

Summary of results of recent Equality Impact Assessments (2007)

Policy or working practices that were impact assessed, with general description	Results – what did the impact assessment show and were there any changes or actions arising?
<p>Transfer policy and procedure This existing policy and procedure was due for review – it gives guidance to staff who assess tenants who wish to transfer, in accordance with London Borough of Islington’s allocation policy</p>	<p>The overall conclusion of the impact assessment was that the policy did not have a negative effect on particular diversity groups, and that the points system includes some positive impact for applicants with disabilities. The actions arising included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve publicity and understanding of the transfer policy and process, including improving information about translations • To get customer feedback on satisfaction with the assistance given during the transfer process (by adding a question into the new tenant survey) • To improve understanding among staff and partners, by organising joint training sessions
<p>Diversity codes and vulnerability flags This new policy/procedure is about the collection, recording and use of diversity information for Homes for Islington tenants and residents.</p>	<p>The collection of diversity information potentially has a positive impact on all diversity groups, as it will help Homes for Islington to tailor services to individual needs. Results following consultation with customers included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendments to the wording of some of the questions • The decision to introduce the diversity collection for all six ‘diversity strands’: disability, religion/belief, age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity
<p>Flexible working policy This is a new policy open to all Homes for Islington staff, which reflects changes in the law regarding employees rights to request changes to their working arrangements</p>	<p>The policy was found to have a positive effect for women and disabled groups, and for all employees as the policy has extended the options to all staff. Action arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor take-up of the scheme by diversity

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<p>Anti-social behaviour Following a full review of anti-social behaviour (ASB) policies and procedures, the impact assessment looked at HFI's case management procedures.</p>	<p>The impact assessment indicated that the procedures have an overall positive impact. The following results were built into procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More variety of communication with residents eg. telephone, using interpreters, investigating reporting on-line • The use of support services such as drug and alcohol team built into processes • Sensitivity to the gender of victims - when possible, a victim can chose the gender of officer dealing with their case
<p>Former Tenants' Arrears The original impact assessment of the way in which former tenants arrears are pursued and debt recovered was due for a review. It looked at the policy, procedure and working practices generally.</p>	<p>The main theme identified that may lead to a negative impact on some groups, was the use of letters as the main form of contact, which may not adequately meet individual needs. Changes planned as a result were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To add information in the six community languages to standard letters • To increase the use of telephone as a means of contact, to allow a more individual response to communication needs • To use the information collected about tenants (the 'flags' available on the computer database) to identify individual needs • To introduce text messaging as a means of contacting former tenants
<p>Rent Arrears Policy The rent arrears policy & procedure is about HFI not losing income because of non-payment of rent, and is also about how we support tenants as far as possible in ensuring they pay rent in accordance with their tenancy agreement.</p>	<p>The overall impact assessment was positive, but highlighted areas for improvement. In particular the support needs of vulnerable residents with rent arrears, and the needs of non-English speakers were identified. Some of the changes to the policy and procedures were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrears letters were discussed with residents and as a result were simplified, and some letters translated • The revised policy & procedure places more emphasis on supporting vulnerable tenants at an early stage • New 'vulnerability flags' on the computer system are used to identify vulnerability

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<p>Complaints The complaints policy and procedure was reviewed following the introduction of a new computerised system, and in order to improve how HFI deals with customer complaints.</p>	<p>As a result of the impact assessment the following were included in the procedure, or acted on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase access for all, the emphasis is on having choices as to how to complain – using the telephone, introducing on-line complaints form. Texting of complaints is being considered • Information leaflets were translated into community languages and available in offices and the intranet, and the easy-read tenants handbook includes reference to complaints • Outreach work was undertaken with the Chinese community, and the leaflet also translated into Chinese
<p>Estate Services Estate services (caretaking) are an important part of services to HFI residents, and were impact assess during the review estate inspection procedures.</p>	<p>As a result of the impact assessment the following actions took place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident service statements and surveys are to include some information in the key community languages • Non-English graffiti that may be offensive to be removed as priority • When ‘make safe’ orders are requested, the needs of the visually impaired to be considered
<p>Succession and assignment of tenancy This existing policy/procedure covers how tenancies are passed on to a family member on the death of a tenant, and reflects the statutory legal rights of secure tenants. It was reviewed to cover new legislation following the introduction of Civil Partnerships.</p>	<p>The policy and procedure was found to have some potential to have a negative impact on some groups, perhaps where residents do not fully understand their legal rights. Some of the results and actions planned were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil partnership was added to the policy which enhances the rights of gay and lesbian tenants • A customer friendly leaflet, explaining succession was planned • The policy was amended to include more guidance to staff on referring tenants to Social Services or others for advice and support • Procedures introduced to monitor the diversity of tenants who have succeeded to a tenancy • Legal advise taken on options for granting ‘discretionary successions’ where individual special circumstances warranted it (eg. special needs of a disabled residents)

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<p>Interpreting and translation services The interpreting and translation services offered by HFI are there to assist residents who do not speak English as a first language, including the needs of Deaf users of British Sign Language (BSL). The impact assessment was part of a wider service review and policy/procedure review.</p>	<p>The impact assessment generally indicated a positive impact for non-English speakers and Deaf residents. As a result of the impact assessment and consultation, several changes were included in the policy and procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone interpreting services were improved • Publicity was improved through revised leaflets (with easy-read pictures) and on the web-site, and a new publicity for Deaf residents • References to the needs of blind & visually impaired residents were added to the policy, to remind staff that audio & large print can also be offered
<p>Harassment policy and procedures The aim of the policy is to ensure that HFI deals with all forms of harassment quickly, sensitively and effectively. The impact assessment was undertaken during a review of the procedures.</p>	<p>Overall the impact of this policy will have a positive affect on the main diversity groups as it recognises that these groups are more likely to be targeted. The areas highlighted by the impact assessment were incorporated in to the revised policy, and some specific actions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigating ways in which residents with limited literacy or language skills could use tape-recording to record incidents • Publicity in the residents newsletter, to encourage reporting by all diversity groups • The policy was revised to reflect the need for flexibility in allocating a case officer depending on the wishes of the victim (eg. male or female)
<p>Decent Homes The impact assessment was undertaken for the major works undertaken by the capital programme project team, such as installing new kitchens & bathrooms, rewiring & external & internal improvements</p>	<p>The assessment was seen to have a positive effect on all equality groups. It did highlight some areas where action would be taken to improve consultation and involvement of various groups. Eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve involvement of BME groups, through liaising with existing community groups • Ensuring knowledge of vulnerable residents and special needs (eg. disability or language) are effectively recorded and shared • Involve young people more, eg. through organising fun days etc

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<p>Housing Support Services These HFI services provide additional support for vulnerable residents who need it, working in partnership with social services and other service providers. The impact assessment was part of a review of policies and procedures used by Housing Support Officers.</p>	<p>Overall the services have a positive impact on diverse groups. The key changes and results from the impact assessment were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved guidance on prioritising potential clients, to ensure fair and equal access to services • Reminders to staff on using interpreters where needed • Increasing publicity and knowledge about the services to a wide range of residents • Standard diversity monitoring added to client surveys
<p>Human resources policies When policies and procedures that relate to HFI staff are reviewed they include impact assessment. Recent examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A revised dress code for staff • Special leave policy • Managing attendance • Smoke-free policy 	<p>HR policies aim to incorporate diversity issues and equality, and the overall impact is generally positive. Some of the results of impact assessing recent HR policies are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management discretion in the dress code around religious customs, festivals and disabilities • Inclusion of Disability Discrimination Act requirements in the special leave policy and attendance management