

INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS (EqIAA)

Housing Floating Support Service Consultation

Please Note:-

This document describes an initial assessment of equalities impacts in relation to the proposals for the Housing Floating Support Service.

The council has a statutory duty to consider the impact of its actions in relation to the following protected characteristic groups:-

Age
Disability
Gender Reassignment
Marriage and Civil Partnership
Pregnancy and Maternity
Race
Religion or Belief
Sex
Sexual Orientation

Therefore, the council wishes to hear and proactively consider any comments in relation to how any aspect of the issues presented may impact on any sections of the community as listed above. Any feedback in relation to equalities and any point raised within this document will feed into and inform a full Equality Impact Assessment and Analysis.

You can find out more and tell us your views by completing our survey online at <https://consultations.southglos.gov.uk/consult.ti/FS20> or sending your comments to:

Email: consultation@southglos.gov.uk

Write to: Freepost SGC, South Gloucestershire Council, Council Offices, Badminton Road, Yate, BRISTOL, BS37 5AF

Phone: 01454 868154

Copies of the consultation are available from your local library or one stop shop.

The consultation on these proposals starts on Monday 20 July 2020 until Sunday 11 October 2020.

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

South Gloucestershire Council commissions a number of services that provide support for people to manage their housing and live independently. The floating support service is currently delivered by an external provider and this contract is due to end on 31st March 2021.

In June 2020 the Children's Adults and Health cabinet members agreed for options to go forward to full cabinet on how the Floating Support Service is delivered.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places homelessness prevention and relief at the core of the statutory framework and promotes that services work together effectively to address homelessness.

The Homelessness Act 2002 sets out a requirement for all authorities to produce a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy to prevent and tackle homelessness. A link to the current Strategy is [here](#). Amongst its priorities is having the right support in place for those who are at risk of, or who are, homeless.

The Floating Support Service (FSS) supports this priority. It is a preventative service which can reduce demand for, and the costs of, housing, homelessness, health and care services. The over-riding successful outcome sought from FSS is to sustain independent living and build resilience.

Floating support is aimed at those households who have a housing problem and need some short term help to resolve this so they can stay, or help to find somewhere else if staying isn't an option and to avoid becoming homeless. If a household is homeless already, the service can help them to find somewhere else to live and provide resettlement support.

The option being considered to make best use of the resources is to bring the FSS service in-house, directly aligning it with housing advice and homelessness prevention and relief services.

The aim is that by bringing the service in-house there will be better continuity of service, support plans will link directly with personal housing plans reducing duplication, and making it clearer for customers. It will improve response to reports of rough sleepers and assistance to other single homeless people – additional resources in HomeChoice means an immediate response to any reports of rough sleeping and intensive support can be put in place straight away.

There will be one recording system so housing staff have live information and knowledge of their customers without needing to gather updates from an external service provider, and with no need for information sharing. This will benefit registered landlords too in considering pre tenancy preparation.

Ultimately, it is anticipated that this approach will result in an increase in service efficiency and effectiveness as well as offering cost effectiveness.

SECTION 2 - RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION

PLEASE NOTE: THIS SECTION WILL BE UPDATED POST CONSULTATION

A key piece of research into equalities issues as related to homelessness is found in the latest Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Report '*Is Britain Fairer?*' published 2019 and available through this [link](#). It sets out the national picture of housing need and homelessness as it relates to protected characteristics.

Key findings include:

- homelessness disproportionately affects ethnic minorities, lone parents (primarily female led households), young care leavers, young offenders, LGBT young people, transgender people, people with mental health conditions, women at risk of domestic abuse, ex-services personnel, and those living in material deprivation including those with disabilities who are more likely to be in receipt of welfare benefits. It also found that living in material deprivation generally increases the risk of homelessness and sets out how many groups identified are more likely to be affected by poverty.
- Lone parent households headed by women made up 47% of duties accepted in 2014/15 unlikely to have changed much – and a further 10% of duties were single women so women whether with dependent children or not are disproportionately affected by homelessness. (ibid page 71)
- Ethnic minorities are more at risk of becoming homeless, with Gypsy, Roma and Travellers face multiple disadvantages across different areas of life.
- In addition, the report identified that, as well as frustration with a lack of accessible housing, disabled people are more likely to live in poverty, particularly those who can't work, and also do not get the support that they need to live independently as the provision of advice, support and advocacy is patchy and people report that they have nowhere to turn when their housing is unsuitable. (ibid page 74)

When laid against this, an analysis of those currently in receipt of housing related support in South Gloucestershire identifies that, while there was a lot of synergy with the Report, there are sufficient deviations from the national picture that going forward should be addressed. These include:

- the majority of those receiving support are single men at 54% with women 46% of whom only 8% were identified as pregnant or with dependent children;
- relating to ethnicity, 81% were white, 6% identified as from a BAME group, and a high level of not declared at 14%;
- those with a declared disability or health issue comprised 33% of those receiving a service, of whom half identified mental health;
- while 61% declared themselves to be heterosexual, there was a high level of non-disclosure of 37% and no-one who declared themselves LGBTQ+;
- the largest age group receiving support is those aged between 31-49 at 49% with younger people at 26%, those aged 50-64 at 18% and those over 65 at 6%.

SECTION 3 - IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF EQUALITIES ISSUES AND IMPACTS

PLEASE NOTE: THIS SECTION WILL BE UPDATED POST CONSULTATION

Taken altogether, the information shown in Section 2 of this EqIAA demonstrates that there is work to be done to ensure that those groups who are represented as most at risk of homelessness, and therefore assumed to be in the highest need of housing related support, are those who are enabled to access and receive the service. Aligned to this, the level of non-disclosure, or possible non-capture, of data in some areas will also need to be addressed.

The service is available to all residents with housing support needs living in any type of independent accommodation in the South Gloucestershire area. Bringing the service in house so it is delivered by the Council will not change what the service does or who can use the service.

Key support currently provided by the service includes:-

- Support with financial management and to be able to pay for housing costs, including addressing any debts or arrears.
- Support to be a responsible tenant, particularly for those who have previously lost accommodation or who have never managed their own home.
- Support to connect and engage with other professionals and services.
- Support to find a new property, for example researching a new area on-line, presenting oneself appropriately to a prospective landlord, and having the financial and other resources in place to cover the costs of moving and to help set up in the new home.

It is proposed that the service in future would offer support around the same areas, and where directly linked to a Personal Housing Plan (PHP), would include wider housing related issues including addressing material deprivation through training and employment and connection with the wider care and support network to ensure ongoing stability.

Our data tells us that the majority of those seeking housing and homelessness advice and assistance are:

- women with dependent children
- young people
- disabled people
- BAME groups

all of whom who are disproportionately affected by homelessness (as evidenced by the EHRC's national data as well as our own local data). People who are LGBT+ can also be vulnerable to homelessness through exclusion by family or discrimination in the private market. The service will provide a direct link to support someone in these circumstances to access settled housing.

By connecting support directly to the housing assessment, the customer will be able to address their PHP more effectively.

Key issues in working with customers in regard to FFS is to ensure that services are tailored to needs such that take-up of service and achievement of positive outcomes is positively impacted for all 'Protected Characteristic groups'. The actions outline in Section 5 of this EqIAA are intended to ensure that systems are in place to ensure this from the outset should the FSS service be brought in-house.

SECTION 4 - EqIAA OUTCOME

PLEASE NOTE: THIS SECTION WILL BE COMPLETED POST CONSULTATION

Outcome	Response	Reason(s) and Justification
Outcome 1: No major change required.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Outcome 2: Adjustments to remove barriers or to better promote equality have been identified.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Outcome 3: Continue despite having identified potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Outcome 4: Stop and rethink.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

SECTION 5 - ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN AS A RESULT OF THIS EqIAA

PLEASE NOTE: THIS SECTION WILL BE UPDATED POST CONSULTATION

Recording and analysis of applications and those receiving a service is to be improved in-line with best practice and the council's corporate internal guidance will be used to ensure this. This includes continuous analysis and consideration of service take-up and achievement of positive outcomes to ensure that there is no inadvertent exclusion or failure to receive a service by those most at risk of homelessness according to Protected Characteristics, national reports and local data.

This will include ensuring that the service is promoted through relevant partner agencies and services who are well placed to connect customers with support as necessary.

SECTION 6 - EVIDENCE INFORMING THIS EqIAA

1. Equalities and Human Rights Commission report '*Is Britain Fairer? The state of equality and human rights 2018*' published 2019
2. Local data of current service users