

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

DONCASTER METROPLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Due Regard Statement Template

How to show due regard to the equality duty in how we develop our work and in our decision making.

Due Regard Statement

A **Due Regard Statement** (DRS) is the tool for capturing the evidence to demonstrate that due regard has been shown when the council plans and delivers its functions. A Due Regard Statement must be completed for all programmes, projects and changes to service delivery.

- A DRS should be initiated at the beginning of the programme, project or change to inform project planning
- The DRS runs adjacent to the programme, project or change and is reviewed and completed at the relevant points
- Any reports produced needs to reference “Due Regard” in the main body of the report and the DRS should be attached as an appendix
- The DRS cannot be fully completed until the programme, project or change is delivered.

<p>1 Name of the ‘process’ and briefly describe the activity being considered including aims and expected outcomes. This will help to determine how relevant the ‘process’ is to equality.</p>	<p>Changes to the DMBC Housing Allocations Policy. The policy was last changed in December 2012.</p> <p>Changes are being made to meet the challenges in the housing market, welfare reform, rising issues of homelessness and rising demand on social care.</p> <p>Changes have been developed by St Leger Homes with an initial consultation with Local Members in October 2015, January 2017 and November 2017 to have regard to emerging legislation. Further consultation has been completed with customers, stakeholders and partners with the last round of consultation concluding in January 2018.</p> <p>There are five changes and one Legislative update:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Owners will be able to apply to join the housing register who have equity of up to £120,000 (excluding savings) and will be included in the general band. To formalise this in the policy the threshold for home ownership equity will be increased from £60,000 to £120,000. However for those owners who meet the threshold but also have an assessed housing need, they will continue to be placed in the priority band appropriate to their needs. The key focus of the Allocations Policy is to meet housing need through allocating the right properties to those in need. When considering owner occupiers, whilst they may have some equity in their home, given the increase in property values, often this is insufficient to enable them to meet their changing housing need. Where owner occupiers are elderly, ensuring that applicants in this category are housed in accommodation that meets their needs can have significant positive impacts on their wellbeing, it can also reduce pressure on longer term social care assistance. Inclusion of owners on the register also helps to make the best use of the housing stock by providing another housing option to predominantly older people. 2. Legislative update - To add an exception to the local connection criteria for Council and Housing Association tenants who have a need to move to a particular location
---	---

for employment in accordance with Right to Move 2015. The guidance stated that local authorities do not disqualify persons on the grounds that they do not have a local connection with the authority's district for Social tenants who need to move to take up a job or live closer to employment or training where this would result in hardship. We are currently accommodating this under the 'any special circumstances' criteria within the local connection exemptions; however for clarity we want to make this an explicit category.

3. To discharge the homeless duty on behalf of full duty Homeless cases in the platinum band, if they have failed to seek suitable and reasonable accommodation with 1 month of the duty being awarded. This will be classed as a full and final offer in order to discharge homelessness duty. Currently applicants who are given a full duty under the homeless legislation are awarded Platinum band, an applicant would remain in this band until they are allocated and accept a home. In some instances applicants are remaining in this band, and temporary accommodation, for some considerable time and not moving on to permanent accommodation. This is having the effect of blocking up our limited temporary accommodation thereby reducing our ability to help those in greatest need. Staying in temporary housing also has a negative impact on the individual. This change will assist applicants to move into suitable accommodation more quickly and enable a more streamlined process. This approach will also enable us to manage customers' expectations with regards to available permanent accommodation.
4. Creating a homeless prevention priority where an applicant is not entitled to any help with their housing costs, to prevent a homeless presentation. Suspending and backdating applications and activating them when they are able to afford accommodation. This would include cases where parents say that a young adult has to move out (Family License Termination), which, in many cases, significantly impacts on the life chances of the young person.

		<p>By offering a back date in effective date and priority if their circumstances at the time of rehousing merit it, the applicant can make a planned move without being disadvantaged. This would also alleviate pressure on the frontline homelessness service and provision of temporary accommodation.</p> <p>5. Creation of a resettlement status in the platinum band to support a resettlement pathway. To support early intervention and prevention through a resettlement pathway process (Complex Lives, Wharf House / Open House etc.) by registering a pending housing application. When it is deemed they are ready and able to manage a tenancy, the application will be activated and given Platinum priority, with their effective date being the date the application was registered. This would enable the applicant to be higher up the waiting list as a recognition that they have worked through the resettlement pathway. This would enable more effective move on from supported housing placements to make places available for those who need them.</p> <p>6. Removal of the debt element criteria for applicants under the resettlement status as a reason to refuse access to the register. This is a barrier to effectively addressing the impacts of rising homelessness and resulting in applicants not moving out of expensive supported accommodation into independent living. This is also resulting in applicants falling back into rough sleeping and is undermining the opportunities we have to address rough sleeping as individuals feel that it's pointless working with services because we won't house them anyway because they owe a debt.</p>
2	Service area responsible for completing this statement.	St Leger Homes of Doncaster Directorate of Housing Services
3	Summary of the information considered across the	Any applicant requesting social housing under this process will have been assessed against the criteria of Doncaster Council's Housing Allocations Policy. The housing

protected groups.

