

Equality Impact Assessment Form

Revised June 2009



(Equality target groups are those which cover the 6 equality strands: race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religious belief)

Part 1 Aims & implementation of the service, policy, procedure, practice or project

This section is the title of what is being assessed, responsible officers, purpose, where it fits within the council's wider aims and how it supports the legislation to eliminate unlawful discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities. *(Please refer to the guidance for additional information)*

1.1 What is being assessed

Housing Options, Homelessness Prevention and Homelessness Services. This is a review of the existing services.

1.2 Officer(s) and section or service responsible for completing the assessment

Acting Head of Housing Services, Housing Needs Manager, housing options team, homelessness prevention team and homelessness team.

1.3 What is the main purpose or aims of the service, policy, procedure, practice or project

Housing Services have a duty under homelessness legislation to advise and assist anybody that has a housing issue. The Housing Options service is the first point of contact for all housing related enquiries. The advice is free to all and impartial, regardless of the persons tenure or status, or whether they occupy accommodation or provide it. The service also includes the housing register for which there is a separate impact assessment available on the Council's website (CBL Equality Impact Assessment 2009).

More detailed casework is undertaken by the Homelessness Prevention team and Homelessness team where there is a statutory duty above advice and assistance. The service is essential to enable the Council to carry out its statutory obligations to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and covers temporary accommodation that the Council requires in order to discharge those duties where appropriate.

1.4 Who is affected by the service, policy, procedure, practice or project? Who is it intended to benefit and how?

The availability of free and impartial housing advice affects the whole community and is of benefit to all including but not limited to:

- Tenants (social and private sector)
- Homeowners
- Landlords and Registered Social Landlords
- Homeless people
- Social care services (adults and children)
- Health services (community mental health team, IOW NHS PCT)
- Probation / Youth Offending Team
- Advice agencies
- Support services

1.5 Has the service, policy, procedure, practice or project been promoted or explained to those it might affect directly or indirectly?

The services are listed under the A-Z of Council services on the CRM system which is available to the call centre to advise people over the phone, in person or online. There are FAQ's regarding the services available through this method also. There have been various press releases in the local media regarding the services and features in the Council's One Island magazine. Multi agency meetings are attended by staff to promote the service and this is also done at the Landlords Forums.

The services have also been promoted through the newsletters of Housing Services, Supporting People and housing associations. Leaflets and literature regarding the service, as well as the newsletters, are sent to Elected Members, all people registered for housing, doctors surgeries, advice agencies, post offices, churches, youth centre's and Council departments to make as many people as possible aware of the service (these are available in a variety of formats on request).

These methods all contain information on how to access the service and what assistance can be offered. The information available is in plain English where appropriate, although there is some legal terminology that cannot be avoided.

1.6 How does the service, policy, procedure, practice or project contribute to better community cohesion?

Housing Options, Prevention and Homelessness will enhance community cohesion through empowering people to make more informed choices on their housing and assisting them to access accommodation through advice, assistance and statutory measures.

1.7 How does the service, policy, procedure, practice or project fit in with the council's wider aims?

The services contribute to the Eco Island theme of 'A healthy and supportive Island' and support the Council's corporate social responsibility to improving outcomes for vulnerable people. The services also meet the Corporate priority to support vulnerable people and create sustainable communities.

1.8 What is the relevance of the aims of the service, policy, procedure, practice or project to the equality target group and the council's duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity?

The services are inclusive of all people on the Island across all diversity strands with information on a wide variety of housing issues being made available. Services are there to ensure equality for all in accessing housing.

1.9 How is, or how will the service, policy, procedure, practice or project be put into practice and who is responsible for it?

The service is run by the Housing Options, Homelessness Prevention and Homelessness Teams in Housing Services, with responsibility for the services lying with the Housing Needs Manager.

