

## Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

**NB:** The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Durham County Council to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Assessing impact on equality and recording this is one of the key ways in which we can show due regard.

### Section One: Description and Screening

<b>Service/Team or Section</b>	TAP – Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Tom Gorman
<b>Title</b>	Review of Durham County Council's proposed allotment policy
<b>MTFP Reference (if relevant)</b>	
<b>Cabinet Date (if relevant)</b>	15 January 2020
<b>Start Date</b>	October 2017
<b>Review Date</b>	

### Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice as appropriate (a copy of the subject can be attached or insert a web-link):

The purpose of the Scrutiny review was to understand Durham County Council's (DCC's) current allotment policy, to examine the proposed allotment policy and to consider and comment on the proposed consultation. The review had the following key lines of enquiry:

- Examine and understand DCC's current allotment service and policy including implementation challenges experienced.
- Examine and comment on DCC's future allotment policy including:
  - The proposed policy and tenancy agreement and consider the possible implications of introduction.
  - The proposed options for the further devolved management of DCC's allotment estate to Town and Parish Councils where applicable or self-managed allotment associations.
  - The options for DCC's future management of non-allotment plots currently included in the allotment portfolio.

- Consider and compare DCC's future allotment policy with allotment policies implemented by other local authorities.
- Comment on the proposed consultation arrangements for DCC's future allotment policy.

The review highlighted that following Local Government re-organisation in 2009, DCC is responsible for the management of 167 allotment sites in the county whether directly managed or via Allotment Associations.

During the last five years DCC has taken steps to improve the management of allotment sites by: increasing engagement with tenants and associations; improving enforcement and investment on sites; introducing handover inspections and a records management system; improved customer services arrangements and use social media to promote plot availability and the health benefits of allotments.

However, DCC recognises that more work needs to be undertaken to ensure that there is a consistent management approach introduced across all DCC allotment sites and sees the introduction of a countywide policy and tenancy agreement supported by transition arrangements as providing an opportunity for consistency. The proposed policy promotes the proper use of allotment plots, compliance with planning and animal welfare regulations and continues to provide access to the wider benefits that come from allotment use.

The review report has made recommendations in relation to the proposed policy and tenancy agreement, overall management of sites and transition arrangements with a view to removing the opportunity for inconsistency when the proposed policy is implemented.

It is recommended that:

- A five year transition period is introduced for the removal of large animals no longer permitted on DCC allotment plots;
- Animals housed on DCC allotment sites have the required welfare documentation including passports, licenses and microchipping;
- The future management of DCC's allotment portfolio is the responsibility of one service team;
- The future of allotment sites not used for proper allotment purpose will be determined by a review group of DCC officers with the future of each site determined on a site by site basis;
- DCC provide an opportunity to establish area allotment associations;
- DCC enters into discussions with Town and Parish Councils to determine whether they are interested in managing DCC allotment sites in the future;

- DCC recognises in the proposed policy the contribution made by co-workers to the cultivation of a plot by acknowledging their previous years of commitment while not registered;
- DCC actively encourages co-workers to register their interest in a particular allotment plot;
- DCC considers the feasibility of providing smaller sized allotment plots if there is demand;
- DCC whilst recognising the health benefits associated with allotments, considers undertaking a rental review;

Who are the main stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users):

Residents of County Durham, current allotment tenants, applicants on waiting lists, allotment associations, Town and Parish Councils and the Northern Region Allotment Association.

## Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics?

Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure
Age	N	Y
Disability	N	Y
Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)	N	Y
Pregnancy and maternity	N	Y
Race (ethnicity)	N	Y
Religion or Belief	N	Y
Sex (gender)	N	Y

Sexual orientation	N	Y
Transgender	N	Y

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause adverse impact. Record full details and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

Negative impact is not anticipated as a result of the proposed recommendations.

How will this policy/proposal/practice promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between people from different groups?

It is uncertain at this point of the potential impact depending on the recommendations adopted by Cabinet. However, the physical and mental health benefits of regular spells of gardening together with the nutritional value of vegetables and fruit grown on an allotment plot will have a positive effect on all protected characteristics

The recommendations made by the review will help to ensure a consistent approach across the county in the management of allotment sites ensuring that allotment plots are used for the proper purpose of cultivation. DCC will continue to promote the availability of allotment plots using various media including social media to ensure that all the residents of County Durham are aware of the allotment provision in County Durham and the application process.

A specific recommendation in relation to the provision of smaller sized plots will be of benefit to certain protected characteristics (age and disability) providing an opportunity to access smaller more manageable plots and take advantage of the associated health benefits (mental and physical) from having an allotment plot.

## Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

Please **outline** your data sets and/or proposed evidence sources, highlight any gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record greater detail and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

As part of the review process evidence was received from the Allotment Team (ReaL Service Grouping) on the current allotment policy, detail of why it had not been implemented in full, improvements in management in the last five years and allotment policies adopted by other Local Authorities via the Northern Region Allotment Association.

In addition, the review group considered the proposed policy, tenancy agreement and transition arrangements developed by the Service Grouping and visited several allotment sites in the county to see 'first hand' direct management by DCC and by allotment associations on behalf of DCC. The group also met with Town and Parish Councils to discuss their management approach and any issues/challenges they may have and to discuss with those T&PCs that currently do not manage sites whether they would consider taking over in the future the management of allotment sites with the help and support of DCC.

### Screening Summary

On the basis of this screening is there:	Confirm which refers (Y/N)
Evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics which will proceed to full assessment?	Individual EIAs will be undertaken by the relevant service grouping following agreement by Cabinet of any of the recommendations contained in the review report.
No evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics?	

### Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: Tom Gorman, O&S Manager	Date: 18 November 2019
Service equality representative sign off: Mary Gallagher, Equality Team Leader	Date: 18 November 2018

If not proceeding to full assessment please return completed screenings to your service equality representative and forward a copy to [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk)