

**South Staffordshire Council
Equality Impact Assessments (EIA)**

Equality Impact Assessment				
1	Title of Function or Policy to be assessed: Authorisation for Registered Social Landlords and members of the Housing Service to receive and verify information on behalf of the Benefits Service			
2	Date: 31 st March 2008			
3	Name of Lead Officer: Tracey Richards, Revenues and Benefits Manager			
4	EIA Team Tracey Richards, Revenues and Benefits Manager Elaine Harper, Principle Benefits Officer Eric Labhart, Fraud Team Leader			
5	Director/Head of Service/Service Manager: Tracey Richards, Revenues and Benefits Manager			
6	Existing, new or review: New			
7	Set out the aims/objectives/purposes/outcomes of the function or policy, and give a summary of the service provided: The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has provided a framework for local authorities to enter into agreements with members of staff in Housing Services, and with Registered Social Landlords (RSL's), to act on behalf of the Housing Benefits Service by checking claims made by their tenants and verifying the evidence required to support those claims. This will help to improve the relationship between the Benefits Service, Landlord and claimant and to improve the claim process. The Benefits Service is aiming to streamline the Housing and Council Tax Benefits processes, in order to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve performance • improve customer service • reduce customer error, and • generate efficiency savings. 			
8	Linked policies, functions: Are there any other functions, policies or services which might be linked with this one for the purposes of this exercise? Housing and Council Tax Benefit schemes Data Protection – security of information received			
9	Who is it intended to affect or benefit (the target population): Vulnerable people within the South Staffordshire Council area, who may have an entitlement to support with payments of rent and/or Council Tax, and to improve the communications between the Benefits Service, Landlord and claimant, and reduce the requirement for duplication in the provision of information.			
10	Within this table, state whether the policy or function will have a positive or negative impact across the following factors and provide any comments.			
		Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Comments
	Age	Yes	No	Increasing the support available in the claim process and encouraging

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				take-up of the scheme. Improving access to services, with claimants being able to claim through more convenient locations
	Disability	Yes	No	Increasing the support available in the claim process and encouraging take-up of the scheme. Improving access to services, with claimants being able to claim through more convenient locations
	Gender	No	No	
	Race	Yes	No	Early notification of where additional support may be required is to be identified from information obtained regarding ethnicity of area
	Religion/belief	No	No	
	Sexuality	No	No	
11	What evidence do you have for the statements you have made above?			
	<p>Age, Disability and Race Positive – building on existing support mechanisms with encouragement to maximise entitlement to additional income and knowledgeable assistance through the claim process, and subsequent involvement. Reduced duplication of effort on the tenant’s part in applying for Housing assistance and Housing Benefit. Improved quality of information provided in support of the claim, reducing the time required to establish entitlement.</p>			
12. From evidence given at Q.11 what actions, if any, will you need to take against each of the following equality strands:				
Disability: Contracts with Registered Social Landlords, Service Level Agreement with Housing service, providing appropriate training, monitoring and evaluation of scheme.				
Race: Contracts with Registered Social Landlords, Service Level Agreement with Housing service, providing appropriate training, monitoring and evaluation of scheme.				
Gender:				
Age: Contracts with Registered Social Landlords, Service Level Agreement with Housing service, providing appropriate training, monitoring and evaluation of scheme.				
Religion/belief:				
Sexuality:				

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13. Briefly explain how the policy or function contributes to Community Cohesion by answering the following questions:

- How will it provide equality of access to services, information and employment?
- Does it or could it celebrate diversity?
- Will it or could it promote good relationships within and between communities?
- How will it help to prevent social exclusion?
- Will it help to reintegrate those who have become excluded?
- How will it provide good quality, inclusive services?

Looking to maximise benefit income to the district for the most vulnerable residents in the area, building on existing relationships that tenants have with their landlord to reduce duplication of effort in supplying information, encouraging take-up of the benefit scheme, and providing ease of access to information regarding entitlement if circumstances change. Identification is more readily accessible through our partners of potential recipients, who may otherwise be socially excluded. By increasing individual's access to funds will help to prevent social exclusion and improve access to affordable housing.

14. Consultation:

Describe what consultation has been undertaken on this function or policy, who was involved and the outcome.

Registered Social Landlords and the Housing Service, through our joint working in maximising the take-up of benefit, identify this initiative as an improvement in the way that they can help our mutual customers to claim and receive their entitlement to benefit promptly.

DWP supported scheme – this scheme was subjected to a pilot exercise across several authorities, before becoming available for all authorities to use across the country. Consultation with staff – staff have been involved in discussions regarding the project, to identify areas that may require monitoring and to support training needs.

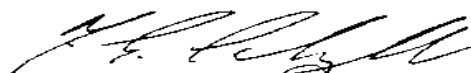
Consultation with customers, through the Best Value Performance survey indicated that there were examples where customers had difficulties in getting to the office, with the inconvenience of opening hours and the speed of processing, which helped to drive the project through improvements that can be obtained in the ease of claiming benefit and the reduced time in processing the claim.

Director/Head of Service:

I am satisfied with the results of this EIA

I have seen the Councils (3) Equality Schemes or Equality Action Plan and am satisfied with the contribution it can make.

Signature of Director/Head of Service:



Completion of the Toolkit:

Log onto website.