



Equality Impact Assessment **Knowing your customers needs**

Sandwell Homes

Background

An Equality Impact Assessment is an improvement tool. It will assist you in ensuring that you have thought about the needs and impacts of your service/policy/function in relation to the protected characteristics. It enables a systematic approach to identifying and recording gaps and actions.

Legislation - Equality duty:

As a social housing service provider, Sandwell Homes has a legal responsibility to ensure that we can demonstrate having paid due regard to the need to:

- ✓ Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- ✓ Advance Equality of Opportunity
- ✓ Foster good relations

For the following protected characteristics:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender / Sex
4. Gender reassignment
5. Marriage and civil partnership
6. Pregnancy and maternity
7. Race
8. Religion and belief
9. Sexual orientation

What is prohibited?

1. Direct discrimination, including by association and perception.
2. Indirect discrimination – now covers all characteristics.
3. Pregnancy and maternity discrimination.
4. Harassment.
5. Third party harassment.
6. Discrimination arising from disability.
7. Duty to make reasonable adjustments.



Equality Impact Assessment

Sandwell Homes

If you require assistance completing this assessment, contact the Equality Team on: 6384 / 6030

1a	Title of Function/ Policy/ Procedure/ Service to be assessed: Decent Homes Standard/Sandwell Standard
1b	Type of policy, function, procedure, service: Existing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New/proposed <input type="checkbox"/> Changed <input type="checkbox"/>
1c	Who has been involved in writing/reviewing this policy/procedure/function? Which specific groups were involved? The Sandwell Standard for the Decent Homes improvement programme was developed and agreed by all of the construction partners involved in delivering the Decent Homes programme. This standard was approved by the tenant compacts in 2006 and again in 2008. For clarity, the standard is a set of overarching principles and guidelines that make customers aware of the general scope and scale of works that can be expected. However, every installation is bespoke being agreed with the tenant at time of survey.
2	Lead Officer for this assessment: Philip Deery
3	Officers assisting with this assessment: Simon Parry, Gulshanara Begum and Kashmir Randhawa.
4	Executive Director: John Clayton
5	Date completed: 7 th July 2011

	The Impact Assessment
6a	<p>Policy / Function - summarise the aims, objectives and purpose of the function or policy and service provided</p> <p>The Sandwell Standard is designed to provide clarity about how Sandwell Homes is delivering the Government set target to ensure that all council housing meets minimum standards of decency.</p>
6b	<p>What specific groups is this policy designed to benefit /affect? (e.g., employees, people with disabilities, young people, tenants, residents)</p> <p>All tenants</p>
6c	<p>What other policies/procedures/functions relate to/impact on this policy?</p> <p>Decent Homes delivery plan (Sandwell MBC)</p> <p>Asset Management strategy (Sandwell MBC)</p> <p>Sandwell Homes Refusal Strategy</p> <p>Sandwell Homes Customer Care/Liaison Process</p> <p>Complaints / Enquiry Process</p>

7a	<p>What existing information / data do you have on the community/equality groups in relation to this service/policy/function/procedure? (customer profiles, service reports, customer feedback, complaints etc)</p> <p>We commenced the Low Rise Decent Homes programme in May 2005 and in every property surveyed we produce a customer profile of the occupants so that, where possible, our service can be tailored to meet the needs of those customers.</p> <p>We have continued to encourage residents to be involved and be more actively involved in agreeing decisions that affect them, their homes and their neighbourhood.</p> <p>There are a number of ways that tenants and leaseholders are involved, these include membership of the customer care sub group, the stakeholder panel, local action groups or by taking part in, and contributing to satisfaction monitoring exercises and reality checks.</p> <p>All of these avenues have provided residents with the opportunity to voice their opinions, raise any concerns about the improvement work that is being carried out under the Decent Homes programme, and help shape how the service is delivered in future.</p> <p>Specific data sets collected include satisfaction surveys, complaints, ad-hoc reports, decent homes tracker with refusal details, customer care call logs and external assessment.</p> <p>Following every completion we provide customers the opportunity to evaluate our service through customer satisfaction questionnaires.</p>
----	---

