

West Lothian Council: Equality Impact Assessment

A. About the function, service, policy, procedure, project etc

1 What is the name of the function/service/policy/procedure/project etc (called “strategy” from this point) to be assessed?

West Lothian Housing & Customer Services Tenant Participation Strategy

2 What were the results of the screening for relevance?

The strategy has been developed to ensure that tenants fully take part in influencing the decisions that West Lothian Council make about housing policies, housing conditions and housing services.

The strategy does have a relevance for the following legislation requirements:

The strategy has a high level of relevance to:

- Housing Scotland Act 2001
- Race Relations Act 1976 (RRA Amendment Act 2000)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA Amendment Act 2005)
- CRE Code of Practice for Rented Housing
- Recommendations of McPherson Report
- Human Rights Act 1998

3 Briefly describe the aim of the strategy etc.

What needs or duties is it designed to meet? Who are the intended beneficiaries? How will it affect employees? How will it affect the community and the different groups of people within it?

Is the service contracted out or delivered under a service-level agreement or with partners? Who else is involved?

In what way will you involve any of these people in the impact assessment process?

In order to meet our statutory duties, the key issues of the tenant participation strategy are designed to meet the following requirements:

Enabling tenant representatives to become involved in the highest level decision making of the council.

Support the three Area Committees

Supporting existing and new tenants and residents groups to work within their local community.

Offer a range of options for involvement through long term and short term groups and also as individuals.

Getting the views of individual tenants and service users and taking these views into account when developing aspects of the service.

Removing barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, geographic location, special needs, language difficulties, learning difficulties, age, gender, social issues or disability.

Developing and funding an annual Learning Plan

Providing a budget and resources for tenant participation

Developing ways of improving communication.

Developing links between Housing Services and other services of the council

Monitoring and evaluating the strategy.

The strategy outlines the commitment from Housing Services to make the best use of our financial, physical and staff resources. This will ensure that the links between the council services and the tenants and residents are seamless.

This service will not be contracted out as there is a dedicated Tenant Participation Officer who will ensure that staff are kept up-to-date with techniques to support tenant participation. The service employs a development officer from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) who provides independent advice and assistance to tenants and residents.

B. Gathering the evidence and assessing the impact

- 4 Is there any evidence (or reason to believe) that this strategy could have a different effect on some groups of people compared to others? (e.g. different needs, different experiences, different outcomes, different rates of participation, different abilities to access opportunities).**

Is there an adverse impact around race, gender, disability, faith, sexual orientation, age, health, etc? What are the reasons for this adverse impact?

This strategy has outlined a number of options that will give everyone the opportunity to become involved in a way that suits them. This menu of options is inclusive and should not lead to any different or adverse treatment for any individuals or groups.

The menu of options for groups to become involved in tenant participation include being involved as:

- Part of a tenants and residents group
- Inclusion on the Register of Interested Tenants
- Being involved at Area Committee level
- Involved in a Quality Improvement Team
- Attending public meetings or being involved in Focus Groups or Customer Panels meetings

Tenants and residents can also be involved in Tenant Led Inspections and are invited along to the Annual Conference in the Autumn and Housing & Customer Services conference in May.

It is recognised that members of the Gypsy Traveller Community are not represented specifically in the strategy and that this is an area for improvement.

Ethnic minority groups are generally under represented along with younger tenants, this is not a problem exclusive to Housing Services but within West Lothian Council and the voluntary sector. This strategy seeks to positively involve under-represented groups.

5 Please describe the evidence or reasoning you have used to make your judgement. What existing data for example (qualitative or quantitative) have you used to form your judgement? Tell us about the information as it applies to different groups (e.g. by race, gender and disability etc).

As part of the review/redrafting of the strategy and related documents there has been full and frank consultation with staff & stakeholders in the following ways and the final strategy has evolved as a direct result of their recommendations:

- TP strategy review conducted by independent body (TPAS)
- Focus groups recommendations
- Articles in publications such as Tenant News/Inside News
- Strategy steering group
- Consultations held at conferences, workshops & local groups

Ongoing monitoring & evaluation through:

- Reports to Tenants Panel, Health & Care & Housing Policy Working Group
- Dedicated officers
- Implementation plan/PR Plan
- Training programme
- Tenant Satisfaction surveys
- Tenant Satisfaction Visits
- Sign –Ups
- Key performance indicators results
- Section within the strategy containing equalities statement & aims
- Monitoring of groups equalities statements within their constitution
- Roadshow/Radio Campaign/visit to mosque/stalls at events/fun days/galadays
- Community Days/Locality Planning
- Tenants and staff training plans

- Research into Best Practice & Benchmarking
- Evidence gathering completed for successful Chartermark application

6 Are there any unmet needs/requirements that can be identified that affect any of the specific groups?

There are 2 areas for improvement that should be carried forward into the next revision of this strategy:

- Inclusion of Gypsy Travellers
- Placement of the translation panel from inside back of the strategy booklet to the more obvious outside page

C. Making changes and promoting equality

7 If in your judgement, the strategy etc does have an adverse impact, can you modify the strategy to reduce/eliminate any adverse impact?

You need to think whether your modifications will:

- **have a positive or negative effect on the promotion of equality of opportunity for any group**
- **help eliminate discrimination in any way**
- **encourage or hinder community relations.**

The 2 areas for improvement do not warrant an unscheduled review of the strategy. They are not unlawful and do not cause a barrier to the involvement of any individual or group as the manner in which this strategy operates allows for a wide variety of participation for all. The ultimate outcome of this strategy in operation negates any possible disadvantage to any individual or group. However, in order to address the individual needs of particular ethnic groups (including gypsy travellers) and to ensure the development of TP in West Lothian, they must be addressed within the remit of the next review.

- The minor adverse impact that the lack of specific Gypsy Traveller focus would have (bearing in mind that this is not a major issue within West Lothian – see Scottish Executive twice-yearly count figures) is minimal. However, it must be addressed within the next draft of this

strategy in order to ensure full inclusion of all groups within West Lothian.

- To ensure that ease of access for all is achieved, the next published strategy document must have interpretation and translation information clearly shown on an outside cover.

8 If you cannot modify the policy to reduce adverse impact, consider if the impact can be justified and explain. (It is unlikely that you will be able to justify any impact which amounts to unlawful discrimination.)

If the impact cannot be justified, how do you intend to deal with it?

As mentioned above, the lack of focus on gypsy travellers as a specific ethnic group is not unlawful as the strategy is designed to be all inclusive, and does not justify a rewrite of the strategy document until the scheduled review date. The issue should than be resolved.

D. Consultation

8 What steps have you taken/are you taking to consult externally as part of your assessment?

Whom have you consulted? What methods did you use? How long was the consultation period?

Have you consulted any “experts”? Did you involve any people in the affected groups in some other way during the process?

A full and wide-ranging consultation was conducted in order to produce the Tenant Participation Strategy document.

The following people were consulted:

- Tenants/Residents
- Staff
- Partner agencies, e.g. youth action, community groups
- Internal partners e.g. Social Policy, Building Services
- Existing Tenants and Residents groups

- Independent specialist consultants TPAS
- Other Local Authorities, SHBVN

Methodology

- Presentations & feedback sessions at conferences, workshops and training sessions
- Q & A sessions with key staff members responsible for writing, developing, monitoring & implementing the new strategy
- Focus group sessions chaired by independent consultant (TPAS) who was then responsible for drafting new suggestions and changes into draft strategy
- Steering groups with staff and tenants on final document
- Full 3 months consultation and response time on final document
- Staff Q & A's at local group meetings
- Wide awareness raising of draft policy to encourage public response

Review period

- From initial brief to TPAS until launch this review began with the first report to Health & Care Committee in September 2003 – until the official launch in May 2005

E. Next steps

9 What were the results of the consultation?

What have you done with the results i.e. how do you intend to use the information gathered as part of the consultation?

The consultations highlighted areas that could use inclusion, issues that had not been addressed and areas for improvement. The compiled feedback was then presented and used to progress the draft strategy through:

- Publishing the information through Tenants News
- Feedback day with tenants & residents who had full access to key staff on the day, e.g. Head of Housing, TP staff, supporting quality team members and local housing staff.
- Made available to steering/focus groups/staff
- Reported through committee/tenants panel/HWPG

The suggestions and recommendations were then taken on board and compiled by the key staff writing the strategy and were then presented to the steering group and the consultants TPAS. The steering group then reached agreement and incorporated these into the final strategy document.

11 Have you published the results of that consultation? If so, where? What arrangements were made to reach specific groups affected?

The results of the consultation were published through:

- Tenants News/Inside News
- Website
- Sent out to Tenant and Residents Groups
- Feedback sessions
- Committee papers/HPWG/Tenants Panel

2 What are your recommendations based on the conclusions of this assessment?

The recommendation based on the evidence and consultations is that this strategy is fit for purpose and carries no risk of different or adverse effect

on any group.

There are 2 areas for improvement that should be carried forward into the next revision of this strategy:

- Inclusion of Gypsy Travellers
- Placement of translation panel from inside back of the strategy booklet to the more obvious outside

13 Please provide us with separate information about how you intend to monitor this policy in future. What is the review date set for this policy?

Review date – May 2007

This strategy, related documents and procedures will be monitored through the ongoing feedback through:

- KPI data
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Tenant Satisfaction Visits
- Comments and suggestion through front line services
- Tenants Panel/editorial panel/local groups and area committees
- Staff
- Performance information

14 How will you publish the results of this assessment? What methods will you use? What arrangements are there to reach specific groups affected?

- Website

- Tenants News
- Plasma Screens
- Local Tenants and Residents Groups/register of interested tenants/distribution list
- General promotion of Tenant Participation in West Lothian

15 Have you conducted any other types of impact assessment on this policy? (e.g. health, financial, environmental).

N/a

16 Is there anything else you wish to add?

N/a

Assessment made by:	Sarah Kelly
Others involved in assessment:	Siobhan Mullen Dyann Weir Tina Bell
<p>Summary of assessment (this will be published).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What you did ▪ What evidence you used ▪ What you found ▪ What consultation you undertook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening & full impact assessment on West Lothian Council's Housing & Customer Services Tenant Participation Strategy • Results of consultation with staff, partners and stakeholders. • Research material on best practice • Results of Review groups • No difference or adverse impact from this policy on any group • 2 areas for improvement in next strategy review • Consultation with staff, partners and stakeholders during review was sufficient

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What changes you made ▪ What will happen next 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes required to current strategy • Areas for improvement as recommended in this assessment will be carried forward into the implementation plan and remit of next review.
<p>Manager's Signature</p>	
<p>Date:</p>	
<p>Service area and job title:</p>	

When you have completed this form, please take a copy and send it to your service representative on the Corporate Working Group on Equality and/or the Equality Officer.