

**Housing and Community Services Department
Departmental Equality Action Plan: Jan 2009 – March 2010**

The Housing and Community Services Department is made up Tenants Services, Housing Needs and Private Sector, and Community Services, and employs 100.9 Full Time Equivalents.

List of Services:

Housing Strategy and Enabling	Sheltered Housing	Care and Repair
Tenancy Management	Housing Needs	Private Sector Housing
Demand Maintenance	Planned Maintenance	Careline
Community Transport	Community Meals	Day Centres

Introduction

This Equality Action Plan includes strategic and practical actions that demonstrate how the department will ensure services are accessible to all people who need them, irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion/belief, or sexual orientation.

This Action Plan has been developed in consultation with our Equality Working Group – volunteers and representatives from staff, stakeholders and the community. More information on the Equality Working Group, and Runnymede Borough Council's wider participation strategy, can be found in our Equality Policy.

Individuals and groups can experience a range of barriers that prevent them enjoying the same quality of life as their peers. This action plan sets equality objectives for those policies, practices or services that have been identified - through Equality Impact Assessments - as being at risk of discriminating against individuals or groups by creating or exacerbating existing barriers. The Housing and Community Services Department has set targets to investigate further whether these barriers to services exist and, if so, to make reasonable adjustments to policies, practices or services to improve accessibility.

Key to implementing these objectives will be ensuring systems and measures are in place to monitor information within service areas on service-user, population and workforce profiles for gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion/belief, and sexual orientation. Where these systems do not already exist they will be developed as part of the Equality Impact Assessment review timetable (outlined at appendix 1)

Reporting arrangements for this Equality Action Plan

The Director of Housing and Community Services holds responsibility for this Action Plan, against which progress will be reported to the Directors' Management Team (DMT). Objectives, targets and progress are further scrutinised and approved by Members through the Housing and Community Services Committee Service Plan. Progress against targets will therefore be reviewed twice a year by Committee. This process will ensure that equality targets are mainstreamed into both service delivery/review mechanisms and corporate management arrangements, and will ensure that appropriate resources have been allocated to achieving the aims of this action plan. Further scrutiny will be provided by the Equality Working Group (EWG), where external challenge is provided by representatives from key local equality groups and public sector colleagues

This Action Plan will be published online on the Council's Equality webpage, and will be available with committee papers at public libraries and at the Runnymede Civic Centre reception. It will be reviewed and revised periodically by the EWG and DMT, and no later than March 2010

Departmental/Service Equality Objectives and Targets

This Equality Action Plan (EAP) states equality objectives and targets for improving access to services for all, irrespective of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion/belief and age.

As part of the three-yearly cycle of service reviews, Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been carried out for all key services and for any new policies developed in that time. These EIAs have been reviewed by the working group, which has, where necessary, requested further information and/or proposed changes to the way the service is delivered to reduce any barriers to access. Where these changes require further action by the department, they have been translated into equality objectives, in consultation with the EWG.

Departmental Equality Objectives

Each department is committed to contributing to the following corporate targets:

Equality Objective	Target	Outcome
Monitor ethnicity, disability and gender of service users	Annual	Services monitored: Housing Register Tenancy Management Choice Based Lettings Repairs acknowledgements Housing Maintenance
Explore corporate mechanism for services to monitor religion/belief and sexual orientation	March 2009	Services to be monitored: Choice Based Lettings Repairs acknowledgements Services monitored: Tenants (Status Survey)
Complete Equality Impact Assessment whenever changes to services (new, enhanced or reduced) are being considered	As required	EIAs completed during 2008/9: Choice Based Lettings Local lettings plan - Pretoria Road Local lettings plan - Wapshott Road Mortgage rescue scheme
Percentage of top 5% of earners who are women BV 11a	10%	10.42% (08/09 outturn)
Percentage of top 5% of earners from black and minority ethnic communities BV 11b	5%	0.9% (08/09 outturn)
Percentage of top 5% of earners who are disabled BV 11c	2%	4.76% (08/09 outturn)
Percentage of people with disabilities as a percentage of total workforce BV 16a	3%	3.19% (08/09 outturn)
Percentage of people from minority ethnic communities as a percentage of total workforce BV 17a	4%	3.79% (08/09 outturn)
Achieve 97.8% of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for, and accessible to, disabled people BV 156	97.8%	96% (08/09 outturn)

