

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

THE STAGE ONE ASSESSMENT FORM - the initial screening process

SERVICE, POLICY OR FUNCTION BEING ASSESSED: Rent Collection

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE, POLICY OR FUNCTION: (e.g. main purpose, users or beneficiaries etc)

Collection and recovery of rent and service charges for the Council's housing stock. Tenancies are held by various permutations of a household. In some cases individuals named in the tenancy agreement are not resident at the property in question. Some members of a household may have rights of succession to a tenancy of the property in which they reside. Notifying tenants of any variation in their weekly rent and service charges. Changes occur annually when rent levels are updated and during the course of the year as the result of Housing Benefit being awarded, new or ongoing eligibility for Supported People grant and repayments of Housing Benefit. Accounts are updated as changes in the circumstances of a household occur.

Council tenants, like any other household are liable to pay Council Tax which is collected separately from their rent. Recovery of unpaid rent is undertaken informally by officers of the Council in accordance with the Council's Debt Management Strategy & Policy. Formal proceedings are undertaken in the County Court and can result in an attachment of earnings order being made, eviction and possible homelessness.

The main impact of the service is directly upon the tenant(s), however the actions of the tenants may result in a consequential impact on other members of the household. E.g eviction or homelessness because tenancy obligations have not been fulfilled will impact on children in the household; other members of the household would be forced to seek alternative accommodation.

Common issues which arise within the service are:-

- Rent accounts fall into arrears
- Failure to claim assistance to which the Tenant(s) is/are entitled.
- Arrears accruing while Housing Benefit claim remains unresolved.
- Tenants do not adhere to payment plans to recover arrears.
- Joint tenants do not always take equal responsibility for payment of rent. Some may be totally unaware of arrears as a result

The most common alternative languages likely to occur across the district are Polish, Portuguese and Kurdish (Source: ISCRE). Staff deal with a small number tenants from, India, Bangladesh, Turkey and other European Union countries.

A wide range of faith groups exist across the district, the most common of which are Christian (Church of England and Roman Catholic, etc) Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs.

Please indicate if it is an existing area of service or a new area/project: Existing service

Target Equality Group <i>(see guidance note 2 for details)</i>	Does it have a Positive Impact If yes, please explain how <i>(see guidance note 6 for details)</i>	Does it have a Neutral Impact If yes, please explain how <i>(see guidance note 9 for details)</i>	Does it have a Negative Impact If yes please explain how, indicate if it is legal and whether or not it is intended. <i>(see guidance note 7 for details)</i>	If it has a negative impact, is the level of this impact high or low? <i>(see guidance note 10 for details)</i>
Age	Yes. Supported People Grants available to those tenants aged 60 or over in sheltered supported housing.	Yes. Tenancy charges, their collection and recovery in the event of non payment are not influenced by a tenant's age.	No. An individual's age does not negatively influence their personal liability for Rent.	
Belief or faith	No. An individual's belief or faith does not feature in the calculation of tenancy charges or influence the recovery process.	Yes. Tenancy charges are not influenced by an individual's belief or faith.	No. An individual's belief or faith does not negatively influence their personal liability for Rent.	
Disability	No. Yes. The nature of a disability and the impact upon their lifestyle is taken into account for home visits when recovering arrears. Help is available in understanding the system and submitting a claim for Housing Benefit.	Yes. Tenancy charges are not influenced by an individual's disability.	Yes. Alternative formats statement omitted from Rent letters and other documentation. People may be unaware of their obligations or factors, which influence their actual liability. They may be disadvantaged as a result.	Low
Sexual Orientation	No. An individual's sexual orientation does not feature in the calculation of tenancy charges or influence the recovery process.	Yes. Tenancy charges are not influenced by an individual's sexual orientation.	No. An individual's sexual orientation does not influence their personal liability for Rent.	

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Gender	No. An individual's gender does not feature in the calc of tenancy charges or influence the recovery process.	Yes. Tenancy charges are not influenced by an individual's gender.	No. An individual's gender does not negatively influence their personal liability for Rent.	
Race	Yes. A translation service is available and reflects the range of cultures and languages known to exist in the district. Translation services are available on the Babergh website. It also enables changes in text size or audio descriptions. Language support is available via language line for face to face visitors or telephone enquiries when the need arises.	Yes. Tenancy charges are not influenced by an individual's race.	Yes. Alternative formats statement omitted from Rent letters and is inconsistently applied on other documentation. People may be unaware of their obligations or factors, which influence their actual liability. They may be disadvantaged as a result.	Low

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IF ANY AREAS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED WITH LOW LEVEL NEGATIVE IMPACT

IS THE IMPACT LIKELY TO CHANGE OVER TIME?

Yes

IF YES, HOW WILL THE IMPACT CHANGE?

Economic migration patterns have changed in recent years and are likely to change further given the current world economic climate. If significant variations occur in the range of new nationalities taking up residence in the district there may be a short term increase in negative impact until their presence is detected.
No variation is anticipated with regard to disabled people. There are no obvious factors which indicate that a significant variation in the number of disabled residents is likely to occur in the future.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MINIMISE OR REMOVE ANY *UNINTENDED* NEGATIVE IMPACT?

Review all standard letters and publications to ensure their availability in alternative formats are known to the recipient and include an alternative format statement with outgoing correspondence.
Ensure all new staff receive equality and diversity awareness training as part of their induction course and all staff are regularly refreshed.
Undertake a more positive approach to home visiting.

HOW COULD YOU MONITOR THIS WORK?

Implement regular quality assurance checks. Instruct staff to check for and report omissions.

IF YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED ANY AREAS WHERE THE LEVEL OF NEGATIVE IMPACT IS HIGH PLEASE REFER TO YOUR HEAD OF SERVICE PRIOR TO COMPLETING A STAGE TWO ASSESSMENT FORM

Signed:Service Manager undertaking the Assessment.

Date: