

By: Angela Slaven, Customer and Communities Directorate,
Director - Service Improvement

To: Commissioning Body 11 October 2011

Subject: Strategic Review of Access to Short-term Supported
Housing

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary

The Kent Supporting People Programme undertook a strategic review of access to short-term accommodation based supported housing. The Supporting People Programme aims to ensure that there is uniformity in the approach to information provision, application processes and procedures, and the availability of services. The proposal within this paper is that short-term supported housing referrals are managed utilising a centralised referral mechanism within the Kent Home Choice system. Kent Home Choice is already managing a choice based lettings system provided by Locata on behalf of all the Local Housing Authorities and Housing Associations in Kent.

1. Introduction

(1) The Supporting People Programme undertook a strategic review of access into short-term accommodation based supported housing services. These services are housing based with housing related support being provided in a specifically designated building. An example of this is a refuge for women escaping domestic abuse. These services are provided for up to two years and are accessed via direct contact with the provider by an individual applicant or an agency on their behalf, and are on the basis of need, risk assessment and a defined eligibility criteria. There are currently waiting lists for the majority of services with often lengthy periods of waiting for service users. The findings of the Strategic Review of Access were:

- Information provision needs to be improved
- Availability of services needs to be stream-lined and rationalised
- Application processes and procedures need to be the same
- The reasons for not providing a service need to be clear
- Reasons for eviction need to be collected
- Move-on needs to be enhanced

(2) Other issues identified through analysis of referral data are as follows:

- Multiple referrals are made by agencies and individuals to services (this trend is most apparent in single homelessness services). Self referrals are the most popular way of accessing services.

- The greatest range of ethnicity is found in domestic violence
- The demand for services for young people at risk continues to be significant
- There are a significant number of individuals who are alternating between sofa surfing, sleeping rough and living with family or friends
- The strategic review has reinforced the need to enable access to services across the county
- There are a significant number of people who are unable to access any supported housing

2. The Supporting People Programme's Recommendations from the Strategic Review

(1) The Supporting Programme currently enables access to long-term accommodation based supported housing via Kent Home Choice. Kent Home Choice is a choice based lettings scheme which is utilised by the districts and boroughs, Medway Unitary, Supporting People, and the majority of housing associations of Kent and Medway.

(2) The Supporting Programme is not suggesting that vulnerable people should bid for short-term supported accommodation but rather that the functionality that is available within Kent Home Choice could be utilised in order to develop what would effectively be a centralised referral mechanism for short-term supported housing. The only exclusion should be refuges for women escaping domestic abuse due to the nature of this service.

3. Consultation and Communication

(1) As part of the review, the Programme consulted with a wide range of stakeholders, including districts/boroughs, providers and current service users.

(2) An Equality Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix 3.

4. Risk and Business Continuity Management

(1) The Supporting People Programme will continue to monitor and review providers on the basis of the findings of the strategic review, and will ensure that there is a smooth and managed transition to the utilisation of Kent Home Choice to deliver a centralised referral mechanism to access short-term accommodation-based supported housing. The risks and issues log is attached (Appendix 2).

5. Financial Implications

(1) The Supporting People Programme is already part of Kent Home Choice as a strategic partner and pays an annual fee of £6,264. The fee next year will be £6,076.

(2) Kent Home Choice has confirmed that there is unlikely to be any further expenditure incurred in relation to this proposal. Kent Home Choice has confirmed that if the costs of developing additional functionality are more than £1,000 that they will carry this risk and the Kent Home Choice Board would need to agree to additional funding being sourced from its reserves.

6. Legal implications

(1) The Programme will ensure that contractual arrangements with providers are not compromised, and that specifications are adjusted accordingly.

7. Sustainability Implications

(1) The Supporting People Programme will work with Kent Home Choice to ensure that access to a centralised referral mechanism for short-term accommodation based supported housing services remains a viable solution that can continue to be funded in the medium to longer term.

8. Conclusion

(1) The Strategic Review has concluded that the best possible solution to the findings is to ensure that access to these services is managed via Kent Home Choice system using a centralised referral mechanism. The Programme will start to work with Kent Home Choice, key stakeholders including providers and service users to implement this by April 2012 if the recommendation is agreed by the Supporting People Commissioning Body.