Service Equality Objectives

Each section is committed to contributing to relevant targets below:

Source	Section	Equality Objective	Target	Comments	Complete
EIA 06/06	Tenancy Management	Seek to ensure Runnymede Council Residents' Association is representative	Annual	Membership of the RCRA is exclusively white and a high proportion of members are retired. However it should be noted that the recent Housing Needs survey estimated that 64% of tenants were pensioners. The small size of the RCRA (15 members) also makes it difficult to get a proportionate representation from BME groups as to match the population this would mean less than one person. It may therefore continue to be difficult to attract younger and BME members. However all tenants were invited to the AGM of the group, which was held in the evening to allow working households to attend, and some new members were recruited from this. The group does also have some disabled representatives.	✓
EIA 06/06	Tenancy Management	Ensure equality issues are taken into account in review of Rent Arrears Recovery Procedure	Mar 09	The rent arrears recover policy is applied consistently. Letters are sent when tenants fall into arrears and these urge residents to make contact with the Council. Whilst non-payment cannot be ignored equality issues such as disability/illness are taken in to account and officers are encouraged not to enforce the policy rigidly in such cases. Help with claiming Benefits is provided and benefit staff attend day centres for those who are unable to come to the civic offices. A statement in different languages is now added to Notices of Seeking Possession explaining the importance of the document, urging recipients to seek advice and help with translation	✓
EIA 02/06	Tenancy Management	Establish whether any complaints have been made about the changes to the Succession Policy since it was changed and originally consulted on in 1999, and if so, how have they been dealt with	Dec 09	Amended Succession Policy has not led to any complaints from groups potentially adversely affected. Policy implications are a long-term issue to be monitored – consider at EIA Service Review.	✓
EIA 02/06	Tenancy Management	Consider implications of Succession Policy on various groups (culture of multiple generations, disabled children, elderly tenants with large family)	Dec 09	A consistent approach has been applied to circumstances where a family member is left in the property following the death of the tenant. The law determines who is entitled to succeed in such cases and for those who are not entitled to remain in the property an assessment is made of their ability to obtain private accommodation. If this is not possible then they are assessed for rehousing under the allocations policy for the Housing Register	✓

EIA 07/07	Housing Maintenance	Consider introduction of 'password system' for housing maintenance contractors or officers visiting vulnerable residents to reduce the possibility of distraction crime	Mar 09	This is in place and tenants were notified of the arrangements in the April 2009 edition of the Streets Ahead magazine	✓
EIA 06/06	Community Services	Research into level of demand for provision of Day Centre and Meals-on-wheels services from different groups	Aug 2010	These services are predominantly used by older people. The Councils community meals staff ask for dietary preferences when clients are first referred for the service and can order a range of dietary and ethnic preference options on Community Meals. We also undertake questionnaires in day centres about food preferences. If individuals have dietary issues the centre managers will do their best to cater for these. Consideration of any further equality issues will also be given during the proposed Day Centre service review.	✓
EIA 12/07 EIA 01/09	Grant Aid	Explore whether Grant Aid applicants and recipients reflect the Borough's demographics and Council's priorities (re: vulnerable groups), and if not, investigate why these gaps exist (e.g. lack of applications, funding criteria/timing) and how they should be tackled (publicity, positive action)	Sept 2011	Community Services provide core grants are only provided to organisations who deliver services for vulnerable people. A condition of grant is that there must be Equal Opportunities policies in place. The allocation of Core Grant aid is reviewed every 5 years and an EIA will be undertaken when the current agreements end, and prior to new allocations being made.	

If you have any comments on this action plan, please contact James Cooper on 01932 425503 or email james.cooper@runnymede.gov.uk

FUNCTIONS FOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Once completed these impact assessments will be available on the Council's website: www.runnymede.gov.uk. Choose "E" from the "A-Z" and then "Equalities"

2009/10	Current position
October – December 2009	
Housing & Community Services	
Tenancy management	(Review EIA from 2005/06)
Allocations	(Review EIA from 2005/06)
Homelessness	(Review EIA from 2005/06)
Departmental service standards	(Review EIA from 2005/06)
Nuisance procedure	(Review EIA from 2005/06)
Racial Harassment	(Review EIA from 2005/06)
Respect/Nuisance	(Review EIA from 2005/06)
Succession	(Review EIA from 2005/06)
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	Completed (see Choice Based Lettings EIA)
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