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To: Councillor James (Chair);  
Councillors Debs Absolom, Davies, Dennis,  
Kelly Edwards, Ennis, Grashoff, Hacker,  
McDonald, McGonigle, O'Connell, Steele,  
Terry, Tickner and Rose Williams.

8 March 2018

Your contact is: Amy Bryan - Committee Services

**HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE -  
14 MARCH 2018**

Further to the agenda sent to you on 6 March for the meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee meeting due to take place on 14 March, please find attached the appendices to Item 13.

Amy Bryan  
Committee Administrator



## SHELTERED HOUSING CONSULTATION

June to August 2017

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading Borough Council's sheltered housing offers people the support to live independently with access to round-the-clock emergency assistance, plus onsite facilities and social activities. The Council is Reading's largest provider of sheltered housing with nearly 300 units of accommodation designed or adapted to provide added security and in many buildings, easy access.

The Council provides a support and landlord service to promote independent living to safely manage our buildings and tenancies.

The consultation aimed to identify what sheltered housing tenants (and people who have applied to move in) think about these services for the benefit of service planning and so that customers' priorities, ideas and perspectives can be fully taken into account.

### 2. METHODOLOGY

A programme of "recruitment events" was held in the social areas at each sheltered housing scheme (see table below), where tenant volunteers worked alongside the Council's Tenant Participation Team to encourage and assist as many residents as possible to contribute and engage with the questionnaires.

Letters were sent to invite all current tenants, giving details of the time of the event in their social room. The events were advertised in advance in communal areas and promoted by sheltered housing officers.

Invites were also sent to every applicant for sheltered housing who had had an assessment this year (115 people) plus every applicant from the previous year who was still actively bidding (26 people who had placed a bid in the last year).

Refreshments were provided at each event, which were lively and well attended. A prize draw was held for each event for those that provided contact details. At the conclusion of the events, paper questionnaires were sent to anyone who hadn't made it along in person and a further month given to complete and return these.

Sheltered Housing Scheme Name	Ward
Bristow Court	Caversham
Christchurch Court	Katesgrove
Corwen Road	Tilehurst
Durham Close	Whitley
Liebenrood Road	Southcote
St Stephens Court	Park
Trinity Place	Abbey

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Tyrell Court	Abbey
Weirside Court	Abbey
Woodlands Court	Wokingham BC area

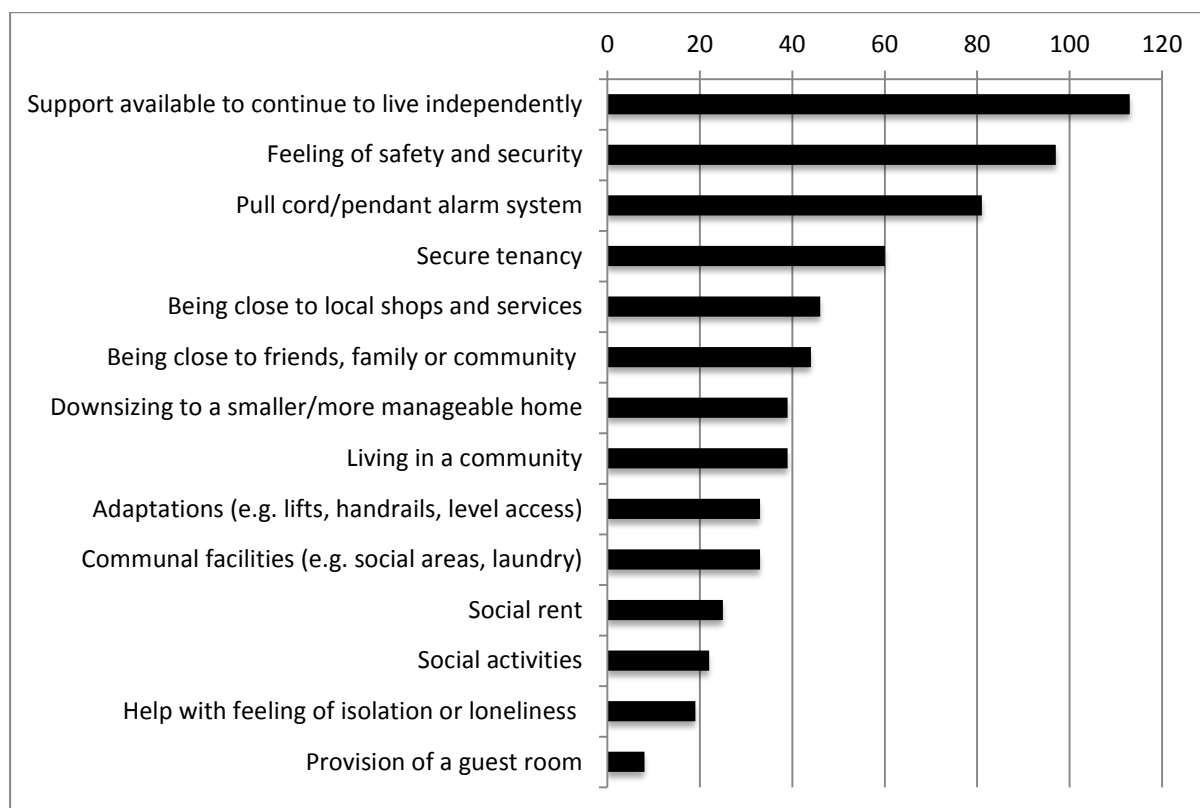
3. RESPONSES

176 responses were submitted in total, 85% from current sheltered housing tenants and 15% from applicants.

