

Tenancy Services Equality Impact Assessment

1. Introduction

This report summarises how the generic Equality Impact Assessment for Tenancy Services was undertaken, its scope and the key findings.

The assessment was undertaken by 4 officers from Landlord Services, a 'critical friend' (Steve Tong, Housing Services Manager responsible for Older Peoples and Supported Housing), two tenant representatives and was overseen by the council's Equality and Inclusion Consultant, Ian Barrett.

Two 2 hour training sessions were held in June 2008 for both officers and tenant representatives. The assessment took place between 19 June 2008 and 3 July 2008 and involved three meetings.

2. Impact Assessment

At the initial scoping meeting we discussed the 'cycle' of a tenancy. All stages of the tenancy process were examined from the initial offer of accommodation through to termination of the tenancy. The flowchart attached summarises the phases of the tenancy and highlights the services areas that were assessed.

The group systematically assessed the Tenancy Service against each customer issue and group listed on the Scoping and Screening template and considered what impact there is.

The age groups were amended to reflect the services offered, for example certain types of properties are let to over 40s and over 60s age groups. Tenancies are not given to those 16 and under and therefore this age group was removed. The age groups considered were as follows:

16 - 17
18 - 24
25 - 39
40 -59
60 and over

We had a number of sources of information available to us when considering the impact of Tenancy Services for each issue / group. These were:

- The Housing Services Equality Monitoring data. This includes a profile of all Council tenants, a Tenant Involvement profile, Rent Arrears Recovery including Introductory Tenancies, Harassment, Anti-Social Behaviour and Domestic Abuse. Information is drawn from the Orchard Information System and ReACT database and then analysed.
- Data from the Tenants Satisfaction Survey
- Information from the Needs and Equality Questionnaire collected at tenancy sign up

3. Findings

The group did not find any evidence to suggest that any of the customer issues / groups are negatively impacted by Tenancy Services. Tenancy Services are considered to have a positive impact for most customers. Our tenants handbook, policies and procedures, introductory tenancy and sign up processes, together with the many other sources of information and advice available for our customers do promote equality. However, it was acknowledged there was insufficient evidence to decide if some groups, whilst not being discriminated against or considered to be disadvantaged by Tenancy Services, would receive a positive benefit. These were people with a long term health problem, mental illness, learning disability and all groups within the sexuality strand.

The group concluded that a detailed assessment was not required but a number of actions would form the improvement plan. They are grouped into two key areas:

- Research and evidence
- Training.

The attached Tenancy Service Improvement Plan lists the actions required to address the areas where the impact on the particular customer group is unknown as well as other general recommendations for improvement that came out of the assessment process.

The majority of the actions will be addressed by Landlord Services and will be incorporated into this year's and the 2009/10 business plans. Some of the research will be interlinked across both Landlord Services and Strategic Housing and therefore has resource implications for both directorates. A number of the training requirements are corporate issues which will need to be picked up by the ICE group.

4. Key Recommendations

The action points set out in the improvement plan apply to all sections within Landlord Services and Strategic Housing. It is therefore important that all sections and directorates affected consider the action plans of their Equality Impact Assessments together. The key action points are to:

- Continue to gather evidence and 'plug the gaps' in our current information base which can then be used to inform decisions regarding Tenancy Services
- Investigate concerns identified using the current equality information
- Improve the information sharing protocol with the Community Mental Health Team
- Investigate whether our current processes of promoting equality meet the needs of local equality groups
- Ensure officers receive training and are aware of equality and diversity issues

5. Monitoring

The Tenancy Services Improvement Plan will be monitored by the Head of Landlord Services and the Housing Equality Group. Action points have a target date for completion and will be included in Service Business Plans where appropriate.

6. Conclusions

Detailed Assessment - No detailed assessment is required.

Improvement Plan - Thirteen actions were identified to address the issues that arose during the assessment. These are summarised in the table below.

If you have any comments on this impact assessment contact the officer responsible for Tenancy Services: Amber Crosskey, Tenancy Services Manager, acrosskey@winchester.gov.uk 01962 848229.

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Improvement Plan for Tenancy Services:

Actions Required to Achieve Improvement	Responsibility		Target Date	Resource Implications	Links
	Lead	Support			
Research and Evidence 1. Ensure there is a robust evidence base to inform decisions about how tenancy services are developed and delivered					
1.1 Continue to obtain information regarding customer needs, particularly the following: transsexual/transgender, sexuality, disability groups, religion and belief.	Landlord services	Strategic Housing	Ongoing	Staff time; existing/additional resources.	
1.2 Investigate the reasons for why it has been difficult to engage 18-24 age group in Tenant Involvement.	Landlord Services	Community Development	2009/10	Staff time; existing resources. Research may need to be commissioned.	
1.3 Investigate the reasons for non white British tenants receiving Notices Seeking Possession but not progressing through to Court.	Landlord Services		2009/10	Staff time: existing resources	
1.4 Investigate the lack of permission requests from non-white British tenants.	Landlord Services		2009/10	Staff time; existing resources.	

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Actions Required to Achieve Improvement	Responsibility		Target Date	Resource Implications	Links
	Lead	Support			
1.5 Consider barriers for non-white British tenants getting involved and commenting on service delivery.	Landlord Services		2009/10	Staff time: existing resources	
1.6 Develop a protocol for recording and authenticating officer's perceptions about tenants needs.	Landlord Services	Strategic Housing	2009/10	Staff time: existing resources	

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1.7 Add the needs and equality questionnaire to the Supported Tenancy referral form.	Landlord Services		2008/09	None	
1.8 Investigate and improve the information sharing protocol with the Community Mental Health Team.	Landlord Services	Strategic Housing / CMHT / Health	2008/09	Staff time: existing resources. Research may need to be commissioned	
1.9 Investigate whether our current processes of promoting equality meet the needs of local equality groups.	Landlord Services	Strategic Housing	2009/10	Staff time: existing resources.	
1.10 Consider the impact of long term illness on service delivery.	Landlord Services	Strategic Housing	2009/10	Staff time: existing resources. Research may need to be commissioned	
2. Training Ensure officers receive training and are aware of equality and diversity issues particularly in relation to housing services					
2.1 Flag up need for training on equality awareness	Corporate		2008/09		In Communications EIA Key Recommendations 7 and 8

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2.2 Managers to identify specific housing related training around equality and diversity	Strategic Housing/ Landlord Services		2008/09	Staff time through appraisal process and supervision	In Communications EIA Key Recommendations 7 and 8
2.3 Ensure all existing and new officers receive training on mental illness and learning disabilities.	Landlord Services		2008/09	Resources; cost of training and officer time	