

# Equality Impact Assessment - update of existing function - Homeless Allocations – 08/12/06

## A: Summary Details

Directorate: **Housing**

Section: **Homeless & Housing Advice Services**

Person responsible for the assessment: **Mike Bobbett**

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Name of Policy to be assessed: **Homeless Allocations**

Is this a new or revised policy: **Current function – EIA re-assessment**

Date policy scheduled for Overview and Scrutiny/Cabinet/LAB: **N/A**

## B: Preparation

### Previous Equality Impact Assessment recommendations:

The service has a commitment to valuing diversity; this commitment translates in service delivery. It is demonstrated in the services introduction of diversity monitoring of all six community groups in recognition of the potential impact of homelessness on these groups.

The previous EIA focused on establishing robust monitoring systems and introduced wider monitoring categories to include all six diversity categories. The data used in this re-assessment shows that statistical data can be produced on homeless allocations to temporary accommodation.

The second recommendation was for the introduction of new IT systems to strengthen the allocation procedure. These system upgrades have been delayed to early 2007 and the service has taken opportunity to reinforce the current manual procedures and strengthened the team.

1. Do you have monitoring data available on the number of people (from different target groups) who are using or are potentially impacted upon by your policy?

The service has data available on the number of people allocated temporary accommodation. To ensure equality of outcomes of allocation for different community groups, the data is broken down and assessed by the Corporate approved diversity categories. (This fits well with Census 2001 data categories) The data has been used in Section D: The impact.

The service has also introduced monitoring of customer satisfaction surveys by diversity. The profile of respondents is looked at and work is being done to further improve data analysis and methodology. The service can demonstrate service improvements following customer feedback. At the point of completing this EIA, data analysis by diversity was not available although this can be done. The service will therefore look at the analysis of satisfaction rates by diversity in Health Check reports as a recommendation from this EIA.

The Councils' Complaints procedure applies to the Homeless Service. Data on complaints is reported to the management team. The current data covering complaints received from April 06 to October 06 for the Homeless Service has been included in this assessment and the figures are illustrated as below.

Complaints received :

Complaints Stage	Complaints received
Stage 1	24
Stage 2	6
Stage 3	4

Ethnicity	Complaints received
Asian	6
White	6
Black	2

There appears to be an issue with the availability of diversity data for approximately 50% of the cases. The service will need to raise the issue of the lack of accessible information on complaints by diversity from the Corporate IT system. Were the data is available, the analysis of the data is not automated for diversity purposes and this will need to be raised as complaints should be reported in Health Check reports. Of the complaints received, only 6 were upheld and at Stage 1 only. Of these, 2 were are in relation to temporary accommodation making reference to pest control and condition of furniture in temporary accommodation. Give the small numbers it is difficult to make general judgements. However, given the issue, the Service is looking to introduce Service Level Agreement that will incorporate maintenance standards.

Complaints does not appear to be an issue with the Service, however, the service will look to include analysis of complaints by diversity in the annual Health Check report.

## **C: Your Policy or Function**

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets Homelessness strategy aims to expand housing opportunities; including opportunities for all members of the community, such as those who may have support needs, and generally those who may be disadvantaged, by providing assistance and access to services which offer prevention and/or access to settled homes.

The Homeless service is placed under a general duty to provide advice and information on preventing homelessness and housing options. Homeless legislation also requires authorities to assist individuals and families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and to seek assistance and apply for access to housing.

The Homelessness Act 2002 (an amendment of the Housing Act 1996) extends the definition of priority need to include 16 and 17 year olds and those leaving care under the age of 21.

When an application is received an assessment is undertaken to determine if a statutory duty is owed to the applicant. During the process of conducting homeless assessments and for the period between successful application and achieving permanent accommodation through Choice Based Lettings, the Service provides temporary accommodation.

The outcomes the Service aims to achieve are fair, consistent decision making where allocation of temporary accommodation is made to a homeless applicant.

This EIA covers the homeless allocation process for assigning temporary accommodation and uses data on allocation of temporary accommodation by community groups. The data is also broken down by the type of property an applicant is placed in.

