

		DBC Equality Impact Assessment Form		

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Directorate: Legal, Democratic and Regulatory

Service: Regulatory Services

Policy / function / activity being reviewed:

Date completed and by whom:

Review date:

Step 1 – Identifying the Purpose / Aims

1. What type of policy, service, activity or function is this?

Changing/ updated

2. What is the aim and purpose of the policy, activity, service or function?

This strategy explains Dacorum Council's approach to bringing empty homes back into use and is an important element of the Council's overarching Housing Strategy. It contains details of the range of powers available to us to achieve this work and how we will use these powers.

The aim of this strategy is not to deal with those empty properties where there is a clear intention that the home will become occupied within a reasonably short time, but on those which remain empty for longer than 2 years and where the owner has either no plans to bring the property back into use, or where there will be a long delay before they are reoccupied.

3. Outline any proposals being considered.

We would hope to encourage the owners of empty homes to bring them back

into use voluntarily. Our approach is focused initially on engaging with the owners offering support, advice and, where appropriate, offering grants, or the opportunity to make use of leasing schemes. However, where an owner is unwilling to bring the home back into use and, it is either causing a specific problem within the neighbourhood, or would meet a particular housing need, we will consider the use of the enforcement powers available to us.

4. Who is the policy, activity, service or function intended to help / benefit / serve?

The strategy intends to assist owners of private sector houses that are being left empty and enable these to be bought back into use. The strategy also details potential enforcement action that can be taken against the owners of premises who are not willing to reoccupy their property, and are in such poor condition that they are detrimental to the local neighbourhood, therefore taking this action will benefit residents in affected neighbourhoods.

5. Does the policy, activity, service or function have any specific aims or objectives in relation to equality, social inclusion or community cohesion?

The Council will both help and influence private sector housing with the aim of improving living conditions for residents by improving and maintaining the quality of the residential stock. The resources will be targeted at those premises in the worst condition. Enabling these properties to be used could remove the risk of crime and anti-social behaviour as well as potentially increasing the amount of affordable housing.

In addition, key workers, young people leaving home and single people have particular difficulty accessing suitable, affordable housing in Dacorum. Bringing more long-term empty homes back into use would be a sustainable way of meeting housing demand and by alleviating pressure on the housing market could benefit these particular groups.

Currently, some vulnerable groups can be negatively affected if they own empty properties. Empty homes cost their owners money in maintenance, insurance, council tax and loss of rental income. In some cases, vulnerable owners may be aware they need to renovate a property but are unable to afford the cost of renovation, so end up paying simply to leave the property empty. The strategy should provide support to this group.

Finally, children can be at risk of accidents if they use poorly maintained empty homes as play places. Ensuring properties are maintained to an adequate standard should reduce the risk to this group.

Step 2 – Considering existing information and what this tells you

6. Summarise any data / research or performance management information about the policy, function or activity that is available.

This could include equalities monitoring information; surveys; complaints or grievances.

Data / Information
Dacorum is experiencing a growth in the number of empty properties and this is currently estimate to be in the order of 550- 600 premises

7. Is there any evidence of negative differential impact on any of the Nine Protected Characteristics or any other cluster group? (Some equality categories may be more relevant than others)

Race or Ethnicity
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.
Sex (Gender)
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.
Gender Reassignment and Transgender
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.
Sexual Orientation
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.
Age
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.
Disability
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.
Religion or belief/ faith communities
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.
Marriage and Civil Partnerships
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.

Pregnancy and Maternity

There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy

Socio Economic Duties (Socially excluded communities or groups)

There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.

Step 3 – Assessing the Impact

8. Is there any evidence of higher or lower take-up of the service, facility or opportunity by any group /community and if so, is there an explanation for this?

This authority currently does not monitor any information regarding empty properties. As this strategy evolves the impact where possible will be reviewed.

9. Could any of the associated rules, requirements or regulations of the function, activity or policy affect the accessibility of the service/ activity to any groups or communities?

The requirements are in accordance with the legal requirements and guidance. It is not anticipated that the strategy will be inaccessible to any of the equalities groups.

10. If the impact or effects are adverse for any community or group, can they be defended i.e. in order to provide equality for another community under legislation or policy?

Yes Please give details below.

There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy is designed to have a positive effect on communities.

Step 4 – Dealing with adverse or unlawful impact

11. What can be done to improve the policy, service, function or any proposals in order to reduce or remove any adverse impact or effects identified?

N/A

12. What would be needed to be able to do this? Are the resources available?

N/A

Step 5 – Consultation and Feedback

13. Outline your proposals to consult with those affected on proposed changes.

We will make the policy widely available on the website. We have included a 'Have your say' section to enable comments and feedback.

Step 6 – The decision

14. What needs to be done?

Step 7 – Monitoring, review and evaluation

15. What monitoring and review mechanisms are in place or will be developed?

We will consider the suitability of carrying out customer satisfaction surveys for both the owners of empty premises, and also those in affected neighbourhoods. The policy will be reviewed initially after 12 months and then annually to ensure it is fit for purpose. The take up of any financial assistance via our Housing Assistance Policy will be monitored for certain equality characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity) and reviewed at regular intervals to ensure there are no access issues.

Step 8 – The service plan

16. What needs to be included in the Service Development Plan?

N/A

17. Does an Action Plan need to be put together to ensure everything is actioned?

N/A

Step 9 – Publishing the Results

The EqlA will be published on the Council's website; therefore as the author of the document it is your responsibility to ensure that it is written in an understandable way, free from Council jargon.

In order for the EqlA form to be published it must be reviewed and signed off by the relevant Group Manager. It is the service manager's responsibility to ensure that this is done.

Once the form this has been completed an electronic copy should be sent to Elissa Rospigliosi - Strategic Development & Transformation Officer, ext. 2541.