Part 2 Consideration of data and research

To conduct the assessment, you will need information about service users and staff that provide the service. This section is to help you identify the sort of information that will be needed to help you assess whether there may be barriers to different equality groups who access your service, policy, procedure, practice or project. *(Please refer to the guidance for additional information)*

2.1 List all examples of quantitative and qualitative data or any consultation information available that will enable the impact assessment to be undertaken

Information Observatory, 2001 Census, Indices of Multiple Deprivation, JSNA, Centre for Housing Research, in house database collating information on all approaches to Housing Services, Housing Register statistics, Homelessness Code of Guidance, legislation

2.2 Equalities profile of users and beneficiaries

According to the 2001 census, 96.76% of Isle of Wight residents considered themselves to be white British, this being slightly higher than average for the South East. Comparative analyses of housing enquiries during 2009/10 show that 99% of people who approach consider themselves to be white British.

The 2001 census also shows that the Island had a higher than average proportion of persons with a limiting long term illness, 21.9% as opposed to 15.4% across the South East.

5% of approaches to the Housing Options Service during 2009/10 were from people aged 60 or over, whereas 28.3% of Island residents are in this age group according to the 2001 census.

2.3 Evidence of complaints against the service, policy, procedure, practice or project on the grounds of discrimination

No specific complaints on equality and diversity grounds – to be monitored continually.

2.4 What does the consultation, research and/or data indicate about the negative impact on the service, policy, procedure, practice or project

Although these seems to be a lower than expected amount of people aged 60+ who approach Housing for advice this may be because according to the 2001 census 82% of this age group own their own homes and 10% live in social housing so have security of tenure. Further monitoring of this needs to be undertaken to ensure there are no barriers to the service for people in this group.

People under the age of 25 may have greater difficulty accessing accommodation due to the restrictions on benefits for this age group and affordability. Although advice and information would still be available, housing options would be limited by this. Whilst this is discriminating against this age group, it is Housing Benefit regulations that we cannot change.

The majority of approaches to Housing are from white British backgrounds and this could mean there are barriers to accessing the service to those from other backgrounds. This will need to be investigated further alongside any corporate work being carried out.

Some groups that are subject to immigration control or who have no recourse to public funds are not eligible for anything more than advice and assistance and may have greater difficulty in accessing accommodation. This is legislative and therefore out of our control.

None of the emergency Bed and Breakfast accommodation that the Council regularly uses is wheelchair accessible. The options in temporary accommodation are somewhat limited as well, with no completely adapted properties available, but a selection of ground floor accommodation available. Accommodation outside of the Council's usual sources will be found if needed though.

2.5 What does the consultation, research and/or data indicate about the positive impact on the service, policy, procedure, practice or project

Buildings are DDA compliant. Approaches to the service can be made via phone, visit, online and people can access the service via any of the Council help centres across the Island. Home visits can be made to those who have no means of contacting or visiting the service.

There is a Medical and Welfare Panel (formerly Special Needs Housing Panel) that meets regularly to ensure that all those with a medical issue are banded correctly on the housing register.

A joint protocol is being developed between the Council's 16+ team and Housing to agree procedures for the provision of advice and accommodation to 16/17 year olds.

Joint work is undertaken between the 16+ team and Housing regarding Care Leavers and their housing options.

Part 3 Assessment of impact

Now that you have looked at the purpose etc of the service, policy, procedure, practice or project (part 1) and looked at the research (part 2), this section asks you to assess the impact, positive and negative, of the service, policy, procedure, practice or project on each of the 6 strands of diversity covered in the Authority's single equality scheme.

3.1 Complete this section with the following information – relating to all of the identified groups: *(please refer to the guidance for additional information)*

		Reason, evidence, comment					
	Race	Disability	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Age	Religious Belief	
Barriers, negative impact	There may be barriers for different cultural backgrounds accessing the service. Some groups may be exempt from services other than advice.	There is a shortage of disabled adapted properties available in an emergency although alternative arrangements can be made.			There may be barriers for older people accessing the service. Under 25's may find greater difficulties in accessing accommodation.		
Neutral impact	Service is available to all people that have any housing related issues regardless of their tenure						
Positive impact	Language line available. Leaflets available in a variety of languages.	DDA compliant buildings. Various contact methods available. Home visits can be made if required. Medical and Welfare Panel for housing register.			Joint working between the 16+ team and housing to look at the housing needs of 16/17 year olds and Care Leavers.		

