

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Homeless Centre - service charge increases to full cost recovery

Reference: EIA000322

Date: 30/01/2024



EIA Form – About your EIA

Reference number	EIA000322
Date Submitted	30/01/2024
Subject of the EIA	Homeless Centre - service charge increases to full cost recovery
Brief description of the policy, service or function covered by the EIA	<p>Brief description of the policy, service or function covered by the EIA Housing Solutions and Support is responsible for statutory service delivery to vulnerable citizens. This includes – people who sleep rough, single homeless and families, including temporary accommodation (TA). Homeless Centres is a type of TA that is offered to homeless households. Households living in our homeless centres are required to pay a service charge of £11.58 per week per room to cover the cost of gas, electric, water and council tax. Benchmarking informed similar supported accommodation providers charge around £20-25 per week service charge. BCC did not increase homeless centre service charge rates last year. Standard practice across the sector is to increase service charges against inflation on an annual basis. Consequently, the true cost of the utilities to the department is not covered by the current service charge levels. A rise in homeless centre service charge costs in line with inflation - the service charge will increase to £19.28 for one room from the 1st April 2024. The cost will then be staggered based on the number of rooms occupied per household. We have taken into account that housing benefits do not cover utility costs, and the impact of this increase will be felt by households in our homeless centres, who are typically low-income single parents or couples with children. However, it is important to acknowledge that all residents within the homeless centres will remain responsible for utility bill payments when they transition to secure accommodation. It is also worth noting that the rise in the service charge within the homeless centres will still be relatively lower than the typical energy costs incurred by households living in other types of TA such as Dispersed and Private Sector Leasing.</p>
Equality Assessment is in support of...	["Amended/refreshed strategy "]
How frequently will you review impact and mitigation measures identified in this EIA?	Six months
Due date of the first review	2024-07-01



Directorate, Division & Service Area

Which directorate(s) are responsible for this EIA?	["City Housing"]
Division	Housing Solutions and Support Service
Service area	Homeless Centres
Budget Saving	Yes

Officers

Responsible officer	Ranjeet Kaur
Accountable officer	Stephen Philpott

Data Sources

Data sources	["Relevant research"]
Data source details	The average gas and electric bill in Great Britain - British Gas Average gas and electricity usage Ofgem

Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic – Age

Does this proposal impact people due to their age as per the Equality Act 2010?	Yes
What age groups are impacted by your proposal?	["0-9 years", "10-19 years", "20-29 years", "30-39 years", "40-49 years", "50-59 years", "60-69 years", "70-79 years", "80-89 years", "90 years or over"]



<p>Please describe the impact to the age characteristic</p>	<p>All citizens regardless of their age can access the service and assistance will be given to all in accordance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that this specific proposal will only impact households that have been placed in temporary accommodation within our homeless centres provided by Birmingham City Council, where officers are onsite daily to provide housing advice, support and guidance.</p> <p>Service data tells us that most of the households in our homeless centres fall into the 20-29 years, 30-39 years, and 40-49 years categories and therefore they will be impacted by this proposal.</p> <p>Households within our homeless centres are more likely to be low-income households on benefits and therefore an increase in service charges may have a financial impact on residents.</p>
<p>How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the age characteristic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our homeless centres are manned by officers between the hours of 8am-9pm. These officers will be on hand to communicate the increase in service charge to residents and offer benefit maximisation guidance, support and assistance. • Written notification of the increase will be sent to all residents following cabinet approval in January 2024. This will give residents adequate notice of the increase (2 months plus). • Letters will include information on how/where residents can seek financial advise and assistance if required. • Cost of service charge is still competitive in comparison to other forms of temporary and permanent accommodation.

Protected Characteristic – Disability

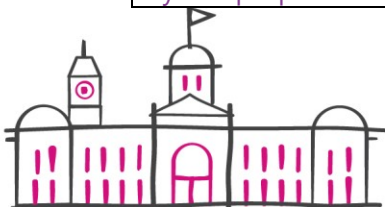
<p>Does this proposal impact those people with a disability as per the Equality Act 2010?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
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<p>Please describe the impact to the disability characteristic</p>	<p>All citizens regardless of their age can access the service and assistance will be given to all in accordance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that this specific proposal will only impact households that have been placed in temporary accommodation within our homeless centres provided by Birmingham City Council, where officers are onsite daily to provide housing advice, support and guidance.</p> <p>Our data reveals that while 9% of households in B&Bs have disclosed a disability, 47% have not, suggesting the actual figure could be higher. National research on the impact of homelessness on this demographic indicates that households with disabilities are disproportionately affected by homelessness. There is also a recognized issue concerning undisclosed disabilities.</p> <p>The impact for this group will be similar to all the the other characteristics in that households within our homeless centres are more likely to be low-income households on benefits and therefore may be impacted financially.</p>
<p>How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the disability characteristic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our homeless centres are manned by officers between the hours of 8am-9pm. These officers will be on hand to communicate the increase in service charge to residents and offer benefit maximisation guidance, support and assistance. • Written notification of the increase will be sent to all residents following cabinet approval in January 2024. This will give residents adequate notice of the increase (2 months plus). • Letters will include information on how/where residents can seek financial advise and assistance if required. • Cost of service charge is still competitive in comparison to other forms of temporary and permanent accommodation.

Protected Characteristic – Sex

<p>Does this proposal impact citizens based on their sex as per the Equality Act 2010?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>What sexes will be impacted by this proposal?</p>	<p>["Male", "Female", "Non-binary"]</p>



<p>Please describe the impact to the sex characteristic</p>	<p>All citizens regardless of their age can access the service and assistance will be given to all in accordance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that this specific proposal will only impact households that have been placed in temporary accommodation within our homeless centres provided by Birmingham City Council, where officers are onsite daily to provide housing advice, support and guidance.</p> <p>Our service data tells us that 73.16% of residents in homeless centres are female and therefore they will be adversely impacted by this proposal.</p> <p>The impact will be that are more likely to be low-income households on benefits and therefore may be impacted financially by the service charge increase.</p>
<p>How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the sex characteristic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our homeless centres are manned by officers between the hours of 8am-9pm. These officers will be on hand to communicate the increase in service charge to residents and offer benefit maximisation guidance, support and assistance. • Written notification of the increase will be sent to all residents following cabinet approval in January 2024. This will give residents adequate notice of the increase (2 months plus). • Letters will include information on how/where residents can seek financial advise and assistance if required. • Cost of service charge is still competitive in comparison to other forms of temporary and permanent accommodation.

Protected Characteristic - Gender Reassignment

<p>Does this proposal impact people who are proposing to undergo, undergoing or have undergone a process to reassign one's sex as per the Equality Act 2010?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
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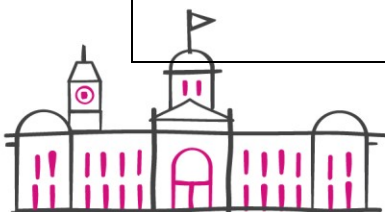
<p>Please describe the impact to the gender reassignment characteristic</p>	<p>All citizens regardless of their age can access the service and assistance will be given to all in accordance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that this specific proposal will only impact households that have been placed in temporary accommodation within our homeless centres provided by Birmingham City Council, where officers are onsite daily to provide housing advice, support and guidance.</p> <p>We do not currently collate any internal data on this characteristic, but the service will seek to improve data collection and review impact.</p> <p>National research from Stonewall shows that almost one in five LGBTQA+ people have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. Rates are even higher amongst trans people, with 25% having experienced homelessness at some point.</p> <p>Individuals that fall into this characteristic are known to face a higher risk of discrimination or harassment. However, the primary impact will be that are more likely to be low-income households on benefits and therefore may be impacted financially by the service charge increase.</p>
<p>How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the gender reassignment characteristic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our homeless centres are manned by officers between the hours of 8am-9pm. These officers will be on hand to communicate the increase in service charge to residents and offer benefit maximisation guidance, support and assistance. • Written notification of the increase will be sent to all residents following cabinet approval in January 2024. This will give residents adequate notice of the increase (2 months plus). • Letters will include information on how/where residents can seek financial advise and assistance if required. • Cost of service charge is still competitive in comparison to other forms of temporary and permanent accommodation.

Protected Characteristic - Marriage and Civil Partnership

<p>Does this proposal impact people who are married or in a civil partnership as per the Equality Act 2010?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
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<p>What legal marital or registered civil partnership status will be impacted by this proposal?</p>	<p>["Single","Never married and never registered a civil partnership","Married: Same sex","Married: Opposite sex","In a registered civil partnership: Opposite sex","In a registered civil partnership: Same sex","Separated, but still married","Separated, but still in a registered civil partnership","Divorced","Formerly in a civil partnership now legally dissolved","Widowed","Surviving partner from civil partnership"]</p>
<p>Please describe the impact to the marriage and civil partnership characteristic</p>	<p>All citizens regardless of their age can access the service and assistance will be given to all in accordance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that this specific proposal will only impact households that have been placed in temporary accommodation within our homeless centres provided by Birmingham City Council, where officers are onsite daily to provide housing advice, support and guidance.</p> <p>Whilst we do not gather data on this characteristic, households in TA could fall under any of the legal marital or registered civil partnership statuses available for selection in the box above and therefore could be impacted. Our service data on household composition however tells us that the majority of household with our homeless centres are single parents with children. The impact will be that are more likely to be low-income households on benefits and therefore may be impacted financially by the service charge increase.</p> <p>The service will continue to improve the way this data is collected and review its impact.</p>
<p>How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the marriage and civil partnership characteristic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our homeless centres are manned by officers between the hours of 8am-9pm. These officers will be on hand to communicate the increase in service charge to residents and offer benefit maximisation guidance, support and assistance. • Written notification of the increase will be sent to all residents following cabinet approval in January 2024. This will give residents adequate notice of the increase (2 months plus). • Letters will include information on how/where residents can seek financial advise and assistance if required. • Cost of service charge is still competitive in comparison to other forms of temporary and permanent accommodation.



Protected Characteristic - Pregnancy and Maternity

<p>Does this proposal impact people covered by the Equality Act 2010 under the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Please describe the impact to the pregnancy and maternity characteristic</p>	<p>All citizens regardless of their age can access the service and assistance will be given to all in accordance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that this specific proposal will only impact households that have been placed in temporary accommodation within our homeless centres provided by Birmingham City Council, where officers are onsite daily to provide housing advice, support and guidance.</p> <p>Whilst we don't hold any internal data on this characteristic national research shows that pregnant women are adversely impacted by homelessness. Homelessness puts the health of pregnant mothers and their unborn babies at risk, as stress in pregnancy can adversely affect both the baby's growth and future development. Frequent moves and moves out of area can affect the degree to which families engage with maternity and health services, leading to broken relationships with professionals such as GPs and midwives.</p> <p>Households within our homeless centres are more likely to be low-income households on benefits.</p>



<p>How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the pregnancy and maternity characteristic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our homeless centres are manned by officers between the hours of 8am-9pm. These officers will be on hand to communicate the increase in service charge to residents and offer benefit maximisation guidance, support and assistance. • Written notification of the increase will be sent to all residents following cabinet approval in January 2024. This will give residents adequate notice of the increase (2 months plus). • Letters will include information on how/where residents can seek financial advise and assistance if required. • Cost of service charge is still competitive in comparison to other forms of temporary and permanent accommodation.
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Protected Characteristic - Ethnicity and Race

<p>Does this proposal impact people due to their race as per the Equality Act 2010?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>What ethnic groups would be impacted by this proposal?</p>	<p>["White British", "Other White", "Bangladeshi", "Chinese", "Indian", "Pakistani", "Other Asian", "African", "Caribbean", "Black British", "Other Black", "Arab", "Latin American", "Irish", "Gypsy or Irish Traveller", "Roma", "Central and Eastern Europe", "Western and Southern Europe", "Black African"]</p>



<p>Please describe the impact to the ethnicity and race characteristic</p>	<p>All citizens regardless of ethnicity and race can access the service and assistance will be given to all in accordance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that this specific proposal will only impact households that have been placed in temporary accommodation within our homeless centres provided by Birmingham City Council, where officers are onsite daily to provide housing advice, support and guidance.</p> <p>Our service data for households in TA tell us that our current residents are Black African 21%, Asian or Asian British Pakistani 15%, White British 13% and therefore this proposal will currently disproportionately impact those who identify as White British, Pakistani and Black African.</p> <p>National research by Herriot Watt identified that minority groups and more significantly Black people are more likely to experience homelessness compared to White British people. They are also more likely to experience discrimination, harassment, or abuse on the grounds of race and ethnicity in housing.</p> <p>The primary impact of this proposal however will be that they are more likely to be low-income households on benefits and therefore may be impacted financially by the service charge increase.</p>
<p>How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the ethnicity and race characteristic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our homeless centres are manned by officers between the hours of 8am-9pm. These officers will be on hand to communicate the increase in service charge to residents and offer benefit maximisation guidance, support and assistance. • Written notification of the increase will be sent to all residents following cabinet approval in January 2024. This will give residents adequate notice of the increase (2 months plus). • Letters will include information on how/where residents can seek financial advise and assistance if required. • Cost of service charge is still competitive in comparison to other forms of temporary and permanent accommodation.

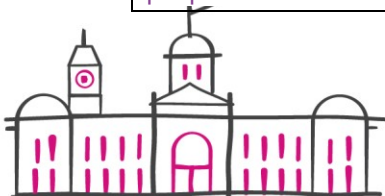


Protected Characteristic - Religion or Beliefs

Does this proposal impact people's religion or beliefs as per the Equality Act 2010?	Yes
What religions could be impacted by this proposal?	["No religion", "Christian", "Buddhist", "Hindu", "Jewish", "Muslim", "Sikh"]
Please describe the impact to the religion or beliefs characteristic	<p>Whilst we do not gather data on this characteristic the service can be accessed by all regardless of religion or belief.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that this specific proposal will only impact households that have been placed in temporary accommodation within our homeless centres provided by Birmingham City Council, where officers are onsite daily to provide housing advice, support and guidance.</p> <p>The service will continue to improve the way this data is collected and review its impact.</p> <p>The primary impact of this proposal however will be that they are more likely to be low-income households on benefits and therefore may be impacted financially by the service charge increase.</p>
How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the religion or beliefs characteristic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our homeless centres are manned by officers between the hours of 8am-9pm. These officers will be on hand to communicate the increase in service charge to residents and offer benefit maximisation guidance, support and assistance. • Written notification of the increase will be sent to all residents following cabinet approval in January 2024. This will give residents adequate notice of the increase (2 months plus). • Letters will include information on how/where residents can seek financial advise and assistance if required. • Cost of service charge is still competitive in comparison to other forms of temporary and permanent accommodation.

Protected Characteristic - Sexual Orientation

Does this proposal impact people's sexual orientation as per the Equality Act 2010?	Yes
What sexual orientations may be impacted by this proposal?	["Straight or heterosexual", "Gay or lesbian", "Bisexual", "Pansexual", "Asexual", "Queer", "All other sexual orientations"]



<p>Please describe the impact to the sexual orientation characteristic</p>	<p>All citizens regardless of ethnicity and race can access the service and assistance will be given to all in accordance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that this specific proposal will only impact households that have been placed in temporary accommodation within our homeless centres provided by Birmingham City Council, where officers are onsite daily to provide housing advice, support and guidance.</p> <p>Whilst our internal data around this characteristic is insufficient, we know that national research has found clear evidence that LGBTQA+ are overrepresented among homeless populations.</p> <p>The reasons why LGBTQA identity increases a person's chance of becoming homeless are not as well documented.</p> <p>Research from Stonewall shows that almost one in five LGBT people have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. Rates are even higher amongst trans people, with 25% having experienced homelessness at some point.</p> <p>Individuals that fall into this characteristic are known to face a higher risk of discrimination or harassment. However, the primary impact will be that are more likely to be low-income households on benefits and therefore may be impacted financially by the service charge increase</p>
<p>How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the sexual orientation characteristic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our homeless centres are manned by officers between the hours of 8am-9pm. These officers will be on hand to communicate the increase in service charge to residents and offer benefit maximisation guidance, support and assistance. • Written notification of the increase will be sent to all residents following cabinet approval in January 2024. This will give residents adequate notice of the increase (2 months plus). • Letters will include information on how/where residents can seek financial advise and assistance if required. • Cost of service charge is still competitive in comparison to other forms of temporary and permanent accommodation.



Monitoring

How will you ensure any adverse impact and mitigation measures are monitored?	Periodic review of homeless centre data
Please enter the email address for the officer responsible for monitoring impact and mitigation	Stephen Philpott

