

1. Introduction

This report briefly summarises how the Equality Impact Assessment of the Choice Based Lettings Allocation policy statement; access channels, local connection criteria, labelling of available properties was undertaken, it's scope and the key findings.

The assessment was undertaken by the following officers:-

- Ian Barrett – WCC Equality & Diversity Consultant - Facilitator
- Olu Fajuyitan – Senior Housing Needs Officer, WCC
- Debbie Rhodes – Enabling Officer, WCC
- Louise Dibben – Housing Service Administrator, Housing Needs Service, WCC
- Jane Shepherd – Area Housing Manager, Landlord Services, WCC
- Alan Rickman – Chair of WCC Evening TACT Group
- Janet Berry – Member Evening TACT Group

2. Process

The group did not consider eligibility within each of the 5 bands as these are largely determined by legislation and have been validated by Local Authority legal teams. Counsel's opinion had also been sought on the initial draft scheme and recommended suggestions taken into consideration in producing the final draft.

The group then considered eligibility under local connection as set out in the scheme; the process of registration and assessment; information about labelling properties with restrictions on them for older or disabled customers and also rural exceptions housing.

3. Findings

The group agreed that the allocation scheme was clear, straightforward and very understandable. Approved icons for the advertising of social housing were also part of the details that would be included in the property adverts for the understanding of the customers. However, the following suggestions were put forward:

- that the scheme user guide to be produced would need input of the customers who would actually be using it as this will be the most important document to customers,
- under local connection, that close family members may need further clarification,
- that information the document be considered to be produced in all formats i.e. audio, Braille, etc,
- video and audio to describe the advertised property where possible,
- provide sufficient access channels to find out about properties,
- in the case of rural customers, if possible to send out adverts by post, and
- ensure the possibility of advocate bidding is well publicised in our communications with customers.

4. Key Recommendations

The action points are set out in the improvement plan. The key action points are:

- Scheme User Guide – ensure TACT comment on draft and both tenants and other users test the scheme before it is finalised. Also ensure it is written in ‘plain English’.
- In the glossary include definitions of ‘Hardship’ in priority band 3 and ‘Advocate’.
- Improve access to property information and bidding where the design is critical: translations; audio and video clips; talking news; adverts in large print; use easy to read system for everyone.
- Ensure the range of translations is reviewed regularly to take account of any change to the most currently used languages in the District. See CAH report for current languages.
- Ensure wide range of ways of advertising properties, including colour flier sent out to customers who do not have internet access.
- Encourage the use of advocates, where appropriate for customers who have difficulties bidding including people with mental illness or dementia, people with a learning disability or who have poor literacy and people who do not have English as their first language.
- Establish training and guidance for all officers who interview applicants on: cultural awareness; easy to read/plain English options; all equality strands.

5. Monitoring & Reporting

- The first action point is now completed. Initial drafts went to TACT for comments before final draft which now includes pictures, diagrams, tables, large icons and screen shots from the website.
- The longer term actions will be included in Business or Service Plans or in Winchester City Council’s case the Equality Service Plan for Housing 2009-2012.
- The Improvement Plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis and reported to senior officers within the council.
 - WCC will undertake this via the Housing Equality Group and its corporate Equality Working Group: reporting annually to the Strategic Equality Group which includes the portfolio holder for Equality & Community.

6. Conclusions.

6.1 Detailed Assessment

A detailed assessment is not required.

6.2 Improvement Plan

Key Actions were identified to address the issues that arose during the assessment. These are summarised in the table below.

WCC's Housing Equality Group (HEG) will review how these actions will be delivered for Winchester City Council actions.

Note: HBC and EHDC will need to determine their own process for monitoring impact assessment actions and may wish to use their own style of improvement form.

Form 3. Improvement Plan

Service or Policy to be improved	Responsibility	Priority	Performance Measure	Year	Min Std	Target
Scheme of allocations						
Actions Required to Achieve Improvement	Responsibility	Target Date	Resource Implications			
Scheme User Guide – ensure TACT comment on draft and both tenants and other users test the scheme before it is finalised. Also ensure it is written in 'plain English'.	Olu Fajuyitan	Done				
In introduction to the scheme, insert sentences to offer customers help and support to participate in the scheme	Project Team	Done				
Amend list of vulnerable customers, appendix 2 to provide detailed and current terminology.	Ian Barrett	May 09				
In the glossary include definitions of 'Hardship' in priority band 3 and 'Advocate'.	Olu Fajuyitan	Done				

<p>Improve access to property information and bidding where the design is critical: translations; audio and video clips; talking news; adverts in large print; use easy to read system for everyone</p>	<p>Project Team</p>	<p>Done</p>	
<p>Ensure the range of translations is reviewed regularly to take account of any change to the most currently used languages in the District. See CAH report for current languages.</p> <p>Need Abritas report to show the number of hits for each language. This will be set up once further reporting training received from the supplier. Will make available to target date.</p>	<p>OF</p>	<p>Sept. 09</p>	
<p>Ensure wide range of ways of advertising properties, including colour flier sent out to customers who do not have internet access. This action point was used to inform CBL EIA, and no further action to be taken forward.</p>		<p>Done</p>	
<p>Ensure that any advocates making bids on behalf of customers are also sent review letters to remain on the Register. This action point was also used to inform CBL EIA.</p>		<p>Done</p>	

<p>Encourage the use of advocates, where appropriate for customers who have difficulties bidding including people with mental illness or dementia, people with a learning disability or who have poor literacy and people who do not have English as their first language. . This action point was also used to inform CBL EIA.</p>		<p>Done</p>	
<p>Provide benefits advice as part of the incentive scheme for older people to encourage them to downsize and for people who hold their own care package budget 'self-supported care'. This action point was also used to inform CBL EIA.</p>	<p>Jane Petty</p>	<p>On-going</p>	
<p>Encourage customers to complete all the information required for monitoring purposes. Explain why it is being collected e.g. sexual orientation, religion or belief</p>		<p>Done</p>	
<p>Ensure that information about landlords of properties is clear e.g. if they are faith based organisations, or other landlord set up specifically to re-house particular client groups.</p>	<p>Allocations Officers</p>	<p>On-going</p>	

Establish training and guidance for all officers who interview applicants on: cultural awareness; easy to read/plain English options; all equality strands	HEACESP	On-going	
--	---------	----------	--

Please send the completed form to the ICE Group

Summarise improvements here and amend service or business plan as necessary. If urgent improvements are necessary – for instance, if you have discovered illegal discrimination - this should be done outside the normal planning timetable. “Quick fixes” can be implemented straight away if they have no or minor resource implications and do not require approval or built into the normal service planning cycle.

The Prioritisation Criteria used at stage may be useful here to give an overall priority and to prioritise individual actions. In either case you may need to add additional criteria such as cost, timescale, ease of implementation, etc.