Recommendations

The Commissioning Body is asked to agree that;

1) The Kent Home Choice system is utilised to deliver a centralised referral mechanism for short-term accommodation-based supported housing services.

2) The Supporting People Programme seeks the agreement of the Kent Home Choice Board to the usage of their reserves if costs exceed £1,000.

Contact details -

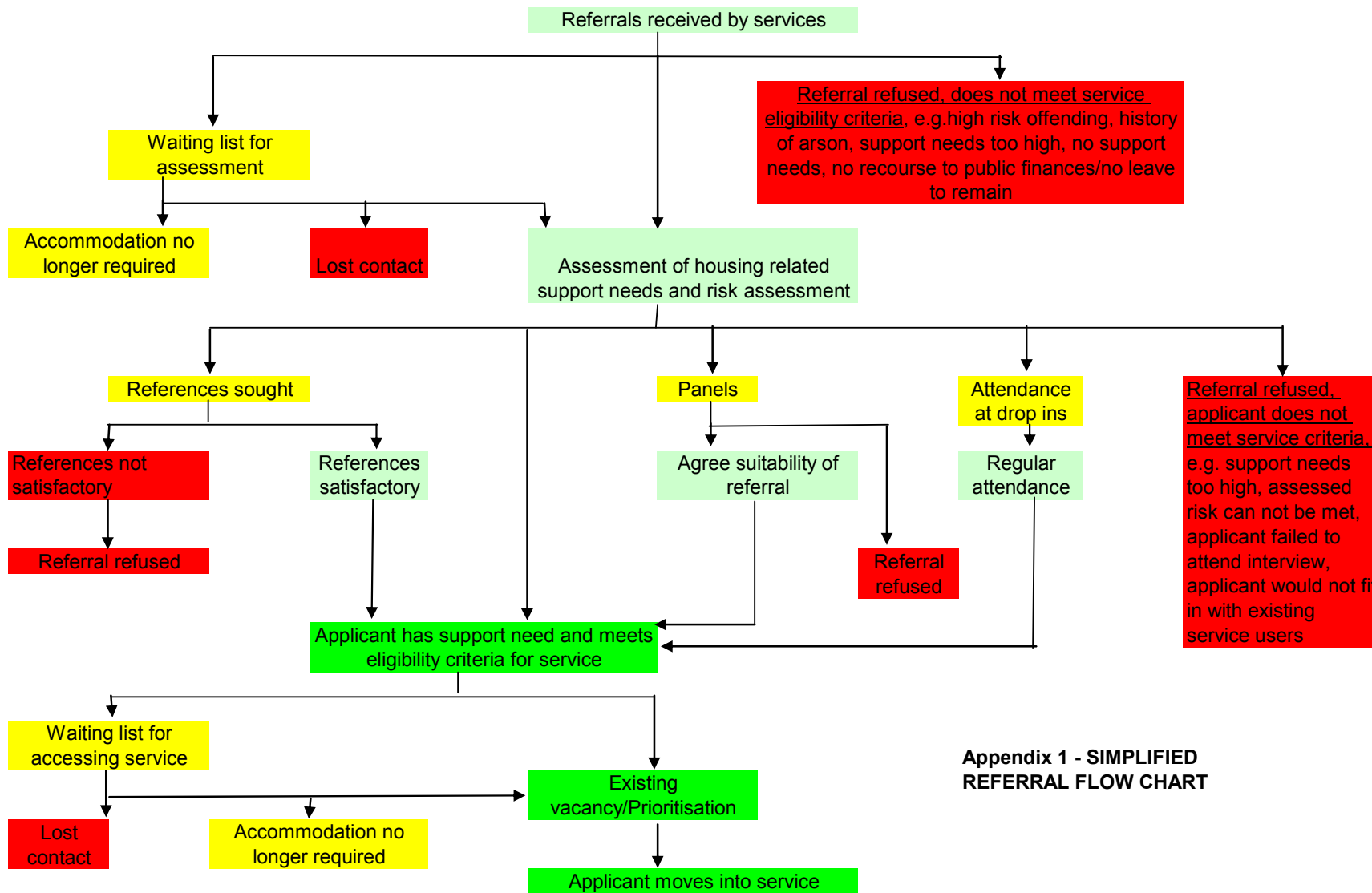
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Appendix 1 – Flow Chart of Service User Experience

Appendix 2 – Risks and Issues Log

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment



Appendix 2 - Risk and Business Issues Continuity Log

Impact & Probability - 1 = Low 2 = Medium 3 = High

Risk Description	Impact 1-3	Probability 1-3	Risk Profile	Risk Owner	Countermeasure	Date Identified
No agreement reached on model	3	2	Medium	SP	The SP Team will negotiate with key stakeholders/providers to reach a consensus	23.8.11
The Kent Home Choice Board refuses to pay for additional costs out of reserves	3	1	Low	SP	The SP Team will need to request funding from reserves to implement. Kent Home Choice have confirmed that they do not believe that this will be an eventuality.	13.9.11
Model may not be appropriate for all service types	3	1	Low	SP	The SP Team will negotiate with key stakeholders/providers to reach a consensus. The Supporting People Team is proposing to exclude refuges from the centralised referral mechanism.	23.8.11
A new model is not introduced	3	1	Low	SP	The SP Team would need to manage the status quo and try and make changes on an incremental basis.	23.8.11
The model of service delivery for housing/housing related support is radically changed	3	2	Medium	KCC	The SP Team would need to work with KCC to mitigate the impact.	23.8.11

Appendix 3 - KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

**EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT
Strategic Review of Access to Short Term Accommodation Based
Services**

Directorate:

Customers and Communities

Name of policy, procedure, project or service

Strategic Review of Access to Short Term Accommodation Based Supported
Housing

Type

Project

Responsible Owner/ Senior Officer

Claire Martin, Head of Supporting People

Date of Initial Screening

1 August 2011

Screening Grid

Characteristic	Could this policy, procedure, project or service affect this group differently from others in Kent? YES/NO	Could this policy, procedure, project or service promote equal opportunities for this group? YES/NO	Assessment of potential impact HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW/ NONE/UNKNOWN		Provide details: a) Is internal action required? If yes, why? b) Is further assessment required? If yes, why? c) Explain how good practice can promote equal opportunities
			Positive	Negative	
Age	No - 1) The Quality Assessment Framework requires providers to meet equality & diversity in services, including fair access. Supporting People funding depends on continuous improvement in this area which is regularly reviewed through service reviews and contract monitoring. 2) The proposed measures will improve the referral process by addressing the issues that may exclude vulnerable people from accessing services.	Yes - 1) The proposed measures for improving access to services will ensure that the referral/ application process does not exclude applicants because of restrictive practices (including those from minority strands)	High	None	a) Involve stakeholders, including service users, in the design of a fit for purpose referral mechanism. This will ensure that arrangements are transparent and understood by all. .c) Supporting People will continue to monitor and review services and referrals to services, including diversity to ensure that vulnerable people including people who are vulnerable because of age and who need the services can access them.
		Yes - 1) Improved promotion of services and information about access will improve the application process	High	None	a) Ensure that service specifications set out the need for providers to widely promote services and access arrangements. c) Better information will make application for services easier.

Characteristic	Could this policy, procedure, project or service affect this group differently from others in Kent? YES/NO	Could this policy, procedure, project or service promote equal opportunities for this group? YES/NO	Assessment of potential impact HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW/ NONE/UNKNOWN		Provide details: a) Is internal action required? If yes, why? b) Is further assessment required? If yes, why? c) Explain how good practice can promote equal opportunities
			Positive	Negative	
Disability	As above	Yes - 1) The proposed measures for improving access to services will ensure that the referral/application process does not exclude applicants because of restrictive practices (including those from minority strands)	High	None	a) Involve stakeholders, including disabled service users, in the design of a fit for purpose referral mechanism. This will ensure that arrangements are transparent and understood by all. c) Supporting People will continue to monitor and review services and referrals to services; including diversity to ensure that vulnerable people with disabilities who need the services can access them.
		Yes - 1) Improved promotion of services and information about access will improve the application process	High	None	a) Ensure that service specifications set out the need for providers to widely promote services and access arrangements. c) Better information will make application for services easier. This will include information in different formats that can be easily accessed and understood by potential service users.
Gender	As above	Yes - 1) The proposed measures for improving access to services will ensure that the referral/application process does not exclude applicants because of restrictive practices (including those from minority strands)	High	None	a) Involve stakeholders, including disabled service users, in the design of a fit for purpose referral mechanism. This will ensure that arrangements are transparent and understood by all. c) Supporting People will continue to monitor and review services and referrals to services, including diversity to ensure that vulnerable women who need the services can access

