



Full Equality Impact Assessment Record

Section 1:

Service:

Housing Related Support

Title of strategy, policy or service:

Housing Related Support for Sheltered Housing

Officers involved in the EQIA:

Cally Antil, Head of HCS
Lynda Anderson, P&Q Manager
Claire Oaten, Partnerships and Service Improvement Officer

Type of strategy, policy or service (delete below as appropriate):

Existing:

New/proposed:

Changing/Update/ revision

X

Q1 – What is the aim of your strategy, policy, project or service?

The Supporting People (SP) programme was introduced by the government in 2003 to help vulnerable people to live independently. The fund was distributed by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to local authorities. It brought together several funding streams, including support provided through the Housing Benefit system, into a single grant for local authorities to fund a variety of services. For sheltered housing the funding could be used to pay for warden services, scheme staff to visit residents, and/or an out of hour's telephone response service.

In subsequent years, the level of SP funding was reduced. In 2009, the government removed the ring fence around the funding, which led to local authorities subsuming the money into their general funds. This occurred at a time when funding to local authority budgets from central government was being reduced as part as wider fiscal cuts and signified the end of the SP programme.

Despite cuts in local authority budgets, the Borough of Poole (BoP) continued to fully or part fund many services which were previously funded through the SP programme. This became known as funding for housing related support but is still commonly referred to as SP. The budget for housing related support for sheltered housing schemes in Poole was reduced by approximately 20% in 2012.

This current proposal is one element of a package of savings required in response to the reduction in local government funding, as set out in the BoP's Budget Report on 28 July 2015 and the BoP's 2020 agenda.

The Council would no longer provide subsidies for long term housing related support such as weekly visits from sheltered housing wardens, annual care reviews and community alarms in sheltered housing.

A warden service and community alarm are often integral parts of a sheltered housing service and provided as part of the tenancy agreement. Choosing to take a tenancy in a sheltered housing scheme means agreement to receiving and paying for the full services which form part of the service offer.

Q2 – Who is it going to benefit and how? If this is a changing function say who it will affect or no longer benefit

The housing related subsidy supports 9 Housing Associations to offer housing related support directly to their residents either free of charge or part funded by the BoP. BoP residents who have the need for similar assistance or services but do not reside in sheltered accommodation provided by Housing Associations are required to pay for the services they receive.

The policy now being proposed will mean that 203 people living in sheltered housing provided by Social Landlords will no longer be treated more favourably than other older people living in alternative forms of tenure.

In response to the proposed funding reduction, Housing Associations will have the option of remodelling their provision to mitigate any financial or service impact on residents. Some social landlords may choose to part or fully subsume the reduction in funding, whilst others may opt to pass the cost of providing housing related support on to residents. The BoP will continue to liaise with each Housing Association but has limited ability to influence how each Housing Association responds to the reduction in funding. Should any Housing Association intend to change the services they offer to residents, BoP will request that they undertake a Equality Impact Assessment.

All social landlords currently receiving the subsidy have been asked to liaise with BoP regarding any residents who may be significantly impacted or face financial hardship as a result to any potential change in their service. To date, only one resident has been highlighted as possibly being significantly affected by a potential changes to services, BoP are waiting to receive further information regarding this individual and will endeavour to facilitate a partnership approach to mitigate the impact on this resident and any other residents identified through this process. (This individual may require accommodation which offers a higher level of support than provided through the current sheltered housing provision.)

Social landlords continue to assess how they will remodel their services, their service offer and whether there will be a financial impact on their residents. At this stage it is unknown whether residents would be able to seek financial assistance via housing benefit. Whilst Providers are still considering their options, there seems to be a

generally consensus that residents would be required to pay for the community alarm service should they wish to receive the service or if it is integral to their homes (hard wired)..

In summary, the impact on service users will generally be financial and dependent on how social landlords respond to the removal of subsidy. BoP notes the government's pledge to protect and preserve the finances of pensioners, for example the commitment that pensions will go up by earnings or prices or 2.5% and the continuation of the Winter Fuel Allowance and free bus pass provision. As such pensioners are the most financially protected section of society and it is hoped that financial protection from the government will mitigate the financial impact of this policy on residents.

Q3 – What outcomes do you want to achieve?

To work with social Landlords to mitigate any negative impacts on residents.

We are confident, based on experiences elsewhere in the country that providers of long term accommodation based services and their tenants will be able to adjust to a zero-subsidy model.

Q4 – How will you put this into practice? Who is involved in this?

In April 2014, the 'Supporting People' subsidy which had been paid to individual residents came to an end and was replaced with renegotiated funding directly to Providers on a Gross Contract basis. This meant that residents no longer applied for individual subsidy and social landlords are funded directly on a twice yearly basis.

As the BoP currently has no formal transactional relationship with residents we do not hold information regarding individual clients or the support they receive. We are also aware that not all 203 residents actively use all of the support services provided. For example, in one scheme of 21 residents only 7 residents request a weekly visit from scheme staff.

We therefore see it as crucial that we work directly with social landlords. We have liaised with social landlords in advance to understand what impact the end of funding will have on their delivery of services to sheltered housing residents.

From Oct 2014 – the majority of social providers were informally notified of the likelihood that housing related support funding would end in March 2016.

May 2015 – Social providers were notified in writing of BoP intentions to cease funding from March 2016. Providers were requested to contact BoP, to provide information regarding any residents who may be significantly impacted by changes in services.

Should social providers have concerns regarding specific individuals the following can be considered:

- Liaise with colleagues in Adult Social Care to assess if additional services and support may be available for the resident.
- Liaise with colleagues in Adult Social Care to enable financial assessments to take place in line with criteria in the Care Act.
- Signpost to other support services if appropriate.
- Liaise and offer services from Your Money Team and Citizens Advice Bureau to ascertain if any additional financial assistance can be provided.
- Liaise with housing colleagues to assist in facilitating a move to alternative providers who offer housing related support services with no additional costs to residents.
- Possible provision of a short term hardship fund to support residents who may be financially impacted by any changes in service.

Social landlords who have voiced concerns regarding the subsidy ending have been invited to discuss their concerns further with Cally Antil, Head of Housing and Community Services and Claire Oaten, Partnership and Service Improvement Officer. To date meetings have taken place with Aster Living and East Brough Housing Trust.

27th August 2015 – Formal notice to terminate contracts with providers will be served. BoP will continue to work in partnership with social landlords to mitigate the impact on sheltered residents.

March 2016 – Housing related funding for all social landlords will cease.

Q5 – Are there barriers to doing this?

Removal of subsidies may result in some people paying higher service charges for support services. It is also recognised that removal of subsidies may lead to an increase in care costs for some people in some settings.

Section 2: Information gathering and judging impact

Q6 - What does the existing information and data tell us about the likely impact on different groups?

General/all equality groups

Age - Residents in sheltered housing are generally but not exclusively over the age of 55 years old.

BoP have asked all providers to make contact should they have significant concerns regarding the impact any change in service may have on residents.

Out of the 203 residents who may be effected by the proposed changes in service,

only one resident has been highlighted as possibly being significantly impacted by any potential change in service or facing financial hardship. BoP is working in close partnership to assess how this resident can be supported and how the impact on this resident can be mitigated.

Annual reviews to sheltered housing providers illustrates that the majority of residents in sheltered schemes provided with subsidy do not request weekly visits from scheme staff. For example, one sheltered scheme which consists of 21 units, only provides weekly visits to 7 residents. Of the 7 residents provided with weekly visits, the social landlord only has concerns regarding one of these residents possibly not being able to live independently should home visits no longer be offered

Disability – Residents in sheltered housing may have disabilities. All Providers have been asked to contact BoP should they have significant concerns regarding the impact any change in service may have on residents, this includes residents with disabilities.

To date, only one resident has been highlighted as potentially being significantly impacted by any potential change in service. BoP is working in close partnership to assess how this resident can be supported and how the impact on this resident can be mitigated.

Gender reassignment - Not Applicable

Pregnancy and maternity - Not Applicable

Race - Not Applicable

Sex – Not Applicable

Religion or belief - Not Applicable

Sexual orientation- Not Applicable

Socially excluded groups - Not Applicable

Q7 – Does this have any impact on the workforce or other Human Resources issues in relation to equality?

Yes/No/Don't know (delete as appropriate). Please give explain your answer.

If this is negative discuss it with your HR advisor.

Q7 - Is there any potential for direct or indirect discrimination? No
If yes, please use the action plan below to say how this will be mitigated

Section 3: Action planning

Issue	Objective/ Intended outcome	SMART action	Performance Target	Lead	Deadline
General equality issues					
Age	<p>To enable Providers to time to considering remodelling their services and liaise/consult with residents.</p> <p>We will continue to encourage social landlords to remodel sheltered warden to mitigate any negative financial impact on older tenants arising from increased service charges due to withdrawal of subsidy.</p> <p>Remodelling options for landlords include moving a greater proportion of the activity cost onto core housing management, replacing some support activity with intensive housing management, making a greater element of the activity eligible for housing benefit funding, absorbing the cost of the loss of subsidy, making efficiencies. Any, or a combination of these options, has the potential to reduce the level of service charge levied on tenants.</p>	<p>Early informal notification of the termination of funding</p> <p>Provide a minimum of 6 months notice to terminate contract.</p> <p>Provide early notification to all social providers to enable them to revise services and consult with residents.</p> <p>Encourage social providers to revise their service offer to minimise any potential impact on residents.</p>	<p>Early notification</p>	<p>CO</p> <p>CO</p>	<p>End of July 2015</p> <p>End of August 2015</p> <p>End of May 2015</p> <p>End of July 2015</p>

	Mitigate impact on residents by considering and where appropriate offering a menu of assistance as set out in section 4.	To provide a holistic approach to support resident who may be impacted by potential changes in service provision.		CO	March 2016
Disability	To minimise the impact in any potential change in service to vulnerable residents, which will includes residents with disabilities.	Encourage providers to provide details of any customers who may be significantly effected by any changes to service. Liaise with Adult Social Care to ascertain if they are aware of individuals within the schemes who may be significantly impacted by potential changes to services.		CO	

EQIA approved by: Cally Antill

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Send a copy of your completed screening to your Unit's Equality Rep for publication

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