

## WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. Policy details	
Policy Title	Allocations
Policy Lead Officer	AnnMarie Carr
Others Involved	
2. Summary of policy aims	
<p>The aims of the Allocation policy are to ensure transparency of approach, maximise opportunities for people, and the promotion of good practice and equal opportunities whilst seeking innovative solutions to meeting housing need and developing sustainable and inclusive communities.</p> <p>The policy will continue to meet all relevant legal and good practice guidance, as well as addressing a range of housing needs.</p>	
3. Key issues and judgements	
<p>The allocation policy has been developed in line with a robust research theoretical framework that promotes relevant equality legal and good practice standards. For example, relevant University research used to inform allocation policy development includes detailed assessment of factors central to effective rights implementation (Montgomery, 2001; and Montgomery, 2012). The research has drawn guidance from a range of sources, including the Equality and Human Rights Commission, plain language guidance (The Plain English Campaign), the social model of disability (Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living), accessibility standards produced by SAIF (Scottish Accessible Information Forum), Stonewall Scotland, Age Scotland and so on.</p> <p>Issues identified and ‘protected characteristics’ impact;</p> <p>Age: The allocation policy does not discriminate on grounds of age when selecting</p>	

tenants unless this is permitted in law. For example, applicants cannot register on our common housing register until they are sixteen years old. The policy can be made available in larger print and other formats that are accessible to older people. Similarly, the allocation summary policy is written in plain language and is thus accessible to people of all age groups, including younger people.

**Belief and religion:** The allocation policy does not discriminate on grounds of belief or religion and neither factor is considered when selecting tenants. Information about these factors is taken into account in the allocation process, though, so as to ensure that we do not discriminate. For example, we ask applicants about their religious beliefs and implications so we can avoid arranging meetings on religious holidays, or enable people to have access to a room for prayers, if appropriate.

**Disability:** The allocation policy is available in a wide range of formats, on request, to address needs of disabled people. The policy promotes the social model of disability by placing disabled applicants into the unsatisfactory housing group, thus recognising that housing is the disabling barrier, not a personal impairment. By allocating a target of lets to this group, the policy ensures that the effect on disabled people will be beneficial. The language used in the allocation policy is based on the social model of disability thereby promoting respect for disabled people.

**Gender:** The allocation policy does not discriminate on grounds of gender as this factor is not a determining factor in the allocation process. The policy is supported by harassment procedures to protect victims of harassment and to ensure that their housing application is treated with some priority. For example, in the case of a woman fleeing domestic abuse/violence, a point award can be granted to facilitate a house move. This rule applies to women and men. The policy also promotes equality by using neutral language. Applicants can also request interviews with persons of their preferred sex thus taking account of specific needs of individual applicants.

**Pregnancy and maternity:** The allocation policy incorporates pregnancy within its point framework insofar as applicants will be allocated housing of the appropriate size.

**Race:** The allocation policy promotes race equality by ensuring that information on allocation policy and practice is made available, whenever possible, in appropriate languages. The performance system operates to assess allocation rules to evaluate if any form of discrimination, including indirect discrimination, is taking place. The allocation policy also includes a section on positive action that can be used to encourage applicants from a range of black and minority ethnic groups to apply for housing. The publicity to be afforded to the allocation policy will ensure that information is disseminated widely throughout the West Lothian Council area.

**Sexual orientation:** The allocation policy ensures that there is no discrimination on

grounds of sexual orientation in two main ways. Firstly, the allocation rules incorporate relevant rights of applicants and tenants in respect of allocation practice. For example, we advise civil partners of their rights to occupy the family home, or their rights to succeed a tenancy in the event of a tenant's death. Secondly, we provide information to applicants and tenants who are harassed or discriminated against on grounds of sexual orientation of housing options and how further information about their rights can be obtained.

#### **4. Summary of consultation and involvement**

A comprehensive consultation exercise has been carried out which included;

- Individual applicant and tenant survey
- Staff and stakeholders survey, including voluntary organisations and disability groups
- Consultation/ Briefing events
- Consultation with partner landlords
- Allocation review group working in partnership with tenants, applicants and partner landlords.

The overall response to consultation was very positive with majority of respondents in agreement.

#### **5. Key recommendations**

- Implement proposal with no amendments
- Full range of performance indicators will be developed to monitor impact and outcomes of policy following implementation.

**For further information or a copy of the full assessment, please contact:**

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Assessments are available in alternative formats or languages on request.

### **PUBLISHING SUMMARY**