

## EQUALITY AND INCLUSION ASSESSMENT OF THE HOUSING STRATEGY

### Context

1. The current Housing Strategy expires at the end of this year and the attached draft housing strategy sets out the Council's ambitions over the next 15 years and how these will be achieved via a series of 5 year plans. These plans will be reviewed and updated annually.
2. The draft strategy explains why we need a new strategy for housing, the context of the recently published National Housing Strategy and the substantial changes to the Benefits system. The draft strategy also sets out the achievements made under the existing strategy and identifies the challenges ahead.

### Equality and Inclusion Assessment

#### Summary

3. An equalities and inclusion assessment has been carried out as part of the process of preparing the draft strategy, in accordance with the Council's Equality & Inclusion Scheme. The assessment has focused in on the broad implications of the strategy, in the context that the forthcoming actions will include further assessment of equalities. This approach is summarised in the "funnel model" described in depth in the Equality & Inclusion Scheme and shown in **Table 1**.
4. The following actions were included in the assessment process:
  - (a) a self-assessment of the Strategy,
  - (b) questionnaires completed by a sample of tenants of Council houses,
  - (c) questionnaires requested from clients using the Probation Service and the Welfare Rights Service over a 2 week period.
  - (d) Four open engagement sessions in the Dolphin Centre.
  - (e) Separate engagement sessions with GOLD, the Deaf Club & the Carers Steering Group.
  - (f) Feedback from relevant organisations such as Darlington Association on Disability.
5. The findings are summarised in the following pages. The self-assessment found that the Strategy could have a slightly positive impact on some vulnerable groups and no impact on others. Four suggestions were generated during the impact assessment sessions that have been held. These are set out below along with the officer response in italics:

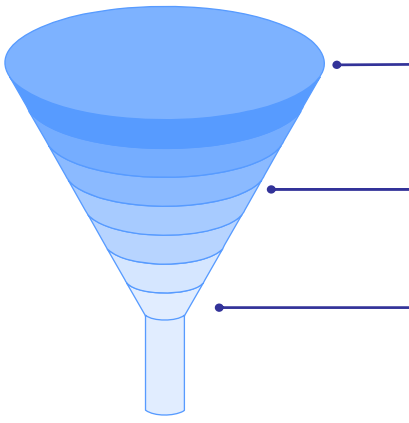
- (a) The draft strategy should explicitly state that the design and delivery of the proposed actions will include appropriate consideration of the equalities impact.  
*Response - Agree.*
- (b) Include an action to initiate the development of a Tees Valley wide accessible housing register, with common standards including access by wheelchair.  
*Response - No action, The Choice Based Lettings system transparently captures applicants' health and disability needs .The adverts for social housing identify where there are adaptations already in place and the allocations policy gives preference to applicants who need the adaptation.*
- (c) Include an action to campaign for a review of the provisions of the Welfare Reform Act 2012, such that their impact on vulnerable groups is mitigated.  
*Response - No action, the Strategy is not intended to be a campaigning document.*
- (d) Include an action to develop a grant scheme that disabled people could bid for funds from, to carry out adaptations to their owner occupied homes. *Response - No action, there is already a Loan Scheme available to carry out adaptations to owner occupied homes.*

6. Textual changes have also been made to the document in light of feedback from those participating in the impact assessment process.

**Assessment Process**

7. The assessment process follows the Funnel Model Table 1.

**Table 1**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Process of Impact Assessment</b></p>  <p>Initial assessment: identify whole population affected by activity – e.g. whole borough; a neighbourhood; all disabled people, etc</p> <p>Secondary assessment: identify target population as activity develops, e.g. rural communities; users of a community facility; wheelchair users, etc.</p> <p>Detailed assessment: identify individuals affected as activity develops into detailed proposals – e.g. users of particular bus services, members of groups meeting in facility; named wheelchair users, etc</p>	<p><b>The Funnel Model</b></p> <p>The model shows that EIA is an ongoing process throughout the development of the activity. It may be easy to identify affected people, if any, for simple activities. The model illustrates the approach for more complex policy development. EIA is likely to start with a broad initial assessment of the affects across a whole population, with further rounds of assessment needed to identify groups and individuals affected as the activity develops.</p>
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Officer Self - assessment

8. A self-assessment was carried out (April 2012). The analysis (shown below) shows a slight positive impact on some protected characteristic groups and no impacts on others.

