



Blackpool Coastal Housing Impact Assessment Lettings Policy

Summary Report



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Name of the service, policy or function being assessed:

Sheltered Housing letting of General Needs above Sheltered Properties

Directorate Housing and Social Services

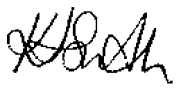
Date Impact Assessment completed 6/12/2006

Is this a policy or function? Policy Function

Is this a new or existing policy or function? New Existing

Names and roles of the people carrying out the Impact Assessment:

- 1.Maggie Cornall, Housing Services Manager (lead contact)
- 2.Denise Williams, Supported Housing Manager
- 3.Karen Smith, Assistant Director Housing Needs

Service Head	Peter Jefferson / Karen Smith
Signature	
Date	6/12/2006

Aims and objectives

The aim of this policy is to ensure Blackpool Council provides affordable social housing, which meets a range of housing needs, and prevents homelessness. We will do this by: -

- Assessing all housing applications fairly and accurately, taking equality and choice into account.
- Working with other providers and agencies to make the best use of all affordable housing.
- Re-letting empty properties quickly.
- Helping to build and sustain diverse and balanced communities.
- Minimising the cost of homelessness to the Council and to tax payers, and eliminating the use of Bed and Breakfast hotels for homeless families

Sheltered Housing

Sheltered Housing is normally for people aged 65 or over who can live independently and are able to manage alone but would benefit from the security of an alarm system and the services of a scheme manager in an emergency. This includes people who can live independently with the aid of a social services care package. Such applications will automatically be registered for Sheltered Housing.

People below the age of 65 may be eligible for sheltered housing because of illness or vulnerability.

Sheltered Housing applicants will not be listed separately in the Housing Register, but will be assessed in accordance with their housing need and placed within the appropriate band.

Only accommodation specified as Sheltered is used as Sheltered Accommodation. There are two schemes that are totally sheltered. The remaining eighteen schemes have sheltered accommodation on the ground floor, with general needs accommodation on the first floor. This means that all prospective tenants have the opportunity to bid and acquire a tenancy above these sheltered homes.

Local Lettings

The Council has discretion to apply local lettings policies to support sustainable communities and will use innovative schemes to reduce the number of empty properties, and maximise rental income.

There are a number of issues with the current policy. This impact assessment relates only to Sheltered Schemes. It is partly an impact assessment of how things operate now and a predictive impact assessment of some proposals for change.

What we know about the current issues:

- Sheltered Scheme residents experience anti-social behaviour problems from general needs tenants above them. These are mainly caused by conflicts of lifestyles between sheltered tenants and general needs. The most severe cases have centred around younger tenants which generally lead to many tenancies ending in failure. Although the Policy criteria allows access to sheltered housing due to vulnerability or illness for people under 65, this is not as frequently taken up as expected. This might be because of a range of factors, for example:
- Need for sheltered housing is not as obviously identified during the applications and allocations process
- The image of sheltered housing (for the public and for agencies) as obtrusive to personal life, a 'done to' service rather than supported independence, only for older adults, a 'friendly neighbour' pop in service rather than professional targeted support, or 'social care', therefore not needed.

What we looked at:

The evidence we viewed to inform this report included

- Housing Quality Network indicative report on Sheltered Housing. This identified issues that directly effected the sheltered tenants. This was gathered by one to one interviews with Scheme Managers, Housing Officers and other Stakeholders. They reviewed supporting documents and visited Sheltered sites.
- Antisocial Behaviour, there have been considerable problems with the re housing of general needs above sheltered tenants. This has been the cause of high profile anti-social behaviour cases, as the conflict in lifestyles between the two tenant profiles too difficult to overcome.
- Feedback from Tenant Liaison Forum, through the forum many sheltered tenants raised this as an issue and went on to state the types of problems they personally experienced.
- Complaints there is evidence within the complaints system to support the issues experienced by sheltered tenants
- Survey of existing sheltered tenants, this asked questions about what type and level of Anti- social behaviour sheltered tenants experienced.
- Staff delivering housing services and those assessing applications were asked for their personal experiences in dealing with various levels of issues caused by general needs above sheltered tenants
- Equalities profile of Landlord Services staff, individuals on the housing waiting list and a random sample of sheltered tenants

- An assessment of impact on Race, Gender, Disability, Age, Lesbian, gay bisexual, Religion/Belief and Health was completed. The findings of these can be found within the main report

This evidence is summarised, a full version can be found within the main Equality Impact Assessment document. Viewed on the Z Drive 061206 General Needs Above Sheltered Impact Assessment/070303 General Needs Above Sheltered Impact Assessment

Solutions:

To fully implement the lettings Policy and process for Sheltered Housing to ensure that the service is equitable.

To implement more effectively the existing criteria for sheltered properties that already covers all aspects of vulnerability, not just over 65's.

This does not require a change in policy. This is a reminder for agencies and practitioners of the existing provisions of the policy

Develop a sensitive lettings criteria for first floor non sheltered properties located within sheltered schemes to reduce the problems experienced on the ground floor and increase the sustainability of lettings on the first floor. The suggestion is to limit the lettings of these properties to applicants who are:

Over 35 years of age: or

In receipt of regular support from social care service(s) as the result of a Community Care Assessment: or

In receipt of regular support from tenancy related support services supplied via Supporting People provider.

This does not require a change in Policy. The current Policy allows for the development of local lettings criteria in appropriate circumstances

To expand the Scheme Managers service (to tenants that need) on the first floor Sheltered schemes.

Potential Impacts: Service could expand within current staffing levels but needs dispersed alarm/telecare equipment.

This does not require a change in Policy. This is a change to the service on offer to residents on the first floor of sheltered schemes.

Offer a flexible, tailored support service via the Scheme Managers to tenants on request, for example where tenants have variable support needs over time.

Potential Impacts: On Fairer Charging/Commissioning Budget, if service is commissioned via Community Care Assessment.

This does not require a change in Policy. This is a change to the services on offer to residents of sheltered schemes, to move away from the perception of "one size fits all" in relation to sheltered support.

Continue the improvement work with partners to ensure a holistic picture of support needs and a seamless approach to meeting needs.

This does not require a change in Policy. This is about improving collaborative working to improve outcomes for tenants.

Overarching objectives:

To reduce the number of anti-social behaviour cases that Sheltered Housing tenants experience from neighbouring occupants

To enable individuals to sustain their tenancy, reduce the likelihood of “move on” and enable the service and the community to become integrated, inclusive, involving and preventative of problems related to social care needs or tenancy issues

Future Monitoring and Consultation

Monitoring will be carried out monthly and quarterly with the Improvement Plans and Quarterly Returns.

Then annually as part of the business planning process