

Initial Equalities Impact Assessment screening form

Prior to making the decision, the Council's decision makers considered the following: guide to decision making under the Equality Act 2010:

*The Council is a public authority. All public authorities when exercising public functions are caught by the Equality Act 2010 which became law in December 2011. In making any decisions and proposals, the Council - specifically members and officers - are required to have **due regard** to the 9 protected characteristics defined under the Act. These protected characteristics are: **age, disability, race, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage & civil partnership***

The decision maker(s) must specifically consider those protected by the above characteristics:

- (a) To seek to ensure equality of treatment towards service users and employees;*
- (b) To identify the potential impact of the proposal or decision upon them.*

The Council will also ask that officers specifically consider whether:

- (A) The policy, strategy or spending decisions could have an impact on safeguarding and / or the welfare of children and vulnerable adults*
- (B) The proposed policy / service is likely to have any significant impact on mental wellbeing / community resilience (staff or residents)*

If the Council fails to give 'due regard', the Council is likely to face a Court challenge. This will either be through a judicial review of its decision making, the decision may be quashed and/or returned for it to have to be made again, which can be costly and time-consuming diversion for the Council. When considering 'due regard', decision makers must consider the following principles:

- 1. **The decision maker is responsible for identifying whether there is an issue and discharging it.** The threshold for one of the duties to be triggered is low and will be triggered where there is any issue which needs at least to be addressed.*
- 2. **The duties arise before the decision or proposal is made, and not after and are ongoing.** They require **advance** consideration by the policy decision maker with conscientiousness, rigour and an open mind. The duty is similar to an open consultation process.*
- 3. The decision maker must be **aware** of the needs of the duty.*
- 4. The **impact of the proposal or decision must be properly understood first.** The amount of regard due will depend on the individual circumstances of each case. The greater the potential impact, the greater the regard.*
- 5. **Get your facts straight first!** There will be no due regard at all if the decision maker or those advising it make a fundamental error of fact (e.g. because of failing to properly inform yourself about the impact of a particular decision).*
- 6. What does 'due regard' entail?*
 - a. **Collection and consideration of data and information;***
 - b. **Ensuring data is sufficient to assess the decision/any potential discrimination/ensure equality of opportunity;***
 - c. **Proper appreciation of the extent, nature and duration of the proposal or decision.***

7. **Responsibility** for discharging can't be delegated or sub-contracted (although an equality impact assessment ("EIA") can be undertaken by officers, decision makers must be sufficiently aware of the outcome).
 8. **Document the process** of having due regard! Keep records and make it transparent! If in any doubt carry out an equality impact assessment ("EIA"), to test whether a policy will impact differentially or not. Evidentially an EIA will be the best way of defending a legal challenge. See hyperlink for the questions you should consider <http://occweb/files/seealsodocs/93561/Equalities%20-%20Initial%20Equality%20Impact%20Assessment%20screening%20template.doc>
1. Within the aims and objectives of the policy or strategy which group (s) of people has been identified as being potentially disadvantaged by your proposals? What are the equality impacts?

The initial Equalities Impact Assessment has highlighted that there are eight groups with protected characteristics that have been identified as having the potential to be impacted by these policies:

- All persons aged above 10 years old – the age of criminal responsibility in the UK
- People who do not speak English as a first language (or at all) – those with limited or no ability to understand how the policy/law affects them day to day
- People with mental health issues – those who lack capacity to understand the way this policy may affect them day to day
- Households with a low income – those households who may lack the financial income to pay fixed penalty notices or fines
- Unemployed people – those individuals who may lack the financial income to pay fixed penalty notices or fines
- Young people not in employment education or training – those who may lack financial income to pay fixed penalty notices or fines and be financially dependent upon their parent(s)/carer(s).
- Rough Sleepers/homeless – those who may lack the financial income to pay fixed penalty notices or fines

In order to mitigate the potential impact upon the groups identified by the initial Equalities Impact Assessment, the balance of proceeding with an enforcement action will need to be on a case by case basis.

Dutyholders also have a right to legal redress should they feel that an enforcement decision was unfairly/unlawfully taken; this can be via the Council's Complaints system, an appeal process, or at a tribunal/court hearing. Service users can use the Council's Complaints system if they believe we have failed to adequately enforce the law.

The Council's policy is based on templates provided by the Government's Better Regulation Delivery Office and has therefore been developed using nationally approved best practice.

By maintaining up to date policies in relation to Private rented sector regulation, the potential for actions causing inequality will be reduced. The regulation of the private rented sector is monitored and scrutinised whenever practicable to assess its impact on protected characteristics. Many of the enforcement activities undertaken by the council are initiated to protect vulnerable individuals with protected characteristics and the policy has a positive effect on equalities.

2. In brief, what changes are you planning to make to your current or proposed new or changed policy, strategy, procedure, project or service to minimise or eliminate the adverse equality impacts?

Please provide further details of the proposed actions, timetable for making the changes and the person(s) responsible for making the changes on the resultant action plan

There are no adverse equality impacts. The proposed policies are in line with legislative changes and statutory guidance and will result in regulatory activities carried out being covered by a clear and consistent policy. The policies will be published and could be used to educate service users regarding the decisions made by the Council in this work area.

3. Please provide details of whom you will consult on the proposed changes and if you do not plan to consult, please provide the rationale behind that decision.

Please note that you are required to involve disabled people in decisions that impact on them

A 4 week consultation is planned. This will use existing channels to reach private tenants, private landlord and letting agents, this will include Landlords Newsletter and an online questionnaire.

4. Can the adverse impacts you identified during the initial screening be justified without making any adjustments to the existing or new policy, strategy, procedure, project or service?

Please set out the basis on which you justify making no adjustments

No adverse equality impacts were identified.

5. You are legally required to monitor and review the proposed changes after implementation to check they work as planned and to screen for unexpected equality impacts.

Please provide details of how you will monitor/evaluate or review your proposals and when the review will take place

Enforcement activity is reviewed annually by each regulatory service as part of developing their Service Plan. This monitoring ensures unexpected equality impacts do not occur and ensures the policies are being applied consistently to ensure fair, open and transparent decision making takes place.

Lead officer responsible for signing off the EqIA: Gail Siddall

Role: HMO Enforcement Team Manager

Date: 17th July 2023

Note, please consider & include the following areas:

- Summary of the impacts of any individual policies
- Specific impact tests (e.g. statutory equality duties, social, regeneration and sustainability)
- Consultation
- Post implementation review plan (consider the basis for the review, objectives and how these will be measured, impacts and outcomes including the “unknown”)
- Potential data sources (attach hyperlinks including Government impact assessments or Oxfordshire data observatory information where relevant)