	<p>Outside of this we have a robust complaints/enquiry system that allows for any correspondence to be directed to the responsible officer or directly with our construction partners via a designated recipient. This is monitored through the customer contact centre and at monthly customer care meetings.</p> <p>In 2006 we were the subject of an inspection by the Tenant Inspectors, which was followed by a reality check in 2007. These inspections contributed to improvements in communication processes, the survey process, partnership wide training sessions and the handover and satisfaction process.</p> <p>The Investment Division also operate a detailed tracker that identifies customer details, any vulnerabilities, items to consider following the survey visit including referrals or no access as well as start and completion dates for the property and the feedback from the quality inspection on completion.</p>
7b	<p>If none, what data do you need to collate?</p> <p>We acknowledge that previous analysis of customer satisfaction has been focussed on the overarching return levels and performance and separate analysis of our Black and minority ethnic customer satisfaction returns. With the new partnering arrangements in place since December 2010 we have introduce more detailed analysis through the customer care subgroup which now review returns against all 6 strands of equality.</p>
8	<p>What does this information/data tell you? (Are there any gaps, trends, issues?)</p> <p>The information has helped identify gaps in our customer care package and how works are delivered.</p> <p>We noted that some customers were refusing works owing to the need to move and store fixtures and fittings. To assist with this we introduced a handy person system to help remove and re-fit curtains, pack away personal items and more importantly to take away some of the stress this situation can cause.</p> <p>We identified from the data collection that customers were having trouble contacting staff on their mobiles and agreed use of a dedicated customer care line. We also agreed to monitor more closely the respect tradespeople were showing tenants belongings.</p> <p>We work with agencies who deliver adaptations for disabled customers but it became clear that the growing backlog of requests meant some customers were left without bathing facilities for up to two years in the most severe cases. We introduced step in showers as part of the bathroom replacement as an interim measure for customers who were unable to continue using a bath unaided.</p>

In light of the data and your own knowledge and awareness, please identify whether the policy has a positive or negative impact on the groups specified below (please refer to the general duties on the front page)

	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Comments / Concerns (please identify data used when making judgement)	Actions (Also include in your unit plan)
Age (younger/older)	✓		Experience has shown that older people are more likely to refuse the work because of the upheaval and have introduced services outlined in this document to minimise the potential disruption to this group	<p>New reporting mechanisms introduced in January 2011 that enable easy analysis of the equality strands.</p> <p>We will review the feedback at monthly customer care subgroup meetings based on all strands of equality to identify where the positive and negative impacts may be occurring.</p>
Disability (e.g. physical / sensory / unseen)	✓			
Gender/Sex (women/men)	✓			
Transgender	✓			
Race, Ethnicity, Culture (Asian, Black, Chinese, White, Mixed, Travellers and gypsies, other)	✓			
Religion / Belief	✓			
Sexuality (lesbian, gay, bisexual)	✓			
Other protected groups: pregnancy & maternity, marriage and civil partnerships	✓			
Other socially excluded groups (e.g., deprivation, low literacy, carers, language)	✓			
All	✓			

	Evidence of Discrimination? (Is the service being delivered the way the policy / procedure / function states it should be?)			
10	Is there any evidence of discrimination against the following groups: please refer to the guidance on the front page			
		Yes	No	Don't Know
				Please give details:
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obvious – e.g. cases / complaints against your organisation , consultation • Non-Obvious – potential evidence of indirect / institutional discrimination: - statistical profiles / user information / commissioned research etc
	Age			There no complaints to indicate discrimination on these grounds and the new reporting mechanism introduced through phase 2 of our Decent Homes programme will enable us to record evidence to further support this or take actions where gaps in service appear.
	Disability			
	Gender			
	Transgender			
	Race, Ethnicity, Culture		✓	
Religion / Belief			✓	
Sexuality			✓	
Other protected groups			✓	
Other socially excluded groups			✓	
	Monitoring:			
11 a.	How do you monitor equality within this service to ensure all groups listed receive an equal service? E.g. access to service/ satisfaction (please explain)			
	Age	The Customer Care Sub Group meets on a monthly basis and review customer satisfaction returns and complaints. The feedback is broken down into various equality strands using satisfaction and complaint reports from SHAPE. This group will assign actions for improvement where under performance or under take-up is evident.		
	Disability			
	Gender			
	Transgender			
	Race, Ethnicity, Culture			
	Religion, Belief			
	Sexuality			

