Diversity impact assessment

TITLE
Name / description of the issue being assessed
Fire Risks Policy

DATE
Date the DIA is completed
12th November 2018

LEAD OFFICER
Name and title of person responsible for carrying out the DIA.
Katherine Bishop – Business Development Officer

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 Fire risks policy sets out how HRA Services aim to minimise the risk of fires starting and spreading in HRA properties and to safeguard residents, staff, contractors and visitors in the event of fire. The health and safety of our tenants is paramount; as such Housing Services implement a systematic and robust approach to fire safety. This policy has been developed to:

• Ensure suitable resources are in place to prevent the cause and spread of fire and if/when they occur to minimise their impact within communal areas and individual properties.

• Place primary importance on the life, safety and welfare of our residents and staff

• Protect the councils assets from the spread of fire and interruption of business

• Fulfil our legislative duties as landlord and ‘responsible person’.

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
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Medway Council Owned properties by type and bedroom size

Property Types:

Most of the buildings in the council's portfolio would be regarded as being 'low rise', that is to say of no more than three floors in height. Around half of the housing stock comprises of flats (49%) with the remainder made up of houses (43%) and bungalows (6%).

Housing Revenue Account tenants with a Disability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEARING IMPAIRMENT</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING DIFFICULTY</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERACY ISSUES</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMITED MOBILITY</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VISUAL IMPAIRMENT</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSEEN IMPAIRMENT</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>525</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The above information shows that some residents may need additional support or advice when communicating the Fire Policy. Residents with mobility issues may also require additional support regarding fire safety.

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)

Protected characteristic groups | Adverse impact | Advance equality | Foster good relations
Age ➤
### Diversity impact assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender reassignment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriage/civil partnership</td>
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<td>Pregnancy/maternity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion/belief</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
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</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 policy could adversely impact on some of the groups.

**Vulnerable residents.**

Vulnerable residents will need additional support and advice regarding fire safety, as there maybe difficulty in interpreting, or accessing fire safety information.

**Disability**

Tenants with mobility problems may feel disadvantaged as the policy does not permit scooters to be stored on site in communal areas. This is due to scooters being considered a health and safety risk and fire hazard in terms of either blocking or reducing the means of escape in the event of a fire or the scooters themselves causing the fire.

Tenants with a hearing impairment may be unable to hear the Fire alarms.

**Ethnicity**

Those with learning difficulties or visual impairments or for tenants whose first language is not English may find it difficult to read the policy.

**Tenants in houses**

Tenants who are houses do not have a Fire Risk Assessment, and may require additional fire safety advice.
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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?

In order to mitigate some of the negative impacts of this policy the following actions will be implemented.

Vulnerable Residents:

The council will address needs of vulnerable residents in relation to fire safety by identifying all tenants and leaseholders that are at risk. To ensure the safety of residents, Scheme Support Officers in HIL schemes carry out various Health and Safety checks within the schemes including but not limited to checking first aid and spillage kits compliance:
- checking Personal Emergency Evacuations Plans are up to date;
- regularly testing scheme alarms such as pull cords and fire call – points.

Ethnicity.

The Council will take particular care to ensure that residents whose first language is not English have access to clear and understandable fire safety information.

Disability

Housing Officers will work with tenants with a disability to ensure that they are aware of appropriate evacuation procedures and routes when signing up to the property.

Tenants in houses

Fire safety awareness will be promoted to tenants and leaseholders via appropriate communication channels including but not exclusive to the Council website Home Safety page newsletters, Information leaflets, tenancy handbooks and tenancy start up packs.

6. Action plan

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

At pre tenancy stage tenants for who English is not their first language should be identified. Fire Safety information should be provided to the tenant in writing, in their own language & recorded against the tenancy, when they occupy.

Housing Officers to provide additional support to vulnerable tenants to ensure that are aware of the possible fire hazards around the home and to take steps to protect themselves from fire and to make themselves and others. Housing Officers to liaise with appropriate external support agencies.
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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 as per the Management of Fire Risks in Communal Areas Policy.

Consideration to be given to the implementation of alarm systems suitable for tenants who have hearing impairments.

Profiling information of vulnerable tenants who live in general need and leasehold properties, to be provided to Kent and Medway Fire Service.

Consideration to be given to the implementation of Fire Risk Assessments for houses.

Processes to be implemented to identify vulnerable tenants who may require additional enhanced fire protection and warning, if evacuation could take some time.

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 recommended to continue to complete the items in the action plan and continue to implement the Fire Risks 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 Blowers
Head of Housing Management

Date

Contact your Performance and Intelligence hub for advice on completing this assessment
RCC: phone 2443 email: annamarie.lawrence@medway.gov.uk
C&S: (Children's Social Care) phone 1481 email: paddyr.cahill@medway.gov.uk
C&A (all other areas): phone 2472/1490 email: corpi@medway.gov.uk
PH: phone 2636 email: david.whitting@medway.gov.uk
Send completed assessment to the Corporate Performance & Intelligence Hub (CPI) for web publication (corpi@medway.gov.uk)

March 2014