Name of strategy and brief description			Housing Strategy				
Protected Characteristics	Impact Y/N		Level of Impact			Explanation of decision Level of impact	
Age	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	<p>Objective 1 aims to increase the supply of housing to meet the needs of all areas. This will have a low positive impact by increasing the supply of one bedroom dwellings which will be suitable for single under 35 year olds on Housing Benefits.</p> <p>Objective 6 of the Housing Strategy aims to provide support and opportunities for vulnerable groups. One of the actions within this is to produce and adopt a Supported Accommodation Strategy. This will have a high positive impact on both young and old residents. This will provide effective support and opportunities for vulnerable groups.</p>
Race	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	<p>Objective 2 of the Housing Strategy will aim to invest in the regeneration of key locations.</p> <p>Objective 3 of the Housing Strategy will aim to improve conditions in the private housing sector. One of the actions is to reduce the number of non-decent homes.</p> <p>Both these objectives will have a low positive impact on black and minority ethnic groups as these tend to have a high incidence of occupying poor quality houses and living in areas requiring regeneration.</p>

Sex	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	Objective 6 of the Housing Strategy aims to provide support and opportunities for vulnerable groups. One of the actions within this is to produce and adopt a Supported Accommodation Strategy. This will have a high positive impact on both young and old residents. This will provide effective support and opportunities for vulnerable groups, including older ladies living independently.
Gender Reassignment	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	
Disability	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	Objective 5 of the Housing Strategy will aim to provide good quality and timely advice to prevent crisis, increase choice and enable access. This will have a positive impact on vulnerable groups, including those with disabilities.  Objective 6 of the Housing Strategy aims to provide support and opportunities for vulnerable groups. One of the actions within this is to produce and adopt a Supported Accommodation Strategy. This will have a high positive impact on both young and old residents. This will provide effective support and opportunities for vulnerable groups, including those with disabilities.
Religion or belief	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	
Sexual Orientation	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	
Pregnancy or maternity	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	Objective 5 of the Housing Strategy will aim to provide good quality and timely advice to prevent crisis, increase choice and enable access. This will have a positive impact on vulnerable groups, including women who are pregnant or caring for very young children.
Marriage/ Civil Partnership	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	

**Will the proposal help to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?**

The continuation of existing actions such as the Choice Based Lettings System and the development of actions such as a supported accommodation strategy should help to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

**Will the proposal help to advance equality of opportunity?**

It is intended that there will be an increase in the provision of special needs housing and/or adaptable housing such as lifetime homes as part of the mix of new housing on private housing developments.

**Will the proposal help to foster good relations?**

Priority actions such as; implementing the remodelling plans for Cockerton and Redhall, and reducing the number of non decent and empty homes will all help to foster good relations within the borough.

Other Groups to consider	Impact Y/N		Level of Impact			Explanation of decision Level of impact	
Unemployed/low income	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	<p>Objective 2 of the Housing Strategy will aim to invest in the regeneration of key locations.</p> <p>Objective 3 of the Housing Strategy will aim to improve conditions in the private housing sector. Priority actions include; reduce the number of non-decent homes and increase the number of accredited landlords.</p> <p>Objective 5 of the Housing Strategy will aim to provide good quality and timely advice to prevent crisis, increase choice and enable access.</p> <p>All these objectives will have a medium positive impact on the unemployed or those on low incomes who tend to occupy poorer quality housing or live in areas in need of regeneration.</p>
Carers	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	
People with criminal convictions	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	Objective 3 of the Housing Strategy will aim to improve conditions in the private housing sector. Priority actions include; reduce the number

							<p>of non-decent homes and increase the number of accredited landlords.</p> <p>Objective 5 of the Housing Strategy will aim to provide good quality and timely advice to prevent crisis, increase choice and enable access.</p> <p>Both these objectives will have a medium positive impact on people with criminal convictions who tend to occupy poorer quality housing or live in areas in need of regeneration.</p>
Refugees & Asylum seekers	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	<p>Objective 2 of the Housing Strategy will aim to invest in the regeneration of key locations.</p> <p>Objective 3 of the Housing Strategy will aim to improve conditions in the private housing sector. Priority actions include; reduce the number of non-decent homes and increase the number of accredited landlords.</p> <p>Objective 5 of the Housing Strategy will aim to provide good quality and timely advice to prevent crisis, increase choice and enable access.</p> <p>All these objectives will have a positive impact on residents of Darlington</p>
Gypsies & Travellers	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	<p>Objective 1 of the Housing Strategy will aim to increase the supply of housing to meet the needs of all areas. Action 4 will specifically increase the number of pitches and therefore will make a high positive impact on the vulnerable group.</p>
Young People leaving care	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	<p>Objective 3 of the Housing Strategy will aim to improve conditions in the private housing sector. Priority actions include; reduce the number of non-decent homes and increase the number of accredited landlords.</p>