The offer of the type of property will depend on the availability of a property within the portfolio at the time of need. The property portfolio available to the Homeless Service for temporary allocation consists of 70% private sector furnished accommodation with the remainder being either Council owned or recent stock transfer properties to partner RSL's. Council owned property is furnished by the Council at tenancy start date. All properties are inspected when a tenant leaves and the property is prepared for the next homeless applicant. The quality of the portfolio is relatively good although there is always room for improvement; Housing Needs Survey (2004) illustrates Council stock as being unsuitable due to major disrepair or unfitness in relation to Housing Association and private rented stock. The service is currently undertaking a tender process that includes a Service Level Agreement that incorporates enhanced maintenance standards to ensure quality of accommodation regardless of the property type and the applicant placed in the property.

#### **D: The Impact**

When looking at the data, please note that the first column uses Census data as comparative data for a profile of Tower Hamlets as a percentage, the second column shows the number of applications in temporary accommodation where relevant data has been specified. The remaining columns show the percentage of each respective category assigned to property type.

**NB:** B&B = bed & breakfast, PLA = private sector provision, HAL = RSL stock, BPL = Council owned.

#### **Gender:**

**GENDER (note: the figures of the homeless service relate to single applicants only and not families)**

	<b>Census</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>B&amp;B</b>	<b>PLA</b>	<b>HAL</b>	<b>BPL</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>24.3%</b>	<b>42.9%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>29.4%</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>22.1%</b>	<b>42.4%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>33.4%</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>512</b>	<b>22.9%</b>	<b>42.6%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>32.0%</b>

Historically, men have always been more likely to become homeless than women have. Research indicates that the factors put forward include a greater inclination to use drugs and alcohol and, therefore, be more prone to addiction/dependency. One of the key factors is sited as rejection by family and/or subsequent offending/imprisonment. It is also accepted that more men than women join the armed forces and that on leaving the service, it places the individual at a greater chance of becoming homeless. All of these lead to a greater chance of becoming homeless.

Such matters are taken into account when determining vulnerability under homeless legislation – only those people who are deemed to be vulnerable will be owed the full housing duty. It follows that as more men than women are prone to substance

misuse and/or institutionalisation (prison or armed forces) that there is a greater likelihood of vulnerability for such reason.

The table demonstrates total equality in the distribution of gender types across property types.

**Race:**

	<b>Census</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>B&amp;B</b>	<b>PLA</b>	<b>HAL</b>	<b>BPL</b>
<b>Asian</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>1314</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>53.6%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>31.3%</b>
<b>Black</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>58.6%</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>27.8%</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>56.4%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>24.8%</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>2345</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>55.3%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>29.0%</b>

It has been accepted by all major agencies that there is a greater likelihood of homelessness amongst BME communities and it might be expected that applications from local BME residents will be higher.

Tower Hamlets has a significant BME community. Households trends demonstrates that BME households are likely to be larger, much more likely to consist of four or more people and nearly twice as likely to have dependent children living with them. The Bangladeshi community is the largest minority community group within the BME community and Bangladeshi households have a trend of being households with more than the average number of children, with prominent rates also for Pakistani, Black African and Black Other households.

Housing Needs survey (2004) states BME households as more likely to be living in social rented accommodation and Asian households stating the highest incidence of unsuitable housing. Combined together, these may contribute to the figures in acceptances.

24% of applications are received from the White community who make up 51% of the local population. Given the housing needs of other community groups, and that the work with the partner agencies does not indicate that this particular group has had difficulty in accessing services, no action is proposed in this regard.

The service has access to a dedicated member of staff who speaks Bengali (Sylheti) and also staff who speak community languages including Somali. In cases where there is a need for other community languages, the service has access to the Corporate Language Support Service.

