

Equality Impact Assessment

**Housing Allocations Policy
April 2024**

- **Background**

An Equality Impact Assessment is an improvement tool. It will assist you in ensuring that you have thought about the needs and impacts of your service/policy/function in relation to the protected characteristics. It enables a systematic approach to identifying and recording gaps and actions.

- **Legislation- Equality Duty**

As a local authority that provides services to the public, Charnwood Borough Council has a legal responsibility to ensure that we can demonstrate having paid due regard to the need to

- ✓ Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation.
- ✓ Advance Equality of Opportunity
- ✓ Foster good relations

For the following protected characteristics:

- ✓ Age
- ✓ Disability
- ✓ Gender reassignment
- ✓ Marriage and civil partnership
- ✓ Pregnancy and maternity
- ✓ Race
- ✓ Religion and belief
- ✓ Sex (Gender)
- ✓ Sexual orientation

What is prohibited?

- ✓ Direct Discrimination
- ✓ Indirect Discrimination
- ✓ Harassment
- ✓ Victimisation
- ✓ Discrimination by association
- ✓ Discrimination by perception
- ✓ Pregnancy and maternity discrimination
- ✓ Discrimination arising from disability
- ✓ Failing to make reasonable adjustments

Complete this action plan as you go through the questions

- **Step 1 – Introductory information**

Title of the policy	Housing Allocations Policy
Lead officer and others undertaking this assessment	Head of Strategic Housing Housing Needs Manager
Date EIA started	March 2024
Date EIA completed	March 2024

- **Step 2 – Overview of policy/function being assessed**

Outline: What is the purpose of this policy? (Specify aims and objectives)
Under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, all Housing Authorities are required to have an allocations scheme for determining priorities and the procedures to be followed when allocating social housing. Charnwood Borough Council’s Housing Allocations Policy outlines how the Council assesses applications for housing, determines eligibility, qualification and housing need, prioritises applications and allocates accommodation to applicants (including offers of tenancies of council owned rental

properties and nominations for tenancies of Registered Provider owned rental properties). It takes into consideration the Housing Act 1996, Part VI and other relevant legislation, regulations and guidance.

What specific group/s is the policy designed to affect/impact and what is the intended change or outcome for them?

The policy impacts upon applicants for social housing within Charnwood. These include current tenants of Councils and Registered Providers applying to transfer their tenancy and new applicants for housing. This includes persons from vulnerable groups.

Which groups have been consulted as part of the creation or review of the policy?

Consultation on the development of the current Housing Allocations Policy took place between March and September 2017. This included:

- Strategic and Private Sector Housing Service Staff Meetings
- Lead Member for Strategic and Private Sector Housing
- Cabinet Members Briefing
- Policy Scrutiny
- Homelessness Strategy Steering Group
- Statutory and voluntary agencies
- Registered Providers Liaison Forum
- Housing Management Advisory Board
- Housing Register Applicants Workshop

In addition an online survey monkey questionnaire was available for completion and promoted at these events, on the Choice Based Lettings website and the Council's website. A letter was sent to all Housing Register applicants to advise them of the survey and invite them to attend the workshop.

The consultation took place with a wide range of stakeholder, including representatives from each of the protected characteristics and the Council received 133 responses to the consultation questionnaire.

The current version of the Housing Allocations Policy was implemented in April 2020.

An internal review of the Housing Allocations Policy has been carried out. Some minor amendments to the Policy have been made, in order to clarify aspects of the policy and ensure it reflects current legislation, guidance and practice.

● Step 3 – What we already know and where there are gaps

List any existing information/data do you have/monitor about different diverse groups in relation to this policy? Such as in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation etc.

Data/information such as:

- Consultation
- Previous Equality Impact Assessments
- Demographic information
- Anecdotal and other evidence
- Housing Allocations Policy EIA 2017 and Housing Allocations Policy EIA 2020
- Decision reviews, complaints and compliments information received about the Service
- Equalities data of residents using the Service and or Scheme
- Demographic profile of Charnwood residents

What does this information / data tell you about diverse group? If you do not hold or have access to any data/information on diverse groups, what do you need to begin collating / monitoring? (Please list)

Charnwood has a diverse population and a range of individuals with complex issues and differing housing needs / requirements who access / have the potential to access the Housing Register.

● **Step 4 – Do we need to seek the views of others? If so, who?**

Considering the answers given in Step 2, do you need to consult with specific groups to identify needs / issues? If not explain why.

Further equalities monitoring may be required in the future. However, at this stage of analysis it is felt the information currently held is sufficient to analyse trends and determine any barriers to individuals accessing the Housing Register.

