

Colchester Borough Council

Equality Impact Assessment Form - An Analysis of the Effects on Equality

Section 1: Initial Equality Impact Assessment

Name of policy* to be assessed: Colchester's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 - 2025

1. What is the main purpose of the policy?

- To set out how the Council and its partner organisations will prevent and reduce homelessness in Colchester

2. What main areas or activities does it cover?

- Increasing access to accommodation and providing settled homes, helping people to sustain their accommodation; improving the health and wellbeing of people who experience homelessness; improving communication and challenging the perception and culture of homelessness.

3. Are there changes to an existing policy being considered in this assessment? If so what are they?

- This strategy replaces the previous Homelessness Strategy 2014 - 2019. The emphasis of the new strategy is on increasing access to accommodation and providing settled homes and helping people to sustain them to prevent them from becoming homeless. It recognises the continued importance of health for people that experience homelessness. The strategy also acknowledges that communication is key to improving partnership working and challenging the perception and culture of homelessness.

4. Who are the main audience, users or customers who will be affected by the policy?

- People that are homeless or threatened by homelessness; Partner organisations

5. What outcomes do you want to achieve from the policy?

- Building collaborative partnerships to increase early intervention and prevention of homelessness in Colchester; better health outcomes for people who experience homelessness; better understanding of homelessness and managing expectations (organisations and customers).

6. Are other service areas or partner agencies involved in delivery? If so, please give details below:

- Voluntary sector partners that are working with people that are homeless, Colchester Borough Homes, CBC Housing Strategy Team, Essex County Council, Probation.

7. Are you aware of any relevant information, data, surveys or consultations¹ which help us to assess the likely or actual impact of the policy upon customers or staff? *If so provide details and include a link to the document or source where available.*

- A consultation event with key stakeholders including partner organisations that work directly with people that are homeless was held as part of the review of homelessness in Colchester. Focus groups/interviews with people that have experienced homelessness were also conducted. All feedback and case studies from the consultation activities are appendices to the strategy document.

8. The 'general duty' states that we must have "due regard" to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a 'protected characteristic'² and those who do not³
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not⁴

Not all policies help us to meet the 'general duty', but most do.

¹Click on [Customer Insight](#) for more information. The Council's surveys and consultations include 'equality monitoring information' to help us identify any particular concerns or views expressed by any particular group or 'protected characteristic'. It can also help us to assess how representative of our customers the respondent group is. Local Data on the Protected Characteristics is available [on this page](#) of the staff intranet, 'Colin'.

²The Equality Act's 'protected characteristics' include age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sex and sexual orientation. It also covers marriage and civil partnerships, but not for all aspects of the duty.

³This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to: (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it, and (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

⁴This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to (a) tackle prejudice, and (b) promote understanding.

Where applicable, explain how this policy helps us to meet the 'general duty':

The policy helps us to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation' in the following way(s):

- By identifying the housing and support needs of vulnerable groups and helping them to access accommodation and support services that can provide information and advice.

The policy helps us to 'advance equality of opportunity...' in the following way(s):

- By recognising the needs of vulnerable groups and providing equal opportunity to access support and accommodation to those people that are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The policy helps us to 'foster good relations...' in the following way(s):

- The Council will work closely with partner agencies to help tackle prejudice and promote understanding which can benefit all groups.

9. The Council has an important role in improving residents' health under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. This relates to both its 'core functions' (such as housing, leisure, green spaces and environmental health) and to its 'enabling roles' (such as economic development, planning and engaging with communities)⁵. The Council recognises that its Public Sector Equality Duty and its role in improving health are interrelated and mutually supportive. This is especially true across the 'protected characteristics' of age and disability.

"Health inequalities are the unjust and avoidable differences in people's health across the population. They come from the unequal distribution of income, wealth and power and influence the wider determinants of health such as work, education, social support and housing. Currently, in England people living in the least deprived areas will live around 20 years longer in good health than those in the most deprived areas. Reducing health inequalities means giving everyone the same opportunities to lead a healthy life, no matter where they live or who they are."

Where applicable, explain how this policy helps us to improve health/ reduce health inequalities for residents:

⁵ The King's Fund: [The district council contribution to public health: a time of challenge and opportunity, 2015](#)

- The strategy recognises that people who experience homelessness are likely to have greater health needs than those that don't which impacts on their life expectancy. Therefore, the strategy has identified key actions to improve access to health services for people that are homeless to reduce health inequalities.