Characteristic	Could this policy, procedure, project or service affect this group differently from others in Kent? YES/NO	Could this policy, procedure, project or service promote equal opportunities for this group? YES/NO	Assessment of potential impact HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW/ NONE/UNKNOWN		Provide details: a) Is internal action required? If yes, why? b) Is further assessment required? If yes, why? c) Explain how good practice can promote equal opportunities
			Positive	Negative	
					services commissioned to specifically support women such as refuges and accommodation based services for teenage parents. (At the same time Supporting People will also continue to monitor that floating support for people fleeing domestic abuse are open to both women and men.)
		Yes - 1) Improved promotion of services and information about access will improve the application process	High	None	a) Ensure that service specifications set out the need for providers to widely promote services and access arrangements. c) Better information will make application for services easier.
Gender identity	Not applicable	Not applicable			
Race	No - 1) The Quality Assessment Framework requires providers to meet equality & diversity in services, including fair access. Supporting People funding depends on continuous improvement in this area which is regularly reviewed through service reviews and contract monitoring.	Yes - 1) The proposed measures for improving access to services will ensure that the referral/ application process does not exclude applicants because of restrictive practices (including those from minority strands)	High	None	a) Involve stakeholders, including service users, in the design of a fit for purpose referral mechanism. This will ensure that arrangements are transparent and understood by all. .c) Supporting People will continue to monitor and review services and referrals to services, including diversity to ensure that vulnerable people including people who are vulnerable because of age and who need the services can access them.

Characteristic	Could this policy, procedure, project or service affect this group differently from others in Kent? YES/NO	Could this policy, procedure, project or service promote equal opportunities for this group? YES/NO	Assessment of potential impact HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW/ NONE/UNKNOWN		Provide details: a) Is internal action required? If yes, why? b) Is further assessment required? If yes, why? c) Explain how good practice can promote equal opportunities
			Positive	Negative	
	2) The proposed measures will improve the referral process by addressing the issues that may exclude vulnerable people from accessing services.				
		Yes - 1) Improved promotion of services and information about access will improve the application process	High	None	a) Ensure that service specifications set out the need for providers to widely promote services and access arrangements. c) Better information will make application for services easier. This would include providing information in other languages on request.
Religion or belief	Not applicable	Not applicable			
Sexual orientation	Not applicable	Not applicable			
Pregnancy and maternity	Not applicable	Not applicable			

Part 1: INITIAL SCREENING

Context

The Supporting People Programme commissions the non-statutory provision of housing related support in a range of services including short term accommodation based supported housing. The commissioning of Supporting People funded services is guided by the Supporting People Strategy 2010-2015. The strategy aims to work in partnership with stakeholders to deliver where possible needs led, value for money and high quality housing support services for vulnerable people.

The overarching objectives of the Supporting People Strategy 2010-15 are: -

- Delivering housing related support the primary objective of which is to promote “independent living”.
- Housing related support is to have clear preventative benefits, promote well being and meet identified need and link with partners’ objectives in delivering the Programme
- Focusing on the priority outcomes including the maximisation of independence and prevention
- Addressing the needs of socially excluded groups, particularly in areas of high deprivation, whose needs are not met by current support provision. Services will apply principles of equal opportunities and fair access. This will enhance diversity and social inclusion in local communities.

A full impact assessment on the Supporting People Strategy 2010-2015 was carried out in 2010 and was signed off by the directorate lead for equalities.

With regards to short term accommodation based services, the implementation measure agreed following extensive consultation was to strategically review access to such services.

Aims and Objectives

Access to supported housing is open to vulnerable people in need of housing/ housing related support. Housing related support is defined as support services which are provided to a person for the purpose of developing that person’s capacity to live independently in accommodation, or sustaining their capacity to do so provided that people:

- have specific and identifiable vulnerabilities that render them in need of welfare services, and that the support service is therefore allocated on the basis of defined selection/admission criteria that the service user is assessed against. (This means that services are not provided to the general public but to people who for some specific reason are in need of the support on offer.)
- are non–dependent over the age of 16 (and not care leavers who are eligible for a statutory service)

The Kent Eligibility Policy identifies services which are eligible for delivery and those which are excluded because they relate to a statutory responsibility or a non- housing related support function.

Services contracted to deliver housing related support also apply their own service criteria. These criteria determine who can access the service, e.g. what groups are excluded, what level of support needs the service can meet and so on.

The objectives of the strategic review were to:-

- Examine referral processes and procedures governing access to services and identify restrictive practices in relation to access to services
- Make recommendation to address identified issues in order to ensure that there is fair access and diversity to services and that they are available to the wider local communities who need them
- Determine whether there should be a centralised referral mechanism for these services

Summing up, the key findings of the strategic review were as follows:-

- Demand significantly exceeds supply.
- Many service users perceived a lack of information about supported housing available to them in the public domain
- Access and referral arrangements are complicated and are currently not monitored. There is duplication of referrals and a lack of transparency about referral processes. Some procedures can lengthen the referral process.
- Some practices exclude some of the most vulnerable people from accessing the services that they need and can lengthen the referral process, e.g. restricted referral routes, referral panels, need for references, need to attend drop in facilities as part of the referral process.
- Once accepted into a service, service users often spend considerable periods of time on waiting lists. During this time service users may lose contact with providers.

In order to improve access to Supporting People funded short term accommodation based services, the review resulted in the following recommendations:-

- Improve access to information about services for would be service users and referrers
- Improve timely move on to ensure that services do not silt up
- Streamline access arrangements through commissioning a centralised referral mechanism. This will ensure that access arrangements and referral processes (including referral outcomes) become more transparent and are shown to be fair. This will also ensure that resources are used to maximum effect.

The overall aim of the proposals is to ensure that services provide fair access.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of the Programme are vulnerable people in need of housing related support services in Kent as defined in the Kent Supporting People Eligibility Policy. They include:

- single homeless people with support needs and rough sleepers
- older people with support needs
- people with physical/sensory disabilities and people with learning disabilities
- people with mental health problems
- families with support needs and teenage parents
- young people at risk and care leavers
- offenders
- people at risk of domestic abuse
- people with alcohol and/or drug problems

Any provider commissioned by the Supporting People Programme to provide one or more of the proposed services is awarded a contract which is monitored through the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF). The QAF has clear and explicit standards to ensure that all Supporting People funded services are inclusive to all members of the community. With reference to assessment and allocation processes the minimum requirements (level C) are as follows:

- Documented and objective procedures that specify how enquiries and applications are processed, assessed and prioritised, and how decisions are communicated to applicants.
- Up-to-date and accurate description of the service that is actively promoted, detailing whom it is for and how it can be accessed.
- Eligibility criteria, means of prioritising applications and the application process are written in plain English and other formats appropriate to the client group.
- Communication needs of clients are catered for in helping them to understand the information.
- Unsuccessful applicants are informed of reasons for refusal

All contracts have clauses requiring providers to work within the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. Providers must all have an equal opportunities policy that complies with all statutory obligations as stipulated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission as far as possible.

Consultation and data

The recommendations for improvements in access to services are based on:

- Collection and analysis of referral data to all short term accommodation based supported housing July 2010 – June 2011.
- Collection and analysis of data on evictions from services
- Examination of information about exclusion policies in the different services
- Consultations with all providers of short term accommodation based supported housing and representatives of all Local Housing Departments and other key stakeholders

As part of the impact assessment, the Supporting People programme also engaged with service users themselves. Consultation with service users focused on the themes of:-

- Awareness of supported housing prior to applying to schemes.
- Service users' experience of referral and waiting times
- The barriers to accessing supported accommodation
- Service eligibility criteria and priority of service users
- Service users' views on preparation for move on and future accommodation preferences

A total of 237 service users were involved in consultations via one to one interviews, focus groups and questionnaires.

