

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM

Directorate	Community Well being	Strategy, policy, procedure, plan or function (indicate)	Strategy	Name of strategy, policy, procedure, plan or function (indicate)	Thurrock's Housing Strategy 2011-2014
Policy author	Helen McCabe		Purpose and Outcomes	The Housing Strategy takes a medium-term strategic approach to shape housing demand and supply to meet resident needs and aspirations. This will ensure we help the most vulnerable and contribute to helping residents achieve wider regeneration goals, excellent resident led services, build energy awareness and sustainable neighbourhoods. The purpose of this Equality Impact Assessment is to assess the impact Thurrock's Homelessness Strategy (2011-2014) has on different equality groups.	
Summary of consultation (s)			Consultation to inform the Strategy was carried out between May 2010 and December 2010 with the aims of analysing and reviewing the actions and targets set previously and identifying additional issues. Consultation was carried out with residents, councillors, statutory and voluntary agencies, Housing Associations, developers, private landlords, local councillors and other stakeholders. Current examples of best practice in housing service provision were also looked at.		
Method of implementation			The Strategy is intended to be in place for five years, until 2014, although it will be reviewed should new legislation and/or policy be implemented or as is necessary. Key priorities and actions identified through consultation and service planning are contained within an Action Plan that will be monitored and updated annually.		

Stage 1

Equality area	Evidence of impact (Consultation, Research or Statistical Evidence)	Potential Adverse Impact
GENDER (Women)	<p>Statistics show that women are over-represented amongst homelessness acceptances.</p> <p>The Strategy reports that domestic violence, which disproportionately affects women, was a key cause of Homelessness in Thurrock during the past three years. Statistical evidence shows that in Thurrock in 2007/2008, 18.9% of homelessness acceptances were cases where violent relationship breakdown was the reason for homelessness. This is slightly higher than the national average (which was 13% in 2006/2007).</p> <p>Current provision for women fleeing domestic violence consists of 15 rooms at Thurrock Women's Refuge. If this is full, women requiring assistance are accommodated at alternative temporary accommodation.</p> <p>A Sanctuary Scheme, introduced in April 2007, now enables some victims of domestic violence to have works carried out in order to enable them to remain in their homes safely. This scheme is provided by Women's Aid and is currently available for Council tenants only.</p>	<p>Women are disproportionately represented amongst the groups of people who have priority need. Women are overrepresented amongst homelessness acceptances and more likely to depend on statutory provision.</p> <p>Applicants at risk of domestic violence, likely to be women, are a group with specific needs. Since the 2003-8 Homelessness Strategy, there has been an increased focus on the prevention of domestic violence and an increase in joint working through the establishment of MARAC, a multidisciplinary group that meets monthly to discuss cases, and through the establishment of a domestic abuse group as part of the Safer Thurrock Partnership.</p> <p>Women experiencing domestic violence, whilst private or housing association tenants or owner-occupiers, cannot currently access the Sanctuary Scheme.</p> <p>Women are also at risk of repeated homelessness due to domestic violence.</p>
GENDER (Men)	<p>Men in general are under-represented in amongst homelessness acceptances, both nationally and in Thurrock. However, they form the majority of certain homeless groups including single people, former members of the Armed Forces and ex-offenders.</p> <p>During 2008/2009, there were no homelessness acceptances from single ex-service people and no records of any homelessness applications made as a result of vulnerability through being in the Armed Forces.</p>	<p>Men in general are under-represented amongst homelessness acceptances and less likely to benefit from statutory provision.</p>

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RACE (BME Communities)	<p>Thurrock's Annual Equality Report (2009) indicates that Thurrock has a lower proportion of ethnic minorities than the national average. Thurrock's ethnic minority population stood at 5.4% in 2003, compared with a national average of 9%. However, this situation is changing and there has been a shift from a mainly white population to a more diverse one, with Black Africans being the fastest growing ethnic minority group in Thurrock (Equality Standard: Self Assessment Report 2008). It is estimated that BME communities now make up an estimated 9% of Thurrock's population (2007 data).</p> <p>Research has established that the level of housing need within BME communities can in some cases be more acute than in other groups. This may be, for example, due to the prevalence of overcrowding due to extended family living, and the poor condition of some (particularly private sector) properties (Facing the Facts, Essex BME Housing Needs Study 2003).</p> <p>However, consultation with TRUST and other groups has shown that in some cases, BME communities can face barriers to access (including cultural and language barriers) that can delay provision in decisions and services.</p>	<p>BME communities have specific needs. BME groups face barriers to access and there is currently a lack of marketing of available services to ensure full take up of mainstream services by BME communities. Although the Strategy identifies no demand for specialist BME services or housing at present within the Borough, it acknowledges that this should be monitored.</p> <p>Without continued monitoring of BME communities and their needs, the needs of Thurrock's growing BME community will not be met.</p>
RACE (Gypsies and travellers)	<p>The needs of gypsies and travellers are not presently well understood. Research shows that the gypsies and travellers who pass through Thurrock are among the 'hidden homeless', who may qualify for assistance but do not seek it. The provision of adequate sites is key to the gypsy and traveller community. Current provision consists of three Council owned sites (with a total of 64 plots) for gypsies and travellers. A formal assessment (Thurrock Gypsy Travellers and Travelling Showpersons Accommodation Assessment, 2006/2007) showed that pitch provision would need to increase by 46 by 2016, but that due to relatively high provision within Thurrock in relation to the rest of Essex</p>	<p>Gypsy and traveller communities have specific needs. Members of gypsy and travelling communities may be reluctant to approach the Council for help due to suspicion of official organisations. In addition to this, a lack of understanding of homelessness in gypsy and traveller communities means that this group may not be adequately planned for. Future recommendations from ongoing research will need to be included in annual updates of the Action Plan.</p> <p>Due to the fact that the housing needs of gypsies and travellers are not presently well understood, it is hard to</p>

