

# Equality Impact Assessment Summary

## Selective Licensing

Responsible Officer: Gail Hancock

### Introduction

*A brief introduction to the project, work to be undertaken, scheme, service and/or intended changes.*

*Why is it needed, who is it for?*

Barnsley MBC has been considering various measures to improve the conditions and management of the Private Rented Sector (PRS) stock. Many areas of Barnsley also have increasing numbers of poor quality, low value housing stock in quite densely populated streets and neighbourhoods. For many these properties are the domain of choice simply because of availability and affordability.

An evaluation of the impact of poor private sector housing on health also found that these types of accommodation were pre-disposed to be in areas which aligned with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and low housing demand in the PRS. In order to address issues emerging from these areas, the council is considering implementing Selective licensing and/or Additional licensing scheme.

The individuals affected by the implementation of the scheme will be likely to include; All residents, tenants, landlords, Accredited landlords and managing agents in each area.

It is anticipated that the scheme in combination with other enforcement and coordinated consultation approaches will act a tool to educate landlords and their tenants regarding how to act in the private rented sector . By providing this approach and where appropriate enforcement work to achieve the standards within PR properties, it will support better living conditions for those currently living in and entering the PRS. It is anticipated that it will assist in halting neighbourhood decline.

### Important equality considerations;

*What is known about the likely impact on certain sections of the community – is the impact negative/positive?*

*How has the likely impact influenced the decision making process for this project?*

This document seeks to address issues highlighted at the initial outset of the consultation. However, this document is live and will address other concerns or issues which also arise during the consultation and where appropriate after the implementation of the scheme enabling a broader understanding of the impact of the whole scheme in due course.

Previous targeted work has been undertaken in 2014-2015 by the 'Our streets project'. The information garnered acted as a pre cursor to the foundations of forming areas where the environmental, housing conditions and decline in demand highlighted the need for action to address issues for all in the community. The scheme highlighted interventions which were taken forward to adopt a dedicated area council officer for areas to be the initial point of contact where issues were identified or arose in specified areas.

The scheme will have the largest impact on the landlords operating and residents and tenants living with the designated areas We are aware that such areas have a higher prevalence of socially excluded, low income and those in receipt of benefits.

Populated in and among these areas are also high in numbers of economic migrants. Consideration has been given to communicating the Council's intentions regarding the scheme and this is outlined below. However, no formal demographic information has been evidenced.

The extent of any potentially negative impacts, following the implementation of either scheme, cannot be fully understood at this point. In order to understand this, a robust monitoring mechanism and feedback process will be needed in order to better understand the actual impact. For example, there may be an increased risk of homelessness for some residents, displacement of landlords and tenants to other areas, issues with affordability for some people on lower incomes and a lowering of demand for residency in that area, creating a further decline in the area's prosperity. Monitoring this, along with local demographic and equality information will give a clearer picture of the actual impact and will allow for mitigating actions to be considered and implemented as appropriate. This will need to be regularly reviewed and part of the administration of the scheme as well as part of the role of the officers working within the community (gathering both subjective and objective information). However, current resources available through housing options to assist with money management and landlord and tenant mediation issues are available and will continue to be available.

There is a requirement for a period of statutory consultation to be undertaken before a decision can be taken. It is important for the consultation to be both accessible and engaging with those likely to be affected (either positively or negatively). It is therefore the intention to undertake both an online consultation (for those who have access to the internet) and some targeted consultation, with the affected groups, for this purpose. Considerations around the accessibility of the consultation will be needed, taking into account the demographics of the local community. It must also consider the communication needs of those living within the designated area (i.e. larger BME population), and ensure that they have access to translation services as required.

This EIA has highlighted the need for;

- Further community and stakeholder consultation to better understand the issues/barriers/concerns;
- Further work within the community to better understand their concerns, worries and fears. This will enable us to address these whilst looking to foster better relationships within the community itself (promoting community cohesion).
- Monitoring of equality information – to better understand the issues faced within the community, to enable us to ensure there is a fair and consistent approach, to mitigate against any discrimination and to ensure that the reporting mechanisms and information around the scheme is accessible to all.
- Monitoring the impact that the scheme is having on the community to reduce the likelihood of any disproportionately negative impacts on those with protected characteristics; including further community consultation as a way to gather this information.

It is important to note that this is an evolving document and will be adjusted throughout the approval at cabinet to implement the scheme. The ongoing consultation process and finally, implementation.

#### Post consultation

At the close of the consultation 4 alternative proposals were received and these have been evaluated together with the initial parameters of the SL Scheme. A Hybrid scheme is being proposed working with landlords to certify the properties via an accreditation scheme environment with the council retaining the licence requirements. Those properties which are accepted onto the scheme must have an absence of category 1 (the most serious).

In the event that the scheme is approved. Consideration has been given to the access and communication needs of BME tenants. To that end: We are proposing documents in languages specific to the dominant demographic in the proposed areas together with information guides for landlords and Tenants. Please note: where other forms of communication and languages are requested. The council will offer the most economic means of delivering this assistance.

## Next Steps

### To improve you knowledge about the equality impact . . .

Actions could include: community engagement with affected groups, analysis of performance data, improve equality monitoring, stakeholder focus group etc.

Action taken so far:	Lead Officer	Completion date
We are undertaking a consultation plan to review how we can contact those affected. Ways of creating and including (POSTING) updates of dialogue regarding question and answer sessions raised by those affected as a blog??	Gail Hancock	Complete
Action we will take:	Lead Officer	Completion date
Consult with local stakeholders and landlords regarding the scheme proposals	Gail Hancock	Completed
Full consultation including letter drops to all those in the scheme. Proposal/ scheme documents, maps and charges for the scheme. Information can be obtained in several different languages upon request.  Drop in sessions have been organised for each area with an additional drop in at the Town Hall for all to access information. Two separate landlord events have also been set up at either end of the consultation period.		Completed
Meetings on district with the Local Landlords Associations. TARA. Several third party providers. For example Mind, Salvation army.		Completed

### To improve or mitigate the equality impact . . .

Actions could include: altering the policy to protect affected group, limiting scope of service change, reviewing actual impact in future, phasing-in changes over period of time etc.

Action taken so far:	Lead Officer	Completion date
Currently, the Community Safety's service is being restructured to align it service to community requirements. To that end; the Housing options team will be joining the department to assist with tenancy issues and offer advocacy advice, deal with disputes and benefits in local landlord and tenant relationships and reduce disputes and friction in the sector. It will also assist environmental health and housing advice to foster better		Completed

relationships with those in the sector.		
Area officers are currently in post to assist with issues relating to the scheme area. These will be moved into area specific designations.		Completed
Action we will take:	Lead Officer	Completion date
Actions will be considered pre and post consultation as per Communications plan. This will highlight areas and mediums to achieve a bespoke communications plan to address demographics and relevant to the stage of planning / implementation.	Coms/ G Hancock	Completed
No formal demographic profile can be obtained in order to determine if any specific groups are directly affected. Therefore, generic information will be produced in the interim. This working document will be amended to address specific demographic issues which may arise and address any issues presented.		On going
Letters in two known participant's language were added to our web pages including questionnaires in the two dominant languages. Letter drops were initiated in areas known to have higher concentrations of this demographic in their language. This was garnered from up to date intelligence received.		Completed
Alternative methods of providing information by officer visits and in this case ERDU speaking officers to translate the SL message and questionnaire were also offered.		Completed
During the consultation it was noted that we did not receive many completed questionnaires from migrant groups. We therefore re convened to issue letters in the two main demographics ( Polish and Latvian) The responses to these were reviewed and these letters were further posted on the Latvian and Polish face book pages to garner more support and understanding in each area. A SNS employee with Polish, Russian and other language skills has assisted with the consultation, information and advice process.		Completed - Reviewed during the consultation period after completing a straw poll of some of the consultation responses.
Staff from the Safer Neighbourhood Service (SNS) also visited a local event where it was		

<p>advised we would be able to engage with affected demographics. This had extremely limited uptake.</p> <p>Upon reflection. We feel that it may be better to engage ESOL and community representatives/ church reps etc. within specific communities to outline the outcomes of the scheme. In addition to letters and face book notifications.</p>		<p>Post consultation outcomes. Ongoing where identified.</p>
<p>The Council has successfully bid to the 'Controlling Migration Fund' and a dedicated Housing and Migration Team has subsequently been appointed to.</p> <p>The stated outcome of the funded project is to 'reduce negative experiences and perceptions of overseas migration into Barnsley'</p> <p>The project will focus specifically on the lived environment and will adopt an intelligence-led approach driven by the concerns of the resident communities together with identifying and addressing barriers to integration from the perspective of non-UK communities.</p>		<p>This is a two year programme 2017 -2019 and has commenced.</p>