● **Step 5 – Assessing the impact**

Considering any data/consultation/information and your own knowledge, identify whether the policy has a positive or negative impact on the individuals or community groups who identify with any ‘protected characteristics’ and provide an explanation for your decision. Please refer to the general duties on the front page.

<p>Age</p>	<p>Neutral impact / positive impact identified</p> <p>The Council acknowledges that many younger persons, including 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers aged 18 to 25, may require support to sustain an independent tenancy and adjust to independent living. Consideration is given to whether any persons accepted onto the register are ready for independent living and have sufficient support in place to sustain a tenancy before they are permitted to bid for properties or are considered for an offer of accommodation. The Council liaises with support agencies, such as Leicestershire County Council Social Services, to assess whether applicants are ready for an independent tenancy and require support to sustain an independent tenancy and to ensure the required support is in place, before allocating accommodation.</p> <p>The Council has a number of older persons’ sheltered housing schemes, which include bedsits, flats and bungalows. These are currently restricted to applicants who are above the age of 60 years. A review of the age restriction for these types of properties is being carried out and consideration is being given to whether the minimum age criteria for these properties should be reduced (for example to 55 years). The justification for the use of age-based allocation criteria is that these schemes are designed to meet the needs of older persons, with services and facilities such as warden support, assistance alarms, mobility aids, communal facilities and shared activities for older persons.</p> <p>There is an exemption to the Financial Means qualification criteria for applicants who meet the age criteria for and who qualify for older person’s sheltered accommodation schemes. These applicants are permitted to join the Housing Register if they do not meet the Financial Means based qualification</p>
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criteria, but are only considered for older persons' sheltered accommodation schemes. The justification for this exemption is that the Council has a number of older person's sheltered accommodation schemes that are designed to meet the needs of older persons. The Council has a number of hard to let properties within its older person's sheltered accommodation schemes, whereas the availability of this type of accommodation in the private sector within Charnwood is extremely limited. This exemption will assist older persons to access sheltered accommodation that meets the needs of older persons within Charnwood.

The Council has a number of non-sheltered 1 bedroom bungalows have minimum age restrictions. These are currently restricted to applicants who are above the age of 60 years. A review of the age restriction for these types of properties is being carried and consideration is being given to whether the minimum age criteria for these properties should be reduced / whether a minimum age criteria for these properties continues to be justified.

The Council has a number of non-sheltered flats that have minimum age restrictions. These are currently restricted to applicants who are above the age of 45 years. A review of the age restrictions for these types of properties has been carried. It has been determined that the age restriction for these properties is not justified and therefore it has been agreed that the age restriction for these properties will be removed. This will be done under a phased approach through 4 tranches of properties over 2 years, to enable potential impacts upon residents and services to be managed, with the changes to the first tranche of properties expected in Summer 2024.

Applicants who are under-occupying a Council or Registered Provider property and applying to downsize to smaller accommodation are classified as having a housing need and therefore qualify for the Housing Register. This group of applicants is likely to contain a high proportion of older persons (such as single persons and couples who continue to reside in larger family properties after their children have reached maturity and left the family home). This criteria will help such applicants to transfer to accommodation that may better suit their long-term housing needs (such as level access accommodation or older person's sheltered accommodation). In addition, this criteria will help to ensure that larger family properties become available for households that contain dependent children.

The Council has a number of 2 bedroom general needs 'duplex' flats. These properties have small combined kitchen and living room areas and limited living space, so are not considered to be suitable in the long-term for households with dependent children. There is a minimum age criteria of 16 years for all household members for these properties. This is

	<p>to prevent applicants with dependent children from being allocated accommodation that is not suitable for them in the long-term.</p> <p>Houses with 2 or more bedrooms are restricted to applicants whose households contain dependent children. This is to ensure that these households are prioritised for available accommodation that is most suitable for dependent children. The policy allows for other household types to be considered for these houses in exceptional circumstances (e.g. where other types of properties with 2 or more bedrooms would not meet their needs).</p> <p>Applicants who need to move closer to relatives in order to give or receive assessed care or support and where moving would prevent significant physical, emotional or financial hardship are classified as having a housing need and therefore qualify for the Housing Register (provided they meet all of the other eligibility and qualification criteria). This group of applicants is likely to contain a high proportion of older persons who require care or support or persons who provide care and support to older relatives. The inclusion of this criteria helps to facilitate the provision of support to older applicants.</p>
<p>Disability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical • Visual • Hearing • learning disabilities • mental health 	<p>Neutral impact / positive impact identified</p> <p>The policy includes criteria that supports individuals who have, or are more likely to have, disabilities to secure accommodation that meets their housing needs:</p> <p>Band 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants who need to move to ground floor, level access or wheelchair accessible accommodation • Applicants need to move to accommodation that has major adaptations (e.g. level access showering facilities) • Applicants who have a significant physical health condition that is directly affected by their accommodation and where a move to alternative accommodation would help to ease or resolve the condition, assist with management of the condition, or assist with independent living • Applicants who have a significant mental health condition that is directly affected by their accommodation and where a move to alternative accommodation would help to ease or resolve the condition, assist with management of the condition, or assist with independent living • Applicants who have a medical need for an additional bedroom (e.g. because they need an overnight carer or need to accommodate a substantial amount of medical equipment). • Applicants who qualify for older person's sheltered accommodation schemes

