

# Budget Savings Proposals Full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

## Section 1: General Information

### **1a) Name of the savings proposal**

Decommissioning of Housing Link, AHWB/6.

### **1b) Service area**

Supporting People

### **1c) Service manager**

Carrie Kilpatrick

### **1d) Name and role of the officer/s completing the EQIA**

Katharine Marks (Acting Service Head, Disabilities and Health)

## Section 2: Information about changes to services

### 2a) In brief please explain the savings proposals and the reasons for this change

The Housing Link Team are based in the East London Foundation Trust and provide floating support for people experiencing mental ill health who live independently. The team support people who are at risk of losing their tenancy. The service currently receives approximately 180 referrals per year of which approximately 70-80 are allocated for support within Housing Link. The support provided includes advocacy and advice on housing matters as well as co-ordination of services to support independent living such as blitz cleans, access to benefits and debt advice.

Few boroughs have a service of this type; generally work to support service users with mental ill health with housing is carried out as a core function of the community mental health teams within the Care Programme Approach. Specifically for inpatients, who represent a significant part of the workload of this team, it is best practice for care coordinators from the CMHTS to start the process of care planning as soon as possible after admission. Such practice enables early identification of any risk to accommodation that admission to hospital might give rise to and it is part of the role of the care coordinator to address this.

This service also operates along side Look Ahead Housing and Care Floating Support Service which is a commissioned floating support service that provides support to people at risk of losing their tenancy with a range or presenting vulnerabilities, including mental ill health. This service was competitively procured in November 2009 and is able to provide what is essentially the same service within their current capacity of 439 individuals at any one time. This service accepts service users from the same referrals agencies in the Borough and has the same criteria where an individual has mental health needs:

- Housing Link accept service users where the person is; in contact with secondary mental health services; or anyone with complex mental health needs who is not currently in contact but needs help to link in with secondary mental health services; or anyone with mental health needs threatened with imminent eviction or other tenancy breakdown
- LAHC accepts service users where the person has low level or undiagnosed mental health needs and is threatened with imminent eviction or other tenancy breakdown.

The LAHC service was commissioned in line with the Cabinet approved recommendation to move to an holistic or inclusive floating support service that improved service user experience by being able to support individuals with a broad range of needs rather than expecting people to move to new services specific to their presenting needs. It also filled a number of recognised gaps in the then existing provision. At the point of commissioning the new service increased capacity in floating support services from 403 to 456. Staff will receive development and training relevant to the service user group and are recruited with appropriate experience.

Whilst at the same time guaranteeing service user experience, this service also operates with more efficient value for money indicators in terms of unit costs, costs per hour and caseloads.

It is also the case that the Borough has secured agreement from another specialist floating support service, aimed at people with more intensive mental health needs, to increase their capacity from 359 hours of support per week to 400. Staff are appropriately trained to work with people with intensive mental health needs.

## **2b) What are the equality implications of your proposal?**

Whilst this proposal decommissions a service for people with mental health needs in the Borough, when considered with the increase of specialist and non specialist provision, and considering the current capacity of existing services this is not considered to be a significant loss to overall service availability.

This proposal streamlines referral routes and to some extent removes the choice of service for service users, but individuals with mental health issues will still have access to support from the Community Mental Health Teams and the floating support service currently commissioned by the Council and this is comparable to other London boroughs. People will also be able to access universal services such as the Housing Support team and Citizens Advice.

When the current capacity and average turnover of the Housing Link team are considered it is anticipated that at least 50% of service users currently receiving a service will no longer need that service at the point of decommissioning. More detailed work will be undertaken to ascertain the number of service users who will require an ongoing service and an appropriate new service will be secured with their involvement. The decommissioning process will be carefully and thoughtfully project managed, with appropriate

service users consultation and communication to ensure continuity of a service for service users. This means that individuals will be supported through the transition to a new service provider where appropriate with an extended handover period if this is needed. The most vulnerable service users will be identified early in the planning process to facilitate this.

If the proposal is agreed, the plans will be communicated in an accessible way to ensure vulnerable service users are aware of the process. This will include discussion and support in one to one meetings.

Analysis of existing services indicates this transition can be accommodated within existing capacity.

### Section 3: Equality Impact Assessment

With reference to the analysis above, for each of the equality strands in the table below please record and evidence your conclusions around equality impact in relation to the savings proposal.

<p><b>Race</b></p> <p><i>Identify the effect of the policy on different racial groups.</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on specific ethnic groups? <b>No</b> Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>Housing Link does not provide an ethnicity specific service. In 2009 the ethnicity of people referred to the services was as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>29% Asian</li><li>19% Black</li><li>43% White</li><li>9% Other</li></ul> <p>All other floating support services, universal services and CMHTs work with people from all racial groups and are monitored on this through the contract monitoring process.</p>
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**Disability**

*Identify the effect of the policy on different disability groups*

Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on disabled people? **NO**  
Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.

Housing Link provides a service for people with mental health problems. As described previously other services already exist which can meet this need.

In 2009/10 Housing Link received 212 referrals of which 82 were allocated within the service. Of the referrals received, 11% were deemed to be ineligible for the service and 28% received advice/signposting or referral to other services. A further 8% declined the support or had already resolved the problem.

Already existing commissioned services provide similar levels of support to the same group of people.

<p><b>Gender</b></p> <p><i>Identify the effect of the policy on different gender groups (inc Trans) groups</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on men or women? <b>NO</b> Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>This is not a gender specific service and referrals to the service are evenly split between men and women.</p> <p>Other commissioned services and community mental health teams provide a service to both men and women and this is monitored through the usual contract monitoring and tendering processes.</p>
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**Sexual  
Orientation**

*Identify the  
effect of the  
policy on  
members of  
the LGB  
community*

Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on lesbian, gay or bisexual people? **NO**  
Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.

Housing Link is not a specific service for the LGBT community. Monitoring data on this group is not currently collected but people from the LGBT community have access to CMHT support as well as other commissioned services and universal services.

**Religion  
and Belief**

*Identify the  
effect of the  
policy on  
different  
religious  
and faith  
groups*

Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on people who practice a religion or belief? **NO**  
Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.

Housing Link is not a specialist service for people of any particular religious or faith group. We do not currently collect monitoring data on this but other commissioned services and CMHTs support people of all faiths.

<p><b>Age</b></p> <p><i>Identify the effect of the policy on different <b>age</b> groups using the prompts above</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on specific age groups? <b>NO</b> Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>Housing Link provides a service for anyone over the age of 18. Other commissioned and universal services and CMHTs also work with people over the age of 18.</p>
<p><b>Socio-economic</b></p> <p><i>Identify the effect of the policy in relation to <b>socio-economic</b> inequalities</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on people with low incomes? <b>NO</b> Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>Although we do not currently collect monitoring information on this it is likely that most people in need of housing support are on low incomes. Benefits maximisation advice and support is available from CAB as well as being part of the service provided by other commissioned floating support services.</p>

<p><b>Other</b></p> <p><i>Identify if there are groups, other than those already considered, that may be adversely affected by the policy?</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on any other people (e.g. carers)? <b>NO</b> Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>Housing Link does not provide support to carers. Support for carers will continue to be available from the community mental health teams and from the carer's centre.</p>
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<p><b>Staff</b></p> <p><i>Identify if there are any staff groups, , that may be adversely affected by the policy?</i></p>	<p>Will the change in your policy/service have an adverse impact on staff? yes/no Please describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion.</p> <p>This Savings Proposal will lead to the decommissioning of the Housing Link Service. The posts in the service will be deleted under the Council's Management of Change procedure.</p>
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#### **Section 4: Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan**

Please list in the table below any adverse impact identified and, where appropriate, steps that could be taken to mitigate this impact.

If you consider it likely that your proposal will have an adverse impact on a particular group (s) and you cannot identify steps which would mitigate or reduce this impact, you will need to demonstrate that you have considered at least one alternative way of delivering the change which has less of an adverse impact.

<b>Adverse impact</b>	<b>Please describe the actions that will be taken to mitigate this impact</b>
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<b>People with mental health problems may lose support during the decommissioning period.</b>	<p>Service users currently supported by Housing Link will be supported in the transition as follows;</p> <p>A cut off date for accepting new referrals agreed. Currently this is proposed as 13<sup>th</sup> February 2011.</p> <p>A project plan will be developed with Housing Link staff to ensure the process of decommissioning the service takes account of the needs of service users. This will include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communication with other providers, referrers and service users to highlight the change in service and ensure alternative referral routes are in place.</li><li>• Where the work being done with a service user can be completed by Housing Link within the decommissioning timeframe it will be.</li><li>• Where service users are identified as needing continued work for a longer period of time a gradual and managed handover will be arranged with the care co-ordinator or other specialist or universal service as required.</li></ul> <p>The project planning for decommissioning is proposed to start at the end of the consultation period.</p>


If an adverse impact cannot be mitigated please describe an alternative option, its costs and the equality impact.

**Section 5: Future Review and Monitoring**

Please explain how and when the actual equality impact of these changes will be reviewed and monitored.

This will be monitored through contract monitoring processes.



## APPENDIX A: Equality Impact Assessment Test of Relevance

TRIGGER QUESTIONS	YES / NO	IF YES PLEASE BRIEFLY EXPLAIN.....
Does the change reduce resources available to address inequality?	No	
<b>CHANGES TO A SERVICE</b>		
Does the change alter access to the service?	Yes	Access to support for people with mental health problems to enable them to maintain tenancies will be provided through the Community mental health teams and the floating support service rather than Housing Link.
Does the change involve revenue raising?	No	
Does the change alter who is eligible for the service?	No	There is no change to the Council's FACs eligibility
Does the change involve a reduction or removal of income transfers to service users?	No	
Does the change involve a contracting out of a service currently provided in house?	Yes	The floating support service is provided by an external provider following an extensive tendering exercise. The Community Mental Health teams are joint teams with East London Foundation Trust. LBTH staff are seconded to ELFT.

<b>CHANGES TO STAFFING</b>		
<b>Does the change involve a reduction in staff?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	All staff affected will be subject to the council's Handling Organisational Change procedure. Tower hamlets aims to provide best value services to the community and regards it's staff as it's most important asset to do this. Changes to service delivery and within the organization inevitably take place and the Borough will accommodate these changes in a positive way, wherever possible providing development for employees careers and without threat to job security.
<b>Does the change involve a redesign of the roles of staff?</b>	<b>No</b>	