

Full Equality Impact Assessment Record

Section 1:

Service:

Housing & Community Services

Title of strategy, policy or service:

Housing Related Support Services

Officers involved in the EQIA:

Emma Collins; Claire Oaten; Lynda Anderson, Andrew Lewis, Kim Ward, Ben Tomlin, Sam Yates

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

New provision:

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

To review the services currently being provided to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the Borough and the service users whom we have a duty to assist.

To ensure we meet our statutory duties with a set budget.

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 services will benefit vulnerable residents in Poole by providing specialist accommodation and outreach services for those who find it difficult to secure accommodation.

Q3 – What outcomes do you want to achieve?

- A range of accommodation based services for those who are most excluded from mainstream accommodation options.
- An outreach service which aims to increase the ability of those unable to access mainstream services to resolve their own housing difficulties.
- Value for money for the council
- Service providers equipped to work with the most complex of needs

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

The procurement and future management of the contracts which come out of the commissioning being resources by a dedicated working group reporting to a project board. There is a 'stakeholder map' showing the main people/teams involved.

Q5 – Are there barriers to doing this?

There is a limited budget available.

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

Information to date shows that the majority of people who utilise the housing related support services we currently provide are aged 45 and below (71%). Of the remaining 29% (aged 45+), only 9% of those using the service were aged above 55. There is low demand for specialist supported services from an older client group, with their need being met through existing Sheltered Housing provision, Extra Care Accommodation and services provided through Adult Social Care.

The Care Act 2014 places a particular focus on supporting people to remain in their own homes. Generally, the services required to facilitate this are those provided by Adult Social Care and will encompass a full support plan to enable the individual to remain as independent as possible. If it is assessed that it is unsafe for the individual to remain within their own home, there are alternatives open to Adult Social Care including the provisions noted above as well as Residential Placement.

Housing Advisors do not report an unmet need within the older client group for specialist Supported Housing.

A Public Consultation was held from Monday 13th June 2016 – Friday 8th July 2016 and consisted of two approaches, an online consultation document and questionnaire and a series of drop in sessions / workshops. Overall, responses were received from a varying age group, the majority being aged 45 – 54 (29%) and 16 – 24 (21%) although this does not take into account the ages of those attending group workshop sessions.

No concerns were raised by the 29% of older respondents regarding a support provision for this age group or older.

Specialist Housing Provision currently provided for those aged 16 to 25 is being used primarily by those aged 18-21 (69% of placements). Only three 16/17 year olds were placed in 2015 as the emphasis is always to try to support young people to stay in a home environment. Feedback from the workshops held as part of the Public Consultation confirms that users of the younger people's services feel that this age range is appropriate and enables them to feel comfortable. All felt that having

anyone aged over 25 would increase isolation and seclusion.

The proposed strategy going forward is to continue an accommodation based service for 16-25 year olds but to divide the provision into two types with different levels of support available. The change is considered necessary because within the existing provision we do not have the numbers of required referrals needed to fully occupy the scheme. This is because many of those referred require a higher level of support than the scheme currently provide and there is therefore a gap in provision for the Borough. It also causes issues for the Provider as they have a higher vacancy rate than is ideal. The intention is that the overall number of units available will reduce from 45 to 12.

The feedback from the Public Consultation raised concerns regarding a reduction in service, mainly based around a fear of losing support and being happy with how things are.

It is believed however that this reduction in units will not be detrimental to the statutory service provided by the Borough and the higher level of support will increase the placements we can make. This was recognised by respondents of the consultation who felt that "it would be good to offer high level support / more specialist support".

18 of the clients supported by the provision in 2015 had an identified need, 6 of which would have benefited from higher level support services based on their significant needs which in some cases led to eviction from the current service.

The average length of stay within the service across 2015 was seven months. The proposed model will therefore have had capacity to support those who present as needing the service.

A further 15 clients had no obvious need for a supported housing provision. It is likely that if the service had not been available then these clients would have been advised to seek private rented accommodation, possibly with financial assistance from HCS or would have received assistance through prevention.

On three occasions the provision was utilised as 'Move On' Accommodation from another supported housing scheme. There was not necessarily a requirement for these clients to remain in a supported housing provision and alternatives could have been sought, should the provision have been available, i.e. home based support in a private rented property.

Those who contact us for support which cannot be met by direct provision of accommodation will still be able to access outreach service as it is not age restricted. However, the service being offered will be focussed more clearly on aiming to support individuals to take responsibility for their own housing need and tackle the issues which cause their housing vulnerability, seeking positive outcomes for them. CAB services are still available for advice and support and Officers will still be able to signpost to this, for less focussed work. The DWP also provide a service for those who have difficulty in completing forms.

Disability

From the reporting we have, 27% of those using our current Housing Related Support Services have been recorded as having a mental health condition, either diagnosed, or otherwise presenting with challenging behaviours which impact upon their ability to manage day to day living. Not all services report on underlying causes of mental health and therefore we cannot be more specific.

18% have drug and/or alcohol misuse as part of their vulnerability. It is known that substance misuse and prolonged use of alcohol and/or drugs can have significant impact on mental and physical health.

Currently, 50% of clients accommodated in the 24 hour supported accommodation service have drug and/or alcohol misuse issues and 73% of those placed in the Housing First support project.

54% of the 32 respondents to the Public Consultation report having a long-term limiting illness or disability. One respondent felt there should be more support available for those with long term illnesses or disabilities. The majority of respondents attending the workshops noted the importance of the accommodation based services and expressed that if services were removed in their entirety there would be a detrimental impact resulting in a significant increase in rough sleeping.

The future service provisions will continue to support those in need of housing related support services who have a mental health condition. Extending the level of support required to provide for young people with high support needs than currently exists will improve access for this group. Attendees of the young people's workshop during the consultation felt that it was valuable to have a mix of people with varying needs and life experience within a supported accommodation provision as this provides the opportunity for peers to support one another.

The joining up of the existing two floating support services into one assertive outreach service will help to ensure one provider can support all cases without the need to refer on those to a specialist mental health provider. The need to be able to deliver to this client group will be made clear within the tender documents.

The current 24 hour supported accommodation service has limited capacity to accommodate wheelchair users or those with limited mobility. Amongst the cohort of users of the scheme the requirement for wheelchair accessible accommodation has only been an issue on the odd occasion. Likewise, the Quay Foyer currently has no facilities for disabled clients, although have ground floor double rooms that could readily be converted should the need arise.

It is recognised that whilst there is a desire to make all accommodation wheelchair accessible there is also the risk that by making this a requirement Providers will be deterred from bidding for the tender in a market where concerns already exist about the potential future viability of schemes. It is therefore proposed that we seek to get a balance between working with Providers to do all that we can to accommodate individuals effectively, whilst not making demands on them to make whole schemes accessible, so as to reduce the risk that Providers will abstain from bidding. We know there is not an abundance of accommodation in Poole which can be used for

supported housing schemes and adding to this the need for them to be wholly wheelchair accessible is unlikely to bring many options.

The desire that Providers work with us to make reasonable adjustments to accommodation within supported housing schemes is however crucial so that we have options to assist clients with mobility difficulty. We will therefore ensure the tender evaluation process within the presentation stage asks questions which enable us to fully understand the provision on offer and we will seek to gain a commitment from potential Providers of their willingness to work in partnership to make the necessary adaptations to accommodate potential future service users who may be experiencing physical disabilities. We will also build in the ability to view the stock before any award is confirmed.

Those with Learning Disabilities are rarely supported through the schemes provided by HCS (6%). This was raised as a concern by a respondent to the consultation who felt that there needed to be further definition in respect of the level of need as may otherwise leave out young adults who have high needs and are learning disabled. Currently only three of the six services report supporting this client group. This is primarily because the borough has a dedicated separate provision for client groups with Learning Disabilities and this provision will remain unchanged.

Gender reassignment

Access to services would not be prevented on the basis of gender reassignment.

Pregnancy and maternity

The dedicated provision within the Borough for Young Parent and Baby units will be unchanged by this commissioning as they are sourced separately by CYPSC and CYPL under a different contract.

Those who are pregnant or have young children are provided for within HCS's statutory duties and they would be supported by the in-house team who assist those in interim and temporary accommodation.

Race

All services currently allow equality of access for different racial groups. Reporting on ethnicity has shown that 90% of clients supported by the services are White British, 7% are minority ethnic groups and 3% unknown or not stated. The 2011 Census for Poole, reported that 91.9% of the population identified as White British.

No concerns were raised by the respondents to the Public Consultation in respect of impact on race.

Access to services would not be prevented on the basis of race.

Sex

The majority of users of the accommodation based services are male (64%), whereas those using the non-accommodation based are primarily female (70%).

The Public Consultation received a higher response rate from men (65%).

All of the services are provided to individuals based on need and specific gender will not preclude an individual from accessing any of the services.

A suggestion was received within the workshop sessions of the consultation that there should be a female only secure area or house within supported accommodation services for clients with complex needs due to feelings of intimidation from male residents. It is recognised that there is a much smaller proportion of female users of accommodation based services and that the service providers moving forwards will need to take into account the difference in need and appropriately manage any risk to female residents. Any concerns in this area will be highlighted through ongoing contract monitoring and the provider supported to make any necessary provisions.

Religion or belief

The only religious belief which we are aware of which may cause difficulty to accommodate is the need for females not to be unaccompanied when in the vicinity of unknown males, as is found in the Jewish Orthodox religion. In cases such as these we would be unable to guarantee this provision in the accommodation based schemes with communal facilities. We would need to try to place in independent self-contained accommodation with outreach support provided.

Sexual orientation

Access to services would not be prevented on the basis of sexual orientation.

Socially excluded groups

Complex needs connected with a wide range of socially excluded groups are catered for within the strategy. It was noted by a respondent to the Public Consultation that services should be identifying hard to reach groups and engaging with isolated people. It is recognised that engagement can be an issue within socially excluded groups and the proposed services aim to have an increased focus on assertive engagement techniques which will offer support to those who require it and have previously been difficult to engage.

Services will only be available to groups of people meeting 'Local Connection' criteria associated with Housing and Homelessness legislation. Whilst it therefore might appear that those who do not meet this criteria are being excluded, services are limited and prioritised in accordance with legislation, and there is a statutory threshold against which to assess.

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

No. Providers will be bound by specific contract terms in relation to Equality and Diversity.

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
Disability	Understand how the Provision could support the accommodating of those with limited mobility/wheelchair use	Question Providers in the 2 nd stage evaluation process and view accommodation before award	N/A	SY,JF	31.01.17
	Ensure assertive outreach service is able to cater for complex needs including delivering to clients with mental ill-health	Include in specifications and in the evaluation of responses during the tender process	N/A	SY, JF	31.10.16

EQIA approved by: Housing Related Support Project Board
Review date:

Date: 16/08/16

Contact number: 01202 633447

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