Diversity impact assessment

Management of Fire Risks in Communal Areas Policy

October 2016

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1 Summary description of the proposed change
- What is the change to policy/service/new project that is being proposed?
- How does it compare with the current situation?

The original Management of Fire Risks in Communal Areas Policy was implemented in January 2014. Following a review of the policy in October 2016, this DIA has also been updated. No significant changes to the policy were to be implemented following the review in October 2016. However the DIA has been extended to consider the adverse impact the policy may have on households that have mobility issues.

The health and safety of our tenants is paramount; as such Housing Services implement a systematic and robust approach to items stored in communal areas in response to criticism and recommendations from an independent fire risks assessment.

As a consequence, despite being in the terms of our tenancy agreements in order to protect tenants and reduce the risk of fire, we intend to implement a robust approach towards managing any items that present a fire risk in communal areas, and enforce the items removal within 48 hours following a warning notice being applied.

‘Non-negotiable’ items include mobility scooters and pushchairs, buggies, prams and festive decorations.

2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment
- Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user records etc.
- Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile

Property types – Around half of the housing stock comprises of flats (49%) with the remainder made up of houses (43%) and bungalows (8%).

In 2014 Inside Housing published the following article containing statistics released by the London Fire Brigade

The London Fire Brigade has today reported that they were 514 fires in communal areas in 2013/14, compared with 449 the previous year. This represents a 14% increase.

The fire brigade is warning that clutter such as buggies, bikes and mattresses are often the cause of fires and can also block residents’ fire escape routes. It is calling on landlords to do more to ensure communal areas are kept clear, that they ensure
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Tenants know their escape routes and what to do in the event of a fire.

Steve Turek, assistant commissioner at the London Fire Brigade, said: 'It is the responsibility of landlords to keep communal areas clear and ensure their property has a suitable fire safety plan.

'Residents can help by not storing bikes, buggies and other items in communal areas because these can cause fires that can spread quickly.

'Packing a pushchair or a bike outside your flat might seem like a practical solution but in the event of a fire it becomes a dangerous obstacle that can slow down firefighters trying to reach a fire and residents trying to escape it.'

The above article highlights the importance of having a Management of Fire Risks in Communal Areas Policy in place.

We have the following disability profiling information on our residents Tenant as at 03.08.2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISABILITY</th>
<th>Known</th>
<th>1587</th>
<th>25%</th>
<th>DISABILITY</th>
<th>Known</th>
<th>1323</th>
<th>44%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total residents</td>
<td>6231</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total lead tenants</td>
<td>2978</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>6231</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>2978</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISABILITY BY TYPE</th>
<th>Count of people</th>
<th>% of all residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Impairment</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Difficulty</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy issue</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility issues</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unseen impairment</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual impairment</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL RESIDENTS</td>
<td>6231</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We know from this information that at least 5% of our residents have some form of mobility issue. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that some of our residents may have some form of mobility equipment that will require storage. Particularly large equipment might be difficult to store within properties.
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3. What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

*Is it likely to:
- Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups?
- Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups?
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don’t? (insert ✓ in one or more boxes)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protected characteristic groups</th>
<th>Adverse impact</th>
<th>Advance equality</th>
<th>Foster good relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender reassignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage/civil partnership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy/maternity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion/belief</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households with young children</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Summary of the likely impacts

- Who will be affected?
- How will they be affected?

This policy will be applied to all residents equally, but whilst not specifically targeted at any protected characteristic it is recognised that some aspects of could adversely impact on some of the groups.

Those with learning difficulties or visual impairments or for tenants whose first language is not English may find it difficult to read warning stickers that are applied to items (warning that the item needs to be removed within 48 hours otherwise they will be disposed of).

As at least 5% of our residents have some form of mobility issue and as such some may have mobility equipment that will requires storage. Tenants that have mobility scooters will not be allowed to store or charge them in communal areas, which could affect the tenants day to day mobility.

Households with young children that have difficulty in storing prams and
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buggies in their homes or carrying them up and down stairs could also be disadvantaged.

