

Equality Impact Assessment for Review of Allocation Scheme

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Date commenced: 22nd August 2022

Date completed: 26th August 2022

Background

Context

This section provides a summary of the decision to be made and the context for the decision within wider Council priorities.

Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 requires the Council to operate a scheme for the purpose of the allocation of social housing within the borough to both new and existing tenants. The Act requires that nominations may only come from the Council's Housing Register and the Act provides the framework that sets out who is eligible to join the Housing Register and how priority is determined between applicants, with certain categories of applicant who must be given a reasonable preference for an allocation of social housing.

The Council's interpretation of the framework legislation must be set out in a document adopted by the Council, called an Allocation Scheme. The adopted Allocation Scheme must be published and available upon request.

The Council's Housing Allocation Scheme is designed to ensure that access to subsidised housing supports the needs of residents, the corporate aims of the Council and reflects current legislation.

The current Allocation Scheme was introduced in 2013 and was most recently reviewed in 2017. The policy is designed to make best use of the limited stock available and awards additional priority to applicants who provide a local community contribution, as well as additional priority to certain serving members of the Armed Forces, as required by statute.

Minor amendments to the Allocations Scheme can be made under delegated authority given to The Head of Housing, Health and Environment (or equivalent officer). Several minor amendments have been made since the policy was introduced in 2013.

A full revision of the Allocations Scheme is also required every four years in accordance with the Council's constitution, which require Cabinet approval via the Cabinet Advisory Board. The Allocations Scheme is therefore due to a full revision, having not been reviewed since 2017 and to ensure it is reflective of current statute and guidance.

Scope of equality impact assessment (EqIA)

This section sets out what aspects are being considered, what changes are being made to existing policies or procedures and if there are any aspects that are not being covered and why (for example if they have already been covered in another EqIA).

The current Allocations Scheme was introduced in 2013 and amended in 2017. Amendments are being proposed to support the of prevention homelessness and victims of domestic abuse, by giving additional preference to households threatened with homelessness or who are victims of domestic abuse and occupying refuge or safe place accommodation.

The amendments are also to support young persons leaving care, but excluding the need to fulfil local connection criteria, as it is recognised that care leavers are often moved locality and to help them settle in an area, they feel at home in.

Changes are also being made to the housing need criteria to be placed into one of four priority bands. These changes will end the differentiate treatment of applicants depending on whether they are an existing social housing tenant or a new applicant and will help to ensure that households in greatest housing need, have an better opportunity to secure an allocation of social housing.

These changes to the Allocations Scheme will support to in addressing health inequalities and aims to improve deprivation and social mobility is improved by ensuring that the Council has an Allocation Scheme that treats all applicants fairly and that access to social housing supports the needs of residents.

Data and information

Please see Annex 1 for data relating to our population, Residents' Survey and performance indicators. Specific findings in relation to protected characteristics may be described in more detail within the consideration of impacts.

Relevance to the Public Sector Equality Duty

This section explains which of the following aspects of the Public Sector Equality Duty are relevant and how:

- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.*
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*
- c. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*

The revised scheme will ensure the fair and transparent treatment of all applicants.

The revised Allocation Scheme will provide a fair system of prioritising applicants based on their housing need and time waiting on the housing register. This applies to all applicants.

Persons with a medical or welfare need will be safeguarded by ensuring that a fair proportion of subsidised housing vacancies are provided to this category based on evidence of number of households with those characteristics on the housing register and vacancies arising. It also ensures that persons with a life-threatening illness, are given a better opportunity of securing an allocation of social housing.

It enhances the opportunity of victims of domestic abuse, who are disproportionately, not do exclusively women, by giving them a better opportunity of securing an allocation of social housing.

Regular monitoring of the outcomes from gaining access to the housing register and bidding activity will provide continuous reassurance.

The revised scheme will equalise opportunity to access the register between those with and those without protected characteristics.

Consideration of impacts

Protected characteristics

Disability (including carers)

Summary of available data, statistics or consultation findings held by the service

There are 229 current applicants live on the Housing Register who have been assessed as having a housing need due to a medical or welfare reason. This is detailed in the table below.

