



**GATEWAY TO HOMECHOICE
LETTINGS SCHEME
&
LETTINGS POLICY**

**EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT
STAGE ONE – Initial Screening**

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT STAGE ONE – Initial Screening

POLICY OR FUNCTION TO BE ASSESSED		Is the policy/function:	
Choice Based Lettings Scheme and the Lettings Policy		NEW	EXISTING
Lead Officer	Assessment Team	Date of Stage One Initial Screening	
Diane Foley	Gateway to Homechoice – Greater Haven Gateway Choice Based Lettings Scheme to be introduced March 2009	November 2008	
1. Who defines or defined this policy/function?	Part 6 Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 The sub-regional allocations policy implemented following a 12 week consultation process with key stakeholders The Sub-regional CBL Project Board		
2. Who implements it?	The seven councils involved in Gateway to Homechoice – Babergh, Braintree, Colchester, Ipswich, Maldon, Mid Suffolk and Suffolk Coastal, their associated LSVTs and other RSLs operating in the district		
3. Describe the aim, objective or purpose of the policy or function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet the legal requirements for letting social housing; • To assist customers in the highest assessed need; • To make the best use of existing housing stock; • To provide a consistent lettings process across the sub-region, so properties are let in a fair and transparent way; • To provide increased choice and information to customers in the allocation of social housing; • To support vulnerable customers accessing available homes; • To ensure that customers are not discriminated against, whether directly or indirectly; • To provide a wider housing options approach in supporting customers to meet their housing needs; • To improve mobility across the sub-region; • To promote social inclusion and help achieve sustainable communities. 		

<p>4. Are there any related objectives? If so, what are they?</p>	<p>High quality, accessible, value for money services. A quality village life. A sustainable future for Greater Haven Gateway A better future through partnership.</p>
<p>5. What are the current priorities associated with this policy/function?</p>	<p>Effectively meeting local housing needs, preventing homelessness; tackling Social Exclusion, Improving the quality of life, Developing sustainable communities, and providing choice for those waiting to be housed.</p>
<p>6. What outcomes are wanted from this policy/function?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing as many households on the housing register as possible in accordance with need • Provision of a clear, open fair and accountable lettings process • Equitable and consistent assessment of need across the district and the sub-region • Prioritisation for those in the greatest housing need • Improved mobility across the Greater Haven Gateway sub-region • Effective partnership working across the district and sub-region and with key stakeholders • To produce an efficient lettings service • The production of detailed housing information • To promote sustainable communities • To introduce the concept of choice to the letting of social housing • Equality of accessibility to all eligible households
<p>7. Who are the main stakeholders?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants • Residents • Tenants • RSLs • Private Landlords • Police • PCT • Health and the Voluntary Sector Groups • Elected members • Sub-regional local authorities and other partners • Staff • Other Council Departments

<p>8. What outcomes do stakeholders want from this policy/function?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal access to the CBL scheme, with a variety of options to enable access • Prioritisation of housing need • Regular advertising of properties • Rehousing solutions • A significant amount of applicants have indicated a need for assistance in applying for, looking for homes and expressing an interest.
<p>9. Is the policy/function corporate and far-reaching?</p>	<p>Yes, it is a sub-regional scheme which links into other corporate objectives and its implementation meets a Government target for CBL to be implemented by 2010.</p>
<p>10. What number of people may be affected or impacted upon by the implementation of the policy/function?</p>	<p>A change in the lettings policy and how social housing is let will have a significant impact on a range of people, both due to the re-assessment of need and the requirement for applicants to be proactive within the lettings process</p> <p>The actual number of people who will be impacted by this change is difficult to calculate, however, the following groups of people will be impacted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those waiting to be housed • Local tenants and other residents • Other council departments • Other Stakeholders as outlined in question 7 • Others who have not yet applied for housing • Those who are ineligible to be housed.
<p>11. Are key elements of people's lives affected by this policy/function eg finance, accommodation, welfare?</p>	<p>Yes –having a settled and secure home is a vital factor to a persons wellbeing. There is an impact on their health, mental wellbeing, financial circumstances, employment opportunities and general family life, either through being housed, or not being assisted.</p> <p>There is an additional change, as CBL requires more customer involvement in the lettings process, as they must actively participate in the scheme through expressing interest.</p>

<p>12. Are there any criteria, requirements or aspects of this policy/function that could contribute to inequality?</p>	<p>Areas that could potentially contribute to inequality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of need – the change in how customers are prioritised could in theory impact on inequality. • Ability to interact with the system through finding out about available homes and expressing interest in them, which takes account of culture, language and disability • The provision of information about the new system • Customers having a basic understanding of the system and being able to participate in it. <p>Allocation of a scarce resource such as social rented housing will be undertaken in a manner that effectively overcomes any barriers to access (e.g. culture, understanding, language, disability)</p>
<p>13. Could the policy/function discriminate against any group(s) either directly or indirectly?</p>	<p>The policy and framework CBL scheme have been designed to be non discriminatory, and equitable for all, however once in place it will be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure there is not direct or indirect discrimination against any particular group. A strategy to ensure participation by everyone in CBL has been produced which highlights where there may be barriers and lists the actions to be taken to mitigate these barriers</p>