## Disability:

	<b>Census*</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>B&amp;B</b>	<b>PLA</b>	<b>HAL</b>	<b>BPL</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>15.9%</b>	<b>43.5%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>34.1%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>1312</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>49.1%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>32.6%</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>1450</b>				

\*the census indicates 17% have a limiting long-term illness; the question asked by H&HAS is whether a person regards themselves as having a disability. This discrepancy may account for the variance between the local population and those that apply as homeless. Of the applicants who state they have a disability, only 52 % are accepted so this will limit the number of disabled people the Allocation Team will be asked to service. The Homeless service will undertake an Equality Impact Assessment on advice provision which will cover access to the Homeless Service to identify any actual or potential impact on this community.

The table demonstrates there is no discrimination by disability across property types.

**Age:** (single people only, not families)

	<b>Census</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>B&amp;B</b>	<b>PLA</b>	<b>HAL</b>	<b>BPL</b>
<b>16-17</b>		<b>41</b>	<b>70.7%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>17.1%</b>
<b>18-59</b>		<b>429</b>	<b>19.1%</b>	<b>45.5%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>33.1%</b>
<b>60+</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>14.3%</b>	<b>45.2%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>35.7%</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>512</b>				

	<b>Census</b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>45-64</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>20-44</b>	<b>62%</b>
<b>16-19</b>	<b>7%</b>

For the majority of 16-17 yr olds self-contained accommodation is not suitable so Bed & Breakfast accommodation is used prior to identifying suitable support accommodation.

## **SEXUAL ORIENTATION (SINGLE PEOPLE ONLY)**

	<b>Census</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>B&amp;B</b>	<b>PLA</b>	<b>HAL</b>	<b>BPL</b>
<b>Refused</b>	<b>n/k</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>12.9%</b>	<b>48.3%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>36.0%</b>
<b>Bisexual</b>	<b>n/k</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Gay men</b>	<b>n/k</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23.1%</b>	<b>69.2%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>
<b>Heterosexual</b>	<b>n/k</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>39.9%</b>	<b>30.3%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>27.5%</b>
<b>Lesbian</b>	<b>n/k</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>512</b>	<b>22.9%</b>	<b>42.6%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>32.0%</b>

It is difficult to establish trends as the service finds that responses to this question provided on a voluntary basis is not significantly high enough to enable a sound evidence based judgement to be made on the impact of the allocation process on this community group. The service will continue to monitor this to identify trends.

**Religion:**

	<b>Census</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>B&amp;B</b>	<b>PLA</b>	<b>HAL</b>	<b>BPL</b>
<b>Buddhist</b>	1%	9	22.2%	44.4%	11.1%	22.2%
<b>Christian</b>	39%	245	15.1%	56.3%	6.9%	21.6%
<b>Hindu</b>	1%	3	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	0.0%
<b>Jewish</b>	1%	3	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Muslim</b>	36%	614	8.0%	43.2%	11.1%	37.8%
<b>Sikh</b>	0.5%	2	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%
<b>Other</b>	0.5%	20	20.0%	50.0%	10.0%	20.0%
<b>None</b>	14%	216	23.6%	43.1%	7.95	25.5%
<b>N/K</b>	7%	1408	1.3%	62.6%	8.6%	27.5%
<b>Total</b>		2520	6.5%	55.3%	9.0%	29.1%

Given that the two largest BME groups in the borough are Bangladeshi and Somali, both of which are almost entirely Muslim, these figures bear a similarity to those regarding race and similar reasons for discrepancies apply.

Recommendations from this assessment are stated in the Action Plan below.

Please sign and date this form, keep one copy and send one to Equalities Team..

Lead Officer           **Mike Bobbett**

Service Head           **Colin Cormack**

Date                      **20/12/06**



## Action Plan – Housing Homeless Services - Allocations

Recommendation	Key activity	Progress milestones	Officer Responsible	Progress
Monitor customer satisfaction survey by diversity and report in service Health Check report	Analyse data Report results in Health Check reports including follow-up action	Annual Health Check report timescale	Carol Johnson, Mike Bobbett and Colin Cormack	
Implement new procedure and improved IT for allocating temporary accommodation	Specify process, transfer current and historical data from existing system, test against live scripts and implement	It implementation plan timescale (indicative date Q4 06/07)	Sue Hayes, Mike Bobbett and Colin Cormack	Processes specified