allocations policy and associated procedures have been assessed under the Equalities Act. All protected characteristics have been considered via this process and no issues have been identified for any of the characteristic groups in relation to inequality.

SLHD staff responsible for the allocation process are trained in the Equalities Act and making reasonable adjustments to action as appropriate.

SLHD procedures take account of the Equalities Act and pay particular attention to those falling within protected characteristic groups and assessments of proportionality and reasonable adjustments are made at every stage the housing application and assessment process and all reasonable adjustments will be made depending on the protected characteristic to ensure that no applicant is unduly treated or affected because of their characteristic. No applicants are deemed non qualifying due to a protected characteristic.

We have considered the impact on the housing register and housing need and recognise that this will increase the chances of a sustainable home for more applicants. This also make best use of Council stock by ensuring that customers with different needs can join the waiting list and bid through the choice based letting system, ensuring transparency for customers.

Each protected characteristic has been carefully considered below: -

Age

Inviting owners to join the waiting list will increase their housing options and allow access to affordable housing for those most in need.

Disability

It is not anticipated that the changes will adversely affect individuals based on their disability. Where required a property suitability visit is carried out before a property is allocated and any reasonable adjustments are made at that point. The use of fixed term tenancies for extensively adapted and purpose built accommodation will support the best

use of housing stock. Where fixed term tenancies are used this is underpinned by a robust review process which will take into account the ongoing needs of the individual.

Race

We monitor the profile of the Housing Register and Allocations by ethnicity as part of the monitoring information we collect. It is not anticipated that the process will adversely affect individuals based on their race and race will not be a factor that will be considered when deciding if an individual will be assisted under the process.

Gender

It is not anticipated that the changes will adversely affect individuals based on their Gender and this factor will not be assessed as part of the process.

Sexual Orientation

It is not anticipated that the changes will adversely affect individuals based on their sexual orientation and this factor will not be assessed as part of the process.

Religion and Belief

It is not anticipated that the changes will adversely affect individuals as a result of any specific religion or belief they may have. If religion and belief are a circumstance that will determine a tenant's residential location then this will be considered should they refuse a property.

Maternity and Pregnancy

It is not anticipated that the changes will adversely affect individuals who are pregnant or post maternity and such characteristics do not form part of the process. Pregnant women and families with children qualify for appropriate accommodation under the DMBC's Housing Allocations Policy and any offer of alternative accommodation under the changes will be size appropriate for the needs of the whole family. All our procedures take into account safeguarding arrangements and if any concerns for children or families wellbeing as a result of this process we would undertake the appropriate referrals to enable the necessary support and help to be offered and provided.

		<p>Gender Reassignment It is not anticipated that the changes will adversely affect individuals who have undergone gender reassignment.</p> <p>Marriage and Civil Partnership It is not anticipated that the changes will adversely affect individuals if they are married or in civil partnerships.</p>
4	Summary of the consultation/engagement activities	<p>Local Ward Member consultation Considerations and analysis of information has been undertaken in liaison with the Access and Allocations Service Manager at SLHD. Advice and liaison has taken place with DMBC Legal Services Detailed consultation with customers, stakeholder and partners was completed in January 2018</p>
5	Real Consideration: Summary of what the evidence shows and how has it been used	<p>The evidence shows that the changes do not adversely affect any person falling within any of the protected characteristics. We have carefully considered each characteristic and also carefully considered the impact on the allocations process and waiting list applicants and have put measures in place to ensure impact is negated.</p> <p>All applications will be reviewed against the new policy changes and appropriate support given. The review plan will be supported by an equality impact assessment.</p>
6	Decision Making	<p>The decision maker has been made aware of the Due Regard Statement and any issues arising from it.</p>
7	Monitoring and Review	<p>Activity under this process will be reported to the Director of Housing Services.</p> <p>The process will be reviewed for its effectiveness after 12 months.</p>
8	Sign off and approval for publication	