Those affiliated to specific religions or backgrounds may display items in communal areas to practice or celebrate their faith or specific festivals.

However if this policy was not implemented it could be to the serious detriment of our residents lives. Fires in communal areas could pose serious risk to resident’s health and in the worst case scenario lead to fatality.

Even if there were no physical casualties, fire could damage stock and put pressure on our Business plan.

The Council is also required under certain legislation (Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005; Health and Safety at Work Act etc 1974; LGA Fire Safety in purpose-built blocks of flats) to ensure residents safety, failing to implement this policy could therefore lead to legal ramifications.

5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?
- Are there alternative providers?
- What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?
- Can demand for services be managed differently?
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In order to mitigate some of the negative impacts of this policy the following actions will be implemented.

We will be reasonable and proportional when considering non-negotiable items, for example the length of time and frequency the item is left in the communal area and whether access is compromised and items are fire resistant. Tenants are entitled to ask for the removed of an item following the council's complaints process.

When protected characteristics are adversely impacted, where possible we will work with tenants to find alternative solutions. For example at some our Homes for independent living some provision will be made for the storage of mobility scooters.

All tenants will be made aware of our policy on storing items in communal areas prior to signing their tenancy. Before they become a tenant with us they will have to formally sign to say they will not store items in communal or outside areas of their properties. They would be in breach of their tenancy agreement if they did this.

The Council's Allocations Policy also awards priority to those residing in accommodation that is not suitable for their needs. This will help ensure that properties are suitable for wheelchair storage etc. prior to a tenant moving in.

Attempts will be made where possible to contact the person responsible for the item to ask them to remove it. This should reduce some of the negative impact on tenants with learning difficulties, visual impairments or cases where English is not their first language.

If in future Housing Services implements a Mobility Scooter storage policy, we will review this DIA in light of the policy, identify any impacts it might have and where necessary implement mitigating actions.

6 Action plan

- Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

| As part of the 'sign up' process, tenants will be made aware of the conditions of their tenancy which include the expectation to keep communal areas clear. | Housing Manager | Ongoing |
| Housing Services will refer tenants for support if the issue is consistent | Housing Manager | Ongoing |
| Review this DIA if Housing Services introduces a Mobility Scooter storage policy. | Policy and Partnership manager | Ongoing |
| Where protected characteristics are adversely impacted, we will work with tenants to find alternative solutions. | Housing Manager | Ongoing |
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7 The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be:
- to proceed with the change, implementing action plan if appropriate
- consider alternatives
- gather further evidence

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

It is understood by the Council that this policy may produce some adverse impact on some of our customers, for example those with mobility issues that cannot store mobility scooters within their property. Where possible the Council will try to mitigate these circumstances through negotiation and compromise. Where this cannot be achieved the council should still enforce this policy in order to meet legal requirements and ensure the health and safety of all residents. The risk of not implementing the policy would be more detrimental than the adverse impacts of it being implemented. The Council also has legal obligations to ensure the safety of its tenants, which can only be undertaken through the enforcement of this policy.

It is recommended to continue to complete the items in the action plan and continue to implement the Management of Fire Risks in Communal Areas Policy.

8 Authorisation

The authorising officer is consenting that:
- the recommendation can be implemented
- sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned
- the Action Plan will be incorporated into service plan and monitored

Authorising Officer: Marc Blowes
Head of Housing Management

Date: 17/11/2016

Contact your Performance and Intelligence Hub for advice on completing this assessment
RCC: phone 2443 email: annamarie.lawrence@medway.gov.uk
C&A: (Children’s Social Care) contact your normal P&I contact
C&A (all other areas): phone 1481 email: paddy.cahill@medway.gov.uk
BSO: phone 2472/1490 email: corppl@medway.gov.uk
PH: phone 2636 email: david.whiting@medway.gov.uk

Send completed assessment to the Corporate Performance & Intelligence Hub (CPI) for web publication (corppl@medway.gov.uk)