Part 4 Measures to mitigate disproportionate or adverse impact or improve on neutral or positive impacts: (please refer to the guidance for additional information)

4.1 If there is any negative impact on any target equality group identified in part 3, is the impact intended or legal?

Impact is unintended or is the result of legislation that cannot be controlled by the Council.

4.2 Specify measures that can be taken to remove or minimize the disproportionate or adverse effect identified in part 3. if none were identified, identify how disproportionate or adverse effect could be avoided in the future

Continual monitoring of service and discussions with minority ethnic groups and older persons groups to identify whether there is a barrier to services.

4.3 If there is no evidence that the service, policy, procedure, practice or project promotes equality, equal opportunities or improves relations within equality target groups, what amendments can be made to achieve this?

N/A

4.4 If a neutral or positive impact has been identified, can that impact be improved upon (continuous improvement)?

Continuous monitoring will ensure improvements are made to the accessibility of the service.

4.5 How will any service, policy, procedure, practice or project be implemented?

Existing service

4.6 As 4.5 above please identify training requirements

None required

Part 5 Conclusions & recommendations

This section ensures that what ever we are impact assessing, whether it be a service, policy, procedure, practice or project that ensure that we abide by the general and specific duties to promote race, disability and gender equality. *(Please refer to guidance for additional information)*

5.1 Does the service, policy, procedure, practice or project comply with equalities legislation?

Yes

5.2 What are the main areas requiring further attention?

Accessibility for older people and minority ethnic groups.

5.3 Summary of recommendations for improvement

Continual monitoring of people who approach the service; further research into what barriers there may be to accessing the service for those groups identified.

5.4 What equality monitoring, evaluation, review systems have been set up to carry out regular checks?

Equalities data is taken from all people who approach the service and is reviewed quarterly.

5.5 When will the amended service, policy, procedure, practice or project be reviewed?

Yearly unless there is a change or complaint before this time.

Part 6 Action / improvement plan

The table below should be completed using the information from the equality impact assessment to produce an action plan for the implementation of the proposals to:

1. Lower the negative impact, and/or
2. Ensure that the negative impact is legal under anti-discriminatory law, and/or
3. Provide an opportunity to promote equality, equal opportunity and improve relations within equality target groups, i.e. increase the positive impact

Please ensure that you update your service/business plan within the equality objectives/targets and actions identified below:

Area of negative impact	Changes proposed	Lead officer	Timescale	Resource implications	Comments
Race	Monitoring of approaches to service and liaison with minority ethnic groups to identify and remove any barriers that may exist	Val Bell	Ongoing	Within current staff levels	Needs to be done alongside any corporate work being undertaken
Disability					
Age	Monitoring of approaches to service and liaison with older persons groups to identify and remove any barriers that may exist	Val Bell	Ongoing	Within current staff levels	
Religious and Philosophical belief					
Gender					
Sexual orientation					
Geographical location					
All of the above					

Part 6 continued – Equality Impact Assessment – Summary report

The results of equality impact assessments must be published. Please complete this summary and publish your report using the Equality and Diversity pages of the Intranet. Your summary information and a copy of your completed report will then be made available to the public on the Council’s website.

Date of assessment	June 2010	
Officer’s name	Val Bell	Role Housing Needs Manager
Service, policy, procedure, practice or project that was impact assessed	Housing Options, Homelessness Prevention and Homelessness Services	
Summary of findings	Service is available to all people that have any housing related issues regardless of their tenure however, when approaches are compared with population statistics there may be some barriers to accessing the service for minority ethnic groups and older persons.	
Summary of recommendations and key points of action plan	Monitoring of approaches to service and liaison with minority ethnic and older persons groups to identify and remove any barriers that may exist. Ongoing monitoring of the service to ensure continuous improvement.	

Groups that this policy will impact upon

Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Age	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	All	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>