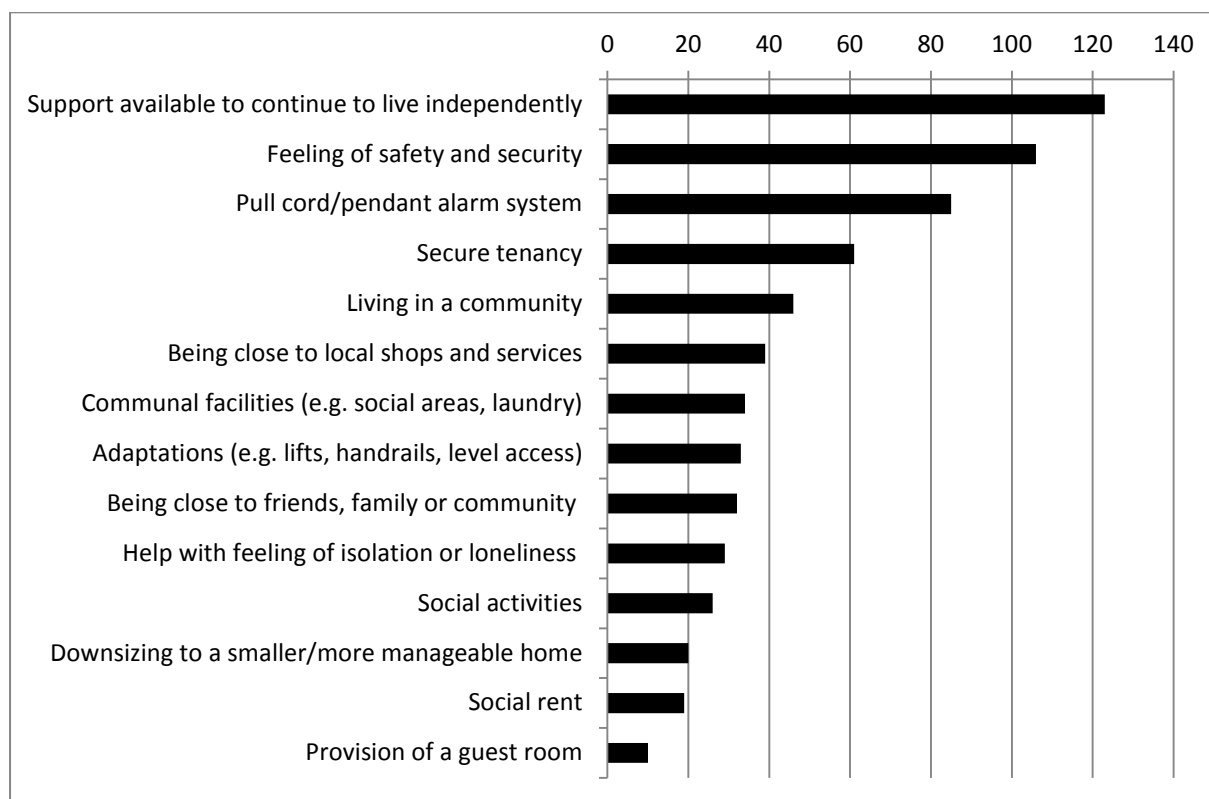
5.1 What is your current housing situation?

Reading Borough Council sheltered housing tenant	150	85.2%
Reading Borough Council tenant interested in moving into sheltered housing	13	7.39%
Homeowner	0	0%
Privately renting	3	1.7%
Living with friends or family	2	1.1%
Homeless	0	0%
A registered provider (housing association) tenant	2	1.1%
Other	4	2.3%
Not answered	2	1.1%

5.2 Before moving in, what were the most important factors for you in choosing to move into sheltered housing (top 5)?



5.3 For current sheltered housing residents only: Now that you are living in sheltered housing, what would you tell other people are the most important benefits of living in sheltered accommodation?



5.4 For current sheltered housing residents only: Now that you are living in sheltered housing, is there anything about it that is different to how you had expected it to be?

There were 35 comments in response to this question. The majority (22) were positive comments about the general experience of living in sheltered housing, such as “better than expected”, “would recommend”, “just as expected - very good” and “feeling of happiness living in sheltered”.

Four people commented that they would have liked more staff time within their sheltered unit or for individual support. Three commented that there was not enough social life or activities.

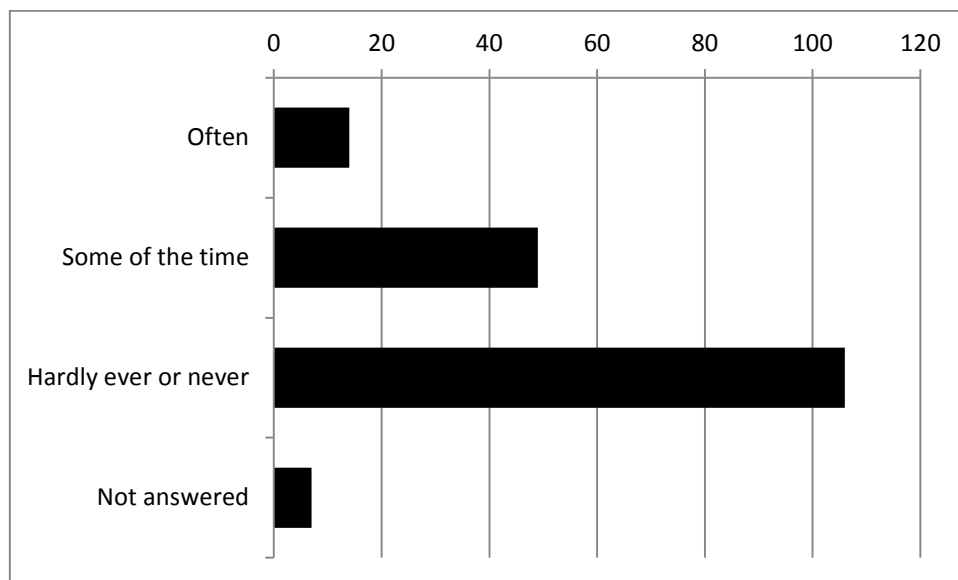
5.5 Which of the following types of technology have you used before? What do you have regular access to? Would you choose to communicate with Reading Borough Council and Housing Services using this technology if the option was available?