Assessed Medical Need	Home Seeker	Transfer Tenant
Urgent Medical Need	3	5
High Medical/Welfare Need	37	459
Low Medical Welfare Need	59	36

Urgent medical grounds

This is defined as a member of the household having been assessed as having a critical need to move as they are unable to remain or return to their current accommodation on medical grounds for example, because:

- they have a life-threatening illness which is being made worse by their housing conditions;
- their current housing is having such a detrimental impact on their health and their ability to live independently and remaining in the accommodation will be seriously harmful or life-threatening;
- they cannot be discharged from hospital until alternative and more suitable accommodation can be provided (subject to the availability of such accommodation);
- they give or receive care without which the recipient of the care is at a significant risk of harm or will have to move into residential care as assessed by the relevant social services team.

High medical grounds

This is where there is evidence that a move to more suitable accommodation will improve a significant health condition substantially, for example where a member of the household has a high need to move for example, because:

- their current housing is unsuitable for severe medical reasons, they are not house-bound and their life is not at risk due to their current housing situation but where their housing conditions are directly contributing to causing serious ill health;
- of a disability which requires adaptations to be carried out to their property to enable them to live independently or to improve the management of the condition, but where their current home has been deemed unsuitable for such adaptations.

Low medical grounds

This is where a member of the household has a moderate need to move for example, because:

- they need to be near family or relatives or medical facility on medical grounds;
- they need sheltered housing or ground floor accommodation;
- the move to more suitable accommodation will improve the management of their condition;
- they give or receive care which is supporting continued independent living.

In addition, applicants with disabilities requiring a property with specific adaptations are identified through one of three categories:

- Category 1 – wheelchair users indoors and outdoors;
- Category 2 – people who cannot manage steps or stairs and may occasionally use a wheelchair;
- Category 3 – independent but can only manage a few steps

The number of applicants live on the Housing Register in each of these categories is detailed in the table below:

Mobility Level	Number of Applicants
Level 1 Mobility	12
Level 2 Mobility	13
Level 3 Mobility	117

How will the proposal impact on people?

The changes to the Allocations Scheme will support applicants with a disability in housing need will have access to the Housing Register for an allocation of social housing, and applicants with a life-threatening illness in housing need have a better opportunity for an allocation of social housing.

Properties with home adaptations to meet the needs of persons with disabilities will be prioritised for applicants in need of these adaptations.

The changes will also end the dealignment between transfer applicants and new home seeking applicants with the same medical housing need, who presently are awarded different priority bands.

What action will be taken to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts?

Regular monitoring of the outcomes from gaining access to the housing register and bidding activity will provide enable amendments to the Allocations Scheme to be made to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts.

By what date will these actions be taken?

Quarterly reviews of Housing Register and bidding data.

Race

Summary of available data, statistics or consultation findings held by the service

The current composition of the ethnic origin of the main applicant on the Housing Register is detailed in the table below.

Row Labels	Count of Applicant Ethnic Origin
White - British	706
White - other	61
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	17
Not Stated	16
Asian or Asian British - Other	13
Other	12
Black or Black British - African	11
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	10
Asian or Asian British - Indian	10
Gypsy or Traveller	9
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	7
Mixed - White and Black African	6
Mixed - White and Asian	5
Prefer not to say	4
Mixed - other	3
Black or Black British - other	2
Arab	2

Black or Black British - Carribean	1
Traveller of Irish descent	1
White - Irish	1
Chinese	1
(blank)	
Grand Total	898

How will the proposal impact on people?

The changes to the Allocations Scheme will ensure that the Council has an Allocation Scheme that treats all applicants fairly and that access to social housing supports the needs of residents.

What action will be taken to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts?

Regular monitoring of the outcomes from gaining access to the housing register and bidding activity will provide enable amendments to the Allocations Scheme to be made to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts.

By what date will these actions be taken?

Quarterly reviews of Housing Register and bidding data.

Sex

Summary of available data, statistics or consultation findings held by the service

The current composition of the gender of the main applicant and main applicant's partner on the Housing Register is detailed in the table below.

Row Labels	Count of Gender
Female	743
Male	475
Transgender	1
Grand Total	1219

How will the proposal impact on people?

These changes to the Allocations Scheme will ensure that the Council has an Allocation Scheme that treats all applicants fairly and that access to social housing supports the needs of residents.

What action will be taken to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts?

Regular monitoring of the outcomes from gaining access to the housing register and bidding activity will provide enable amendments to the Allocations Scheme to be made to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts.

By what date will these actions be taken?

Quarterly reviews of Housing Register and bidding data.

Age (including dementia)

Summary of available data, statistics or consultation findings held by the service

The current composition of the age band of the main applicant on the Housing Register is detailed in the table below.

