



Appendix C

Equality Impact Assessment Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 - 2025

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed

Directorate: Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Service: Housing

Name and job title of person doing the assessment

Name: Verena Hutcheson

Job Title: Homelessness and Housing Pathways Manager

Date of assessment: 28th June 2020

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

Under the legislation of the Homelessness Act 2002 all local authorities are legally obliged to have a homelessness strategy. At least every five years each authority should undertake a review of homelessness in their area; carry out a consultation and then use the results from both to inform their homelessness strategy, including the formulation of key priorities and an action plan. The action plan should be developed to ensure that the strategy's objectives are achieved.

Both the homelessness strategy and action plan should have regard to Government's Homelessness Code of Guidance, and it should be made publicly available.

Aside from legal requirement, an effective homelessness strategy ensures that Reading has a robust plan; is accountable for its response to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness (including those groups most vulnerable to homelessness) and that the Council understands and regularly revisits, and reviews need. This includes causes of homelessness, what has been achieved and any new priorities that should be introduced.

The Council aims to deliver Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 - 2025 under the following established priorities:

- **Priority One** - Intervening early to prevent homelessness
- **Priority Two** - Supporting people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness
- **Priority Three** - Increasing access to decent, suitable accommodation

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

Residents of the Reading borough who are homeless or at risk of homelessness through early and targeted interventions for prevention and relief of homelessness.

What outcomes will the change achieve and for whom?

In line with the stated priorities, Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2015 - 2020 aims to intervene at the earliest opportunity to prevent any single person, couple or household in the borough from becoming homeless, where risk has been identified, or relieve homelessness where it ensues.

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

Customers of the Homelessness Prevention Service, including those who are homeless and at risk of homelessness where they want to receive a service that prevents or relieves their homelessness.

Wider communities and residents where they want to be able to identify and prevent homelessness crisis and therefore reduce/eliminate the need for council intervention and/or emergency accommodation.

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity, promoting good community relations?

The strategy identifies the primary reasons for homelessness in Reading and how the Council plans to address these by using universal approaches, targeted upstream interventions, supported sustainment, pre-crisis/crisis interventions and the provision of accommodation.

Of those households approaching the Service between April 2018 - March 2020 as homeless, or at risk of homelessness, the primary reasons for homelessness disproportionately affect certain equality groups (addressed under each group of this EqIA).

Reading has geographical variations in where and how populations who are homeless and at risk of homelessness live. The borough's JSNA and Census 2011 data can provide an analysis of distributions across wards, including where there are higher proportions or concentrations of people, for example, of certain ages or ethnicities. Populations and location data can be cross-referenced with the groups that approach the Service in crisis, or as needing support with prevention, who are therefore known to be disproportionately affected by homelessness. This enables the Service to explore and plan where to target awareness and prevention interventions in line with the principles that underpin Reading's strategic priorities. The Census 2021 is likely to be published in 2022/23. This will provide up to date population data that will support in the mapping and implementation of the homelessness strategy's *Targeted Interventions*.

Reading's overall strategic response for homelessness is to identify those most at risk of homelessness and then ensure that positive and targeted interventions are undertaken to meet the needs of these groups. Priority 2 of the strategy action plan outline actions to collate, analyse and improve data capture for targeted early upstream interventions. The underlying principles of this is to identify disproportionately affected groups for positive interventions that including improve communications, training with partners and direct responses to reduce inequalities regarding accessing and benefitting from the Service.

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?

Yes No

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be?

Yes No

These are addressed under the impact of each group of this EqlA.

Consultation

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts?		
Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
General public, businesses, university students, sector partners and internal staff	Online survey via RBC's Consultation Hub (open public consultation)	5 th August - 29 th September 2019
Single people and families living in Homelessness Support Services, emergency accommodation, temporary accommodation, those attending Homelessness Prevention appointments	One-to-one interviews with people who have lived experience of homelessness; being at risk of homelessness and of recurring homelessness	5 th August - 29 th September 2019
General public, businesses, university students, internal staff and those affected by homelessness	Use of social media (Facebook and Twitter) and RBC internal communications (Intranet and Inside Housing) to provide an information piece and promote the on-line survey	5 th August - 29 th September 2019
Statutory, charity and community led services who are supporting or providing a service to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	Cross-sector focus groups with informed and experienced partners	5 th August - 29 th September 2019

Data collection and assessment

Describe how this proposal could impact on racial groups

Data collated from customers approaching the Service between April 2018 - March 2020, who have chosen to divulge their ethnicity, has been compared to Census information from 2011¹ (new Census data is due to be collated in 2021). The comparison shows a disproportionate number of people from Black British, Black African and Black Caribbean and other Black ethnicities (16.7% compared to Census data of 7.7%) and mixed/multiple ethnic groups (9.8% compared to Census data of 3.9%) approached the Service for support with their housing options, with most of these being families (11.4% Black and 7.3 mixed/multiple ethnic

¹ <https://www.reading.gov.uk/jsna/ethnicity>

groups). White (60.8% compared to Census data of 74.8%) and Asian (11.1% compared to Census data of 13.6%) ethnic groups appeared less proportionately/under-represented in those approaching the Service.

JSNA and Census 2011 data in Reading shows that the Black African population has grown since 2001, but in 2011 it was unclear whether this is related to migration to the UK or within the UK. The highest proportions of those identifying as Black African in 2011 were in a number of wards central to the borough.² Our data analysis of those approaching the Service suggests that families within this group are part of a wider Black population we may wish to provide targeted support and interventions for. Counter to this, Asian populations seem to be underrepresented compared to Census 2011 data which could indicate the potential for overcrowding or concealed households amongst this group; or it could indicate that this population experience less socio-economic disadvantage in Reading.

Further analysis and some benchmarking against more recent Census 2021 data (when published) will be undertaken as part of the strategy. This current data only provides us with an initial flag to explore further.

Consultation with the public and stakeholders outlined concern for travellers and gypsies and those where English is not a first language - including refugees, asylum seekers, EEA and Non-EEA nationals. Action points within the strategy's action plan will seek to provide interventions for these identified groups.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

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

Analysis of the immediate reason for homelessness of those households approaching the Homelessness Prevention Service between April 2018 and March 2020 identifies the following:

- Relationship breakdown which it is known disproportionately results in single males leaving a family or marital home resulting in precarious housing or homelessness, including rough sleeping and repeat homelessness. More single males approached the Service than single females (approximately 20% of those approaching overall). We know that nationally and locally there has been an increase in single homeless households in crisis. This data regarding gender supports the national trend regarding what we know about increases in numbers of single people placed into B&B since the HRA was implemented in April 2018 and that around 75% of single people within our single supported accommodation units or sleeping rough are male.

- That females are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse and that overcrowding disproportionately affects lone parent families, of whom females tend to be the lone parent head of that household. More females, who were denoted as having one or more children or having an expected due date, approached the Service than males. Census data³ tells us that there were 4,700 lone parent households with dependent children in Reading in 2011 and that 90% of these lone parents were female.

No robust data on the UK trans population exists. Therefore, we have no contextual or comparative data from general UK population statistics⁴, however customers identifying as

² <https://www.reading.gov.uk/jsna/ethnicity>

³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/2011censuskeystatisticsforlocalauthoritiesinenglandandwales>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-lgbt-survey-summary-report/national-lgbt-survey-summary-report>

trans⁵ are a notable number from our data. With the heightened profile of the LGBTQ+ agenda, it is likely that the 2021 Census will be able to provide us with more detail and context about our transgender population in Reading.

Consultation with the public and stakeholders outlined concern for 'sofa surfers' and hidden homeless groups and the need for accommodation for single males that is not substandard, shared or dangerous. Actions within the strategy's action plan will seek to provide interventions for these identified groups.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability

The data regarding those who approach the Service shows significant numbers of single people/couples having one or more support needs with:

- 16% of families and 36% of individuals/couples identified as having a support need
- 6% of families and 27% of individuals/couples identified as having **multiple support** needs (more than one)
- 22% of families and 63% of individuals/couples who approached, identified as having at least one reason to need support

The data shows that the most apparent needs for single people are: mental ill-health, physical ill-health, substance misuse, offending history and a history of rough sleeping/repeat homelessness. Across all households, those with multiple needs were primarily due to mental ill-health and substance misuse. The data also shows that those approaching the Service with complex and multiple needs often have a history of rough sleeping and repeat homelessness are significant. The strategy outlines that hospital discharge is a primary reason for homelessness amongst single people, where we know that the single cohort is overrepresented by males.

Consultation with the public and stakeholders outlined concern, and the need for support for, those diagnosed with both mental health and substance misuse (dual diagnosis) where both link considerably to physical and mental health and well-being. Action points within the strategy's action plan will seek to provide interventions for these identified groups.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

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

Data from approaches to the Service between April 2018 and March 2020 records a disproportionate number of client records that 'preferred not to say' their sexual orientation, especially for single households/couples. This was 31% of single people and 17% of families for whom this detail wasn't recorded.

This is most likely due to data recording methods and collation where the question may not be prioritised or perhaps is not asked at all due to perceived sensitivities.

The 2021 Census is likely to be able to provide more detail and context about Reading's LGBTQ+ population, when compared to 2011 collation, which will support us to identify any gaps in the way services are delivered to this group.

⁵ Where a customer advised us that their gender is different from the gender assigned to them at birth

Consultation with the public and stakeholders outlined concern for access to services for LGBTQ+ groups. Action points within the strategy's action plan seek to improve data capture and provide interventions for these identified groups.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how this proposal could impact on Age

Analysis of the immediate reason for homelessness of those households approaching the Homelessness Prevention Service between April 2018 and March 2020 shows that homelessness disproportionately affects younger people aged 20 - 34 and care leavers aged under 25 years old.

Age analysis of specific households shows that most families were headed up by someone aged 25 - 44 (33%). For single households, this was primarily those aged 25 - 44 (20%) and 45 - 64 (14%). The most notable disproportional representation, when compared to Census 2011 data, were approaches from those aged 65+. The number of approaches represented 2.7% overall (with 2.3% being single households) compared to those aged 65+ comprising 16% of the borough's population in 2011. A very small proportion of single 16/17 year olds approached the Service directly, where joint working and placement of this age group is undertaken with BfFC. Older people being under-represented compared to population data is most likely due to them occupying settled accommodation for longer and not requiring the Service; however, the strategy takes into account that promoting homelessness prevention services and alternative housing options to those over 65 might require a different communications approach.

Further analysis and some benchmarking against more recent Census 2021 data (when published) will be undertaken as part of the strategy. This current data only provides us with an initial flag to explore further.

Consultation with the public and stakeholders outlined concern for children, young people, students, care leavers, young carers and older people. Action points within the strategy's action plan will seek to improve data capture and provide interventions for these identified groups.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief?

In comparing those customers approaching the Service with Census information from 2011⁶ data comparison shows a higher proportion of people with no religion, or that their religion was not stated, with a significant under representation of households who were Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish or other. We can see an over-representation of households whose religion is Muslim (Islam) compared to Reading's most recent Census data.

Again, this may represent an overall demographic shift in Reading when we are able to compare new Census data in 2021; however, this is worth exploring as there may be barriers to earlier engagement, specific triggers and consequently ways that we can adapt service

⁶ <https://www.reading.gov.uk/jsna/ethnicity>

delivery to reach people practicing Islam, who are at risk of homelessness, through communities and faith groups/churches.

Further analysis and some benchmarking against more recent Census 2021 data (when published) will be undertaken as part of the strategy. This current data only provides us with an initial flag to explore further.

Consultation with the public and stakeholders did not outline concern for any specific groups regarding disproportionate impact and religious beliefs; however, action points within the strategy's action plan will seek to improve data capture and provide interventions for this group.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Decision

1. **No negative impact identified** Go to sign off
2. **Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason**
You must give due regard or weight, but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.
3. **Negative impact identified or uncertain**
What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale?

How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

Any future review to Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 - 2025 and/or how its action plan is delivered will include further assessment of the impact on specific groups and how any negative effects will be counteracted.

Signed (completing officer): Verena Hutcheson

Date: 04/08/20

Signed (Lead Officer): Zelda Wolfle

Date: 04/08/20