- Applicants who are residing in a supported or semi-independent accommodation scheme
- Applicants who have a welfare need for an additional bedroom (e.g. because they have a child with behavioural difficulties who cannot safely share a bedroom with siblings).

Band 2:

- Applicants who are residing in a supported or semi-independent accommodation scheme and are ready to move to independent accommodation
- Applicants who are residing in accommodation provided by a Local Authority under Section 20 or Section 22A of the Children Act 1989 and are ready to move to independent accommodation

Band 1:

- Applicants who need to move to ground floor, level access or wheelchair accessible accommodation, where conditions in their current accommodation pose an imminent risk of serious harm, for example because they are unable to access bathing and toileting facilities
- Applicants who need to move to accommodation that has major adaptations (e.g. level access showering facilities), where conditions in their current accommodation pose an imminent risk of serious harm, for example because they are unable to access bathing and toileting facilities
- Applicants who have a serious physical health condition that is directly affected by their accommodation, who need to move because conditions in their current accommodation pose an imminent risk of serious harm, and where a move to alternative accommodation would help to ease or resolve the condition, assist with management of the condition or assist with independent living
- Applicants who have a serious mental health condition that is directly affected by their accommodation, who need to move because conditions in their current accommodation pose an imminent risk of serious harm, and where a move to alternative accommodation would help to ease or resolve the condition, assist with management of the condition or assist with independent living.

Applicants who have a specialist need for wheelchair accessible or adapted accommodation are given additional given preference for available properties that are wheelchair accessible or have the required adaptations in place. The policy also allows for direct matches of applicants with these needs to these types of properties. This is due to limited availability of this type of accommodation. There is an exemption to the Financial Means criteria for applicants who have a specialist need for wheelchair accessible or adapted accommodation that is not accessible or affordable in the

	<p>private sector. This exemption supports applicants with disabilities to access suitable accommodation.</p> <p>Applicants who need to move closer to relatives in order to give or receive assessed care or support and where moving would prevent significant physical, emotional or financial hardship are classified as having a housing need and therefore qualify for the Housing Register (provided they meet all of the other eligibility and qualification criteria). This group of applicants is likely to contain a high proportion of persons with disabilities who require care or support or persons who provide care and support to persons with disabilities. The inclusion of this criteria helps to facilitate the provision of support to persons with disabilities.</p> <p>The Council has a number of 1 and 2 bedroom bungalows, some of which are classified as accessible for persons with medical / mobility needs. A review of the accessibility of these 1 and 2 bedroom bungalows is being carried out to ensure that accurate accessibility information can be specified on property adverts and applicants can be effectively prioritised for these properties based on accessibility need.</p> <p>The Council acknowledges that some persons with significant mental health problems and/or learning difficulties may require support to sustain an independent tenancy and adjust to independent living. Consideration is given to whether any persons accepted onto the register are ready for independent living and have sufficient support in place to sustain a tenancy before they are permitted to bid for properties or are considered for an offer of accommodation. The Council liaises with support agencies, such as Leicestershire County Council Social Services, to assess whether applicants are ready for an independent tenancy and require support to sustain an independent tenancy and to ensure the required support is in place, before allocating accommodation.</p> <p>The policy includes a local connection qualification criteria, designed to ensure that the housing register meets the needs of local residents and the local community. This type of criteria potentially indirectly discriminates against persons who have physical and mental health problems, as they are over-represented in homeless populations. As homeless persons are not resident in settled accommodation, they cannot meet the aspect of the criteria relating to settled residence. The policy therefore includes an exemption to the local connection criteria for applicants who are homeless and who did meet the local connection criteria through residence in settled accommodation immediately before they became homeless.</p>
Gender Reassignment (Transgender)	<p>Neutral impact / no impact identified.</p> <p>The gender of household members is taken into consideration when determining bedroom eligibility. The bedroom eligibility</p>