10. This section helps us to identify any disproportionate equality impacts. Please indicate in the table below whether the policy is likely to particularly benefit or disadvantage any of the 'protected characteristics'.

Remember to include reference to any relevant consultation, data or information.

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
Age	Older people (60+)	X	People over 60 who are homeless would have priority for sheltered (supported) accommodation.		None identified
	Younger people (17-25) and children (0-16)	X	By providing education and advice to young people on the realities of becoming homeless and providing support and access to accommodation for those experiencing homelessness.		None identified
Disability	Physical	X	Working in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations in Colchester to provide support and accommodation for people with disabilities that are experiencing homelessness.		None identified
	Sensory	X	Working in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations in Colchester to provide support and accommodation for people with disabilities that are experiencing homelessness.		None identified
	Learning	X	Working in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations in Colchester to provide support and accommodation for people with disabilities that are experiencing homelessness.		None identified

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
	Mental health issues	X	Working in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations in Colchester to provide support and accommodation for people with disabilities that are experiencing homelessness.		None identified
	Other – <i>specify</i>				
Ethnicity ⁶	White		None identified		None identified
	Black		None identified		None identified
	Chinese		None identified		None identified
	Mixed Ethnic Origin		None identified		None identified
	Gypsies/ Travellers		None identified		None identified
	Other – <i>please state</i>				
Language	English not first language		None identified		None identified
Pregnancy and Maternity	Women who are pregnant or have given birth in last 26 weeks	X	Priority for housing is given to this group if they are experiencing homelessness.		None identified
Religion or Belief	People with a religious belief (or none)		None identified		None identified
Sex	Men		None identified		None identified
	Women		None identified		None identified
Gender Reassignment ⁷	Transgender/ Transsexual		None identified		None identified

⁶ National Census 2011 categories are: Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian (Asian or Asian British), African, Caribbean, Other Black (Black or Black British), White and Black African, White and Asian, White and Black Caribbean (Mixed), British, Irish, Other White (White), Chinese, Other (Other Ethnic Group).

⁷ The protected characteristic of gender reassignment is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as “a person proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.” This is a personal process that may involve medical interventions such as counselling, psychotherapy, hormone therapy or surgery, but does not have to.

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
Sexual Orientation	Bisexual, Heterosexual, Gay or Lesbian		None identified		None identified
Marriage and Civil Partnership	People who are married or in a civil partnership		None identified		None identified

11. If you have identified any negative impacts (above) how can they be minimised or removed? N/A

(This is a key section: Please deal with each negative impact noted above in turn.)

12. Could the policy discriminate⁸ against any 'protected characteristic', either directly or indirectly⁹? (No)

Summary and findings of Initial Equality Impact Assessment

13. Please put a tick in the relevant box to confirm your findings, and what the next step is:

Findings	Action required
A. No negative impacts have been identified <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X	Sign off screening and finish.
B. Negative impacts have been identified but have been minimised or removed <input type="checkbox"/> n/a	Sign off screening and finish.
C. Negative impacts could not be minimised or removed <input type="checkbox"/> n/a	Sign off screening and complete a full impact assessment – Section 2.
D. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement. <input type="checkbox"/> n/a	Sign off screening and complete a full impact assessment – Section 2.

⁸ The Council has a general duty to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'. Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another in a comparable situation because of their 'protected characteristic' whether on grounds of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, ethnicity; religion or belief; sex (gender), sexual orientation, or marriage and civil partnership. Indirect discrimination occurs when an apparently neutral provision or practice would nevertheless disadvantage people on the grounds of their 'protected characteristic'.

⁹ If you answer 'yes' to question 11 (above) you will need to complete the following section *and* go on to complete Section 2 in order to conduct a full Equality Impact Assessment.

14. Name and job title of person completing this form: Karen Paton - Housing Strategy Officer

15. Date of completion: 09/09/2019

16. Date for update or review of this screening¹⁰: 2024/25 when the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is due to be reviewed.

¹⁰ This is normally three years, but not always: You may know that the policy itself will be reviewed earlier in which case the EqIA should be reviewed at that time. Or, in the case of a five year strategy, you may want to have a review date of five years. In the case of a “one off” decision, such as closing a service, a review date may not be needed - in which case you should indicate ‘N/A’. In any event, the review date should be brought forward if you receive information or feedback which raises new concerns, or if the public policy context changes. You can speak to the [Equality and Safeguarding Co-ordinator](#) for more advice.