

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT – August 2005

Service Area - Arts Development, Legal services, Environmental Health services, Human Resources. etc.

Housing

Detailed activity – Development of the Pound Arts Centre, marketing industrial starter units, food hygiene courses, recruitment. etc.

Housing advice service review (linked to a review of the homelessness service)

Lead Officer – A.N.Other

Janet O'Brien, Housing Team Leader

Provide a broad description of the detailed activity and explain what the main aims of the activity are

1 What are the aims of the activity?

To fully review the statutory housing advice service provided to residents. This service is aimed at preventing homelessness and providing people with advice to assist them in maintaining their homes or moving to more appropriate housing where necessary.

2 Which sections of the community will this activity have an impact on?
eg. general population, young people, older people, people with disabilities, ethnic minority groups:

Everyone with a housing need i.e. can impact on people whose housing needs change through disability, those with support needs, financial problems, relationship problems and so on.

3 How and where will information be disseminated about:

a) The need for the activity?

The housing advice service is a statutory service that all local housing authorities have a duty to provide. It is publicised on the Council's website, in the Housing Strategy and in the Homelessness Strategy. Articles are written for Improving North Wiltshire and other publications to raise awareness of the advice service. CAB, the current providers, also circulate leaflets advertising their service and particularly the local area surgeries. The review will involve all local stakeholders as well as customers from the start of the process

- b) Collecting views of particular groups and/or the public? eg People's voice, groups representing ethnic minority groups, organisations such as Age Concern Wiltshire, budget consultation

A key part of the review will involve consulting stakeholders and customers on the quality of the existing service and what improvements they would like to see. This will be done through the website, writing to stakeholders and community representatives including local voluntary organisations and through focus groups. Consultation will also be with Members through the Housing Working Group.

- c) Details of the activity? (If already existing or if being amended)

The housing advice service is currently contracted out to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The review will assess how well the current service is working, will identify any areas for improvement and result in recommendations to improve the service. This could mean providing it in a different way or could mean continuing with the same.

- 4 Has any research or consultation been carried out into the need for the activity AND the ability of various community groups to access it?

The purpose of the review is to assess its' accessibility and how well it meets the needs of our customers. The purpose is to ensure that areas for improvement are identified and addressed.

- 5 Has any evidence of access or compliance difficulties emerged as a result of previous monitoring?

Monitoring of the service from the customers' perspective has not been robust to date. It is intended that the review will identify whether there are any access issues or issues of customer satisfaction with the service and include in the recommendations ways of ensuring monitoring is more robust in the future.

- 6 Does the activity have the potential to lead to:

a) direct or indirect discrimination Yes No

The review will be aimed and ensuring there is no discrimination either direct or indirect in the provision of this service. It is anticipated that if there are any areas of indirect discrimination, these will be identified.

- b) an adverse affect or other negative impact upon any community group?

Yes

No

The housing advice service should be accessible and beneficial to all groups of society. The review will aim to ensure that this is and continues to be the case. The review should identify where any action needs to be taken to ensure there are no negative impacts.

c) a disproportionately positive impact on one community group over another?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	The service is available to all and is a free and statutory service. Anyone in need of housing advice should be able to access it.
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

7 If there is likely to be direct or indirect discrimination, or a disproportionately positive impact on any particular group, can this be justified? Please state how (eg statutory, results from monitoring, other evidence etc)

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8 If (in 7) it cannot be justified, please state what measures, and/or reasonable adjustments (eg the DDA), will be put into place to address the in-equality

9 Is there an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity and good community relations through the activity?

The review should give an opportunity to all to input into the proposals for the housing advice and homelessness services. The aim is to improve the service and improve its responsiveness and usefulness to the community. The service is particularly important for hard to reach and vulnerable groups and we will want to ensure we engage with these groups as part of this review.

10 Will there be a requirement for equality/diversity training to equip staff to deliver

It would be useful for the person employed to lead on the review and possibly other members of the project team to have specific equality/diversity training.

the activity?

11 Does the information available about this activity need to be revised?
(eg literature, website, internal documents, etc)

Following the review it is anticipated that changes may be required to literature and the website about the housing advice service. However, the review itself will be a stand alone project. The website and other literature will be used to publicise the review and seek feedback.

12 Please explain what forms of consultation you will be using or have used to inform the answers you have given above?

We will specifically be consulting customers who already access the housing advice and homelessness services. We will also be consulting stakeholders e.g. social services, Housing Associations, the health service, probation service, voluntary groups and residents groups as well as the general public and members to ensure we get as much feedback about the existing service and what improvements are needed for the future. The website, focus groups and written questionnaires will be used to consult.

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