Row Labels	Count of Applicant Age Band
Between 30 and 34	138
Between 35 and 39	134
65 and over	126
Between 25 and 29	114
Between 40 and 44	96
Between 18 and 24	86
Between 45 and 49	72
Between 50 and 54	54
Between 55 and 59	48
Between 60 and 64	46
Grand Total	914

How will the proposal impact on people?

The changes to the Allocations Scheme will enable older persons, 55 years of age and older, without an identified housing need to be eligible to join the Housing Register for an allocation of sheltered accommodation.

The changes to the Allocations Scheme will ensure that the Council has an Allocation Scheme that treats all applicants fairly and that access to social housing supports the needs of residents.

What action will be taken to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts?

Regular monitoring of the outcomes from gaining access to the housing register and bidding activity will provide enable amendments to the Allocations Scheme to be made to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts.

By what date will these actions be taken?

Quarterly reviews of Housing Register and bidding data.

Religion or Belief

Summary of available data, statistics or consultation findings held by the service

Limited data is held by the service on the religion or belief of the main applicant on the Housing Register is detailed in the table below.

Row Labels	Count of Field
No Religion	112
Christian	60
Muslim	50
I do not wish to answer	32
Other Application	11
Religion	1
Jewish	1
(blank)	
Grand Total	267

How will the proposal impact on people?

The changes to the Allocations Scheme will ensure that the Council has an Allocation Scheme that treats all applicants fairly and that access to social housing supports the needs of residents.

What action will be taken to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts?

Regular monitoring of the outcomes from gaining access to the housing register and bidding activity will provide enable amendments to the Allocations Scheme to be made to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts.

By what date will these actions be taken?

Quarterly reviews of Housing Register and bidding data.

Sexual orientation

Summary of available data, statistics or consultation findings held by the service

Limited data is held by the service on the sexual orientation of the main applicant on the Housing Register is detailed in the table below.

Row Labels	Count of Applicant Sexual Orientation
Heterosexual	58
Prefer not to say	13
Bi-sexual	2
Grand Total	73

How will the proposal impact on people?

The changes to the Allocations Scheme will ensure that the Council has an Allocation Scheme that treats all applicants fairly and that access to social housing supports the needs of residents.

What action will be taken to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts?

Regular monitoring of the outcomes from gaining access to the housing register and bidding activity will provide enable amendments to the Allocations Scheme to be made to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts.

By what date will these actions be taken?

Quarterly reviews of Housing Register and bidding data.

Pregnancy and maternity

Summary of available data, statistics or consultation findings held by the service

There are currently sixty main applicants on the Housing Register recorded as being pregnant, however, much of these applicants' data is historic and has not been updated.

How will the proposal impact on people?

The changes to the Allocations Scheme will ensure that the Council has an Allocation Scheme that treats all applicants fairly and that access to social housing supports the needs of residents.

What action will be taken to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts?

Regular monitoring of the outcomes from gaining access to the housing register and bidding activity will provide enable amendments to the Allocations Scheme to be made to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts.

By what date will these actions be taken?

Quarterly reviews of Housing Register and bidding data.

Gender reassignment

Summary of available data, statistics or consultation findings held by the service

There is currently one partner of a housing register applicant who is recorded as being transgender.

How will the proposal impact on people?

The changes to the Allocations Scheme will ensure that the Council has an Allocation Scheme that treats all applicants fairly and that access to social housing supports the needs of residents.

What action will be taken to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts?

Regular monitoring of the outcomes from gaining access to the housing register and bidding activity will provide enable amendments to the Allocations Scheme to be made to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts.

By what date will these actions be taken?

Quarterly reviews of Housing Register and bidding data.

Marital or civil partnership status

Summary of available data, statistics or consultation findings held by the service

No data held by the service.

How will the proposal impact on people?

The changes to the Allocations Scheme will ensure that the Council has an Allocation Scheme that treats all applicants fairly and that access to social housing supports the needs of residents.

What action will be taken to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts?

Regular monitoring of the outcomes from gaining access to the housing register and bidding activity will provide enable amendments to the Allocations Scheme to be made to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts.

By what date will these actions be taken?

Quarterly reviews of Housing Register and bidding data.

Armed Forces Community

Summary of available data, statistics or consultation findings held by the service

There are currently 16 applicants on the housing register who are recorded as being current members of the armed forces and a further 7 applicants recorded as being former members of the armed forces.

How will the proposal impact on people?

