

## **1. Introduction**

This report briefly summarises how the Equality Impact Assessment on the Rural Housing Development Strategy was undertaken, its scope and the key findings.

The assessment was undertaken by 4 officers from across the Housing Department, an external 'critical friend' (Beth Taylor who chairs the Inclusive Society Strategic Outcome Group of the Winchester District Strategic Partnership and who has wide experience of social housing and care) and facilitated by the council's Equality & Inclusion Consultant. In addition to two 2 hour training sessions, the assessment required a 2.5 hour meeting and some time for members of the team to check or research some points that arose and time to complete the forms.

## **2. Process**

The Housing Strategy was the first Strategy to be equality impact assessed. It was agreed at the scoping meeting that the whole Housing Strategy would be assessed, and that the sub-strategy/action plans on Homelessness and Rural Housing Development would subsequently be assessed by the same Equality Impact group. It was also agreed that the Private Sector Housing sub-strategy would be assessed at a later date.

The Team used the questions and table in Template 1 of the EIA Guidance Manual to consider whether the Rural Housing Development Strategy had an impact on each customer group listed. The age groups were amended to reflect how they are grouped with regard to housing need.

In deciding if a customer group would or might be disadvantaged by the Rural Housing Development Strategy, we based our conclusions on the following:

- Monitoring evidence where this was available, in particular the evidence from the data collected by the allocation and homelessness services, and from the Housing Registers
- Data from the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey
- Evidence from the recent Housing Market Assessment
- Information about housing needs and barriers to receiving housing services faced by particular groups, drawn from local and national organisations and available research and guidance from governmental, academic and other sources.

## **3. Findings**

The assessment team agreed that the Rural Housing Development Strategy was relevant to all the customer groups as accommodation is a fundamental requirement for everyone. The team did not find any evidence to suggest that any of the customer groups would be negatively impacted by the Strategy. The Rural Housing Development Strategy was considered to have a positive impact on most groups as rural housing development enables people with a local connection to a parish to choose to remain in the parish where they may have social and support networks. However, it was acknowledged that there was insufficient evidence to decide if some groups whilst not being discriminated against or considered to be disadvantaged by the Strategy would receive a positive benefit. These were people within the sexuality strand, and all groups within the religion and belief equality strand. No monitoring information is gathered on the Housing Registers at the moment for these equality strands.

## Rural Housing Development Strategy Equality Impact Assessment

The team concluded that a detailed assessment was not required, but a number of actions would form the improvement plan. They are grouped into three areas: research and evidence; provision; and communications. Training issues have not been included as they are already set out in the Housing Strategy improvement plan. Most improvement points have been included in the Rural Housing Development Action Plan. The complete Improvement Plan is attached to this report.

### **4. Key Recommendations**

The action points set out in the improvement plan apply to allocations and homelessness services and landlord services. It is therefore important that all the housing services within Winchester City Council consider the action plans of their Equality Impact Assessments together. The key action points are:

- To ensure there is a robust evidence base to inform decisions on affordable rural housing development
- To ensure housing provision reflects the needs of eligible households including any specific housing needs e.g. adaptations for disabled people
- To increase the awareness of eligible households by improving communication options

### **5. Monitoring**

- Each action point has a named lead officer and a target date for completion.
- The longer term actions will be included in Business or Service Plans
- The Improvement Plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis and reported to senior officers within the council.

### **6. Conclusions.**

#### **6.1 Detailed Assessment**

No detailed assessments are required.

#### **6.2 Improvement Plan**

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

It should be noted that Equality Impact Assessments have been undertaken across a raft of services within Housing and there will be actions that cut across services. The Housing Equality Group (HEG) will review how these actions will be delivered once the programme of assessments has been completed.

### Improvement Plan: Rural Housing Development Strategy

Actions Required to Achieve Improvement	Responsibility		Target Date	Resource Implications	Links
	Lead	Support			
<b>1. Research and Evidence</b>					
1.1 Ensure that monitoring information collected on parish based Housing Needs Survey forms by Community Action Hampshire is aligned to the monitoring information collected on the Winchester Joint Housing Register application form.	Strategic Housing Debbie Rhodes	Landlord Services	January 2009	Staff time	
1.2 Research individual parish needs through the use of housing surgeries in the parish so that households have easy access to advice	Strategic Housing Debbie Rhodes		January 2009	Staff time	
1.3 Undertake a review of literature on the housing needs of specific groups in rural areas	Strategic Housing Debbie Rhodes		April 2009	Staff time	

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<b>2. Provision of housing</b>					
2.1 Ensure that housing provision for local people reflects any specific needs of the eligible housing applicants e.g. adaptations for disabled applicants or their family members	Strategic Housing Development Team	Landlord Services	April 2009	Staff time	
<b>3. Communication</b>					
3.1 Increase awareness of 'easy to read' options to assist people with poor literacy or language skills and for people who do not have English as a first language, so that they are aware of developments in their parish and how they can register their need	Strategic Housing Debbie Rhodes	Communications Team		Staff time	Communications EIA
3.2 Insert a section on equality and diversity to the HARAH 10 step guide	Strategic Housing Debbie Rhodes		April 2009	Staff time	
3.3 Raise awareness of equality and diversity in relation to affordable housing with Parish Councils and through community planning processes	Strategic Housing Debbie Rhodes	Community Support Team Steve Lincoln	April 2009	Staff time	