

PART B – Equality Analysis Form

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

This form:

- Can be used to prompt discussions, ensure that due regard has been given and remove or minimise disadvantage for an individual or group with a protected characteristic
- Involves looking at what steps can be taken to advance and maximise equality as well as eliminate discrimination and negative consequences
- Should be completed before decisions are made, this will remove the need for remedial actions.

Note – An Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A) should be completed prior to this form.

When completing this form consider the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc. – see page 11 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

1. Title	
Equality Analysis title: Housing Revenue Account Rents and Services Charges Report 2021-22	
Date of Equality Analysis (EA): 12 November 2020	
Directorate: Finance & Customer Services	Service area: Finance Business Partnering – Adult Care, Housing and Public Health
Lead Manager: Mark Scarrott	Contact number: Extn 22007
Is this a: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategy / Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Service / Function <input type="checkbox"/> Other If other, please specify	

2. Names of those involved in the Equality Analysis (Should include minimum of three people) - see page 7 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance		
Name	Organisation	Role (e.g. service user, managers, service specialist)
Mark Scarrott	RMBC	Manager
Paul Elliott	RMBC	Manager
Owen Campbell	RMBC	Manager

3. What is already known? - see page 10 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance

Aim/Scope (who the Policy/Service affects and intended outcomes if known)

This may include a group/s identified by a protected characteristic, others groups or stakeholder/s e.g. service users, employees, partners, members, suppliers etc.)

Section 23 of The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 implemented the Government's policy on social housing rents which requires providers of social housing to reduce rents by 1% per year for four years with effect from April 2016 to March 2020.

The policy applied to all registered providers of social housing including local authority landlords, who have a statutory obligation to implement the policy.

This has now been replaced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) – Policy Statement on rents for social housing (February 2019) allowing Councils to increase rents by Consumer Price Index (CPI) (as at September) plus 1% from April 2020 and in respect of shared ownership properties increase rents by Retail Price Index (RPI) (as at September) plus 0.5%.

The report also considers the non-dwelling rent charges for garages, garage plot sites, cooking gas and communal facilities including laundry services where provided proposing an increase of 2% in line with the proposed increase in fees and charges across the Council and no increase for District Heating charges in 2021/22 and also sets out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2021/22.

The report recommends the following proposals: -

1. That dwelling rents are increased by 1.5% in 2021/22 in line with the Government's rent policy from April 2020 which allows rents to increase by Consumer Price Index (as at September) plus 1% and rents for shared ownership properties are increased by 1.6% in line with Retail Price Index (as at September) plus 0.5%
2. That there is a 2% increase in charges for garages and parking spaces, communal facilities, cooking gas and use of laundry facilities, in line with increases being proposed for other fees and charges across the Council.
3. That the unit charge per Kwh for District Heating Schemes remains the same level as agreed by the council in December 2017.

4. Agree the draft Housing Revenue Account budget for 2021/22.

What equality information is available? (Include any engagement undertaken)

The Council currently owns circa 20,130 homes, 544 leasehold homes and 3,375 garages with a turnover from rents and other sources approaching £82m per annum (excluding the sale of new properties). This includes 1315 properties in the council's district heating scheme.

Circa 264,000 people live in Rotherham Borough, about half living in and around the main urban area of Rotherham. Rotherham has a similar age profile to the national average and in common with the national trends, the population is ageing.

Central Rotherham has a younger population than average whilst the more suburban and rural areas, mainly in the south of the borough, have older age profiles. One in four residents (25.2%) are aged 60 years or over and 22,500 people (8.5%) are aged 75 years or over. Rotherham has 56,900 children aged 0-17 (21.6% of the population).

Rotherham's Black and minority ethnic (BME) population was 8.1% in 2011 and is now estimated at around 11%. The central area of Rotherham is far more ethnically diverse than the rest of the Borough.

The 2011 Census showed that 56,588 (22%) of Rotherham's population had a long-term health problem or disability and 11.3% said their day-to-day activities were limited a lot by long term conditions (8.3% nationally). In November 2016, 30,296 Rotherham residents (11.6%) claimed Disability Living Allowance (16,680), Personal Independence Payment (6,100) or Attendance Allowance (7,516).

Despite improvements overall, some areas of Rotherham are affected by high economic and social deprivation. Rotherham is the 52nd most deprived district in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015, which showed 19.5% of residents living in the 10% most deprived areas nationally.

The Housing Service undertook a survey of tenants' views referred to as the Star (Standard Tenant Assessment Response) Survey which supports how resources are targeted and allows the Council to benchmark satisfaction with other social housing providers. The most recent survey found:

- 80% of tenants are satisfied with the overall service provided
- 80% of tenants are satisfied with the quality of their home
- 78% of tenants believe their rent provides value for money
- 48% of tenants were satisfied that their views were listened to and acted upon
- Satisfaction with grounds maintenance and estate services were varied across the borough

The HRA Budget has responded to some of the above concerns by increasing investment in Tenant Involvement Services and increasing capacity in the housing management teams.

One in six homes is rented from the council and although house prices have risen over the

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years, they are about half the national average.