							<p>Objective 5 of the Housing Strategy will aim to provide good quality and timely advice to prevent crisis, increase choice and enable access.</p> <p>Objective 6 of the Housing Strategy aims to provide support and opportunities for vulnerable groups.</p> <p>All these objectives will have a medium positive impact on residents of Darlington</p>
Geographical impacts	Y	N	H	M	L	nil	<p>Objective 1 of the Housing Strategy will aim to increase the supply of housing to meet the needs of all areas. This will take place in locations identified in the Core Strategy and Making Places Accommodating Growth DPD. These include:  Town Centre Fringe  North Western Urban Fringe  Eastern Urban Fringe  Central Park  Lingfield Park  West Park  Other locations within the existing urban area.</p> <p>Objective 2 of the Housing Strategy will invest in the regeneration of key locations. Priority actions include; implementing the remodelling plans for Cockerton and Redhall Estate.</p> <p>Objective 3 of the Housing Strategy will aim to improve conditions in the private housing sector. Priority actions include; reducing the number of non decent homes which tend to be located in certain wards which suffer from multiple deprivation.</p> <p>Both these objectives will have a positive impact on certain geographical areas of Darlington</p>

<b>Are there any potential impacts on partners e.g. Providers, Health, Police etc. Please detail</b>			
Will be a potential impact on providers- There could be a number of positive impacts on partners;			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in non decent homes could see an improvement in residents health</li> <li>• Support will be given to Housing providers</li> <li>• Reduction in non decent and empty properties could see to a decrease in anti social behaviour which will be a positive impact for both Police and Fire Service.</li> </ul>			
<b>Have any other options been explored</b>	Y	<b>N</b>	<b>If yes please detail</b>
Not applicable			
<b>Date: Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012</b>			

### Engagement activity

9. The following involvement and engagement plan was developed, based on the self-assessment exercise. No response was received from several of the organisations, despite repeated attempts to make contact.

<b>Involvement and Engagement Plan</b>		
<b>Which organisations, groups and individuals do you need to involve or engage and how?</b>		
<b>Stage</b>	<b>Organisations, Groups, Individuals</b>	<b>Dates, channels and staffing of involvement and engagement</b>
Initial assessment stage	GOLD Deaf Club Disability  Welfare Rights  Carers Steering Group Age UK First Stop BME Network DAD Gypsies & Travellers  Learning Disability	21 May 2012. Small group session 29 May 2012. Conversation at Club Night 11 -14 May 2012. Drop in & small group sessions Questionnaire to clients 14 March 2012 for 2 wks Questionnaire to clients 14 March 2012 for 2 wks 22 May 2012. Small group session No response No response No response 16 April 2012. Meeting Scheduled for summer 2012 as part of a consultation on potential site expansion Feedback provided



## Engagement findings

10. The following findings were recorded. Most findings were comments or other feedback about the draft Strategy, rather than individual impacts. This is to be expected, given that the actions will contain much of the detail that will reflect the recorded impacts obtained through further assessment work.

Summary of engagement carried out	
Group	Summary of engagement carried out (who with, when, what was the outcome, summarise impacts on individuals)
Age	<p>GOLD -21 May 2012</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern that there is a very small provision of single person accommodation. This needs to be considered as it would stop single people being pushed into the private rented sector.</li> <li>• A gentleman living in an upstairs flat was worried that if he became infirm would he be able to get adaptations so he can stay where he is and carry on living independently. If he did have to move would there be enough available single person properties available or would have to move into a home.</li> </ul>
Race	No impacts recorded
Sex	No impacts recorded
Gender Reassignment	No impacts recorded
Disability	<p>Carers' Meeting 22/05/12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tenants who have carers need an additional bedroom in case they need to stay overnight.</li> <li>• accommodation required for those physically disabled or with a mental impairment.</li> <li>• concerned about some vulnerable people not scoring high enough to receive a Council house.</li> <li>• need to avoid "ghetto" by locating groups of people in the same area; much preferable to locate people throughout the area.</li> <li>• one key challenge is to improve conditions in the private rented sector.</li> <li>• invite given to EQIA sessions scheduled 11/06 onwards to identify specific impacts.</li> <li>• Deaf Club 29/05/12</li> <li>• wheelchair accessible housing can be difficult to find in the</li> </ul>