	<p>criteria has been designed to minimise situations where persons of different genders over the age of 16 (who are not a couple in a relationship) share bedrooms. The criteria allows for separate bedrooms for households members who are not of the same gender, and separate bedrooms for household members who are over the age of 16. The assessment of bedroom eligibility is based on the applicant's identification of their own gender / the gender of their household members. Procedural guidance for assessing officers will clarify that where a household member is transgender / non-gender binary, a separate bedroom should be allowed.</p>
Race	<p>Neutral impact / no impact identified.</p> <p>The policy includes local connection qualification criteria, designed to ensure that the housing register meets the needs of local residents and the local community. This type of criteria potentially discriminates against Gypsies and Travellers who have a nomadic lifestyle and as a result are unlikely to be able to establish a local connection through settled residence / through residence of close relatives. The policy therefore includes an exemption to the local connection criteria for this group.</p>
Religion or Belief (Includes no belief)	<p>Neutral impact / positive impact identified.</p> <p>The Council operates a Choice Based Lettings scheme under which applicants can express preference over the accommodation to be allocated to them, by bidding for advertised properties in their preferred areas. Applicants who wish to reside close to a place of worship in order to practice their religious beliefs have the ability to bid for properties near to their place of worship (subject to availability).</p>
Sex (Gender)	<p>Neutral impact / no impact identified.</p> <p>The gender of household members is taken into consideration when determining bedroom eligibility. The bedroom eligibility criteria has been designed to minimise situations where persons of different genders over the age of 16 (who are not a couple in a relationship) share bedrooms. The criteria allows for separate bedrooms for households members who are not of the same gender, and separate bedrooms for household members who are over the age of 16. The assessment of bedroom eligibility is based on the applicant's identification of their own gender / the gender of their household members. Procedural guidance for assessing officers will clarify that where a household member is transgender / non-gender binary, a separate bedroom should be allowed.</p> <p>The policy includes local connection qualification criteria, designed to ensure that the housing register meets the needs of local residents and the local community. This type of criteria potentially indirectly discriminates against women, as they are overrepresented amongst victims of domestic abuse who may need to apply for accommodation in an area to</p>

	<p>which they do not have existing connections. Applicants who have fled from another Council area due to domestic abuse, violence or threats of violence that are likely to be carried out are unlikely to meet the local connection criteria with the policy. The policy therefore includes an exemption for applicants who have fled domestic abuse, violence or threats of violence that are likely to be carried out and cannot safely reside within any of the council areas where they have a local connection.</p>
Sexual Orientation	<p>Neutral impact / no impact identified.</p> <p>None of the criteria in the Housing Allocations Policy have been identified as potentially having an impact based on the applicant's sexual orientation.</p>
<p>Other protected groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnancy & maternity • Marriage & civil partnership 	<p>Neutral impact / positive impact identified.</p> <p>Unborn children are taken into consideration when determining bedroom eligibility once the expected delivery date is within 3 months. This will assist pregnant women to secure accommodation that meets their longer-term needs and the longer-term needs of their unborn child.</p>
<p>Other socially excluded groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers • Low literacy • Priority neighbourhoods • Health inequalities • Rural isolation • Asylum seeker and refugee communities • Current and ex-armed HM forces personnel (Veterans) • Care experienced leavers 	<p>Neutral impact / positive impact identified.</p> <p>The policy includes criteria that support the following socially excluded groups to apply for accommodation that meets their needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants leaving local authority care (classed as a housing need, band 2 priority for some groups, exemption to local connection criteria for some groups) • Applicants living in supported accommodation (classed as a housing need, band 2 priority for some groups, exemption to local connection criteria for some groups) • Applicants who are suffering violence, harassment or abuse (classed as a housing need, band 1 priority, exemption to local connection criteria for some groups, exemption to financial means criteria for some groups) • Homeless persons (classed as a housing need, band 1 priority for some groups, exemption to local connection criteria for some groups) • Applicants who have a need to move in order to give or receive assessed care or support (classed as a housing need) • Applicants who have a need to move due to financial hardship (classed as a housing need) • Armed forces members (additional priority within bands for some groups, exemption to local connection criteria for some groups). <p>The policy includes local connection qualification criteria, designed to ensure that the housing register meets the needs</p>

of local residents and the local community. This criteria potentially disadvantages some groups:

- Persons who are homeless are not resident in settled accommodation, so they cannot meet the aspect of the criteria relating to settled residence. The policy therefore include an exemption to the local connection criteria for applicants who are homeless and who did have a qualifying local connection through residence in settled accommodation immediately before they became homeless.
- Persons living in support accommodation are not resident in settled accommodation, so they cannot meet the aspect of the criteria relating to settled residence. The policy therefore includes an exemption to the local connection criteria for applicants who are residing in supported accommodation and who did have a qualifying local connection through residence in settled accommodation immediately before they became homeless.
- Young people in care are not resident in settled accommodation and care leavers may have no close relatives / may need to be accommodation away from their close relatives, so they are unlikely to meet the criteria relating to settled residence / residence of relatives. The policy therefore includes an exemption to the local connection criteria for Care Leavers who are owed a duty under S23C of the Children Act 1989 by Leicestershire County Council and for Care Leavers who are owed a duty under S23C of the Children Act 1989 by another Local Authority and who were accommodated within Charnwood under S22A for at least 2 years.

Applicants who have fled domestic abuse, violence or threats of violence that are likely to be carried out are unlikely to meet the local connection criteria. The policy therefore includes an exemption for applicants who have fled domestic abuse, violence or threats of violence that are likely to be carried out and cannot safely reside within any of the council areas where they have a local connection.

Where there are potential barriers, negative impacts identified and/ or barriers or impacts are unknown, please outline how you propose to minimise all negative impact or discrimination.

- If you have identified adverse impact or discrimination that is illegal, you are required to take action to remedy this immediately.
- Additionally, if you have identified adverse impact that is justifiable or legitimate, you will need to consider what actions can be taken to mitigate its effect on those groups of people.

Ensure review of age criteria for 60+ bungalows carried out to establish whether this continues to be justified.

Ensure review of accessibility of 1 and 2 bedroom bungalows carried out to enable accurate information in relation to accessibility to be specified on property adverts / to allow applicants for accessible properties to be prioritised based on accessibility need.

Ensure effective processes in place for identifying suitability for independent accommodation and support required to assist with tenancy sustainment (for young persons and persons with mental health problems and/or learning disabilities).
Monitor decision reviews, complaints and compliments information received alongside equalities monitoring data for applications received to ensure any adverse impacts are identified and minimised.
Summarise your findings and give an overview as to whether the policy will meet Charnwood Borough Council's responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity (please refer to the general duties on the front page).
It is the opinion that the Housing Allocations Policy complies with equality and diversity responsibilities. Where potential barriers are identified at this stage, it is recognised that it will be necessary to plan effectively to ensure adverse impact is not created for any particular groups.

● **Step 6- Monitoring, evaluation, review**

Are there processes in place to review the findings of this Assessment and make appropriate changes? How will you monitor potential barriers and any positive/ negative impact?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision reviews, complaints and compliments. • Equalities data relating to applications received.
How will the recommendations of this assessment be built into wider planning and review processes? e.g. policy reviews, annual plans and use of performance management systems.
All recommendations made will be addressed in relevant service / team plans and monitored as appropriate.

● **Step 7- Action Plan**


Please include any identified concerns/actions/issues in this action plan. The issues identified should inform your Service Plan and, if appropriate, your Consultation Plan			
Reference Number	Action	Responsible Officer	Target Date
01	Ensure review of age criteria for 60+ bungalows carried out to establish whether this continues to be justified	Housing Needs Manager	31 st March 2025
02	Ensure review of accessibility of 1 and 2 bedroom bungalows carried out to enable accurate information in relation to accessibility to be specified on property adverts / to allow applicants for accessible properties to be prioritised based on accessibility need	Housing Needs Manager	31 st March 2025
03	Ensure effective processes in place for identifying suitability for independent accommodation and support required to assist with tenancy sustainment for young applicants and applicants with significant mental health problems and/or learning difficulties	Housing Needs Manager	31 st March 2025

04	Monitor decision reviews, complaints and compliments information received alongside equalities monitoring data for applications received to ensure any adverse impacts are identified and minimised.	Housing Needs Manager	31 st March 2025
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- **Step 8- Who needs to know about the outcomes of this assessment and how will they be informed?**

	Who needs to know?	How they will be informed (we have a legal duty to publish EIA's)
Employees	Yes	This EIA will be circulated to employees who work with the Housing Allocations Policy.
Service users	Yes	This EIA will be published on the Council's website.
Partners and stakeholders	Yes	This EIA will be published on the Council's website.
Others	Yes	This EIA will be published on the Council's website.
To ensure ease of access, what other communication needs/concerns are there?		A hard copy of this EIA can be provided on request.

- **Step 9- Conclusion (to be completed and signed by Service Head)**

I agree with this assessment
Signed (Service Head):  Katie Moore Head of Strategic Housing
Date: 25 th March 2025

Please send completed & signed assessment to **Vicky Brackenbury** for publishing.