

Strategic Rent Policy

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

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This is an initial Equality Impact Assessment of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Under equality legislation, the Council has a legal duty to pay 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and
- foster good relations between different groups.

The duty to pay 'due regard' is required to be demonstrated in the decision making and the implementation process. Assessing the potential equality impact of proposed projects that are part of the programme is the means by which we show 'due regard'.

The decision

In October 2015 Cabinet discussed the introduction of a Choice Based Lettings scheme in Milton Keynes following recommendations from the Housing Allocations Scheme Task and Finish Group which met between April and August 2015.

Methodology

This assessment will review the decision. It will look at how the decision advances equality of opportunity, could adversely-impact different people or be used to foster good community relations.

Issues

Choice Based Lettings schemes were introduced by the Government in 2001 and were designed to provide a transparent and fair process for the allocation of social housing. They allow applicants the opportunity to bid for properties, which are most appropriate for their needs and work by the Local Authority and Registered Providers in the area advertising housing to potential applicants via local newspapers, newsletters or on a website. The system then identifies the successful bidder, which is the applicant who has the highest priority. All applicants have the opportunity to view available properties that meet their needs and, therefore, it does not give discretion to Local Authorities. However, staff are still required to give advice and feedback to applicants.

The benefit of such a scheme is that if an applicant is allocated a property they have chosen, rather than being housed where the Local Authority wants them to go, then it is more likely that the applicant will be living somewhere they can settle and enjoy which has a positive effect on communities.

Impact on vulnerable people

Vulnerable people participating in CBL will need

- Defining levels and types of support that may be required. For example, assistance with reading and completing forms, 'hand holding' through the whole process until accommodation is secured.

- Identification of those who are in need of support and matching them with the appropriate level of support.
- Timescales for support offered to those needing assistance through the bidding process. Support may need to be offered for a significant period of time until they secure accommodation.

In particular, for someone with a disability who may find it difficult to use the choice based lettings system will need extra help with reasonable adjustments.

Examples of reasonable adjustments may include:

- allocating a member of staff who can assist you to place bids or place bids on their behalf
- auto-bidding where bids are placed automatically on your behalf
- notifying a person of the outcome of your bids in an accessible way
- sending a list of available properties in an accessible format
- taking extra time to explain the bidding system
- giving you extra time to bid.

It is important that changes to the scheme are made to make it accessible.