

Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

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. Completion of this template allows us to provide a written record of our equality analysis and demonstrate due regard. It must be used as part of decision making processes with relevance to equality.

Please contact equalities@durham.gov.uk for any necessary support.

Section One: Description and Screening

Service/Team or Section	Strategy, Partnerships and Commissioning
Lead Officer name and job title	Strategy, Partnerships and Commissioning Manager (Planning and Housing Service)
Subject of the impact assessment	Social Housing Allocations Policy review
Report date (Cabinet/CMT/Mgt team etc)	REG – 30 th October 2024 CMT – 13 th November 2024 Cabinet – 4 th December 2024
MTFP Reference (if relevant)	
EIA Start Date	4 th November 2024
EIA Review Date	

Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice which is the subject of this impact assessment.

In County Durham, a Choice Based Allocations scheme is in operation to allocate social housing to people on the housing register, as part of the Durham Key Options (DKO) partnership. The DKO Partnership is made up of Durham County Council and its four key housing partners. The wider partnership is also used to advertise and allocate other types of housing including low-cost home ownership and those in the private rented sector, however this consultation is relevant only to how social housing is allocated via the Allocations Policy.

The Allocations Policy was last reviewed in 2017, it is therefore timely to take account of the relevant changes across the housing sector including the current housing crisis and the considerable sustained pressure on the supply of social housing. There are also changes in National and Local Policy that need to be considered when allocating social housing. Durham County Council and its partners have agreed that the time is now right to comprehensively review the Durham Allocations Policy.

The purpose of this first consultation document is to understand the view of the public and key stakeholders on several key issues related to how the allocations scheme works. The first consultation will run from the 15 January and close on the 12 March 2025. This full consultation issues paper will contain some technical questions and will be appropriate for Registered Providers (RPs) and other housing professionals. There is also a shorter less technical summary paper for the public and a shorter consultation survey which will seek the views of the general public. A second consultation will take place later in autumn 2025 where the key findings from this consultation on the Issues paper will be taken into consideration and a revised allocations policy will be tested in public.

The final allocations policy will be approved by the Durham County Councils Cabinet reflecting democratic accountability on the way in which social houses in County Durham are allocated.

How is the Current Allocations Policy Managed?

The Allocations Scheme is the statutory responsibility of the Council. In Durham there is an active partnership between registered housing providers and the County Council that was established in 2009 to implement and oversee the scheme. The partners are:

- Durham County Council
- Believe housing
- Karbon Homes
- Livin, and
- North Star Housing

The partnership enables a consistent policy and procedural approach when allocating properties. The Council estimates that around 92% (43,000 properties) of available social housing is advertised and allocated via the allocations scheme.

As part of the partnership, the housing providers above let 100% of their housing stock in County Durham via the Durham Key Options partnership agreement. As part of the allocation scheme, partners are committed to a joint Allocations Policy. The policy covers all partners when allocating properties within the County boundary. Any other policy that partners may have is only used by them outside County Durham. All of the partners own stock outside of County Durham and a couple of the RPs have separate allocations policies for stock outside of the boundary of the County.

In addition to the formal partnership a further 16 registered providers (RPs) are signed up to a nomination agreement which assist the Council in addressing housing need. This agreement requires the signatories (sub-partners) to nominate at least 50% of their empty properties to be let to applicants from the housing register. The sub-partners are:

- Accent Group

- Anchor Hanover
- Bernicia Homes
- Castles and Coasts Housing
- DASH – Durham Action on Single Housing
- DAMHA – Durham Aged Miners Housing Association
- Gentoo
- Hellens Residential
- Home Group
- Housing 21
- Johnnie Johnson Housing
- Places for People
- Railway Housing Association
- Riverside North-East
- Sherburn House Charity
- Thirteen Group

The sub-partners request nominations via Durham County Council's allocations team. The nominating provider will then allocate from the shortlist of applicants and then rehouse. The nomination agreement with the sub-partners is monitored monthly by Durham County Council to check compliance.

The total stock of houses that would fall solely under the allocations policy from the main four partners in County Durham is approximately 39,500 houses. The sub-partners have in addition approximately 7,000 properties, of which at least 50% are allocated via the allocations policy.

The consultation has been designed to be as inclusive as possible for all residents and targeted towards any relevant groups who may otherwise be excluded from the consultation process .

Who are the main people impacted and/or stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users, community representatives):

- The public wishing to move within the social housing sector (or into the social housing sector) within County Durham
- Durham County Council
- Registered Providers signed to the DCC Nomination Agreement

Anyone who lives in, studies in, works in, visits, or has an interest in living in County Durham may be interested in the Housing Strategy. This includes the general public, council staff, Elected Members, landlords, registered providers, housing developers and landowners, various partners, stakeholders from various sectors and interest groups or communities, Area Action Partnerships,

Town/Parish Councils, Neighbourhood Forums and statutory consultees / prescribed bodies as defined by the Government.

Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics¹?

Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Yes, No or Unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Yes, No or Unsure
Age	Yes	Yes
Disability	Yes	Yes
Gender reassignment	U	U
Marriage and civil partnership (only in relation to 'eliminate discrimination')	No	No
Pregnancy and maternity	U	U
Race	U	U
Religion or Belief	No	No
Sex	Yes	Yes
Sexual orientation	U	U

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause discrimination or negative impact. Record full details and any mitigating actions in section 2 of this assessment.

The Allocations Scheme is the statutory responsibility of the Council. In Durham there is an active partnership between registered housing providers and the County Council. Its purpose is to set out how social housing will be allocated across the County.

