

Equalities Impact Assessment

Directorate : Social Services

Date:28th September 2006

Business Unit: Housing Strategy and Needs

Title: Lettings Policy.

1. The Aims of the function

- To put in place a robust policy for the letting of all Council and Housing Association homes in the Borough.
- To establish a Lettings Policy that meets good practice and legal requirements.
- To establish a policy that clearly explains how priority is given to different housing needs.
- To include alongside the policy a points scheme that ensures these priorities are met in a fair and transparent way.
- To operate the Lettings Policy as part of a range of new services and policy initiatives to improve choice in social housing, and meet key Council and Government objectives.

2. Relevant information and evidence

- The proposed Lettings Policy being considered by Haringey Council's Executive Committee on the 12 September 2003 is an important policy for the Council.
- It sets out how the Council ensures all Council and Housing Association properties are let on the basis of housing need.
- How priority is given to housing need as set out in the Lettings Policy. The policy plays an important role in meeting the Council's wider commitments to tackling inequality.
- The number of dwellings within the borough covered by the policy are 16,462 council and 12,738 housing association.

Background on priority lets:

Housing authorities must ensure that reasonable preference is given to the following categories of people, as set out in s167 (2) of the 1996 Act:

- (a) people who are homeless this includes people who are intentionally homeless, and those who are not in priority need;
- (b) people who are owed a duty by any housing authority or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section 192(3);
- (c) people occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- (d) people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds; and
- (e) people who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).

Housing authorities will need to be able to demonstrate that, overall, reasonable preference for allocations has been given to applicants in all the reasonable preference categories.

Section 167(2) gives housing authorities the power to frame their allocation schemes so as to give additional preference to particular descriptions of people who fall within the reasonable preference categories and who have urgent housing needs.

Examples of people with urgent housing needs to whom housing authorities should consider giving additional preference within their allocation scheme include :

- (a) those owed a homelessness duty as a result of violence or threats of violence likely to be carried out and who as a result require urgent re-housing, including:
- (b) those who need to move because of urgent medical reasons.

The Council's Lettings Policy covers all Council housing lettings and letting to housing association homes where a nomination agreement exists.

Gender

The Housing service does not currently monitor lettings by gender. We must start monitoring by January 2007 as set out under the Monitoring and Reviewing arrangements section.

Age

We must start monitoring by January 2007 as set out under the Monitoring and Reviewing arrangements section.

Disability

The Housing Service monitors lettings by disability. However the number of lettings is so low as to make data statistically unreliable.

Ethnicity

Table 1 shows the close correlation between lettings and the wide range of ethnic groups living in the Borough.

Table 1: Waiting List by Ethnicity

Rolling 12 Months Report							
Waiting List by Ethnicity		Target = Difference no more or less than 10%					
Feb-06							
	Census	Waiting List		Lets		Comparison	
Ethnicity		No. of Cases	% of Waiting List	No. of Lets	% of Total Lets	Expected lets from WL	Difference
Bangladeshi/UK Bangladeshi	1.37%	111	1.73%	7	0.88%	14	-0.85%
Black African	9.18%	1629	25.34%	198	24.94%	201	-0.41%
Black British	1.35%	170	2.64%	21	2.64%	21	0.00%
Black Caribbean	9.5%	1090	16.96%	167	21.03%	135	4.08%
Black Caribbean and White	1.48%	54	0.84%	13	1.64%	7	0.80%
British Asian	1.55%	13	0.20%	1	0.13%	2	-0.08%
Chinese	1.13%	28	0.44%	3	0.38%	3	-0.06%
East African Asian	-	25	0.39%	5	0.63%	3	0.24%
Indian or UK Indian	2.85%	44	0.68%	8	1.01%	5	0.32%
Mixed Asian and White	1.08%	13	0.20%	2	0.25%	2	0.05%
Mixed Black	-	8	0.12%	2	0.25%	1	0.13%
Mixed Black African/White	0.72%	33	0.51%	4	0.50%	4	-0.01%
Mixed Other	1.28%	40	0.62%	5	0.63%	5	0.01%
Other Asian	-	222	3.45%	26	3.27%	27	-0.18%
Other Black	-	44	0.68%	8	1.01%	5	0.32%
Other White	-	110	1.71%	15	1.89%	14	0.18%
Other White European	-	499	7.76%	57	7.18%	62	-0.58%
Pakistani / UK Pakistani	0.95%	49	0.76%	2	0.25%	6	-0.51%
Traveller	-	4	0.06%	0	0.00%	0	-0.06%
White British	45.28%	1012	15.74%	128	16.12%	125	0.38%
White Greek Cypriot	-	88	1.37%	9	1.13%	11	-0.24%
White Irish	4.3%	197	3.06%	22	2.77%	24	-0.29%
White Kurdish	-	428	6.66%	41	5.16%	53	-1.49%
White Turkish	-	207	3.22%	22	2.77%	26	-0.45%
White Turkish Cypriot	-	310	4.82%	28	3.53%	38	-1.30%
Total:		6428	100.00%	794	100.00%	794	

3. Assessment of Likely Impact

Having reviewed the points allocations scheme they fall in line with current legislation on prioritising housing needs. The points scheme is not directly discriminatory and all points allocated are done on a justified priority need approach. Please see background for details of cases where we are legitimately able to give points on priority need.

Ethnicity

Points are not awarded based on ethnicity. The lettings policy will still have points awarded on a housing needs basis. The scheme now has greater emphasis on reducing overcrowding, it is therefore likely that some groups will be indirectly discriminated against as particular ethnic groups may be overcrowded to a greater or lesser extent. This is justified under 'reasonable preference' under the homelessness act which gives preference to people in certain categories see above.

As required by legislation the policy sets out how additional points would be awarded if a resident is experiencing harassment, this applies to harassment based on race.

Under the CRE guidelines the Council needs to ensure that one group does not receive a better standard of housing than others. The service was unable to provide information on the standard of housing by ethnicity (please advise over responsibility, Haringey or HfH) so we are unable to establish which groups are receiving 'better' homes.

The Service needs to ensure monitoring standard/type of property (e.g. flat, house, garden) and area by ethnicity.

The Lettings Policy is available in the 6 community languages and will be made available to applicants by them contacting the Translation service:

**FREEPOST
Haringey Council
Translation and Interpretation Services
8th Floor, River Park House
225 High Road London N22 8HQ**

Disability

The proposed Lettings Policy places a high emphasis upon tackling the needs of disabled people and they are likely to receive points based on medical need. The service was unable to provide monitoring information by disability, it is therefore difficult to ascertain what the present rate of allocation to those with a disability.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) people with a disability should not be waiting disproportionately longer for a property than able bodied people, monitoring therefore needs to be introduced to ensure that this does not occur.

The Housing Needs Service also needs to introduce monitoring of all adapted homes to ensure that they are let to people with disabilities

The Lettings policy is available in different formats including:

In LARGE PRINT On Disk On Audio tape In Braille

Gender

The Lettings Policy does not directly award points on the basis of gender. The service is unable to provide information on lets by gender.

The policy and points scheme may give priority to:

males under the medical requirement priority as typically males suffer from mental health related problems more (MIND).

to females where points are allocated on the basis of number of dependents as women are more likely to be sole carers of dependents (ERSC, 90% 2004)

This is justified under the 'reasonable preference' priority scheme.

To ensure that males/females are not allocated properties disproportionate to their need the reason for points allocation by gender would to be collated and monitored.

Sexuality

As required by legislation the policy sets out how additional points would be awarded if a resident is experiencing harassment, this applies to harassment based on sexual orientation.

Same sex couples are also given succession rights.

Age

The Lettings Policy does give priority to older people and reflects the priority Older People's Services gives to supported housing. This need arises as a consequence of associated ill health or disability rather than because of age.

Teenage parents are supported through semi independent housing options (with the support from Supported Housing).

Religion/belief

The lettings policy As required by legislation the policy sets out how additional points would be awarded if a resident is experiencing harassment, this applies to harassment based on religion.

The council does have links with housing associations that have experience in housing groups from different religions.

All strands

Complaints and appeals

These will need to be monitored by the six equality strands where available.

Consultation

The Housing Service has carried out extensive consultation with a wide range of people and organisations. This has included a survey of all 25000 people on the Housing Register, a Tenant Consultative Forum presentation and a one day conference of voluntary sector organisations. Focus Groups have been held with hard to reach and BME residents e.g. Turkish speakers. The focus group supported the policy. They had concerns about under-occupied property. The Lettings Policy seeks to address this through points scheme. Transfers receive more points if they are under-occupying their home.

All local housing associations and BME voluntary sector organisations have been consulted as have disability, older peoples organisations. Concerns were raised about the need to support vulnerable adults under the new Choice Based Lettings

Domestic Violence

The Lettings Policy gives priority to Domestic violence in line with the statutory priority that requires it to be considered as an 'Additional Preference.' It is proposed to strengthen the this area.

2. Consideration of Alternatives

Domestic Violence

The importance of responding to Domestic Violence is reflected in the points scheme. It is proposed, given the priority Members give to tackling Domestic Violence to make this one of the top 5 priorities in the policy. The proposed pointing scheme already gives Domestic violence a high level of points.

Vulnerable People

Following consultation on the Lettings Policy the emphasis upon meeting the needs of vulnerable people was increased. The need to respond to people with mental health and learning disability challenges was identified as was the need to respond to people with 'complex needs'; that is people with a range of health or disability related challenges.

5. Monitoring and reviewing arrangements

The Housing Service will introduce a range of measures to improve the monitoring of the lettings service in addition to the existing arrangements.

These are set out in the Action Plan at Annex A. The Action Plan will be monitored by the Council's Executive Committee.

6. Publishing the Impact Assessment

The Housing Service will make copies of the agreed EIA available on the website and copies will be displayed in Housing Offices.

This Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out by:

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Approved by: **Julian Higson** Designation: **Head of Housing**

Date: **28 September 2006**

Lettings Policy

Equalities Impact Assessment Action Plan

No	Action	Target Date	Lead Officer	Progress
1	Ethnicity: Introduce monitoring targets for all lettings	31.01.07	Greg Carter	
2	Ethnicity: Introduce monitoring of household size	31.01.07	Greg Carter	
3	Disability: Introduce monitoring targets for all lettings	31.01.07	Greg Carter	
4	Disability: Introduce monitoring of household size	31.01.07	Greg Carter	
5	Disability: Introduce monitoring of adapted homes to ensure let to disabled.	31.01.07	Greg Carter	
6	Age: Introduce monitoring targets for all lettings	31.01.07	Greg Carter	
7	Age: Introduce monitoring of household size	31.01.07	Greg Carter	
8	Monitor waiting time for all equalities groups	31.01.07	Denise Gandy	
9	Produce Monitoring report bi-annually.	31.01.07	Denise Gandy	
10	Ensure that the new build housing programme includes partnership arrangements with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Providers.		Rupert Brandon	The current development programme includes the provision of specialist accommodation provided by BME housing associations.
11	Ensure that housing association partners are aware of their equality responsibilities within the nominations process		Hitesh Tailor	

No	Action	Target Date	Lead Officer	Progress
12	Equality proof new Lettings procedures	01.11.06	Nigel Long	
13	Develop further consultation with BME and Equality and Diversity organisations		Denise Gandy	
14	Review the complaints and appeals arising from the new Lettings Policy.			