	<p>private rented sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feel that economic recession is reducing the ability of owner occupiers to maintain homes; noted that Council houses are regularly updated and maintained to a good standard. Discussion that this cost is taken from the rent. Council has a duty to maintain houses to a certain standard - also "Darlington" standard.</li> <li>• discussion about impact of Welfare Reform Act. Brief overview given and people advised to talk to someone who understands their personal circumstances and the Act.</li> <li>• Discussed Landlord Accreditation Scheme.</li> <li>• Invite given to EQIA sessions scheduled 11/06 onwards to identify specific impacts. David Hugill to act as the first point of contact and will arrange interpreters as required. May need to invite colleagues from Housing Benefit if that is the main issue for those attending</li> <li>• DAD 16/04/12</li> <li>• Currently there is not a properly maintained accessible housing register. Action could be to set up Tees Valley wide accessible register. There also needs to be included in the register a clearer understanding of what is classed as wheelchair accessible.</li> </ul> <p>Engagement session 14/06/12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need for a fund to help owner occupiers make adaptations to their homes to enable independent living as a wheelchair user.</li> <li>• Need for more explanation of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and how it will affect the individual.</li> <li>• More explanation needed for the "Move On" and "extra care" initiatives.</li> </ul>
<b>Religion or belief</b>	No impacts recorded
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	No impacts recorded
<b>Pregnancy or maternity</b>	No impacts recorded
<b>Marriage / Civil Partnership</b>	No impacts recorded

## Questionnaire

11. A questionnaire was completed by 66 individuals who are tenants in Council houses. Not all individuals answered every question.

12. Questionnaires completed by clients attending either the Probation Service or the Welfare Rights Service have not been received at the time of writing.

Question	Yes	No
Should we build more Council houses?	53	12
Should we review the amount of improvement work we do on properties?	54	8
Which improvements are most important to you? (first choice only shown here)	Count	
Heating	32	
Kitchen	7	
Bathroom	2	
Doors internal or external	7	
Roof or other structural item	14	
other	2	
Which energy efficiency improvements do you think are most important? (first choice only shown here)	Count	
Water meters	1	
Water butts	0	
Solar heating or lighting	7	
Efficient boilers or heating	40	
Insulation	12	
other	0	
Improvements you think need to be made to the repairs & maintenance service? (first choice only shown here)	Count	
Improve the appointment system	15	
More discussion with the tradesperson about problem	8	
Better diagnosis for a repair	7	
Better response to urgent repairs	18	
Vans are stocked with the right materials	13	
other	1	
Which of the areas listed below do you think should be improved first? (first choice only shown here)	Count	
North Road	13	
Red Hall	6	
Bank Top & Victoria Road	8	
Whessoe Road	5	
Katherine Street	5	
other	5	
What improvements would you like to see in the area you have listed as your number one choice? (first choice only shown here)	Count	
Private off road parking	27	
Improved street lighting	7	

More quality open spaces	3	
Fences	4	
Traffic calming	8	
other	3	
Do you know about the welfare reforms and how they could affect you?	35	28
How do you think we can encourage people who have spare bedrooms in their homes to consider moving to a smaller property? (first choice only shown here)	Count	
Provide incentives to people to move	27	
Encourage people to share properties as friends	3	
Provide more smaller properties	18	
Introduce fixed term tenancies	2	
Give priority to people moving to a smaller property	12	
other	0	

### Public Sector Equality Duty

13. The Strategy was assessed for compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Did the engagement process consider the 3 strands of the Public Sector Equality Duty?	Please give details
a) How will the proposal help to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?	The strategy continues the application of an allocation system for public sector housing that seeks to protect vulnerable groups and avoid discrimination.
b) How will the proposal help to advance equality of opportunity?	The strategy continues the application of an allocation system for public sector housing that seeks to protect vulnerable groups and avoid discrimination.
c) How will the proposal help to foster good relations?	The strategy seeks to improve relations between tenants and landlords through a greater clarity about standards of housing.

## Mitigation

14. Four suggestions were made during the assessment process about how the Strategy could be amended to improve the impact on vulnerable groups. These are set out below and the officer response to them is set out paragraph 5 above.

**During the engagement process were there any suggestions on how to avoid, minimise or mitigate any negative impacts? If so please give details.**

1. The draft strategy should explicitly state that the design and delivery of the proposed actions will include appropriate consideration of equalities impact as required in law and the Council's Equality & Inclusion Scheme.
2. To include an action to initiate the development of a Tees Valley wide accessible housing register, with common standards including access by wheelchair.
3. To include an action to campaign for a review of the provisions of the Welfare Reform Act 2012, such that their impact on vulnerable groups is mitigated.
4. To create a fund to which owner occupiers can bid in order to make adaptations to their homes to enable independent living as a disabled person.

## Ongoing assessment

15. This document is the report of an initial equalities assessment. Further assessment will be needed where required, as part of the development of the actions set out in this strategy following the principle of the Funnel Model.

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