

Bristol City Council Equality Impact Relevance Check



This tool will identify the equalities relevance of a proposal, and establish whether a full Equality Impact Assessment will be required. Please read the guidance prior to completing this relevance check.

CF2		What is the proposal?	
Name of proposal	Recommissioning homelessness support services for adults and families		
Please outline the proposal.	We will commission our accommodation based homelessness services to better align supply with demand and make savings from the current spend.		
What savings will this proposal achieve?	£500,000 – £1,000,000 (around 10% - 20% of current expenditure)		
Name of Lead Officer	Tom Rhodes		

Could your proposal impact citizens with protected characteristics?

(This includes service users and the wider community)

Please outline where there may be significant opportunities or positive impacts, and for whom.

The council funds over 1,000 units of supported accommodation for families, single people and couples who have been homeless to help them recover and move towards settled accommodation. These services are mostly provided by partner agencies rather than by the council directly and the contracts to provide the service are nearing the end of their respective terms. In November we will consult on a draft commissioning plan that details our intentions for these services.

The draft commissioning plan includes different recommendations to make savings at the lower end (around £500,000 or 10% of current expenditure). Because the plan involves making savings from homelessness services at a time of rising demand there are more risks than opportunities for positive impacts, but the following recommendations are intended to improve the services:

Create 50 additional units of family accommodation

The recommendation will make more accommodation available for families with dependent children who become homeless. This accommodation will be a good standard, will be in the Bristol area, will be closely monitored and provided by a trusted partner. Currently there are some families who are temporarily placed outside of Bristol and in accommodation with shared facilities because of the lack of suitable accommodation locally.

12% of current families in homelessness services have someone disabled in them, with

58% of those having 'mental and emotional distress'. Poor housing is closely linked with mental ill health so this proposal will improve the situation for disabled families.

Around 55% of families in homelessness services are BME so any improvement to family provision will have a positive impact on BME families. 31% identify as Muslim.

Commission services for single people and couples in distinct pathways

This proposal involves remodelling services to create closer partnership working between different services providing accommodation to homeless people. This will reduce the number of times someone is assessed and ensure that they are referred to the service in the pathway that is best suited to meet their needs. The services will have a particular focus on working with people with complex needs, including people with disabilities.

There will be a specific women only pathway.

Fund an expanded Assertive Contact and Engagement (ACE) service to specifically work in supported accommodation

29% of current residents of homelessness services are disabled, with 35% of those having 'mental/emotional distress'. 23% of current residents have mental health support needs that are not currently being met. This proposal will improve the link between homelessness services and mental health services and will improve the experience for those disabled people in homelessness accommodation.

Operate a small (10 units) Housing First not a pilot

Housing First is an approach to working with people with complex needs, including some disabled people. It involves ensuring that someone is securely housed before working on any other of their complex needs. There is a strong evidence base demonstrating how the approach achieves good outcomes for disabled people. This recommendation will therefore improve the options and outcomes for disabled people in the homelessness pathway.

Please outline where there may be significant negative impacts, and for whom.

The commissioning plan assumes savings of 10% or around £500,000. It does not include a reduction in the total number of accommodation units available for homeless people, but if the higher level of savings (around £1 million, or 20%) need to be achieved, this will not be possible without reducing the current number of units. A reduction in units at a time of increasing demand will increase rough sleeping. Rough sleepers are more likely than the general population to be male (85% compared to 50% in the general Bristol population) and 'white other' (25% compared to 5%), so these

groups will be particularly affected.

If there is a need to reduce the number of units, this will mean that it is more difficult for homeless people to find accommodation and lead to worse outcomes for homeless people. This will have a disproportionate impact on disabled people, BME people and Muslims, all of whom are over-represented amongst homeless people when compared with the overall Bristol population.

At the lower saving limit (10% or around £500,000), there are some recommendations in the plan that may have negative impacts on particular groups of people:

Commission services for single people and couples in distinct pathways

The proposal to remodel services mentioned above does have some potential risks as well as benefits, notably around the restriction of choice for service users. Initial placements will be made based on availability of accommodation into an assessment centre, and that person will be referred to the appropriate place in the pathway. Where someone has specific needs (for example the 14% of people with a physical impairment), these will be accommodated, but there will be limited ability to choose the area or type of accommodation.

Standardise the support cost per unit

In order to make the 10% reduction, the plan recommends an overall reduction in the support costs per unit of supported accommodation to bring the most expensive in line with less expensive provision. This does not mean applying a standard cost, but ensuring that any differences in the unit cost can be justified. At present, women only accommodation has a much higher unit cost than any of the other provision, and this cannot be justified by either the service outputs or the outcomes achieved for homeless women.

However, this does mean an overall reduction in spending and there is a risk that the currently more expensive services could get worse. Any deterioration in homelessness services will have a disproportionate impact on disabled people, BME people and Muslims, all of whom are over-represented amongst homeless people when compared with the overall Bristol population.

Could your proposal impact staff with protected characteristics?

(i.e. reduction in posts, changes to working hours or locations, changes in pay)

Please outline where there may be significant opportunities or positive impacts, and for whom.

There are no BCC staff members affected by any of the proposals in the commissioning plan.

Please outline where there may be negative impacts, and for whom.

There are no BCC staff members affected by any of the proposals in the commissioning plan.

Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required?

Does the proposal have the potential to impact on people with protected characteristics in the following ways:

- access to or participation in a service,
- levels of representation in our workforce, or
- reducing quality of life (i.e. health, education, standard of living) ?

Please indicate yes or no. If the answer is yes then a full impact assessment must be carried out. If the answer is no, please provide a justification.

Yes, a full EqIA will be carried out.

Service Director sign-off and date:

Equalities Officer sign-off and date:
Cherene Whitfield 17th October 2016