The Allocations Scheme provides that certain member of the armed forces, and their family members, in housing need have a better opportunity of an allocation of social housing, as required by statute, by awarding addition preference and not requiring them to meet the local connection qualifying criteria/

The changes to the Allocations Scheme will ensure that the Council has an Allocation Scheme that treats all applicants fairly and that access to social housing supports the needs of residents.

What action will be taken to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts?

Regular monitoring of the outcomes from gaining access to the housing register and bidding activity will provide enable amendments to the Allocations Scheme to be made to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impacts.

By what date will these actions be taken?

Quarterly reviews of Housing Register and bidding data.

Conclusions

This section summarises the details of any positive or negative impacts that have been identified and any actions that may be required to mitigate negative impacts.

The amendments to the Allocations Scheme will ensure all applicants are treated fairly and that access to social housing supports the needs of residents. The changes will have a positive impact on applicants who may have a protected character of disability, by awarding additional preference to those applicants with a life-threatening illness, ensuring that adapted accommodation is allocated to those persons most in need of adaptations and ensuring that applicants with the same medical need for housing as treated equally and is no dependant on whether the applicants is an existing social housing tenant or not.

Certain members and former members of the Armed Forces continue to have additional preference and are not subject to local connection requirements and therefore have a positive impact on their ability to access social housing.

There are positive impacts on older person applicants, who will be given the opportunity for an allocation of sheltered accommodation, even where they have no identified housing need, and persons who are victims of domestic abuse, which disproportionately effects women, who providing a better opportunity of an allocation of social housing for some victims of domestic abuse.

Outcome

Select one/delete those that are not relevant from the list below:

Continue to policy

When will this equality impact assessment be reviewed

The equality impact assessment when the Allocation Scheme is next subject to a full revision, or should the monitoring of housing register or bidding data identify a need to review this equality impact assessment.

Annex 1 – Borough Data

Population data

Disability

The 2011 Census recorded that 12,763 households (27.1 per cent) in the borough include people with a long-term health problem or disability. Of these 2,260 households (4.8 per cent) include two or more persons with a long-term health problem or disability.

16,371 people (14.3 per cent) in the borough have their day to day activities limited a little or a lot by a long-term illness or disability. This is lower than the Kent average of 17.6 per cent and lower than the national average of 17.9 per cent.

9.2% (10,539) of population provide unpaid care.

Age

Mid-year population estimates (2019) recorded the average age of the borough's population as 41.5. This compares with a Kent average of 41.2 years and a national average of 40.2 years. Currently, 19.4 per cent of the borough's population is aged over 65. Population forecasts indicate that 25.2 per cent of the borough's population will be aged over 65 by 2038. This is in line with population forecasts for the Kent area.

Sex

The ONS mid-year estimates (2019) puts the percentage of females in the Borough as 50.6 percent, and males as 49.4 percent. The number of females over 85 years is significantly higher than the number of males.

Race

The 2011 Census recorded that 5,810 people (5.1 per cent) in the borough are from a Black or Minority Ethnic background. This is lower than the Kent average of 6.9 per cent and the national average of 14.6 per cent.

Religion or belief

The 2011 Census recorded that 62.9 per cent of the population is Christian. This is higher than the Kent average of 61.8 per cent and the national average of 59.4 per cent. 26.6 per cent of the population have no religion. Small proportions of the remainder of the population are Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh and Jewish.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation data is not captured by the Census. There are plans to include this as a question topic for the Census in 2021.

Pregnancy or maternity

The ONS Birth Summary Tables (2019) show that the total fertility rate for Tunbridge Wells Borough was 1.75, which is similar to the Kent average of 1.76 and higher than the national average of 1.65.

In 2019, there were 56.8 births per 1,000 of the borough's population. This is lower than the Kent average of 59.4 and the national average of 57.5.

Marital or civil partnership status

The 2011 Census recorded that 50.1 per cent of the borough's population are married. This is higher than the Kent average of 48.9 per cent and the national average of 46.6 per cent.

Gender reassignment

At present, there is no official estimate of the trans population. Gender reassignment data is not captured by the Census. The Census (2021) will update the national information recorded on sex and gender and allow for respondents to enter their own identity in a free text box, if they do not feel it is the same as their sex as assigned at birth.

Residents' Survey (2015)

Summary of where significant differences were found by demographic group.

Disability

Contact with the Council

Those with a disability were more likely to have contacted the Council (main method of contact by telephone and in person).

Age

Contact with the Council

Those aged 35-54 were most likely to have contacted the Council overall.