	Other protected groups	See comments above
	Other socially excluded groups	
b.	<p>What do you do with the data – how will it be used?</p> <p>See above</p>	
12.	<p>Do you need to involve and engage with service users in addressing any issues relating to discrimination/adverse impacts, as identified in this assessment? (provide details)</p> <p>No - we have tenant representation in our Customer Care sub group who provide a view from service users. The Refusal Strategy was taken to the PAM group and accepted. Usually, issues are specific to individuals and therefore resolved with the customer concerned through the complaints, on site/during work or follow-up of satisfaction processes.</p>	
13.	<p>Do you need to alter the policy / function to incorporate under-represented groups? (provide details)</p> <p>No - The convenient aspect of the Decent Homes Programme is that we have to visit and undertake surveys for the majority of properties; this service impacts on all property types and tenants from all geographical areas and equality groups.</p> <p>The Refusal Strategy acknowledges that tenant choice is paramount and although it may be in Sandwell Homes' interest to undertake the work, for some customers, particularly those who are older and frail, they should be allowed the choice to forego the work.</p>	
14.	<p>Do you need to develop Positive Action to help under-represented groups overcome barriers (this can range from public relations & marketing to specific targeted programme of activities? (provide details)</p> <p>As stated previously, were we have previously identified potential gaps we have introduced services tailored to that client group so we believe the current approach to PR & Marketing is the most appropriate. The service is bespoke to individuals needs for each circumstance highlighted to us as we work with other service areas, other agencies and family members to find appropriate solutions and so this is positive action by design.</p>	

15.	<p>Will there be any specific improved service outcomes for groups/partners as a result of this assessment?</p> <p>We have not identified any further service improvements for a specific group as yet but will continue to monitor and respond as required.</p>
	<p>Public Relations:</p>
16 a.	<p>How will the following know about this assessment:</p> <p>Service users / general public Employees Partners</p> <p>This equality impact assessment will be freely available to customers, staff and partners via publication on our internal and external facing websites. We will also circulate copies of this document with our partners.</p>
16 b.	<p>How do you promote/ raise awareness of the policy/procedure/function to ensure that it is accessible and available to all groups?</p> <p>We have produced leaflets, DVD's, organised open events, publicised in local media and via our website and provided all customers engaged in the process with a customer care pack.</p> <p>Wide ranging information is readily available and issued to all customers before and during Decent Homes works. This includes customer information packs, regular articles in homelife, website information and information in different formats using the acquired getting to know you information.</p>
17.	<p>How are you going to share positive outcomes / findings of this assessment? (add to action plan)</p> <p>We have previously celebrated the successes we have achieved through local media, Homelife Magazine, web site articles and partners newsletters. We will incorporate the positive outcomes and findings of this assessment as part of that publicity.</p>
	<p>Actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete the attached action plan addressing any issues / concerns identified in this assessment. 2. If there are any actions arising from this Impact Assessment you will need to complete the assessment again once the actions have been completed, to ensure that all adverse impacts, barriers, issues have been addressed. (See Action Plan)

18	Signed (Lead Officer):
	Conclusion: (to be completed by the Executive Director)
19	I agree / disagree with this assessment / action plan
20	If <i>disagree</i> , state action/s required, reasons and details of who is to carry them out with timescales:
21	Signed (Executive Director):
22	Date:

Please send completed & signed assessment to: The Equality Team

Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Please ensure these actions are also included in your service unit plan and progress is monitored regularly
(YOU WILL NEED TO COMPLETE A NEW ASSESSMENTS ONCE THE ACTIONS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED)

Policy / Function: Sandwell Standard for Decent Homes

Question No. (Ref)	Action Required	Lead Officer	Person Responsible	Target Date	Progress
9	We will review the feedback at monthly customer care subgroup meetings based on all strands of equality to identify where the positive and negative impacts may be occurring.	Simon Parry	G Begum	September 2011	
10	Monthly Progress Reports presented at Customer Care Sub Group to incorporate levels of refusals and reasons for refusal	Phil Deery	G Begum	September 2011	
10	Follow Up on Low Customer Satisfaction to ascertain whether the tenant has experienced discrimination / there are any trends for tenants of a particular equality strand.	Phil Deery	Mick Shorthouse	Ongoing from July 2011	

17	Article in Homelife to share positive findings from this assessment and to re-emphasise scope of Decent Homes work to manage expectation of what we can and can't deliver	Simon Parry	G Begum	September 2011	
General	Conduct a new impact assessment when all actions have been completed	Phil Deery	Phil Deery	April 2012	

Are there any actions within the action plan that need to be included in any other service area action plans?