

Equality Impact Assessment

West Essex Tenancy Strategy

1. What is the main purpose of the strategy?

The Tenancy Strategy is intended to provide guidance to Registered Providers operating in the Council's area, informing their policies and practices to produce lettings for customers that meet local housing need and improve market functioning in the area. It will also inform home seekers of the types of tenancies that will be on offer by social housing providers in the West Essex area.

2. List the main activities of the project/policy (for strategies list the main policy areas):

The Localism Act includes new powers relating to allocations and flexible tenancies; it requires local authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy that sits alongside the Housing Strategy Homelessness Strategy and Allocations Policy. The Act requires the Strategy to cover:

- What kind of tenancies to offer;
- Circumstances in which the landlord will grant a tenancy of a particular kind; and circumstances where the landlord will grant further tenancy on the ending of the existing tenancy.

3. Who are the main stakeholders?

- Those on the Councils Housing Registers – seeking social housing;
- Residents of the borough who are interested in how social housing tenancies are let;
- Registered Providers – who must have due regard to the contents of this strategy.

4. What outcomes are wanted from this strategy?

The strategy aims to make clear the three councils positions on the letting of fixed term tenancies. The strategy itself has the following objectives:

1. To fulfil the statutory requirement to publish a Tenancy Strategy, following consultation with stakeholders;
2. To ensure that affordable housing meets locally, identifiable housing need;
3. To provide guidance and direction to RPs regarding their use of social and affordable housing tenancies;
4. To set out clearly to partner agencies and others, the expectations of the West Essex Housing Forum in relation to the use of flexible tenure;
5. To indicate to home seekers what they can expect from their fixed term tenancy, if one is granted, including arrangements for statutory reviews;
6. To provide a framework for working in partnership over flexible tenure, including establishing a joined up approach and joint governance arrangements;
7. To ensure that local authorities have regard to the Tenancy Strategy when reviewing its allocations policies and exercising its housing management functions; and
8. To keep the Tenancy Strategy under review.

5. Are there any concerns that the strategy/project/policy could have a differential impact in terms of equality?

Use the table below to indicate:

(a) Where you think that the strategy/project/ policy could have a negative impact on any of the equality target groups i.e. it could disadvantage them;

(b) Where you think that the strategy/project/ policy could have a positive impact on any of the groups or contribute to promoting equality, equal opportunities or improving relations within equality target groups.

Please provide an explanation as to why you think there is a positive/negative or no impact.

		Positive impact – it could benefit	Negative impact- it could disadvantage	No impact	Explanation
Gender	Women Men Transgender			√	Social housing homes will be let according to agreed policies – the fixed term tenancy will apply to housing applicants irrespective of gender. There will be no impact as a result of gender.
Race- Census Categories	White – British White – Irish White – other background Mixed – White and Black Caribbean Mixed – White and Black African Mixed – White and Asian Any other mixed background Asian/Asian-British - Indian Asian/Asian-British - Pakistani Asian/Asian-British – any other Asian background			√	Fixed term tenancies will be issued regardless of race, according to the terms set out in the tenancy strategy. The issue here is more about ensuring that all groups are able to understand the implications of a fixed term tenancies. Communication with those who do not have English as their first language will need to be given careful consideration.

		Positive impact – it could benefit	Negative impact-it could disadvantage	No impact	Explanation
	Black/Black British – Caribbean Black/Black British – African Black/Black British – any other Black background Chinese Gypsies/Travellers Any other group				
Disability	Physical	√			<p>Housing applicants who have a disability that requires significant adaptations to their property are likely to benefit from the tenancy strategy because they are likely to be offered life time rather than fixed term tenancies.</p> <p>Also where a property has been adapted but the adaptations are no longer required by the household (e.g. where a disabled child has moved on), the property could be returned to the RP to be re-let. In effect there may be greater turnaround of adapted properties,</p>