Potential Impact

The Supporting People Programme monitors and reviews the services it commissions to ensure that they are accessible to the vulnerable people who need them irrespective of race, religion, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Therefore, potential adverse impacts could only affect the protected characteristics of age, disability, race (only where this affects a floating support service specifically for BME groups) and gender (where services are focused on those fleeing domestic abuse and teenage parents).

The proposals will affect any client group equally and will not affect groups of people with the protected characteristics more than others.

Adverse Impact:

A review of the proposals has been considered and based on the information currently available no adverse impacts have been identified that may affect one group of people with the protected characteristics disproportionately more than others.

Contracts contain specific targets regarding Equality and Diversity, particularly monitoring arrangements around fair access, the measures proposed will

increase knowledge and ensure that the specific needs of minority groups are constantly reviewed.

Positive Impact:

The proposals for streamlining access arrangements will benefit all client groups: they will have equal opportunity to gain access to services. Services will still apply agreed service criteria but decisions on access will become more transparent and the length of the referral process in some services is likely to be shortened which will benefit applicants.

Services will continue, as they are at present, to be open to all vulnerable people who have a housing related support need. Supporting People continues to monitor and review services through the Quality Assessment Framework and contractual obligations which oblige providers to ensure that services are accessible to all who need them and do not discriminate against minorities such as people from Ethnic Minorities or lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) people.

JUDGEMENT

Option 1 – Screening Sufficient **NO**

Following this initial screening our judgement is that further action is required.

Option 2 – Internal Action Required **YES**

Justification:

Following this initial screening our judgement is that whilst no adverse impacts have been identified that may affect one group of people with the protected characteristics disproportionately more than others there is room for further improvement there is scope for further action to accompany the recommendations:

- Involve key stakeholders including providers and service users in co-designing a fit for purpose referral mechanism.
- Improved information about supported housing services accessible to service users

An action plan is attached.

Option 3 – Full Impact Assessment **NO**

Sign Off

I have noted the content of the equality impact assessment and agree the actions to mitigate the adverse impact(s) that have been identified.

Senior Officer

Signed:

*Claire
Martin*

Date: 2 September 2011

Name: Claire Martin

Job Title: Head of Supporting People

Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Protected Characteristic	Issues identified	Action to be taken	Expected outcomes	Owner	Timescale	Cost implications
Age	Need to streamline access arrangements in order to make them more transparent and ensure that resources are used to maximum effect	<u>Add to recommendations:</u> Work with representatives from key stakeholders to co-design a fit for purpose referral mechanism	A transparent referral system which ensures fair access to services	Supporting People (Lead) Housing FSC Health Probation Providers Service Users	October 2011 to March 2012	None
	Need to improve information available to service users about supported housing	Review contract documentation to ensure that providers are required to publicise services widely.	Improved publicising/promotion of supported housing which is written in plain English	Supporting People Providers	March 2012	None
Disability	Need to streamline access arrangements in order to make them more transparent and ensure that resources are used to maximum effect	<u>Add to recommendations:</u> Work with representatives from key stakeholders to co-design a fit for purpose referral mechanism	A transparent referral system which ensures fair access to services	Supporting People (Lead) Housing FSC Health Probation Providers Service Users	October 2011 to March 2012	None
	Need to improve information available to service users about supported housing	Review contract documentation to ensure that providers are required to	Improved publicising/promotion of supported housing which is provided in a range of	Supporting People Providers	March 2012	None

Protected Characteristic	Issues identified	Action to be taken	Expected outcomes	Owner	Timescale	Cost implications
		publicise services widely.	alternative formats, including plain English, easy read, Braille and talking newspapers.			
Gender identity	N/A					
Race	Need to streamline access arrangements in order to make them more transparent and ensure that resources are used to maximum effect	<u>Add to recommendations:</u> Work with representatives from key stakeholders to co-design a fit for purpose referral mechanism	A transparent referral system which ensures fair access to services	Supporting People (Lead) Housing FSC Health Probation Providers Service Users	October 2011 to March 2012	None
	Need to improve information available to service users about supported housing	Review contract documentation to ensure that providers are required to publicise services widely.	Improved publicising/promotion of supported housing which includes the provision of information in other languages on request.	Supporting People Providers	March 2012	None
Religion or Belief	N/A					
Sexual orientation	N/A					
Pregnancy or maternity	N/A					