The Housing Rents report complies with Government policy on social housing to increase rents by CPI plus 1% from April 2020. The implementation will be monitored as part of monthly budget monitoring and the collection of rent income from Council tenants; this will include any rent arrears.

Members have been consulted on the proposals for housing rents as part of the review of the HRA Business Plan.

Are there any gaps in the information that you are aware of?

No data is collected in respect of gender reassignment and religion and belief protected characteristics.

What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics?

The allocation of Council properties is monitored by protected characteristics and rent arrears are monitored by age, gender and disability.

<p>Engagement undertaken with customers. (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)</p>	<p>25 November 2020 (Housing Involvement Panel) – supported proposals to focus on housing growth so improving housing options available to vulnerable groups in need of housing.</p>
<p>Engagement undertaken with staff (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)</p>	<p>Engagement has been undertaken with Members and managers within Housing Services in respect of formulating the recommendations within this report.</p>

4. The Analysis - of the actual or likely effect of the Policy or Service (Identify by protected characteristics)

How does the Policy/Service meet the needs of different communities and groups? (Protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity) - see glossary on page 14 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance)

As part of the HRA budget there is increasing investment in Tenant Involvement Services and increasing capacity in the housing management teams to deal with issues of Anti-Social Behaviour, financial inclusion and engaging with under-represented groups through increasing staffing numbers.

The Housing Business plan responds to the needs of communities for affordable housing through identifying funding towards building new properties of different tenure, size and type of accommodation (including Disabled person units) which has been informed by the Strategic Housing Market assessment.

Within the HRA budget there is a contribution to the Housing Capital Programme of £6.519m in 2021/22 towards investment in increasing and maintaining existing housing stock.

Does your Policy/Service present any problems or barriers to communities or Groups?

The proposed increase in Council Rents and Services Charges may impact on tenants on low income not receiving housing benefit or Universal Credit towards their housing rent.

Does the Service/Policy provide any positive impact/s including improvements or remove barriers?

Vulnerable people are offered and provided with tenancy support which is tailored to individual needs to help them sustain their tenancy and live in the community. A key priority is the ongoing work mitigating the impact of welfare reform and general financial pressures tenants face. The Council is committed to minimising any effects of welfare reform on tenants and to do this through continuing early intervention and arrears prevention.

Our efforts will continue to be in supporting tenants to continue to pay their rent; by offering additional support to vulnerable tenants to help with money, benefits and debt advice; this is being done through our Financial Inclusion team. The Advocacy and Appeals service is now part of the Financial Inclusion team and as such provides Money Advice Officers to support tenants in rent arrears manage debts.

The increase in funding identified within the Business Plan to increase the supply of new council properties will assist vulnerable groups on the council house register, including reducing the number of temporary accommodation and increasing the support for accommodation for the disabled.

What affect will the Policy/Service have on community relations? (may also need to consider activity which may be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another)

It is not envisaged that the HRA Rents and Services Charges report will have any negative impact on community relations.

Please list any **actions and targets** that need to be taken as a consequence of this assessment on the action plan below and ensure that they are added into your service plan for monitoring purposes – see page 12 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

5. Summary of findings and Equality Analysis Action Plan

If the analysis is done at the right time, i.e. early before decisions are made, changes should be built in before the policy or change is signed off. This will remove the need for remedial actions. Where this is achieved, the only action required will be to monitor the impact of the policy/service/change on communities or groups according to their protected characteristic - See page 11 of the Equality Screening and Analysis guidance

Title of analysis: Housing Revenue Account Rents and Services Charges Report 2021-22
Directorate and service area: Finance and Customer Services – Finance Business Partnering (Adult Care, Housing and Public Health)
Lead Manager: Mark Scarrott
Summary of findings:
The proposed increase in Council Rents and Services Charges may impact on tenants on low income not receiving housing benefit or Universal Credit towards their housing rent. Vulnerable people are offered and provided with tenancy support which is tailored to individual needs to help them sustain their tenancy and live in the community.

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics as listed below	Target date (MM/YY)
Monitor the demographics of tenants in rent arrears on a bi-annual basis	A,D,S,GR,RE,SO,RoB	06/2021
Monitor the impact of the 1.5% rent increase and 2% increase in service charges on the HRA budget	A,D,S,GR,RE,SO,RoB	03/2022

***A = Age, D= Disability, S = Sex, GR Gender Reassignment, RE= Race/ Ethnicity, RoB= Religion or Belief, SO= Sexual Orientation, PM= Pregnancy/Maternity, CPM = Civil Partnership or Marriage. C= Carers, O= other groups**

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6. Governance, ownership and approval		
Please state those that have approved the Equality Analysis. Approval should be obtained by the Director and approval sought from DLT and the relevant Cabinet Member.		
Name	Job title	Date
Tom Bell	Assistant Director of Housing	27 November 2020

7. Publishing	
The Equality Analysis will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.	
If this Equality Analysis relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.	
A copy should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.	
Date Equality Analysis completed	27 November 2020
Report title and date	Housing Revenue Account Rents and Services Charges Report 2021-22
Date report sent for publication	tbc
Date Equality Analysis sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	27 November 2020