		Positive impact – it could benefit	Negative impact-it could disadvantage	No impact	Explanation
	Sensory Learning Mental health issues	√	√		meaning that more people on the housing register requiring adapted or wheelchair accessible homes could be helped. As above. These groups will be unaffected by the tenancy strategy because the strategy only applies to general needs housing. These groups of applicants are likely to be housed in supported accommodation.
Sexual orientation	Lesbian, gay and bisexual			√	Social housing homes will be let according to agreed policies – the fixed term tenancy will apply to housing applicants irrespective of sexual orientation.
Age	Older people (60+)			√	It is likely that many RPs will issue lifetime tenancies to older people rather

		Positive impact – it could benefit	Negative impact-it could disadvantage	No impact	Explanation
	Younger people (17 to 25) and children (0 to 16)			√	<p>than fixed term tenancies. This would mean a situation of no change for those over the age of 60 years.</p> <p>Young people moving into supported housing schemes may be offered fixed term tenancies of less than 5 years. However these tenancies are likely to be renewed if conducted satisfactorily and so there will be no overall negative impact.</p>
Belief or religion	Faith groups			√	Social housing homes will be let according to agreed policies – the fixed term tenancy will apply to housing applicants irrespective of religion or belief.
Language	English not first language		√		<p>Communication is a key issue here.</p> <p>The Councils would need to ensure that language support is given to explain</p>

		Positive impact – it could benefit	Negative impact-it could disadvantage	No impact	Explanation
					tenancy terms.
Social Inclusion	Low incomes	√			In theory, tenants who are able to afford to move on alternative housing at the 5 year review, will be asked to do so. This means that housing vacancies will become available more frequently for those who are unable to afford alternatives. However, overall, numbers are likely to be low.
	Rural isolation			√	This is unaffected by the tenancy strategy
Equal opportunities and/or improved relations				√	

6. Are key elements of people's lives affected by this strategy for example finance, accommodation, welfare?

The strategy enables Registered Providers to issue fixed term tenancies in social housing stock, which are renewable every 5 years. This is a fundamental change to current practice where life-time tenancies are issued.

7. Could the strategy discriminate against any group(s) either directly or indirectly? If yes, please state how.

No – the strategy will not discriminate against groups. The only issue arising is the need to ensure the changes are communicated effectively to those who do not use English as their first language.

8 a) If there are any negative impacts, how could you minimise or remove any negative impact?

As above – the key issue is one of communication. Ability to communicate the changes and the implications of the changes to those who do not use English is key.

8 b) How could you improve the strategy, project or policy's positive impact?

The draft Strategy was subject to consultation and we have welcomed any suggestions for increasing its positive impact.

9. If there is no evidence that the strategy, policy or project promotes equality, equal opportunities or improved relations – how could it be adapted so that it does?

We would welcome the views of consultees in the future as to whether or not the Strategy could be adapted to promote equality.

10. What consultation has been carried out on the strategy/policy/project? Please include details of any equality monitoring carried out.

A Stakeholder workshop was held with a range of agencies – statutory and voluntary – as well as Registered Providers. The strategy has been developed as a result of this and input from partners has been taken on board.

11. Do you have data available which monitors the impact of the policy on minority groups? If not, please explain how you intend to continue monitoring the impact of this strategy, policy or project

There is no data available currently.

It is proposed that the West Essex Housing Forum will establish a sub-group consisting of representatives of RPs and other key stakeholders. This group will support the West Essex Housing Forum in its role of monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of this Strategy. This will be achieved by the monitoring of trends that can then be used to inform future policy. This will include the number of flexible tenancies let, outcomes of these, bidding activity on fixed term tenancy adverts and so on. The first review meeting will be held 6 months after publication of the Strategy, and ongoing review arrangements will be timetabled thereafter.

12. Has this EIA been consulted on? Who with? What feedback was received?

Internal:

Each council to add

External:

Each council to add

13. Next steps: Based on your assessment, what changes, if any do you need to make?

This EIA makes no significant suggestions to change the Tenancy Strategy. However it does raise an action point about communication with those who do not use English as their main language.

14. Summary of findings

The tenancy strategy will have no negative impact on equality issues.