A higher proportion of those aged 55+ have contacted the Council by telephone.

Those aged 16-34 were more likely to use the website as the primary means of obtaining information.

Those aged 35-54 were more likely to use the website as the most common means of obtaining information but the local newspaper and Local are also common.

Those aged 55+ were more likely to use the local newspaper as the most common means of obtaining information and Local is also common.

Higher proportions of those aged 16-54 have access to the internet, consider themselves confident/expert and consider the internet to be essential.

Those aged 35-44 were more likely to disagree that they can influence decisions in their local area and more likely to be interested in being involved in decisions that affect their local area.

Town Centre

Those aged 16-54 were more likely to visit the town centre at least once a week than those aged 55+.

Those aged 16-34 were more likely to be satisfied with the town centre than those aged 55+.

Feelings of safety

Those aged 16-54 were more likely to feel safe walking alone in their local area during the day and after dark than those aged 55+.

Importance of services

Those aged 16-34 ranked providing support to local businesses and the creation of jobs, activities for promoting health and wellbeing and housing services as important.

Those aged 35-54 ranked protecting the quality of the local environment, providing support to local businesses/creation of jobs and activities for promoting health and wellbeing as important.

Those aged 55+ ranked events, theatres and arts as important.

Those aged 16-54 ranked using technology to redesign how services are provided as important.

Those aged 55+ ranked asking users to pay more towards the cost of discretionary services as important.

Sex

Feelings of safety

Males were more likely to feel safe walking alone in their local area during the day and after dark.

Race

Satisfaction with the Council and value for money

Respondents of a Black and Minority Ethnic background were more likely to strongly agree that TWBC provides value for money than residents of White origin.

Respondents of a Black and Minority Ethnic background were more likely to be very satisfied with how the Council runs things than residents of White British origin.

Contact with the Council

Respondents of White origin were more likely to have visited the Council's website than respondents of a Black and Minority Ethnic background.

Religion or belief

This information was not collected by the Residents' Survey.

Sexual orientation

This information was not collected by the Residents' Survey.

Pregnancy or maternity

This information was not collected by the Residents' Survey.

Marital or civil partnership status

This information was not collected by the Residents' Survey.

Gender reassignment

This information was not collected by the Residents' Survey.

Performance indicators by service

Data collected in 2021-22 (unless otherwise stated).

Assembly Hall

Number of Access Focussed Performances per annum – 5.

Cemetery and Crematorium

Percentage of Muslim burials at the Crematorium – 3.6%.

Housing

Percentage of applicants from a Black and Minority Ethnic Background on the housing register – 18%

Percentage of applicants from a Black and Minority Ethnic Background housed through the housing register – 18%.

Percentage of full-time and occasional wheelchair users on the housing register – 15%.

Percentage of full-time and occasional wheelchair users housed through the housing register – 20%.

Percentage of those aged 16-24 on the housing register – 12%.

Percentage of those aged 16-24 housed – 15%.

Percentage of those aged 55+ on the housing register – 24%.

Percentage of those aged 55+ housed – 29%.

Number (estimated) of rough sleepers aged 16-24 (snapshot 31/03/2022) – 0.

Number of households in temporary accommodation aged 16-24 (snapshot 31/03/2022) - 7.

Number of homeless acceptances aged 16-24 (snapshot 31/03/2020) - 2.

Number of Disabled Facilities Grants completed per year - 90.

Human resources

Average age of the Council's workforce (mean) – 44.

Percentage of women in top 10 per cent highest paid Council employees – 51.24%.

Percentage of local authority employees with a disability- 4.10%.

Percentage of local authority employees from a Black and Minority Ethnic Background – 3.93% (2020/21).

Percentage of applicants for Council vacancies with a disability – 3.88% (2020/21).

Percentage of those recruited with a disability – 0% (2020/21).

Percentage of applicants for Council vacancies from a Black and Minority Ethnic Background – 12.94% (2020/21).

Percentage of those recruited who are from a Black and Minority Ethnic Background – 7.7% (2020/21).

Gender pay gap reporting figures are available at:

<https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/council/freedom-of-information-and-transparency/gender-pay-gap>

Licensing

Number of licensed wheelchair accessible taxis and private hire vehicles - 35.

Revenues and Benefits

Number of 16-24 year olds affected by the benefit cap (annual) – 1 (2020/21)

Number of people in receipt of single room rate aged under 35 (annual) – 33 (2020/21)