

# Equality Impact Assessment Template

Please complete this template using the [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance document](#)

**Version 3: January 2013**

Title of proposal <i>(include forward plan reference if available)</i>	The restructure of the Housing Choice Service in response to the Homeless Reduction Act
Directorate and Service Area	Neighbourhoods
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Names and titles of other officers involved in completing this EIA	
Partners involved with the EIA where jointly completed	
Date EIA completed	13 <sup>th</sup> June 2018
Date EIA signed off or agreed by Director or Executive Director	
Name of Director or Executive Director signing off EIA	Alan Caddick
Date EIA considered by Cabinet Member	

See [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance](#) for key prompts that must be addressed for all questions

**1. The purpose of the proposal or decision required  
(Please provide as much information as possible)**

Approval is sought for the introduction of the restructure of the Housing Choice service to meet the additional duties of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 which was implemented on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018.

The Homeless Reduction Act places greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness and early intervention. There are a range of new duties placed on Local authorities but the three major duties are:-

- **Assess** all eligible applicants and agree an individual personal Housing Action Plan
- to take reasonable steps to **prevent** homelessness
- to **relieve** homelessness by helping the applicant to secure accommodation

Every eligible applicant who is homeless or at risk of becoming homelessness will have a comprehensive assessment to establish not only their housing needs but also their support needs.

This is a holistic approach and through the protocols in place with key partners, applicants will be able to access the services required in a timely and seamless manner.

This is a person-centred approach to homelessness. Employees within the service are being trained on PIE (Psychologically Informed Environment) which places the officer in the position of the applicant to ensure that there is empathy with the applicant and the ability to determine the needs of the applicant. Employees are undertaking training on emotional interviewing techniques to enable officers have confidence to undertake the new approach.

The proposal for the restructure of the service is to increase the establishment by approximately 25% to meet the anticipated increase in demand. There are a range of new job roles to be introduced to meet the specific needs of the change in approach such as Complex Needs Officers and Visiting Officers.

## 2. Evidence used/considered

The findings from the homelessness review has informed the restructure of the Housing Choice service following the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, in particular that:

- In 2016/17, 4,215 cases were opened by the Housing Choice Team for households who were either homeless or threatened with homelessness. This figure has remained relatively constant over the last three years. Current levels of statutory homelessness in Sandwell exceed national rates.
- Based on 2016/17 figures, the Council's Housing Choice Service assists and succeeds in enabling around a third of all households who present to the service to either remain in their existing home (697 households) or obtain alternative accommodation (591 households) before reaching 'crisis stage'.
- The annual rough sleeper estimate undertaken in November 2017 identified 10 persons experiencing street homeless in the borough on the night in question (11 in 2016). This equates to 0.08 per 1,000 households in Sandwell which is below the national figure of 0.18 calculated outside of London.
- Whilst the use of temporary accommodation (TA) remains an issue in the borough, the Council has in recent years considerably improved the options at its disposal where the use of TA is the only option. However, due to an increasing number of large families that present at crisis, bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation has had to be used because of the general lack of suitable accommodation for larger households. However, the number of families placed in such accommodation fell in 2016/17 to 30, down from 42 in 2015/16.
- The share of lettings to households with some form of homeless priority within the Council tenure has increased from 16% in 2014/15 to 22% in 2016/17 at a time when overall lettings have declined. Despite a local policy being in force, the private rented sector (PRS) has not been used to discharge any homeless duty. The PRS is also only utilised in 6% of prevention cases where the household is assisted to obtain alternative accommodation.
- Despite the overall plateauing in homeless trends within the last three years, future levels of homelessness are likely to increase based on the socio-economic profile of the borough set against a backdrop of significant and growing housing market pressures.

A review of the employee demographics of the Housing Choice service which highlighted the following: -

- 39.1% of employees are aged 50 and over
- 8.7% of employees are aged 16 – 29
- 32.6% of employees are from an Ethnic Minority
- 84.8% of employees are female and 15.2% male

### **3. Consultation**

During the period leading up to the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act and prior to the development of the revised structure a comprehensive approach to consultation was developed. This included two workshops with key partners and stakeholders held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018. The voluntary sector has also been consulted through the Sandwell Council of voluntary Organisations on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

In addition, the Tenant Review Panel were consulted on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and Landlords were consulted at the Private Landlords Forum on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2018

Furthermore, a range of managers and colleagues were consulted at senior management teams with Adult Social Care and Children's Services as well as through the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership. In addition, through the Vision 2030 Town Plan events that took place throughout the borough during February and March 2018.

Employee consultation took place on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018 with the respective Trade Unions representatives and Human Resources staff present.

### **4. Assess likely impact**

Please give an outline of the overall impact if possible.

The Homeless Reduction Act places an increase in the range of duties on local authorities to prevent homelessness and introduces the need to undertake a comprehensive assessment to not only identify the housing need but also the support needs. This will lead to the development of a personal Housing Action Plan. Coupled with the increase in staffing and new job roles proposed within the revised structure a range of positive outcomes are likely to be achieved.

The proposals in the report will have no adverse impact on staff with protected characteristics.

**Please complete the table below at 4a to identify the likely impact on specific protected characteristics**

**4a. Use the table to show:**

- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a negative impact on any of the equality strands (protected characteristics), that is it could disadvantage them or if there is no impact, please note the evidence and/or reasons for this.
- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a positive impact on any of the groups or contribute to promoting equality, equal opportunities or improving relationships within equality characteristics.

<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>Positive Impact</b>	<b>Negative Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>	<b>Reason and evidence (Provide details of specific groups affected even for no impact and where negative impact has been identified what mitigating actions can we take?)</b>
	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Age</b>	✓			<p>The proposal to recruit 6 apprentice posts will provide young people with opportunities within the revised structure.</p> <p>The restructure will lead to some changes in job roles, however, it is proposed to increase in the establishment from 45.68 FTE to 56.50 FTE</p> <p>See also section 4 above</p>
<b>Disability</b>			✓	<p>All legal requirements will be adhered to</p> <p>See also section 4 above</p>

<b>Gender reassignment</b>			✓	All legal requirements will be adhered to See also Section 4 above.
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>			✓	All legal requirements will be adhered to See also section 4 above.
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>			✓	All legal requirements will be adhered to See also section 4 above.
<b>Race</b>			✓	All legal requirements will be adhered to See also section 4 above
<b>Religion or belief</b>			✓	All legal requirements will be adhered to See also section 4 above

<b>Sex</b>			✓	All legal requirements will be adhered to See also section 4 above
<b>Sexual orientation</b>			✓	All legal requirements will be adhered to See also section 4 above
<b>Other</b>				

Does this EIA require a full impact assessment? Yes  No

If there are no adverse impacts or any issues of concern or you can adequately explain or justify them, then you do not need to go any further. You have completed the screening stage. You must, however, complete sections 7 and 9 and publish the EIA as it stands.

If you have answered yes to the above, please complete the questions below referring to the guidance document.

**5. What actions can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts?**

**6. As a result of the EIA what decision or actions are being proposed in relation to the original proposals?**

**7. Monitoring arrangements**

## **8. Action planning**

You may wish to use the action plan template below



**9. Publish the EIA**

## **Where can I get additional information, advice and guidance?**

In the first instance, please consult the accompanying guide “Equality Impact Assessment Guidance”

### **Practical advice, guidance and support**

Help and advice on undertaking an EIA, using the electronic EIA toolkit or receiving training related to equalities legislation and EIAs is available to **all managers** across the council from officers within Improvement and Efficiency. The officers within in Improvement and Efficiency will also provide overview quality assurance checks on completed EIA documents.

**Please contact:**

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