

## Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

**The separate EIA guidance notes outline what should be included for each section. Please read them before you begin. If you have any queries, contact your Corporate Equality Group rep, or the Engagement Team on 643 2828.**

1. Author, service area, date

Julia Orton, Housing Implementation Officer, Environment, Housing and Leisure - July 2019

2. Who else has been involved in writing this EIA?

Paul Worth- Senior Manager – Housing Operations  
Katrina Anderson – Housing Options Manager

3. What proposal is this EIA assessing?

Proposed changes to North Tyneside Council's Lettings Policy

4. What is the purpose of your proposal and what is it expected to achieve?

The Lettings Policy sets out the way in which Council Housing is allocated. North Tyneside Council's Lettings Policy was reviewed in 2016, it is good practice to review the letting policy every two years in order to respond to policy changes and the local housing market. There are a total of 4 changes that fulfil our responsibility to all of our tenants to ensure people are living in accommodation most suitable to their needs, to rehouse those in the most housing need, and to let homes in the most efficient and effective way. The changes are outlined below:-

- One direct offer of accommodation to be given to homeless applicants
- Setting an applicant's household income of £50,000 or £100,000 in savings &/or assets
- Restricting transfers for 1 year if there is no housing need
- Suspending applicants for up to 6 months after 3 reasonable refusals

5. Is there any relevance to the aims of the public sector equality duty? *Write your answers in the table*

Aim	Yes, No, or N/A	Details if 'yes'
Eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Yes	No evidence of discrimination has been found previously but this EIA will help us to verify that lettings are fair and equitable.
Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not	Yes	The Lettings Policy aims to ensure that applicants receive the correct priority for housing in line with their needs.
Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not	Yes	The Tyne and Wear Homes process allocates homes to people from all communities and backgrounds in North Tyneside. Procedures are in place to ensure any prejudices that may be encountered are addressed; this will help foster good relations.

6. Analysis by characteristic *Write your answers in the table*

Protected characteristic	Potential positive or negative impact?	Explanation and evidence
Age	Positive	The equity/savings of people aged over 60 who apply for North Tyneside Living properties (older person's accommodation) has been increased to £110,000 in 2019/20. This figure will be reviewed on an annual basis and is currently incorporated in the Lettings Policy.
Disability	Negative	<p>Vulnerable customers may find it difficult to bid for a home or understand how the Homefinder process works.</p> <p>The policy allows for applicants to be suspended for a period of six months where</p>

	<p>Positive</p>	<p>they have refused three or more offers over a twelve month period. Some respondents in the consultation raised concerns that for those with mental health issues may be detrimentally impacted by this measure. It is therefore important that safeguards are put in place to ensure that offers are suitable. The implementation of this proposal will be carefully monitored, including making use of information about protected characteristics and reviewing procedures.</p> <p>Applicants can bid for homes online, by contacting the Council First Centres or by Auto-bid (this is set up for vulnerable customers).</p> <p>The reviewed policy allows that for applicants with a priority homeless status to be made a direct offer of accommodation rather than being able to bid for available homes. In implementing this it is important that such offers are 'suitable' and do not create situations in which people are vulnerable or disadvantaged, for instance by moving them to an area where they feel unsafe due to hate crime.</p> <p>Evidence has shown where direct offers have been made to homeless applicants that there has been very little impact on these applicants in relation to direct offer and areas of choice, over 80% have been allocated homes in areas where they have requested in 2017/18.</p>
<p>Gender</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>We have no reason to believe that the proposals would have any greater or lesser effect on people on account of gender.</p>
<p>Gender reassignment</p>	<p>Negative</p>	<p>The policy allows for applicants' accounts to be suspended for a period of six months where they have rejected three or more offers over a twelve month period. Some respondents in the consultation raised concerns that for some, including those who are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment, some areas / properties may not feel safe and therefore they may be detrimentally impacted by this measure. It is therefore important that safeguards are put in place to ensure that offers are suitable. The implementation of this proposal will be carefully monitored, including making use of information about protected characteristics and reviewing procedures.</p>
<p>Marriage and civil</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>We have no reason to believe that the proposals would have any greater or lesser</p>

partnership status		effect on people on account of marriage and civil partnership status.
Pregnancy and maternity	N/A	We have no reason to believe that the proposals would have any greater or lesser effect on people on account of pregnancy and maternity.
Race	Negative	The proposed policy change allows for applicants accounts to be suspended for a period of six months where they have refused three or more offers over a twelve month period. Some respondents in the consultation raised concerns that for vulnerable applicant's issues may be detrimentally impacted by this measure. It is therefore important that safeguards are put in place to ensure that offers are suitable and that the proposal is sensitively implemented, particularly with regard to minority groups. The implementation of this proposal will be carefully monitored, including making use of information about protected characteristics.
Religion or belief	Positive	The Lettings Policy and procedure is sensitive to the needs and requirements of applicants who are suffering from harassment and hate crime as a result of their religion or faith.
Sexual orientation	N/A	We have no reason to believe that the proposals would have any greater or lesser effect on people on account of sexual orientation.

7. Have you carried out any engagement in relation to this proposal? If so, what?

Engagement has already been carried out with the Housing Options Service Development Group and Syrian refugees in the Borough have been consulted. Further hard to reach groups e.g. YMCA, Islamic Society were consulted as part of the consultation explained below.

Consultation took place week commencing 4<sup>th</sup> June to 13<sup>th</sup> July 2019. The consultation was posted on the North Tyneside Engagement Hub and on the Tyne and Wear Homes website. It was sent out to all applicants currently on the housing register. Posters and hard copies of the questionnaire were made available in the four Customer First Centres in the borough. Members of the resident's panel who are current tenants were contacted along with our stakeholders e.g. Shelter, CAB and other Housing Providers.

8. Is there any information you don't have that you need to find?

No

9. What actions are already in place, or will be taken, to remove or reduce potential negative impacts? (add more lines to the table if you need to) *Write your answers in the table*

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
We will ensure that safeguards and procedures are in place so any negative impacts on people with protected characteristics will be addressed.	PW/KA/LB	Once policy changes are agreed
Monitor the waiting list, bidding activity, allocation of properties, outcome of affordability tests and account suspensions due to multiple refusals by people with protected characteristics	PW/KA/LB	Ongoing
Annual review of savings/equity figures will be carried out	PW/KA/LB	Annual

10. Are there any potential negative impacts that cannot be removed or reduced? If so, why is this?

No

11. Based on your conclusions from this assessment, what are your next steps?

To seek Cabinet approval and implement the proposed changes to the Lettings Policy, late 2019

12. How will the impact of this proposal be monitored after it is introduced?

By monitoring the changes and any impact, through reviews and complaints.

13. When will this EIA be reviewed?

The EIA will be reviewed in line with the next Lettings Policy review in September 2021 or if any legislative changes are made prior to this date.