

Meeting: Integrated Housing Board

Date: 23 March 2009

Report Title: Haringey's Homelessness Strategy -Equalities Impact Assessment

Report of: Nick Powell – Head of Housing Strategy, Development and Partnerships

Purpose

At its meeting of 26th June 2008 the Integrated Housing Board received a briefing on the development of Haringey's Homelessness Strategy. This Strategy was subsequently approved by Cabinet and published in July 2008.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with findings of the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) conducted on Haringey's Homelessness Strategy, which the Integrated Housing board is invited to consider and note.

The EIA has been signed off by the Council's Principle Equalities and Diversities Officer.

Summary

The Equalities Impact Assessment has found that the Homelessness Strategy and the actions specified within the action plan were designed to reduce homelessness among all groups. However in examining information relating to the various groups which were over represented, further data was needed to fully understand the causes of homelessness and how to best address their needs. As a result in addition to specific actions which aim to improve services for BME and other specific groups, the Homelessness Strategy action plan includes actions recommended by the EIA which are dedicated to research and the implementation of systems to ensure that all the relevant data is collated in the future and that this information is used to inform future service provision.

Progress of the Strategy's action plan is reviewed by the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (HSIG), which held its first meeting on 10th March 2009. In brief this meeting established that:

- The multi-agency delivery groups were well attended
- While some action due dates had passed good progress was being made to ensure all actions would be completed within the target year.
- Recommendations to be received on the format of future meetings.

A review of the first year of the Strategy's action plan will also be carried out and presented to a future meeting on the Integrated Housing Board.

The Homelessness Strategy and action plan is a working document that will therefore evolve as issues arise, and will be revised accordingly.

Legal/Financial Implications

Financial Implications

The Equalities Impact Assessment of the 2008-11 Homelessness Strategy describes proposed actions for further research projects and improved multi-agency working towards reducing homelessness; no specific proposals with resource implications are put forward in the Equalities Impact Assessment.

As the tasks identified in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan for 2008/09 are completed, those involving the potential need for additional resources will need to be identified for further consideration in the business planning processes of the varying agencies.

Legal Implications

No specific legal issues were highlighted, however general comments were made relating to the faith group equality strand not appearing in the body of the EIA.

At the time of writing the EIA there was insufficient information to draw any reliable conclusion relating to the representation of particular faith groups among service users. Systems are now in place (equalities monitoring which captures faith groups which was implemented in 2008) which will enable future monitoring of this equality strand.

A question of how the gap in monitoring the sexual orientation equality strand could be addressed was also raised. The level of responses in this area may be low due to a reluctance for service users to provide this information. Further research is planned within the homelessness strategy action plan aimed at removing any barriers in accessing services and will specifically examine causes of homelessness and the support needs of this group. In line with the partnership approach of the Strategy, working with Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender community and voluntary sector organisations could provide better sample sources for future research.

A final point was concerned with whether the consultations are still relevant given that they took place some time ago. The consultations took place at the end of 2007 and in the beginning of 2008. While focusing on different elements, the messages from the consultation provided consistent messages and it is these that addressed in the strategy. However in order to ensure that we remain responsive an annual programme of events and activities relating to service user consultation and involvement will be published

Recommendations

That the Board note the Equalities Impact Assessment.

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Appendices

Copy of the EIA (attached)