

# **Equality Impact Assessment**

**Level 2**

## **Published Equality Impact Assessment**

Equality is about recognising that people are diverse and therefore have different needs and should be treated accordingly and taken into account in service delivery and employment practices.

Equality Impact Assessments will enable services to identify these needs and adapt their services and functions primarily through drawing on existing research, information/data and consultation. The overall purpose of Equality Impact Assessments is:

- To assess and identify the impact of policies or procedures, strategies, functions and services on different members of the local community and key stakeholders
- To establish objectives and targets for action to mitigate impacts and improve services where appropriate
- To promote and work towards equality of opportunity and reduce discrimination and enhance relations between different groups in society.

An impact assessment must be completed before the formal implementation of a policy, strategy, procedure or function can take place. In general the sooner an impact assessment is completed the better.

# Equality Impact Assessment

**Name of function being assessed** (*Service, Policy, Procedure, Strategy etc*)

Housing Strategy 2009-12

**Who is completing the assessment?** (*Please state names and should include at least 3 people from across the department*)

Ruth Edwards – Housing Strategy & Partnerships Manager

Rosey Notley – Housing Policy Officer

Affordable Housing Working Group – this was established in 2006 to consider ways and means of providing affordable housing in Stevenage. Membership of the group is made up of Members including the Portfolio Holders for Housing and Environment and Regeneration, Council officers and Stevenage Homes' officers. The group will monitor delivery of the Housing Strategy action plan, and will also be responsible for monitoring this EIA and undertaking future reviews.



## Stage 1: AIMS of FUNCTION

What are the main aims and objectives or purpose of the service/policy/procedure/strategy?

To develop the strategic direction for housing within Stevenage and to increase the supply of suitable and affordable housing to meet identified need and as set out within the legislative framework.

What outcomes do you want to achieve and for whom?

The strategy has four key strategic priorities that have been set in line with the five key elements of the strategic housing role as defined by the Audit Commission's key line of enquiries for strategic housing:

Priority One	Understand our Housing Market
Priority Two	Future Homes and Sustainable Development
Priority Three	Inclusive Communities
Priority Four	Strengthen the Private Sector

Who is affected by this function and by the way it is carried out? i.e. the internal and external customers, groups, communities or any other stakeholders?

Residents, Members, officers of Stevenage Borough Council and Stevenage Homes, affordable housing providers, developers, private landlords, Homes and Communities Agency, Tenant Services Authority, Department of Communities and Local Government, GoEast, London Commuter Belt sub region, Hertfordshire County Council, Supporting People Commissioning Body.

Who implements, carries out or delivers the function? Please state where more than one person, team, department or body?

Stevenage Borough Council has responsibility for delivering the strategic housing role. The actions detailed within the Housing Strategy will be delivered by a number of partners including Stevenage Homes, affordable housing providers, developers, private landlords, Citizens Advice Bureau and a number of voluntary agencies and charities. The Affordable Housing Working Group will

be responsible for ensuring that the Housing Strategy 2009-12 is implemented, through continuous monitoring and reviewing of the delivery of the Action Plan.

Is the policy, practice, service or function affected by external drivers for change? e.g. new legislation, national policy, external inspections etc.

Guidance on producing future housing strategies was given by the Government in 2008 in 'Creating Strong and Prosperous Communities'. Emphasis was placed on Sustainable Communities Strategies and local authorities were encouraged to set strategic housing priorities within them. Separate housing strategies were no longer compulsory although the majority of local authorities have chosen to reflect the continued importance placed on housing by publishing a housing strategy.

The Audit Commission may refer to the Housing Strategy as evidence in any inspection of the Council or the County Council via the Comprehensive Area Assessment process.

How are people (internal & external incl. staff) informed about the service or function? How is information publicised or explained to those affected either directly or indirectly?

The Housing Strategy will be published on the Council's website and the link will be sent to all key stakeholders. The Council will inform the residents of Stevenage about the Housing Strategy through 'Chronicle' and Stevenage Homes' tenants newsletter 'Housing for You'. Information will be on display in the Customer Service Centre advising residents how they can get a copy of the Housing Strategy. The joint Member and Officer Affordable Housing Working Group receives regular progress reports related to the Housing Strategy and Action Plan.

Who will be responsible for the service or function? How will it be implemented? What monitoring and reviewing arrangements are in place?

Stevenage Borough Council has responsibility for delivering the strategic housing role. The Affordable Housing Working Group will be responsible for ensuring that the Housing Strategy 2009-12 is implemented, through continuous monitoring and reviewing of the delivery of the Action Plan.

What steps have you taken to ensure that your procurement procedures address equality issues, if the policy, practice, function or service is provided by another organisation or agency on behalf of the Council?

Services linked to the delivery of the Housing Strategy that will be delivered by partner agencies will be required by the Council to have Equal Opportunities Policies in place.

What are the key performance indicators? These may be national, local or service designed?

National Indicators:

NI 141 – Percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living

NI 154 – Net additional homes provided

NI 155 – Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)

NI 156 - a reduction in statutory homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation

NI 158 - delivery of 100% completed properties to Decent Homes standard by 2014

NI 187A – Percentage of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a high energy efficient rating

NI 187B – Percentage of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low energy rating

Local Indicators:

Encourage Community Involvement (ECI) A – number of people participating in corporate consultation exercises

Encourage Community Involvement (ECI) B – percentage of particular minority groups participating in consultation

Stevenage Homes BV63 – Improve energy efficiency SAP rating of stock

Stevenage Homes PI 34 – Increase in satisfaction levels with anti-social behaviour case handling

What links are there between this service/policy/procedure/strategy and other corporate objectives?

The Council's vision and priorities are linked to those of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the priorities in the Housing Strategy contribute to all of these. This point is illustrated in the following table.

SoStevenage Community Strategy	Corporate Ambitions and Priorities		Housing Strategy
Priority Themes	Ambition	Priorities	Linked strategic objective/priority
Economy, Enterprise and Environment	Regenerate Stevenage	Have a growing town and economy	Provide good quality homes in clean, safe and well maintained neighbourhoods.
		Develop a modern, vibrant town centre	
		Revitalise neighbourhood centres	
Safer and Stronger Communities	Create Sustainable Communities & Shape our Community	Provide quality, affordable housing	Assess and plan for housing needs across all tenures.
		Keep the town safe	Make best use of existing stock.
		Focus on neighbourhoods	Develop a strategic approach to private sector housing.
		Maintain a clean and green environment	Help tackle poor housing conditions in the private sector.
		Bring communities together	Ensure effective housing and neighbourhood management through partnership working and community engagement.
		Improve the image of Stevenage	Plan and commission homelessness prevention and housing support services.
		Encourage community	



		involvement	
	Move towards Excellence	Use resources effectively	The Housing Strategy is committed to delivering the Audit Commission's cross cutting themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access, customer care and user focus</li> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Value for money</li> </ul>
		Maintain customer focus	
		Promote equality	
		Support and develop our people	
Healthier Communities and Older People.  Children and Young People	Create Sustainable Communities	Help provide leisure and health services	<i>This priority theme is largely supported by other strategies and partner organisations including the Primary Care Trust and Hertfordshire County Council</i>

In addition, the Audit Commission expects councils to address the following cross cutting themes. These are incorporated in all of the Council's strategic housing services and functions:

- 1) Promote and encourage access, customer care and user focus
- 2) Consider diversity and equalities in all that we do
- 3) Provide value for money

The strategic priorities and objectives of the Housing Strategy have been shaped by the above elements, local concerns and findings from our consultation with stakeholders and service users. Many of the objectives can only be achieved with strong partnerships formed with private landlords, housing associations, economic development agencies and residents.

## Stage 2: DATA COLLECTION

**Evidence: Consultation, data, research:** Knowing your customers and the community

This section is about obtaining information and evidence to inform decisions and judgements made about the impacts/barriers different people may face in accessing a service or function.

Answers must be made using correct, quantifiable and qualitative information. An impact assessment cannot be carried out unless this information is available, where not a reasonable explanation must be given or further consultation undertaken.

What is the profile of the people affected/service users? How does this compare to the local profile? What is the difference? (if you don't know then include monitoring arrangements as an action in your action plan to enable you to start to build a profile of your service users)

Stevenage is a compact urban area with a population of nearly 80,000 people. The population has been forecast to increase. Stevenage has a higher number of young people and a relatively low proportion of black minority ethnic communities, 94.6% of the population is white. It is estimated that by 2025 one in five people in Stevenage will be over 60, the Council is developing an Older Persons Strategy to address the needs of this group.

Stevenage was built as the first new town to provide homes and jobs for people moving from London after the Second World War. Many of the original communities continue to exist. The percentage of private sector properties overall has increased from 36% in 1981 to over 70% in 2007. This is due partly to tenants exercising their right to buy and also the construction of new housing estates by private developers. Although private home ownership has increased Stevenage has the highest percentage of social tenants relative to the East of England Region and compared with other districts in Hertfordshire.

In Stevenage a significant number of people do not enjoy the same quality of life as many others in the rest of Hertfordshire - some of our residents experience poor health, lack of qualifications and some people have low aspirations. Stevenage young people have a lower rate of educational achievement and are less likely to graduate from university than their counterparts in Hertfordshire overall.

Although Stevenage has the lowest property prices in the London Commuter Belt Housing Sub-Region there is still a serious affordability issue. The average price of a property in Stevenage in 2008 was £192,100. The Stevenage housing market has seen rapid price growth over the last few years and is experiencing the same acute affordability problems as other parts of the sub-region. Fluctuating interest rates and generous lending practices have added risk to the market and we are concerned that for some home owners, sustaining mortgage repayments is becoming increasingly difficult. In this housing market environment the social rented sector is becoming increasingly important in providing good quality affordable homes in Stevenage.

To develop its understanding of the local housing market the Council commissioned jointly with North Hertfordshire District Council a **Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) – 2008**. It has identified levels of both housing demand and need, which far exceed what could be supplied. There is an increased demand for affordable housing and the SHMA concludes:

- an overall annual shortfall of 606 units of affordable housing
- implied need for 1,103 units of supported accommodation up until 2010
- 1,093 units for older person accommodation currently living within and wanting to move to Stevenage (913 affordable and 180 in the private sector)
- 301 extra care units up until 2011
- Approximately 4,500 applicants on the housing register
- Overall under-occupation is 37.1%

The SHMA has analysed the needs of specific household groups and key findings for each group can be found within the report. The data on the needs of households with support needs, older people and BME households was gained from utilising primary data from each respective authority local housing needs survey.

Joint studies for **Gypsy and Traveller accommodation assessment and Site Scoping** were commissioned with Hertfordshire County Council, Broxbourne and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Councils, East Hertfordshire and North Hertfordshire District Councils in **2006 and 2007**. A need for 35 additional permanent pitches and 10 additional transit pitches was identified. The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) has recommended that Stevenage provides 10 additional pitches by 2011. They also support the need for 10 new transit pitches in the north and east Hertfordshire area.

Indicate all available information, including data, consultation that will support the development of the impact assessment?

Please refer to the Housing Strategy for full details of information, data used and consultation carried out.

Who was involved in the consultation? (National duties indicate that interest groups related to the six strands and those with a disability should be consulted)

A working group was formed and a consultation event held in October 2008 was attended by a cross section of representatives from the public, voluntary and commercial sectors. The key stakeholders invited to this event were also sent a website link to the draft Housing Strategy and invited to comment.

Key stakeholders included local Authority partners in the London Commuter Belt sub region, SoStevenage Local Strategic Partnership, Stevenage Homes, Hertfordshire County Council, Primary Care Trust, Hertfordshire Constabulary and Police Authority, Voluntary, Charitable and non-profit organisations. For a full list of consultees please refer to the Housing Strategy appendix.

Have any complaints been made on the basis of discrimination? What are these?

No

Where gaps in information have been identified, further research and consultation will need to be undertaken before the assessment can be carried out to identify impacts. If this is not possible, it must be stated in the action plan.

Does the data, information, consultation etc. suggest any impacts on the users of this function? What are these impacts?

Use the tables below to think through potential impacts

# Stage 3: ASSESSMENT of IMPACT

The assessment should cover the all six strands of diversity  
 For more information on diversity in Stevenage, please see  
**intranet/ staff info:**

- **E - Equality and diversity internal information/ Knowing our communities and customers**
- **S - Stevenage Profile Information**

**1. What is the aim and what do you want to achieve?**

That the outcomes of the Housing Strategy reflect fully the needs and aspirations of all sections of the community.

**3. What is actually happening in real life that prevents aims and outcomes being achieved and people from accessing the function/policy?  
 (data, consultation and staff knowledge and observations)**

Insufficient resources  
 Local, regional and national economic conditions  
 Changing demographics  
 Increasing housing need  
 Policy changes  
 Government changes  
 Differing political priorities

These are barriers that impact on the community as a whole rather than individual groups.

**2. Think about the impact on the different people**

Age	Disability	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Religion/ Belief	Socio-economic	Financial
<b>Other</b>							

## **Groups under each diversity strand**

### **Ethnicity**

Asian or Asian British  
Black or Black British  
Chinese  
Mixed race  
White  
Gypsies and Travellers

### **Gender**

Women  
Men  
Transgender

### **Disability**

physical or mobility impairments  
sensory impairments (hearing, visual and speech)  
learning disabilities  
non-visible condition such as epilepsy or diabetes

### **Age**

0- 9  
10-15  
16-19  
20-29  
30-44  
45-59  
60-64  
65-74  
75 or over

### **Faith or belief**

Christian  
Buddhist  
Hindu  
Jewish  
Muslim  
Sikh  
Other  
No religion or belief

### **Sexual orientation**

Bisexual  
Gay  
Heterosexual  
Lesbian

## Overall Impact

<b>Diversity Strand</b>	<b>Impact</b> - Positive and Negative or neutral - High, Medium, Low, none	<b>Reason</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Neutral	<p>Stevenage has a relatively low proportion of BME communities with higher proportions in the younger age groups. The total BME population is estimated at 4,304 representing 5.41% of the total overall population. The findings of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) repeat that 26% of BME households state that their home is too small. 5.5% of BME households had incomes below £10K per annum, 69.3% of BME households had incomes above £27,500 per annum, compared to 24.5% and 17.8% respectively in the whole population. The majority of BME households stated owner occupation as their preferred tenure. In general, BME households have similar incomes and new housing requirements to non-BME households; these requirements should be met through initiatives to address the needs of the whole population.</p> <p>Stevenage Borough Council and North Hertfordshire District Council are producing a joint Area Action Plan (SNAP) which consults on appropriate locations for new Gypsy and Traveller pitches.</p> <p>Unlike many other areas Stevenage has not experienced a significant growth of new economic or other migrants. The largest influx has occurred from Eastern Europe, particularly Poland with 400 National Insurance Registrations between Jan 2002 and April 2008.</p>
<b>Gender</b>	Neutral	<p>The strategy identifies actions to support victims of domestic violence (the majority of which are women). The gender of all housing applicants is held on the housing register. There is no evidence that gender influences how an application for housing is assessed. The Allocations Policy ensures that there is no inappropriate preference given to people on the waiting list. The</p>

		Allocations Scheme is to be reviewed annually by the Council and Stevenage Homes. Lettings outcomes are monitored by Stevenage Homes and reported regularly. There are actions in the strategy that support the needs of young parents (the majority of which are women)
<b>Disability</b>	Neutral / Negative	The SHMA states that 19.7% of households in Stevenage included a member with a disability, 56.7% of these are over the age of 60. This is partly addressed through all affordable housing funded by the Homes and Communities Agency being built to Lifetime Home Standards (i.e. easily adapted to meet changing mobility requirements). Overall, a total of 9% of properties in Stevenage have been adapted in some way, the majority of these are Council properties. The budget for aids and adaptations in Council homes for 2008/09 was £815,000. The Dept. <b>Communities &amp; Local Govt. awarded the Council £197,000 in 2209/10 to be spent on Disabled Facilities Grant.</b>
<b>Age</b>	Neutral / Positive	It is estimated that by 2025 one in five people in Stevenage will be over 60, the Council is developing an Older Persons Strategy to address the needs of this group. Stevenage Homes have commissioned research to examine future demand for sheltered housing and also to examine the physical state of existing stock. The rate of teenage pregnancy is high in Stevenage compared to other areas of the County. In an attempt to offer more support to young parents the Council decommissioned a sheltered housing scheme and opened a supported scheme for young parents. Young people in the town also benefit from the services of Herts Young Homelessness and Aldwyck's supported housing schemes. These both benefit from Council subsidy. The intermediate tenure housing being delivered in addition to social rented housing gives young people opportunity to access the property ladder e.g. shared ownership.
<b>Faith/Belief</b>	Neutral	All 6 strands of diversity are monitored via the Housing Register



		application form. The allocations policy ensures that there is no inappropriate preference given to people on the waiting list. There is no evidence to suggest that this group is discriminated against.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Neutral	All 6 strands of diversity are monitored via the Housing Register application form. The allocations policy ensures that there is no inappropriate preference given to people on the waiting list. There is no evidence to suggest that this group is discriminated against.
<b>Socio-economic</b>	Neutral	
<b>Financial</b>	Neutral / Positive	Enabling the delivery of additional affordable housing in Stevenage contributes to ensuring that those on low incomes have access to decent affordable housing. The availability of intermediate tenures such as shared ownership has given many residents an opportunity to get a foot on the property ladder. The Council has taken a lead in setting up an Economic Task Force to offer support to residents affected by the economic downturn. A Mortgage Rescue advisor working for the Citizens Advice Bureau has been funded by the Council to enable residents to benefit from the Govt's MRS scheme.

**Where a negative impact does occur, is this appropriate/can be supported to promote equality of opportunity?**

N/A

**If not, what action can be taken to ensure people from different groups are not adversely impacted (Should be further identified in action plan)?**

## Stage 4: ACTION PLANNING

Objective/outcome	Responsible Person	Date for Completion	Action	Milestones	Resource implications
Reliable, detailed, up-to-date statistics on housing needs of different communities in Stevenage, to inform future developments and actions.	Ruth Edwards		Monitor / report equality statistics on a regular basis.		Officer time  Within existing resources
Commissioned research meets legal requirement to report on needs of diverse communities in Stevenage.	Ruth Edwards		Ensure that future research commissioned by the Strategic Housing team collects data and reports on needs of residents in Stevenage covering all 6 diversity strands: ethnicity, gender, disability, age, faith/belief and sexual orientation.	Reports	Officer time  Within existing resources

### How and where will these actions be monitored?

The Affordable Housing Working Group will be responsible for ensuring that the Housing Strategy 2009-12 EIA Action Plan is implemented, through continuous monitoring and reviewing of the EIA.

### When will this service or function be reviewed?

A new Housing Strategy Action Plan will be updated and published annually.

## Impact Assessment Summary

<b>Name of function assessed</b>	Housing Strategy 2009-12
<b>Date completed</b>	9 October 2009
<b>Next review date</b>	10 October 2010
<b>Author</b>	Ruth Edwards
<b>Outline of Assessment</b>	
<p>To ensure that the outcomes of the Housing Strategy reflect fully the needs and aspirations of all sections of the community. To assess the consultation used to influence the priorities and key actions for the Housing Strategy to be satisfied that all Stevenage residents have had chance to contribute.</p>	
<b>Assessment Team</b>	
Ruth Edwards, Rosey Notley	
<b>Data, information and Consultation used</b> ( <i>sources, who &amp; How</i> )	
<p>Data &amp; Information:</p> <p>North Herts &amp; Stevenage Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) - 2008  Affordable Housing Development Viability Study – 2007  Aspirational Housing Study – 2007  Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and Site Scoping studies – 2007 and 2008  Hometrack  Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment - 2008  North Herts &amp; Stevenage Homelessness Strategy  Affordable Housing Strategy  SoStevenage Community Strategy</p> <p>Consultation:</p> <p>Working Group made up of Council, Stevenage Homes, Sub Regional co-ordinator and Housing Association representatives.  Consultation event for key stakeholders held at Council in October 2008 (full list of invitees in Housing Strategy Appendix).  A website link to the draft Housing Strategy was sent to all key stakeholders inviting them to comment.</p>	

## **Impact, Outcomes and actions identified**

### Outcomes –

- The housing needs of Stevenage residents are identified and met in an equitable, accessible and appropriate manner.
- Everyone in Stevenage can access key information about housing easily.
- Sharing of information (where appropriate) with other Council Departments, other public sector partners and relevant agencies.

### Actions –

- Reliable, detailed, up-to-date statistics on housing needs of different communities in Stevenage.
- Future research meet requirement to identify and report needs of diverse communities in Stevenage.

Date completed

Signed by Head of Service