

# Equality Impact Assessment - update of existing function - Homeless Assessments – 30/9/06

## A: Summary Details

Directorate: **Housing**

Section: **Homeless & Housing Advice Services**

Person responsible for the assessment: **David Gingell**

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

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 assessments undertaken and cases where the duty to house has been accepted.

This re-assessment will focus on new data available to undertake an assessment of the impact of the homeless assessment process. Homeless services data has been produced by acceptances by six key community group. This decision to look at monitoring data for single/family applications for some community groups (and not cover all) was made based on eligibility for assistance under homeless legislation. For single applicants the process looks at vulnerability (including drugs and alcohol abuse) issues of the applicant and issues such as gender, disability, sexual orientation and age could be significant factors in the outcome of an applicants

request for help. Families with dependant children would automatically qualify for assistance and the data looks at race and faith as significant potential factors for outcomes.

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 impacted on by assessment process. To ensure equality of outcomes of assessments 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.

### **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.

The key function of the service is to conduct homeless assessments and to reach a decision on eligibility, homelessness, priority need, intentional homelessness and local connection and to inform the applicant in writing of the decision giving full reasons were a negative decision is reached.

This EIA covers the homeless assessment process but recognises that there are other elements of the homeless service which are linked to issues around access to the homeless service and therefore the assessment process.

The first point of contact for an applicant is the Enquiries and Prevention Team who undertake a short interview to determine the housing position of the applicant, this part of the process looks at the eligibility criteria and undertakes verification of the applicants situation using a set form to make a decision. One of the outcomes is to refer to the team who undertakes the assessment.

The service also has an advice and information service which is freely available to the community, a separate EIA on this function will help to assess impact and one looking at the outcomes for the Enquiries and Prevention Team will also be undertaken.

The outcomes the service aims to achieve are homelessness prevention and fair, consistent decision making where homeless assessments are undertaken.

## 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 received for homeless assessments for decision making as a percentage. The final column shows the number of cases where a positive decision was made (a full housing duty was accepted) as a percentage of the number of applications.

### Gender:

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

	<b>CENSUS</b>	<b>APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>ACCEPTANCES</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>40%</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 cited 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.

**Race:**

<b>RACE</b>	<b>CENSUS</b>	<b>APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>ACCEPTANCES</b>
<b>Asian</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>Black</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>N/K</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>54%</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.

33% 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 any particular groups has had difficulty in accessing services, no action is proposed in this regard.

It is noted that only 42% of applications from white people result in a positive decision against 68% and 63% from Asian and Black people respectively. There is a greater likelihood amongst BME groups to allow adult children to remain at home for longer; often until a child is expected. Being pregnant or having a dependant child proffers automatic priority for housing under homeless legislation. There is, therefore, a greater chance of young white people being excluded by their parents prior to starting their own family. Such people are likely

to be refused assistance as being non-priority. The service has access to a dedicated member of staff who speaks Bengali (Sylheti) and also staff who speak community languages including Somali.

**Disability:**

**DISABILITY**

	<b>CENSUS*</b>	<b>APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>ACCEPTANCES</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>17%*</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>58%</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.

To further strengthen positive impact on disabled clients the service will look at the impact of access to the service in separate Equality Impact Assessments on Housing Advice and Housing Enquiries and Prevention Teams function. This will also look at the translation of key documents.

**Age:**

**AGE (single people only, not families)**

	<b>CENSUS</b>	<b>APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>ACCEPTANCES</b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>45-64</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>20-44</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>16-19</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>57%</b>

There is an automatic priority for housing for people aged 16-17 so it is expected that a greater proportion in this age band would be owed a duty.

Equally a person may be vulnerable and, therefore, in priority for housing as a result of old age. It is not, therefore, unexpected that proportionately a larger number of older people have successful applications.

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

	<b>CENSUS</b>	<b>APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>ACCEPTANCES</b>
<b>Lesbian</b>	n/k	1%	66%
<b>Gay Men</b>	n/k	4%	44%
<b>Bisexual</b>	n/k	3%	42%
<b>Heterosexual</b>	n/k	68%	37%
<b>Not known</b>	n/k	25%	43%

All figures regarding proportionate acceptances are similar and the actual number of lesbian applicants is so low (3, with 2 accepted) that a trend cannot be established. 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 assessment process on this community group. The service will continue to monitor this to identify trends.

### **Religion:**

<b>RELIGION</b>	<b>CENSUS</b>	<b>APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>ACCEPTANCES</b>
<b>Buddhist</b>	1%	1%	36%
<b>Christian</b>	39%	23%	54%
<b>Hindu</b>	1%	>0.5%	75%
<b>Jewish</b>	1%	>0.5%	50%
<b>Muslim</b>	36%	48%	66%
<b>Sikh</b>	0.5%	>0.5%	0%
<b>Other</b>	0.5%	2%	22%
<b>None</b>	14%	14%	49%
<b>N/K</b>	7%	11%	47%

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        **David Gingell**

Service Head       **Colin Cormack**

Date                 **24/10/05**

## Action Plan – Housing Homeless Services - Assessments

Recommendation	Key activity	Progress milestones	Officer Responsible	Progress
Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment of the Housing Advice service	Gather data on access to the service Undertake assessment with staff involvement	April 06- Undertake assessment using data from previous year	David Gingell	
Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment of the Housing Enquiries and Prevention Team	Gather data on access to the service Undertake assessment with staff involvement	April 06- Undertake assessment using data from previous year	David Gingell	
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, David Gingell and Colin Cormack	