¹ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics>

The Allocation Policy Issues Paper recognises the importance of meeting housing needs of those most in need in the County. There is potential for negative impact on some protected characteristics as some groups needs are prioritised over others. This includes:-

Key Issue 1 Qualification Criteria- Removing Band 4 (no housing need) could impact younger people more than others who may be more likely to register in this Band as they do not have a current housing need but are registered in case they should have a need in the future or pre-empting a need in the future.

An unintended consequence of removing a band could be that some of the applicants in this band enter other bands and so impact these waiting times to be housed. This includes: Age (wishing to live independently- who may be more likely to be young people wanting to leave home), care leavers, overcrowded housing. Disability- unsuitable housing, medical welfare grounds, urgent medical reasons.

Key Issue 3 Local Lettings Policy, depending on what issues a Local Lettings Policy prioritises, other protected characteristics may be negatively impacted if the policy does not meet their needs.

Key Issues 4 Priority of Homeless Cases- If homeless prevention cases are prioritised over those who are already statutory homeless this could have a negative impact on single men who make up a large proportion of this cohort as other cases are addressed and people housed ahead of them. We also recognise that LGBT people and minority ethnic groups can be disproportionately affected by homelessness.

The review is at an early stage, with the first of the consultations seeking views to inform any policy changes. Consultation will therefore be wide reaching and targeted at service users and any groups may otherwise be potentially excluded from consultations and impacted by the policy. This includes consultation with social rental tenants, those who are homeless, young people, people with disabilities.

The policy review is based on the premise that everyone in County Durham should have access to safe and secure housing that meets their needs. It is recognised that some groups may be more in need of assistance to gain safe and secure housing than other. This includes children leaving care, people fleeing domestic abuse, veterans, people at risk of homelessness or people currently experiencing homelessness, people with medical needs, people currently not in suitable housing.

The Allocations Policy will prioritise groups for social housing based on those most in need on application. We will help and support people to

prevent them becoming homeless and support those who are homeless to be housed in permanent accommodation.

We are committed to placing people in social housing that best meets their needs.

Please provide **brief** details of positive impact. How will this policy/proposal 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?

The Allocations Policy will cover the whole of County Durham that will be developed and delivered through working closely with partners across the county and for the benefit of all of our residents. We will make use of the County Durham Partnership, DKO Board and other relevant groups in developing and delivering the Policy.

Community consultation and engagement will be promoted as part of the development and delivery of the policy. Consultation will be carried out with local partners, groups, social housing tenants, residents and relevant agencies, which will foster good relations between people from different groups.

There are potential positive impacts across the protected characteristics especially in terms of age (younger and older people), disability. Engagement and assessment of equality impact is very much locality specific depending on need.

Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your data analysis and any findings?

Please **outline** any data you have and/or proposed sources (e.g. service user or census data, research findings). Highlight any data gaps and say whether or not

you propose to carry out consultation. Record your detailed analysis, in relation to the impacted protected characteristics, in section 2 of this assessment.

TBC

Screening Summary

On the basis of the information provided in this equality impact screening (section 1), are you proceeding to a full impact assessment (sections 2&3 of this template)?

Please confirm (Yes/No)

Yes

Sign Off

Lead officer sign off:

Peter Ollivere

Date:

22/11/2024

Equality representative sign off (where required):

Ruth Ashton

Date:

22/11/2024

If carrying out a full assessment please proceed to sections two and three

If not proceeding to full assessment, please ensure your screening record is **attached to any relevant decision-making records or reports**, retain a copy for update where necessary, and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk

If you are unsure of assessing impact please contact the corporate equalities team for further advice: equalities@durham.gov.uk

Section Two: Data analysis and assessment of impact

Please provide details of impacts for people with different protected characteristics relevant to your screening findings. You need to decide if there is or likely to be a differential impact for some. Highlight the positives e.g. benefits for certain groups and advancement of equality, as well as the negatives e.g. barriers or exclusion of particular groups. Record the evidence you have used to support or explain your conclusions, including any necessary mitigating actions to ensure fair treatment.

Protected Characteristic: Age		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to age?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
Care Leavers	See key issue 1	

Protected Characteristic: Disability		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to disability?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: Gender reassignment		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to gender reassignment?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: Marriage and civil partnership (only in relation to 'eliminate discrimination')		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to marriage and civil partnership?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: Pregnancy and maternity		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to pregnancy and maternity?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: Race		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to race?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: Religion or belief		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to religion or belief?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: Sex		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to sex?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: Sexual orientation		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to sexual orientation?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Section Three: Conclusion and Review

Summary

Please provide a brief summary of your findings; a summary of any positive and/or negative impacts across the protected characteristics, links to the involvement of different groups and/or public consultation, mitigations and conclusions made.

Will this promote positive relationships between different communities? If so how?

Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescales for implementation	In which plan will the action appear?

Review and connected assessments

Are there any additional or connected equality impact assessments that need to be undertaken? (If yes, provide details)	
When will this assessment be reviewed? Please also insert this date at the front of the template	

Sign Off

Lead officer sign off:	Date:
Equality representative sign off (where required):	Date:

Please ensure:

- The findings of this EIA are carefully considered and used to inform any related decisions and policy development

- **A summary of findings is included within the body of any relevant reports or decision-making records**
- **The EIA is attached to reports or relevant decision-making records and the report Implications Appendix 1 is noted that an EIA has been undertaken**

Please retain a copy for review and update where necessary, and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk