

Equalities Impact Assessment – The Provision of Loft Conversions or Extensions to Alleviate Overcrowding in Council Owned Properties

Aim of Policy / Scope of Service:

The aim of the policy is to provide overcrowded households living in council property the opportunity to have either a loft conversion or extension to their current home. Such works would resolve the overcrowding. This scheme would be particularly suitable for households who wish to remain in their current home and area where they are already settled.

The selection of properties and households to be included need to be open, fair and transparent. In this respect the criteria broadly reflect the priority awarded to overcrowded households on the council's Housing Register and as published in the council's Allocations Scheme.

Funding has been set aside in the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2011 – 2014 and it is anticipated that up to 10 households per year will benefit. This will inevitably depend on the size and complexity of each individual project.

Different Groups included in scope

Ethnicity

including (Asylum seekers, Refugees, Gypsies and Travellers)

Gender

(men, women, trans / gender variant people)

Disability

(physical or mental health issue, long term illness, learning disability, physical/sensory impairment)

Age

(included – older& younger people)

Religion/Belief, including

(faith communities including no belief)

Sexual Orientation

(lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other)

Other

Impact	Potential Impact on this group	Potential actions to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts
1. Focus on houses in Year 1	(-) Households living in flats who are overcrowded will not be able to benefit from the scheme and instead will need to rely on other options for example the Housing Register, Mutual Exchange or for those who qualify the Tenants Incentive Transfer Scheme.	<p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During the first year of the scheme full analysis should be undertaken to review the number of overcrowded households living in flats so that we are aware of the full impact of not including flats. The analysis should also include an assessment of the housing need for transfer applicants by property size.. - At the same time a feasibility study should be undertaken to assess the potential for flat loft conversions or extensions and the implication of this in terms of the Right to Buy being exercised in the future and the lease implication. - The Lead Commissioner for Housing will have discretion to override the selection criteria in exceptional circumstances and may use this discretion to assist a household living in a flat.

<p>2. Selection of households in priority order from the Housing Register, for overcrowding reasons</p>	<p>(+) A number of households who are the most severely overcrowded and have been waiting the longest will benefit first from the scheme, assuming they would like the works carried out and it is feasible for those works to be undertaken in their property.</p> <p>(+) The Housing Register is a fair and transparent way of awarding priority for households and has undergone extensive consultation. The selection criteria of this scheme mirror that policy and as such is able to piggy back on the consultation already undertaken in this respect.</p> <p>(-) Some households may not have registered their housing need on the Register and would therefore be unable to benefit from the scheme, other than through the Lead commissioner for housing's discretion.</p> <p>(-) Households who are less severely overcrowded, for example lacking 1 bedroom and placed in band C may either wait a long time for the opportunity of a loft conversion or extension or may never reach the top of the waiting list.</p> <p>(-)(+) Some households may be in a higher priority band for reasons other than overcrowding. For</p>	<p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Households who are overcrowded but who have not registered their need will be encouraged to register. - These households will still be able to bid on properties through Choice Based Lettings and where eligible may also benefit from opportunities to move into private sector via The Overcrowding Project, participate in a mutual exchange or benefit from the Transfer Incentive Scheme. - Where medical needs or factors other than overcrowding have placed the household in a higher priority banding the Lead Commissioner for Housing may use discretion, in exceptional circumstances, to award priority to that household. Other factors assessed under the Housing Register application will assist when deciding to exercise that discretion.
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	<p>example a household may be lacking one bedroom and as such would be awarded band C. However, they may actually be placed in a higher banding for other reasons i.e. medical needs.</p>	
<p>3. Prioritisation for working households and those making a positive contribution.</p>	<p>(-) If English is not the first language there could be issues around being able to work or volunteer and therefore not being able to qualify for this priority.</p> <p>(-) People with high levels of disabilities (e.g. mental health, long term illnesses, sensory impairments) may have more difficulty in being able to work or volunteer and therefore may not qualify for this priority.</p> <p>(+) More households contributing to the economic growth of the city and more sustainable communities</p> <p>(+) Less working households leaving the city</p> <p>(-)(+) Working households on low incomes may struggle to pay the increased rent payable on larger properties</p>	<p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor how many households are bypassed during the selection process because they are not working or making a positive contribution. Analyse those households by housing need and equality strands. - Provide financial advice to households to ensure income maximisation and that they can afford any increased costs with having a larger home. - We would like to monitor this over the first year of this scheme and report back to ensure that no groups who are in high housing need are missing out because of the working and positive contribution priority.

<p>4. Excluding tenants with Rent Arrears or other breaches of their tenancy agreement</p>	<p>(-) Tenants who have rent arrears or who have otherwise breached their tenancy agreement, for example anti social behaviour, will be excluded from the scheme.</p>	<p>ACTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tenants with rent arrears will be targeted for assistance by the Housing Income Management Team. Cases who would otherwise be bypassed will be considered by The Arrears Transfer Panel to devise an action plan to assist these households so they can benefit - Tenants with other breaches of their tenancy agreement will be referred to their Housing Officer or specialist teams for appropriate assistance and advice. - Households excluded for such breaches will be monitored by housing need and the equality strands. The outcome of this monitoring can feed into other strategies designed to help such households.
<p>6- Lead Commissioner for Housing Discretion (for other exceptional circumstances not covered by this scheme).</p>	<p>(-)(+) To all the Groups in the same measure</p>	<p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All of the above cases will be taken to Housing Management Consultative Committee on a yearly basis to review the numbers submitted, the outcome of the cases and brief reason for the case being submitted via this route to ensure that it is

working in a fair and transparent way

7. Refusing permission for the works where it is likely the overcrowding will be alleviated within 3 years.

ACTION

- **The Homemove Team will be able to provide an assessment of the likely waiting time for the household to successfully bid for an alternative property.**
- **Sensitive discussions will need to take place with the household in respect to any likely changes to the household composition.**
- **Officers will explain to all households the potential alternative options that are open to them in order to alleviate overcrowding.**

What consultation has been used or undertaken?	Methods Used	Findings	Agreed Actions
<p>The council's allocations policy is currently undergoing a review and proposed changes to that policy have undergone a 12 week consultation process with wider stakeholders in the city.</p> <p>Stakeholders include Communities of Interest, our partner agencies, Age Concern, support agencies, people on the Housing Register, and support providers.</p> <p>In so far as this scheme is concerned no formal consultation has been undertaken. However, the selection criteria for households mirrors the current, and proposed changes, to the allocations policy.</p>	<p>Consultation was offered via email, in writing, face to face meeting, over the telephone, group meetings, offered in large print and translators were offered if necessary.</p> <p>It was also made available on Brighton & Hove City Councils website consultation portal.</p>	<p>There are currently 133 overcrowded households living in houses who have applied for a transfer. Of these 65 are working households and 68 households do not work. A total of 40 households have rent arrears.</p> <p>There are an additional 189 households who have registered their housing need, are overcrowded and live in flats.</p>	<p>Further analysis needs to be undertaken around the equalities strands attributable to overcrowded households who have applied for a transfer as a result of overcrowding.</p> <p>The details of the scheme should be formally circulated to a group of selected colleagues and tenant representatives for their comments and also contribution towards this Equalities Impact Assessment.</p> <p>That we will ensure as much support for understanding these changes is given to households affected by this scheme and that that we will review the scheme and it's impact in 12 – 18 months Allocations policy amendments again in 12 months.</p>

Lead Equality Impact Assessment Officer:
Business Improvement Manager
Head of Housing & Social Inclusion

Martin Booty
David Rook
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Date
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Please date when you have seen and agreed
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