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	<p>alternative pitches need to be sought in the sub-region.</p> <p>The University of Salford is currently undertaking research into the needs of gypsies and travellers for the Essex Planning Officers Group.</p>	<p>predict future levels of homelessness in this group.</p>
DISABILITY	<p>According to the Annual Equality Report (2009) there are fewer than 500 people of all ages with a learning disability in Thurrock, with the majority of these having a mild impairment.</p> <p>Statistics show that around four people with mental health problems are seen each month by the duty team, and that the main reason for homelessness in people with mental health problems is relationship breakdown and the inability/unwillingness of family to continue to house the person, in some cases due to aggression/violence.</p>	<p>Increased partnership working has led to the drafting of joint working protocols for homelessness applications from people with mental health issues. A mental health floating support service (provided by the Richmond Fellowship) has been commissioned, financed by Supporting People.</p> <p>The Strategy should continue to have a positive impact on this client group. It acknowledges that earlier identification of mental health issues and referral to appropriate services has the potential to prevent homelessness. It identifies the need for further actions to improve outcomes. These actions include ensuring adequate hospital discharge policies are in place and ensuring rigorous assessments of clients' mental health circumstances, to enable appropriate support and suitable accommodation is identified quickly. It identifies the need for stronger links with mental health services and recommends that there is a named link officer to work within the duty assessment team.</p> <p>The Strategy sets out the need to produce and disseminate up-to-date housing options information to people with learning disabilities who may be in housing need.</p> <p>Insufficient support and inappropriate accommodation can lead to homelessness in clients with mental health problems</p>
DISABILITY (Physical)	<p>Statistical evidence shows that there is around 15 households awaiting suitable and accessible affordable accommodation homelessness, the majority of the households will require adaptations to their homes to provide for their needs.</p>	<p>The Strategy exists within the statutory framework and promotes positive outcomes for people who are vulnerable as a result of physical illness or disability.</p> <p>The Strategy is likely to have a positive effect on people with physical disabilities. It identifies the need for further research</p>

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	<p>It is required that any new development schemes over 50 units should provide 3% wheelchair accessible housing.</p> <p>An Accessible Housing Register was launched in 2008 and has helped to match clients to properties that meet their needs.</p>	<p>into the long term housing needs and provision for disabled people.</p>
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	<p>There is limited statistical data on sexual orientation in Thurrock. However, an estimated 7% of the general population is lesbian/gay and it is reasonable to assume that the trend is similar in Thurrock. During the past two years, there have been 17 civil partnerships conducted by the Thurrock Registrar.</p> <p>There is no evidence that sexual orientation impacts on people's ability to access housing services, or on the quality of service they receive.</p>	<p>The LBGT community may face specific barriers not currently considered, and it may be that more information about this client group is needed.</p> <p>Thurrock's Annual Equalities Report identifies that the Council has yet to engage fully with LGBT groups</p>
AGE (Young People)	<p>Young people are disproportionately represented in homeless statistics, both nationally and in Thurrock. Statistical evidence from P1E returns shows that in Thurrock In 2009/10, 30% of those found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need are young people aged between 16 and 24 and only 9.9% are 45 and over. Parental exclusion is the most common reason for homelessness in Thurrock, as it is nationally.</p> <p>Research shows that the main issue for 16/17 year olds is the lack of appropriate forms of alternative accommodation, resulting in long periods of time spent in hostel accommodation (if homeless), which is designed to provide short- term emergency accommodation, rather than to meet the long-term needs of young people</p> <p>There is also an issue of affordability for Young People, as many are unable to access the both the owner-occupier and/or the private rented sector as housing costs are too high. Research shows Britons who do not get financial help</p>	<p>Supporting People currently funds support services for young people at risk, currently provided by Look Ahead Housing and Care, using a combination of accommodation based support services.</p> <p>However, homelessness amongst young people (and vulnerable young people in particular) in Thurrock is a key issue requiring further actions. Former care leavers are also at increased risk of homelessness.</p> <p>Young people are at a risk of parental exclusion, the most common reason for homelessness. A lack of mediation services locally for this purpose may be exacerbating the problem.</p> <p>There is lack of awareness amongst young people about Housing options and the homelessness services the council provides.</p> <p>There is a need to provide alternative, supervised sources of</p>

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	<p>from their parents will reach an average age of 37 before they are able to buy their first home. The average first-time buyer has to save over £37,000 just to get a deposit for a new home. That means someone in their 20s on a normal salary would have to save every penny they earn for more than two years just to get a deposit.</p>	<p>accommodation for young people, so that they do not have to spend long periods of time in unsuitable hostel accommodation, or take on unsupervised tenancies which are likely to fail.</p> <p>Further housing needs analysis will provide a local picture with regards to the difficulties young people in the Borough have in accessing the local housing market.</p>
<p>AGE (Older people)</p>	<p>Statistical evidence shows that the population in Thurrock is an aging population. Over the next 25 years Thurrock will see a significant ageing of its population. The number of people aged over 65 will increase by 13,800 people, an 71% increase and people aged over 85, increasing by 3,100 people, an 141% increase (ONS 2008)</p> <p>Currently housing provision for older people is provided in 1274 stock units of sheltered housing, with frail elderly units at 2 sites.</p>	<p>Older people are highly vulnerable to the effects of non decent housing and fuel poverty which has a direct impact on their health.</p> <p>A significant number of older people are likely to be living in unsuitable housing, and/or with inadequate support for their needs, and the aging population in the Borough may well further impact on the suitability of present housing stock for future needs.</p> <p>Currently, a close working relationship with the Elderly Persons Team ensures that assessments are undertaken to enable applicants with higher-level support needs to be accommodated appropriately according to their needs. To further improve outcomes.</p> <p>Awareness of specialist housing advice services (such as those provided by Age Concern and the Elderly Accommodation Counsel) needs to improve among older people and Housing Advisors.</p> <p>Thurrock's Annual Equalities Report (2009) notes that Thurrock Council has yet to engage successfully with the complexities surrounding age discrimination. Continued monitoring of the needs of older people will be essential if the changing needs are to be met in the future.</p>

Equality area	Evidence of impact (Consultation, Research or Statistical Evidence)	Potential Adverse Impact
RELIGION OR BELIEF	<p>The Annual Equality Report (April 2009) indicates that Christians are the largest faith group in Thurrock (forming 75.1% of Thurrock's population). Other faith groups include Muslims (1.1%), Sikhs (0.7%), Hindus (0.6%), Buddhists (0.2%) and Jews (0.2%).</p> <p>There appears to have been little consultation with a wide range of faith communities and more information may be needed.</p>	<p>There is no evidence that religion or belief impacts on people's ability to access services, or on the quality of services they receive. More information about the needs of faith groups may be needed. Thurrock's Annual Equalities Report (2009) notes that Thurrock Council has yet to engage successfully with faith groups.</p>

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Stage 2

	Summary of adverse impact (or potential to improve equality)	Options explored to improve outcomes
1	<p>Women are disproportionately represented in homelessness acceptances and vulnerable to homelessness through domestic violence.</p>	<p>The Strategy has already explored options to improve outcomes for women who have experienced domestic violence, and these are outlined in the Homeless Delivery Plan for 2011-2014. These options include the review of the Sanctuary Scheme to ensure it is more accessible and cross-tenure and the review of working arrangements with.....</p> <p>MARAC and the domestic abuse delivery group, with the aim of reducing the number of homelessness applications from this group. The positive impact should arise from an increased focus on the prevention of domestic violence and an increase in joint working through MARAC and the Safer Thurrock Partnership, as well as through the provision of sufficient temporary accommodation for those fleeing domestic violence.</p>
2	<p>Men are under-represented in homelessness acceptances, and less likely to benefit from statutory provision.</p>	<p>The Strategy has already explored options to improve advice and information services to inform people about local services that may be available to them, as outlined in the Action Plan for 2011-2014. Improved advice about local services may be of particular benefit men, especially when there is no statutory duty owed to them.</p> <p>For example, the Homeless Strategy recommends producing a Directory of Services.</p>
3	<p>BME communities have specific needs and may face barriers to accessing services, including cultural and language barriers.</p>	<p>The Strategy has already explored options for improving outcomes for BME communities, as outlined in the Action Plan for 2011-2014. For example, it sets out the need to improve monitoring arrangements for BME communities, to ensure that advice and support is made available to them. Although there is no identified need for specialist BME services, this should be monitored. In addition to this, more marketing of mainstream services towards BME communities will help ensure take-up of services.</p> <p>A SLA with TRUST has led to better working arrangements and improved outcomes for BME communities</p>
4	<p>The needs of gypsy and traveller communities are not well understood. It is acknowledged that this, together with the relative reluctance of this community to engage with services, can limit positive outcomes for this client group.</p>	<p>Findings from current research into the needs of the gypsy and traveller community should be incorporated into future local policies and updates of the Action Plan.</p>

	Summary of adverse impact (or potential to improve equality)	Options explored to improve outcomes
5	The Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on people who have physical or mental illnesses, disabilities or learning difficulties.	<p>The Strategy has already outlined options for improving outcomes for people who have physical or mental illnesses, disabilities or learning difficulties. The Delivery Plan sets out the need to review hospital discharge procedures to ensure rigorous assessment occurs, and to produce housing information tailored to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities.</p> <p>Continued monitoring of the needs of disabled people (and particularly people with learning difficulties, who are now likely to outlive their carers) will be important to ensure adequate provision is made for their future needs.</p>
6	This client group may face barriers to accessing services but a lack of past engagement makes this difficult to assess	The need to set targets in relation to sexual orientation has identified by Thurrock Council
7	Young people are over-represented in homelessness acceptances. Current provision for young people (both in terms of services and accommodation) is lacking.	<p>The Strategy has already explored a wide range of options to improve outcomes for young people (particularly vulnerable young people), and these are outlined in the Action Plan for 2011-2014. These options include addressing the major cause of homelessness in Thurrock (parental eviction) through improved mediation services and home visits.</p> <p>In addition the Strategy explores joint working with Education to raise awareness of the realities of homelessness amongst school children.</p> <p>The Action Plan also recommends exploring options for providing alternative supervised accommodation for 16/17 year olds.</p>
8	Many young people are unable to access the housing market due to low incomes.	<p>The strategy looks to provide a wide range of housing advice on housing options for this age group.</p> <p>In addition, the strategy's action plan look at undertaking further localised housing needs analysis and investigating a foyer scheme for the Borough.</p>
9	The aging population will affect the housing needs of elderly population of the Borough and the complexities of age discrimination are still not well understood	<p>The Strategy has already explored options to improve outcomes for older people. These options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheltered Housing Review • Commission of Social Enquiry to improve links and working between Housing, Health and Social Adult • Further provision of extra care housing • Housing Advisors are aware of the availability of specialist housing advice services from

	Summary of adverse impact (or potential to improve equality)	Options explored to improve outcomes
		agencies such as Age Concern and the Elderly Accommodation Counsel
10	There is a lack of specific information on how religion and belief may impact on housing.	More information is needed on how religion and belief can impact on people's ability to access services, and steps should be taken to obtain this information.

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Stage 3

Number from table in stage 2	Action that will remove adverse impact/ promote equality	Responsible officer	Target date	Progress update
3	Continue to monitor and profile the BME community to ensure there is still no identified need for specialist services.	All Housing Managers	Ongoing	Use of customer feedback to inform customer delivery and develop services that meet the diverse needs of our customers
3	Market mainstream services towards BME communities to help ensure take-up of services	All Housing Managers	Ongoing	As above
4	Ensure findings from current research into the needs of the gypsy and traveller community are incorporated into future local policies and updates of the Delivery Plan	Strategic Housing	Ongoing	Findings from current research taken into account in the development of the LDF.
5	Continue to monitor of the needs of disabled people to ensure adequate provision is made for their future needs	Strategic Housing	Ongoing	An Accessible housing register is continuously updated and maintained.
6	Consider ways to engage the LGBT groups to identify if they are facing any particular problems in relation to housing.	All Housing Managers	Ongoing	Use of customer feedback to inform customer delivery and develop services that meet the diverse needs of our customers
7	Consider a localised housing needs survey to advise on affordability of the housing market for in particular young people	Strategic Housing	Ongoing	Initial meeting undertaken to with regards to Market research the views and aspirations of Thurrock residents in relation to Low Cost Home ownership (LCHO) products
9	Continue to monitor the needs of elderly people to ensure the changing needs of an aging population are met in the future.	Strategic Housing	Ongoing	HCA funding received for a new build extra care scheme for 67 units, subject to planning. Sheltered housing review underway, as is the Commission of Social Enquiry.
10	Consider ways to engage different faith groups to identify if they are facing any particular problems in relation to housing.	All Housing Managers	Ongoing	Use of customer feedback to inform customer delivery and develop services that meet the diverse needs of our customers

Reviewed by (Corporate Diversity Team)	Date: Signature:
Signed off (Head of Service)	Date: Signature:
EIA Review Date:	

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