<p>14. Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a differential impact in terms of equality?</p> <p>If Yes, please indicate what your concerns are for each category.</p> <p>Please substantiate your concerns with any existing evidence.</p>	<p>Ethnicity Including Gypsies & Travellers</p>	Y	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information about how the process works • Information not clear for customers who do not speak English as their first language • Potential impact on Gypsies and Travellers due to lifestyle choice
	<p>Disability Including Mental Health</p>	Y	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of suitable adapted properties • Lack of support services • Lack of resources to be able to adapt some properties • Some properties cannot be adapted for technical reasons • Potential impact on the homebound who are unable to access information • Properties should be labelled clearly to state if it is adapted • Information not displayed in a clear appropriate manner?
	<p>Gender Including Transgender</p>	Y	N	
	<p>Sexual Orientation</p>	Y	N	

	Religion or Belief	Y	N	Due to the limitations on housing stock, are people's religious/ cultural needs taken into account? For example if an additional room is required for prayer, two reception rooms are needed, or people have specific bathing requirements.
	Age Young-Elderly	Y	N	Impact of age restrictions on certain properties Impact on some of the partner organisations lettings policies for 16-17 year olds Need for guarantors for 16-17 year olds Elderly people: information to be provided in appropriate formats. Shortages of some appropriate housing.
15. Of the groups who might be expected to benefit from the intended outcomes, are there any that do not?	Cannot say at the moment – rigorous analysis is required once the scheme is in place. The scheme will be monitored to find those who are not expressing interest in available homes and groups who are expressing interest but not being successful.			
16. Do your answers reveal there is potential or actual differential or adverse impact of this policy/function?	Unknown at this stage. A range of actions are being taken to ensure the concerns outlined above do not occur.			

<p>17. Can any differential impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality for one group, or for any other reason?</p> <p>Please give details.</p>	<p>Ethnicity Including Gypsies & Travellers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of translations of information for customers who do not speak English as a first language • Provision of information in different formats, for example, audio CD's/ tapes • Website design to ensure information is assessable. • Enable customers to find out about available homes through a variety of methods, and express interest in the most appropriate manner. • The provision of interpretation services where required • Working closely with agencies who support customers from BME communities • Consideration of the specific needs of Gypsies and Travellers.
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	<p>Disability Including Mental Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DCLG consultation Code of Guidance on CBL advocates providing measures to advantage disabled applicants above other groups. This includes giving disabled people longer to decide whether to accept an offer of the home, greater assistance in viewing properties than other applicants and allowing longer void times for adapted properties to find an applicant who requires those adaptations. • The ability to make direct lets to people requiring adapted properties where necessary. • The use of Occupational Therapists where necessary to ensure the property is appropriate for the applicants' needs. • Arranging advocacy and support for applicants when required • Making sure information is displayed in a clear way, especially around the adapted properties. • Prioritization through the lettings policy • We are procuring a website which is DDA compliant.
	<p>Gender Including Transgender</p>	<p>People fleeing domestic violence may be treated differently, for example through provision of home visits and sensitive handling of the situation. They will be given sufficient prioritisation through the lettings policy.</p>
	<p>Sexual Orientation</p>	<p>A customer's sexual orientation should not impact their chances of being housed.</p>
	<p>Religion or Belief</p>	<p>We will be sensitive and considerate to the religious and cultural requirements of customers.</p>

	<p>Age (for example young or elderly)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with support agencies where required • Information will be provided in a variety of formats • Elderly people are more likely to be underoccupying their home. Additional preference will be given to those who are underoccupying and who want to move to a smaller home. • Before an offer of accommodation is made, people requiring sheltered housing will be assessed to ensure the property is suitable for their needs. 	
<p>18. Does the policy/function meet the statutory duty to promote good relations?</p> <p>If Yes, please detail how.</p>	<p>Yes: full consideration has been undertaken to ensure the system meets the needs of customers from the above groups, including the development of a Participation Strategy and the measures outlined above.</p> <p>However, it is clear that until the scheme is implemented its full impact will not be known. There will be ongoing monitoring and reviews once implemented to ensure that groups are not disadvantaged through the implementation of CBL.</p> <p>Once the scheme has been in place for long enough to establish a meaningful statistical base, it is recommended that a stage 2 assessment be undertaken.</p>		
<p>19. Should this policy or function proceed to a STAGE 2 PARTIAL EIA?</p>			
	<p>If Yes, is there enough evidence to proceed straight to a STAGE 3 FULL EIA?</p>		
	<p>YES</p>	<p>x</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Date set for:</p>	<p>STAGE 2 PARTIAL EIA</p>	<p>or</p>	<p>STAGE 3 FULL EIA 6 months following full implementation</p>
<p>Signature of Lead Officer</p>	<p>Diane Foley</p>		<p>Date EIA completed November 2008</p>
<p>Name and Position: Greater Haven Gateway Choice Based Lettings Project Manager</p>			

EIA checked/ approved by		Date	
Name and Position N/A			
STAGE ONE EIA completed and located at:			
Ongoing monitoring arrangements, and review date: Full impact assessment to be completed six months after implementation date			