	Used before	Have access to	Would choose to communicate with
Internet	21.6%	20.5%	4.6%
Email	16.5%	17.1%	6.9%
Smart phone	14.2%	15.9%	6.2%
Personal computer or laptop	17.6%	16.5%	4%
Tablet computer	6.3%	10.2%	2.3%

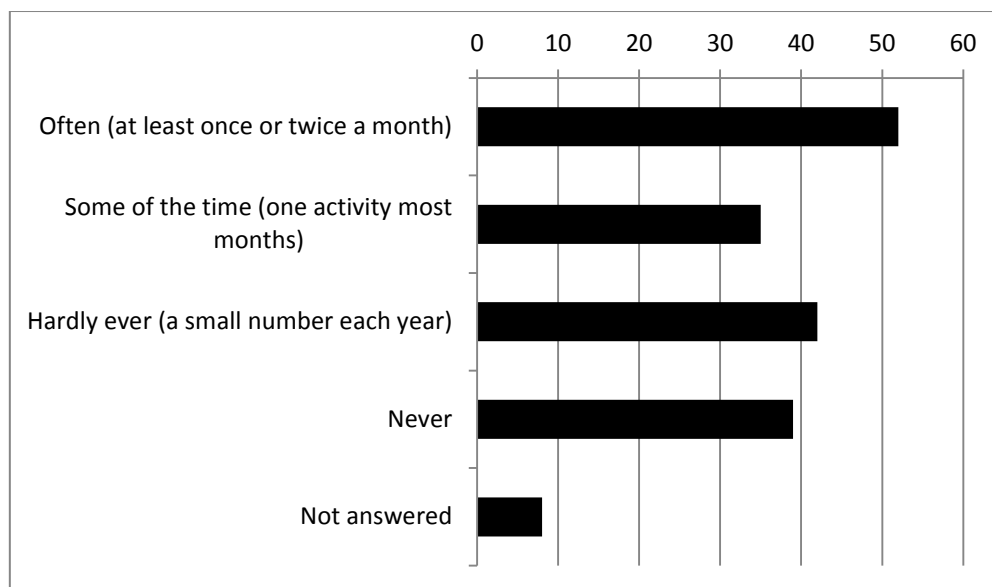
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Social media	5.7%	6.3%	0%
Video messaging service	4.6%	4.6%	0%

5.6 Age UK has identified loneliness as one of the major factors that worries older people and we want to understand better the scale of loneliness in sheltered housing so we can tailor our services appropriately. How often do you feel lonely?



5.7 We run a programme of activities and events to make it easy to meet and connect with other tenants. How regularly do you attend the activities and events we organise?



If you don't often attend, please tell us why

I don't know what's happening or when	12	6.8%
There hasn't been much that I've been interested in	34	19.3%
I don't feel confident going on my own	8	4.6%
I think that language/communication will be a barrier	11	6.3%

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I don't feel well enough to go out to an activity or event	13	7.3%
I'm concerned about getting there or back home	9	5.1%
Activities don't happen at times that suit me	15	8.6%
The cost is too much for me to afford	9	5.1%
I can't arrange transport	9	5.1%
Other	35	19.9%
Not answered	72	40.9%

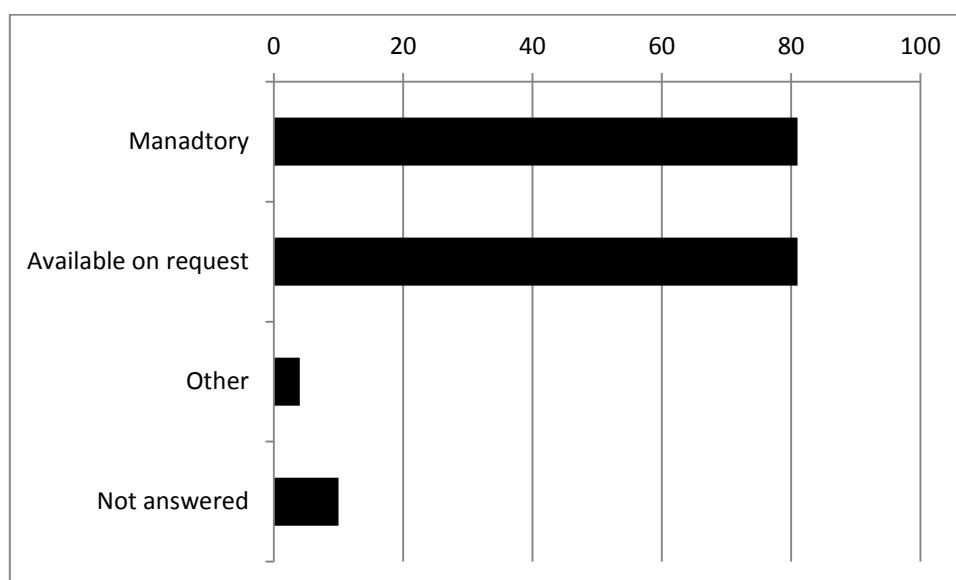
There were 16 comments in response to this question. The main reasons people gave were that because of their personal health issues or their age they didn't feel able to attend, or that they preferred being by themselves.

5.8 Please tell us your ideas for what else you'd like to see offered, including activities, events or opportunities to meet with other people or agencies coming in to sheltered housing:

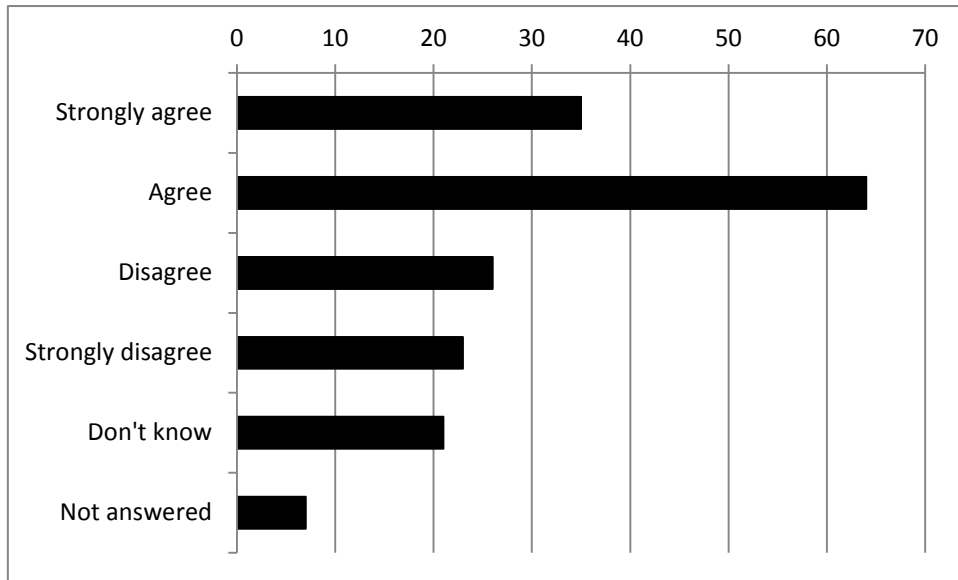
There were a number of suggestions for activities that people would like to see offered in response to this and other questions:

Weaving, basket making, live cooking, painting; more trips away; card games (including help for blind players); music nights; quiz nights; interesting talks; games nights; film nights; trips to shows/theatre; choir/singing; English classes; bowling; support to go out to clubs; a boat trip along the river; more planned activities during the week, including something for gents: talks, cooking, practical skills, demonstrations, trips out, tech skills.

5.9 We currently provide all of our tenants with a daily welfare call by default - we ask that you have to sign a disclaimer if you don't want a call. Do you think that we should keep these calls mandatory in this way, or should we make it optional and offer them on request?



5.10 Most other providers in Reading offer sheltered housing to applicants over the age of 55. We also recognise that there are some people in Reading aged 55 to 59 who are suitable for and would benefit from the Council’s sheltered housing, although our minimum age is still 60. If we were to lower the age criteria from 60 to 55, we would make sure that we carried out the same thorough assessment process to confirm that sheltered housing was the right option. Would you agree with us accommodating people in these cases?

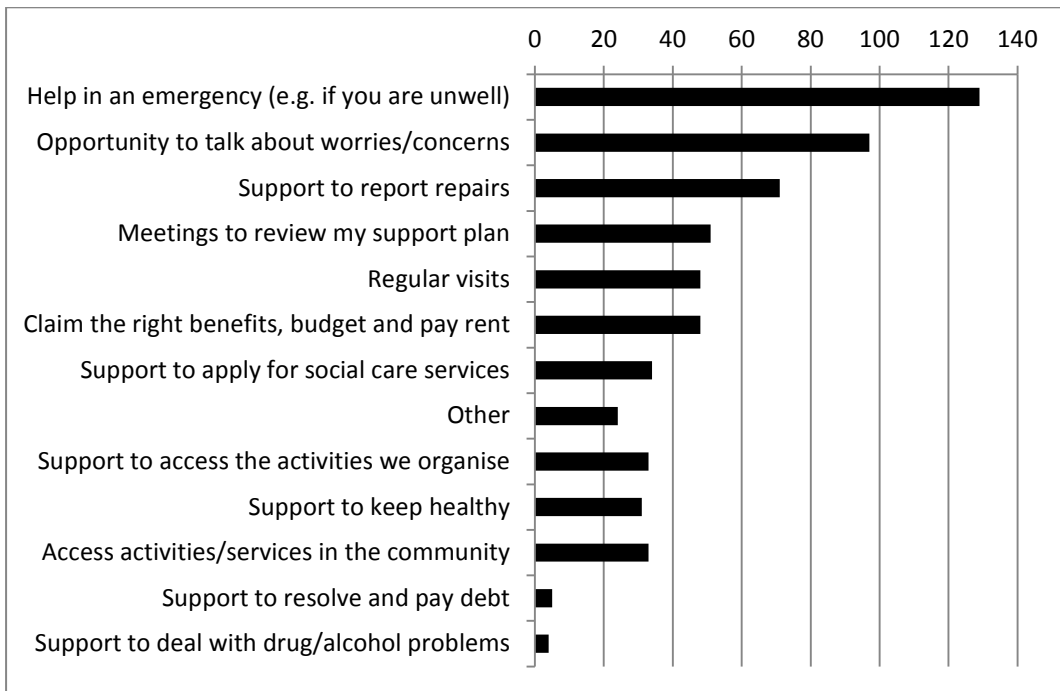


There were 40 comments in response to this question. Those that were supportive of a reduction in the age limit often pointed to individual needs being the most important point, for example that dementia can affect under 60s, or that the diversity may be positive. Those who disagreed often stressed that they didn't think the type of accommodation would be suitable for people that are not retired and still working.

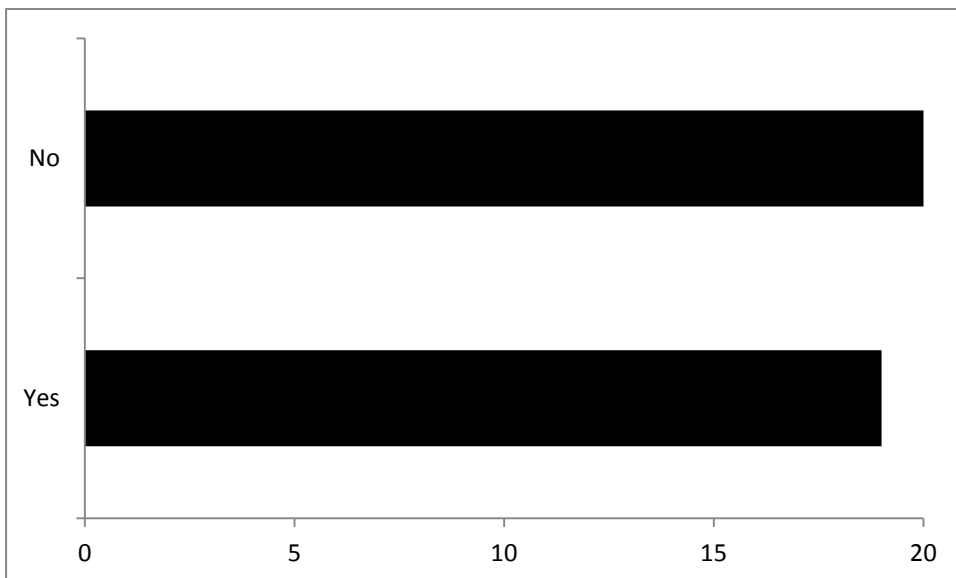


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5.11 What do you think are the most important features of the support service in sheltered housing?



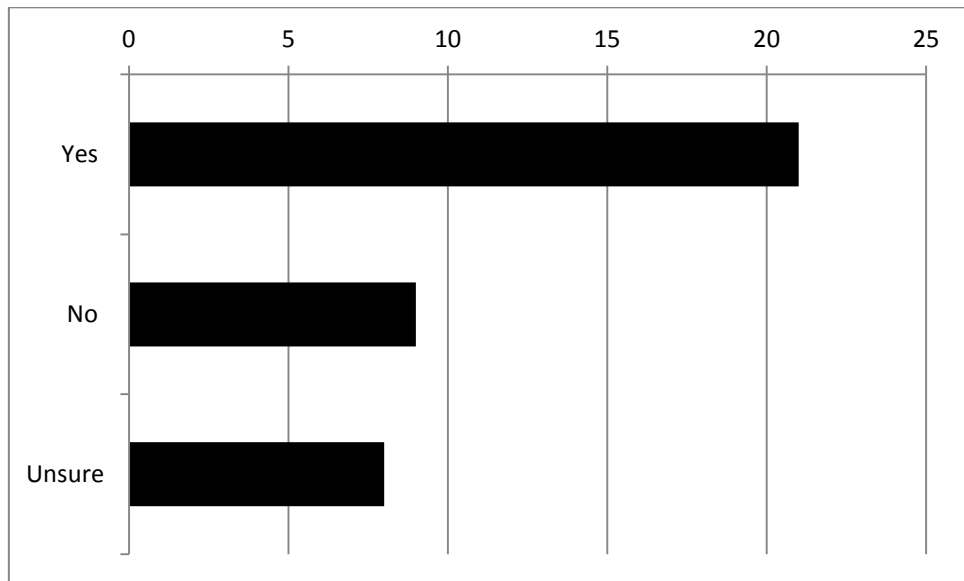
5.12 APPLICANTS ONLY: Do you currently receive housing support (the types of support listed in question seven)?



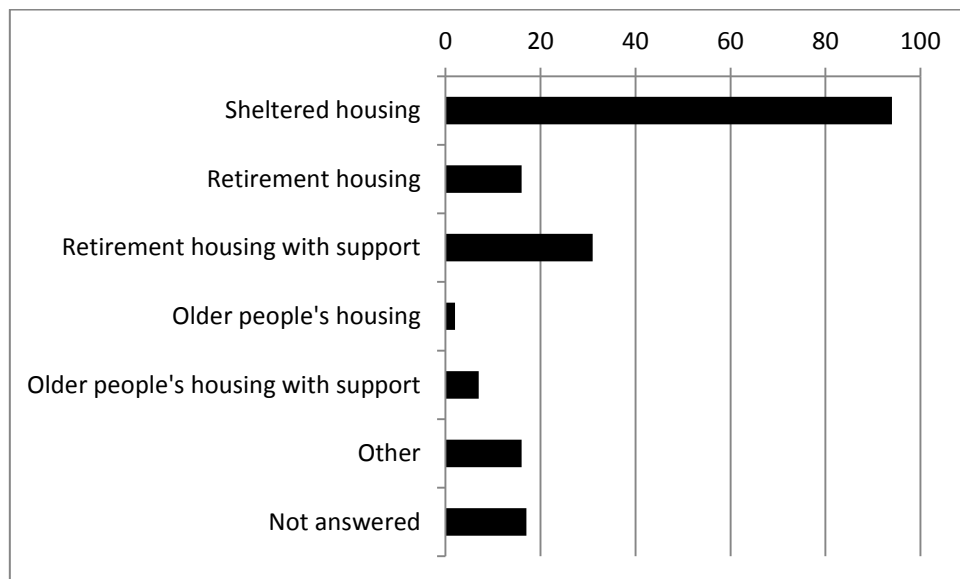
If you answered Yes: please tell us the name of the organisation that supports you:

11 respondents said that they have a social worker.

If you already do or could access the type of support listed in question seven, do you think it will/would help you to live independently in your current home for longer?



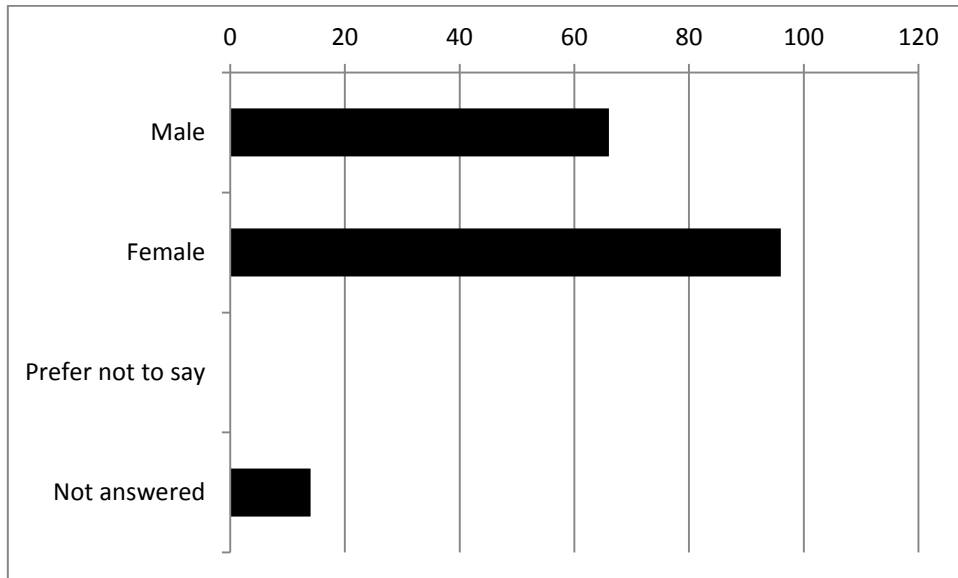
5.13 Finally, some Councils and tenants are moving away from using the term *sheltered housing* because it can cause confusion for people that don't know what it is. Do you think we should call it something else? Tell us what you prefer:



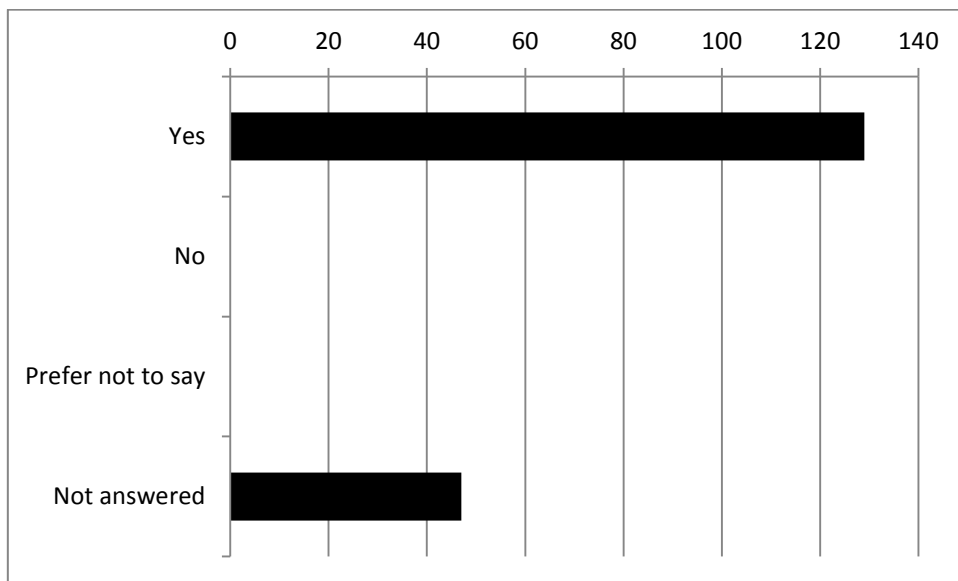
11 people commented on this question. Two suggested *Independent Living* and one suggested *Forget Me Not Housing*. Most others didn't support any of the suggestions.

6. DEMOGRAPHIC REPOSSES

6.1 Are you:

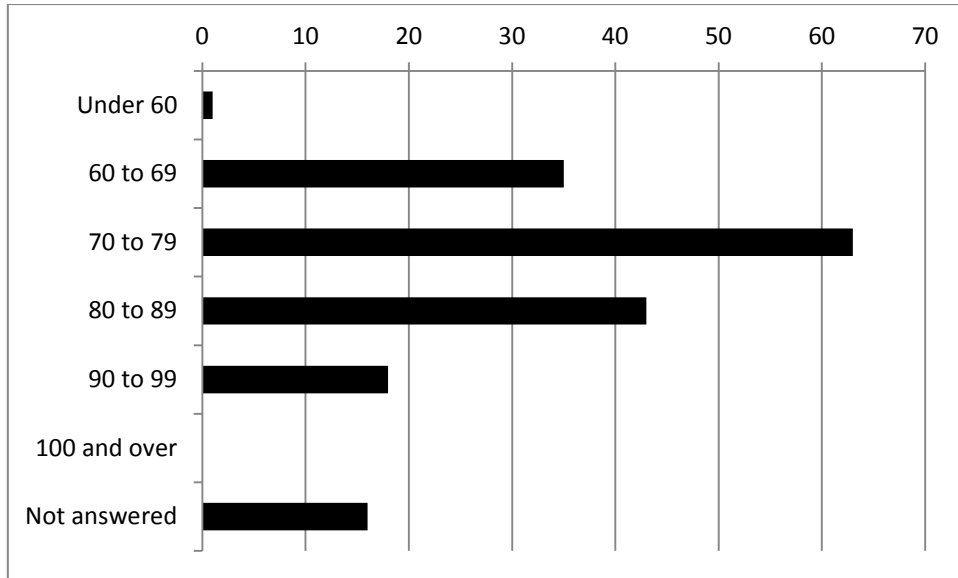


6.2 Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?

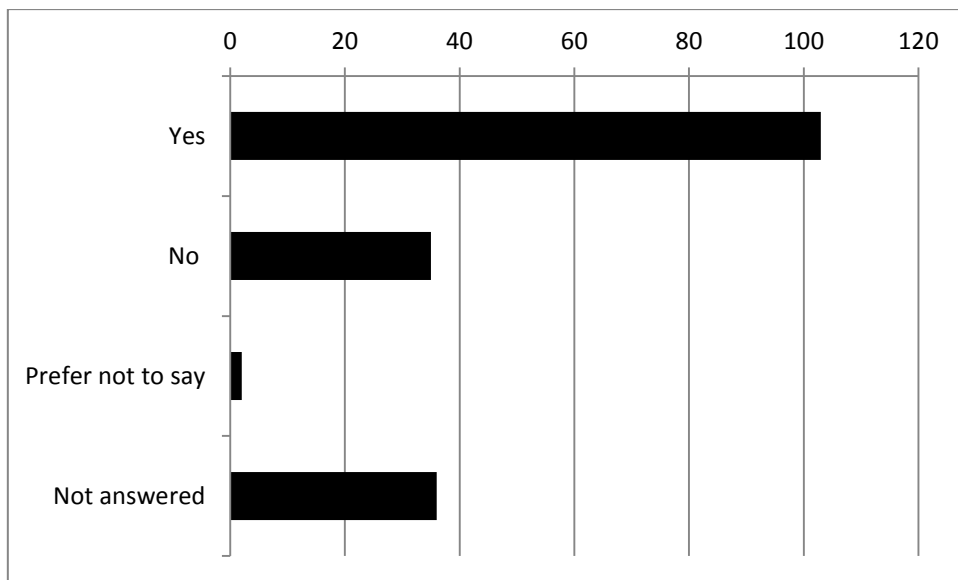


6.3 Which age group do you belong to?

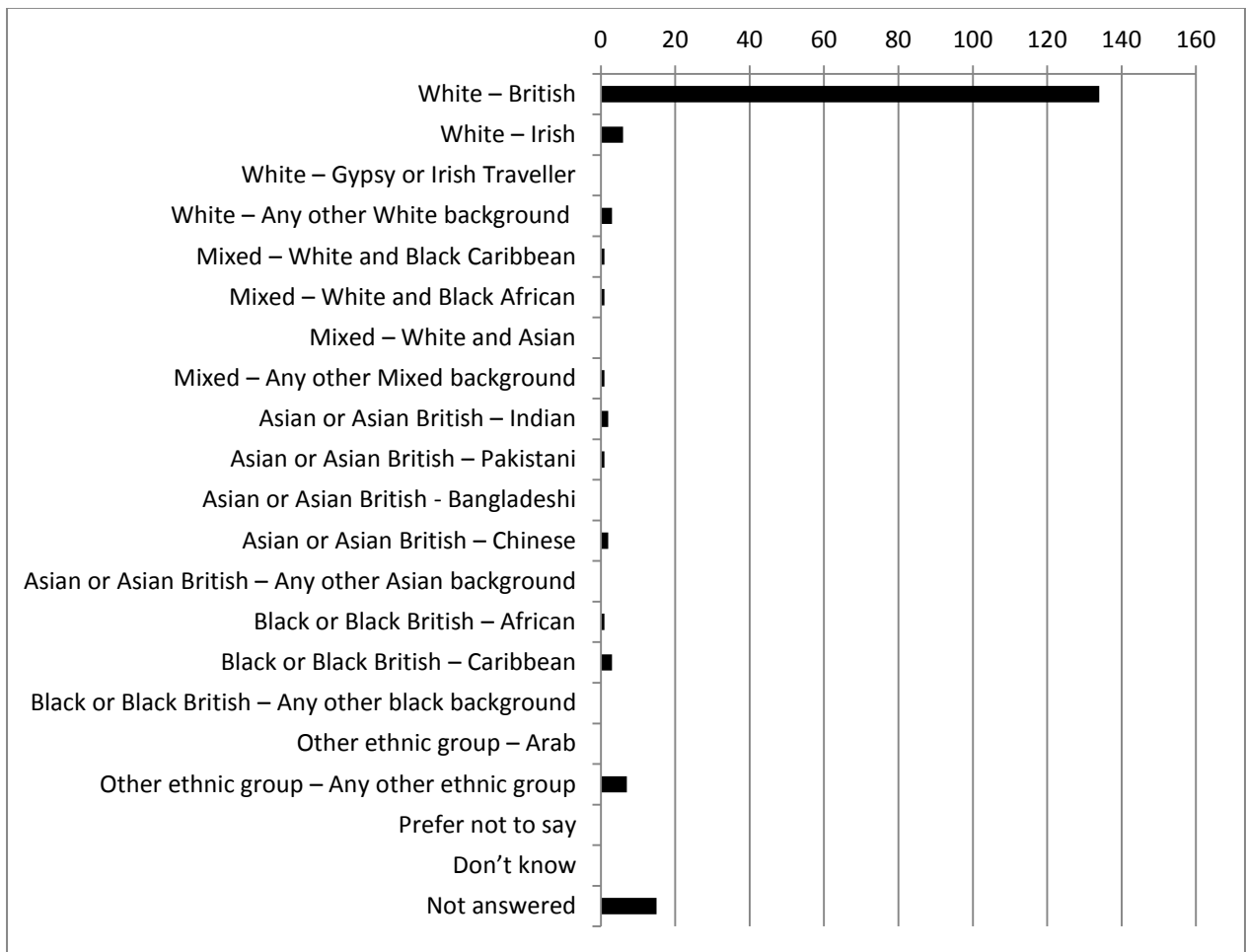
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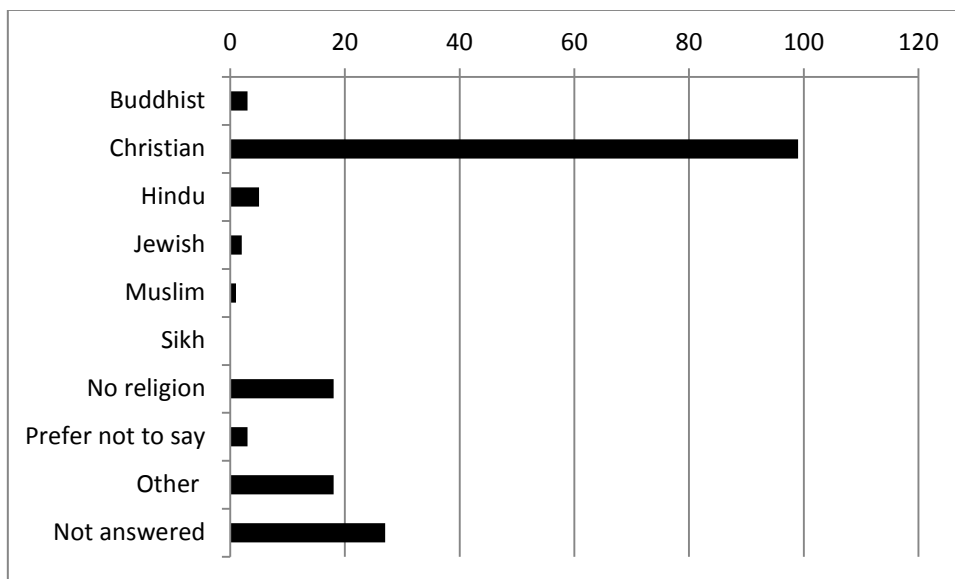
6.4 Do you have a disability, long-term illness or health problem (12 months or more) which limits your daily activities or the work you can do?



6.5 To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong?

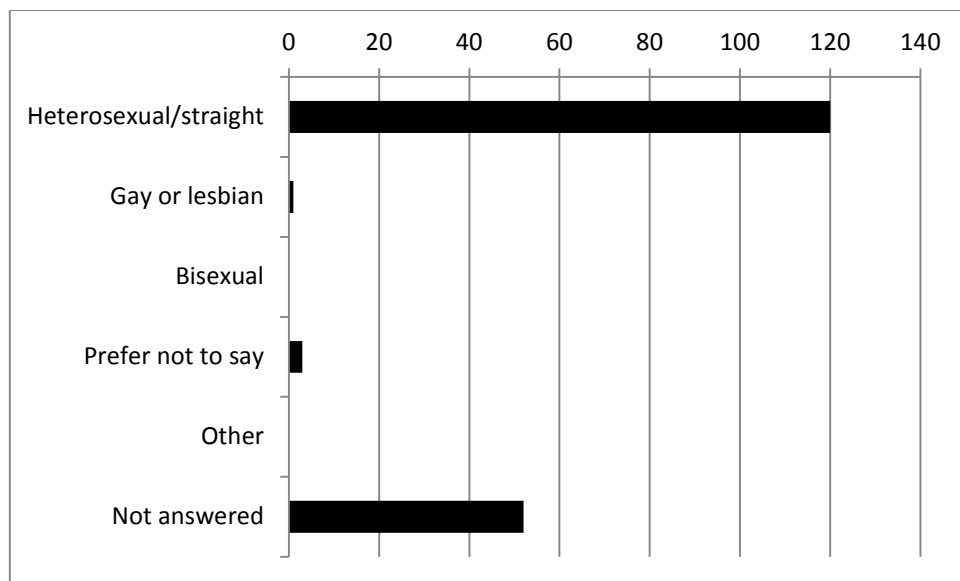


4.6 What is your religion/belief?



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4.7 Are you:



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

**Housing Services for Older People**

**Directorate:** DENS

**Service:** Housing Services

**Name:** Tom Simpson

**Job Title:** Housing Transformation Officer

**Date of assessment:** 14 September 2017

**What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?**

To make housing services for older people available to more residents, prioritised for those in most need and so as to develop resilience to current and future social and demographic pressures. The key changes are:

- a) a reduction in the age limit for sheltered housing from 60 to 55 to enable appropriate lettings to be made to those in most need
- b) a reshape of the Council's sheltered housing service to increase the support available to sheltered housing tenants and extend the service to include those living in the wider tenant community
- c) removing the age criteria that are attached to some Council homes and amend the Allocations Scheme so as to replace these with a range of options designed to promote sustainable communities whilst maintaining a fair system of allocating new tenancies.

**Who will benefit from this proposal and how?**

The Council's sheltered housing tenants will benefit from having more support available

Older people with support needs in the wider tenant community will benefit from a new 'hub and spoke' service model providing outreach support and access to activities

Housing applicants will benefit from more equitable criteria for Council homes that are currently age-restricted and access to sheltered housing for younger people who have a need for that type of accommodation.

**What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?**

Additional support available to maximise independent living for sheltered housing tenants

New support available to maximise independent living for elderly Council tenants and other residents in the community

Allow younger housing applicants an opportunity to be considered for properties they are currently automatically excluded from due to their age

**Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?**

Tenants

In this summer's sheltered housing consultation, 58% of sheltered housing tenants said that they agreed or strongly agreed with lowering the age limit to 55. Attendees at August's Tenant Consultation Day were strongly supportive of the proposal to provide sheltered support to tenants living in general needs accommodation.

APPENDIX B

Applicants

Respondents to a consultation on broader changes to Homechoice at Reading in March 2017 showed strong support for the principle of speeding up the time it takes to let properties (98% agreed or strongly agreed that this was a positive approach). By making access to some Council homes more equitable these proposals will streamline the letting process for age-restricted properties that are currently low demand.

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.)

Yes - the proposals are designed to provide better services for residents based on their age

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, and feedback.

Not regarding the proposed approach - many areas are adopting similar approaches partly to avoid potential discrimination

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
Sheltered housing tenants and applicants	Sheltered Housing Consultation	June to August 2017

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Racial groups**

These proposals are designed to enable more equitable housing allocations and greater provision of support to people living in the community who are not currently able to access these services. In the 2011 census Reading's population was found to be more diverse than the national average, with 35% of people coming from BAME background and compared to this 2011 proportion, BAME groups are slightly over-represented in overall housing lettings, making up approximately 45% of total allocations. Within sheltered housing, 33% of residents are from BAME backgrounds. Because the BAME population was younger overall than the average population in the 2011 census there is a potential that racial groups could benefit from lowering and removing age criteria. Therefore it is not assessed that these proposals will negatively impact on racial groups.

**Is there a negative impact?** No

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)**

Within sheltered housing the large majority of tenants are single households and 52% of tenants are female, whilst 0% is recorded as transgender. Only 35% of consultation responses were recorded from male participants however and 0 were recorded from anyone whose gender identity is different to that assigned at birth. Whilst the provision of extra support and more equitable allocations are likely to have an overall positive impact, monitoring will continue to be developed to ensure equal access to these services.

**Is there a negative impact?** No



**Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability**

This proposal would enable disabled people looking for suitable accommodation more properties to choose from, including anyone under the age of the current designation and particularly if they are looking for level access/adapted properties. This is therefore assessed as having a positive differential impact on disability.

**Is there a negative impact?** No

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)**

Recording of sexual orientation within older people's services will require consistent further oversight. Within Reading's sheltered housing, over a third of residents are recorded as 'prefer not to say' or 'not answered'. Within the sheltered housing sector nationally it is becoming more understood that there is an issue with LGBT residents not disclosing their gender identity or sexual orientation and that services need to be accessible and open to all. The ability to provide a greater level of support for individuals and more equitable housing allocations mean that these proposals are not assessed as having a differential impact on sexual orientation.

**Is there a negative impact?** No

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Age**

The key aims of these proposals is to reduce the number of automatic exclusions from housing and housing-related support services based on age, whilst reconfiguring older people's support so that it is available for more people and designed to meet current needs. It is therefore assessed as having a positive impact on older and younger people, who will have the ability to access the right housing and support based on their needs.

**Is there a negative impact?** No

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief?**

These proposals are designed to enable more equitable housing allocations and greater provision of support to people living in the community who are not currently able to access these services and are not assessed as having a differential impact on religious belief.

**Is there a negative impact?** No

**Decision**

No negative impact identified.

**How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?**

Detailed equalities information is recorded regarding housing applicants and tenants via the Council's IT systems and application processes. As identified above, continued development of recording and monitoring for service involvement for gender/transgender and sexual orientation will be important to support this.

Given this information availability it will be possible for these proposals and any resultant policy changes to be monitored for their impact to ensure the intended benefits aren't lost: more diverse age groups and representative equalities groups.

APPENDIX B

Signed (completing officer)	Tom Simpson	Date	14/9/17
Signed (Lead Officer)	Zelda Wolfle	Date	14/9/17