

APPENDX 3

Equality Impact Assessment

The Equality Act 2010 replaces the previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It simplifies the law, removing inconsistencies and making it easier for people to understand and comply with it. It also strengthens the law in important ways, to help tackle discrimination and equality. The majority of the Act came into force on 1 October 2010.

Public bodies are required in it to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The public sector Equality Duty came into force on 5 April 2011. The duty ensures that all public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all. It ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work – in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

The Equality Duty encourages public bodies to understand how different people will be affected by their activities so that policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people's needs. By understanding the effect of their activities on different people, and how inclusive public services can support and open up people's opportunities, public bodies are better placed to deliver policies and services that are efficient and effective.

The new equality duty replaces the three previous public sector equality duties, for race, disability and gender. The new equality duty covers the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – including lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

It also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

Having due regard means consciously thinking about the three aims of the equality duty as part of the process of decision-making. This means that consideration of

equality issues must influence the decisions reached by public bodies, including how they act as employers, how they develop, evaluate and review policies, how they design, deliver and evaluate services, and how they commission and procure from others.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves considering the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- meet the needs of people with protected characteristics, and
- encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low.

Fostering good relations involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and others.

Complying with the equality duty may involve treating some people better than others, as far as this is allowed by discrimination law. For example, it may involve making use of an exception or the positive action provisions in order to provide a service in a way which is appropriate for people who share a protected characteristic.

The Equality Duty also explicitly recognises that disabled people's needs may be different from those of non-disabled people. Public bodies should therefore take account of disabled people's impairments when making decisions about policies or services. This might mean making reasonable adjustments or treating disabled people better than non-disabled people in order to meet their needs.

There is no explicit requirement to refer to the Equality Duty in recording the process of consideration but it is good practice to do so. Keeping a record of how decisions were reached will help public bodies demonstrate that they considered the aims of the Equality Duty. Keeping a record of how decisions were reached will help public bodies show how they considered the Equality Duty. Producing an Equality Impact Assessment after a decision has been reached will not achieve compliance with the Equality Duty.

It is recommended that assessments are carried out in respect of new or revised policies and that a copy of the assessment is included as an appendix to the report provided to the decision makers at the relevant Cabinet, Committee or Scrutiny meeting.

Where it is clear from initial consideration that a policy will not have any effect on equality for any of the protected characteristics, no further analysis or action is necessary.

Public bodies should take a proportionate approach when complying with the Equality Duty. In practice, this means giving greater consideration to the Equality Duty where a policy or function has the potential to have a discriminatory effect or

impact on equality of opportunity, and less consideration where the potential effect on equality is slight. The Equality Duty requires public bodies to think about people's different needs and how these can be met.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

Directorate:	Chief Executive	Lead officer responsible for EIA	Head of Housing
Name of the policy or function to be assessed:		Rent Setting Policy	
Names of the officers undertaking the assessment:		Head of Housing	
Is this a new or an existing policy or function?		Updated policy for an existing function	
<p>1. What are the aims and objectives of the policy or function?</p> <p>The Rent Setting Policy outline how rent will be set for housing revenue account properties.</p>			
<p>2. What outcomes do you want to achieve from the policy or function?</p> <p>A fair rent setting process, which balances the need to protect the income of the Council and ensure rents are affordable for tenants</p>			
<p>3. Who is intended to benefit from the policy or function?</p> <p>Tenants Employees involved in the rent setting process</p>			
<p>4. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the policy or function?</p> <p>Tenants Employees involved in the rent setting process</p>			
<p>5. What baseline quantitative data do you have about the policy or function relating to the different equality strands?</p> <p>Personal data is held for tenants on the Council's housing management system, which records age, disability and gender.</p> <p>Information is held on the number of tenants claiming benefits to cover their rent. As at 31st January 2023, 1327 tenants were claiming universal credit to help pay their rent.</p>			

6. What baseline qualitative data do you have about the policy or function relating to the different equality strands?

Notes are recorded on the Council's housing management system each time an Income Officer or Income Assistant speaks to a tenant about issues with their rent or arrears.

Number of cases referred to the Financial Inclusion Service are monitored regularly, including the reasons for referral.

7. What has stakeholder consultation, if carried out, revealed about the nature of the impact?

Tenants are asked to complete regular surveys in regards to the work of the Income team, and positive feedback is given about the level of support offered by Income Officers, Income Assistants and the Financial Inclusion team.

8. From the evidence available does the policy or function affect or have the potential to affect different equality groups in different ways? In assessing whether the policy or function adversely affects any particular group or presents an opportunity for promoting equality, consider the questions below in relation to each equality group:

- Does the policy or function target or exclude a specific equality group or community? Does it affect some equality groups or communities differently? If yes, can this be justified?**

The rent charged, for both social and affordable rent, is based on the property not on the person who holds the tenancy. Rents can't be adjusted to reflect individual circumstances as this is not in accordance with government guidance.

- Is the policy or function likely to be equally accessed by all equality groups or communities? If no, can this be justified?**

Only people over 18 can hold a tenancy, however there can be an impact on children living in council tenancies, in regards to rent increases and affordability.

- Are there barriers that might make access difficult or stop different equality groups or communities accessing the policy or function?**

Warnings are placed on the Council's housing management system when tenants require information in a different format or language. This ensures that they are sent information about their rent increase in a way that they can access.

- Could the policy or function promote or contribute to equality and good relations between different groups? If so, how?**

No impact in this area is expected.

□ What further evidence is needed to understand the impact on equality?

Regular monitoring of the service will be undertaken.

9. On the basis of the analysis above what actions, if any, will you need to take in respect of each of the equality strands?

Age: The age of the tenant does not affect the rent charged, however it is acknowledged that younger tenants, often in their first tenancy, may not understand the process of rent increases. More information and support may need to be provided, such as with making changes to Universal Credit payments or standing orders.

Disability: Home visits will be arranged with Income Officers and Financial Inclusion Officers for tenants that want advice and support but may be unable to come into the office or discuss the matter on the telephone.

Gender: It is not anticipated that the Council will need to take any further action in order to enable access for this group. Regular monitoring and analysis may identify reasons that have not been anticipated. Action will be taken to mitigate any barriers identified.

Gender Reassignment: It is not anticipated that the Council will need to take any further action in order to enable access for this group. Regular monitoring and analysis may identify reasons that have not been anticipated. Action will be taken to mitigate any barriers identified.

Marriage and Civil Partnership: Tenants that are married or in a civil partnership are more likely to be joint tenants, equally responsible for rent payments. Specific questions may arise due to this, which the Income team can support with.

Pregnancy and Maternity: If a tenant is pregnant or has recently had a child they may have reduced income due to maternity leave, or experience difficulties in making rent payments due to increased costs. Whilst the rent can't be adjusted to address this, more assistance can be provided, such as financial inclusion referrals.

Race: It is not anticipated that the Council will need to take any further action in order to enable access for this group. Regular monitoring and analysis may identify reasons that have not been anticipated. Action will be taken to mitigate any barriers identified.

Religion and Belief: It is not anticipated that the Council will need to take any further action in order to enable access for this group. Regular monitoring and analysis may identify reasons that have not been anticipated. Action will be taken

to mitigate any barriers identified.

Sexual Orientation: It is not anticipated that the Council will need to take any further action in order to enable access for this group. Regular monitoring and analysis may identify reasons that have not been anticipated. Action will be taken to mitigate any barriers identified.

I am satisfied with the results of this EIA. I undertake to review and monitor progress against the actions proposed in response to this impact assessment.

Signature:
R Shaw
Head of Housing