

Equality Impact Assessment Form

The aim of an equality impact assessment (EqIA) is to consider the equality implications of your policy, practice, function or service on different groups of staff, customers, and residents and consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality. Where further guidance is needed, please contact Stephen.Kane@colchester.gov.uk

1. Project Details (Policy, Practice, Function or Service)	
Name of the policy, practice, service or function being assessed.	The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031
What is the main purpose?	The strategy sets out how the Council and its partner organisations will prevent, reduce and respond to homelessness in a planned and coordinated way.
What main areas or activities does it cover?	• Prevention & early intervention. • Tenancy/accommodation sustainment. • Strengthened partnership working. • Enabling access to suitable and stable homes. • Reducing the use of temporary accommodation.
Are there changes to an existing policy being considered? If so, what are they?	The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy must be reviewed every five years (with the last strategy running from 2020-2025). Following a review of homelessness in the city, the new strategy has a greater focus on both prevention and reducing the use of temporary accommodation than the previous strategy.. It also aims to take a more compassionate and person-centred approach to supporting those affected by homelessness.
Who are the main audience, users or customers who will be affected by the project?	• People that are homeless or threatened by homelessness. • Partner organisations who provide support to the above cohort.
What outcomes do you want to achieve?	Overall, the Council wishes to work together with our Partner organisations to reduce and prevent homelessness in Colchester.
Are other service areas or partner agencies involved in delivery? If so, please provide details.	Voluntary sector partners that are working with people that are experiencing homelessness, Colchester Borough Homes, CCC Housing Strategy Team, Essex County Council, Probation & Health Services.
Are you aware of any relevant information, data, surveys or consultations ¹ which help us to assess the likely or actual	• Evidence Base – provides information and data to inform the key issues and challenges for Colchester over the coming years. It draws on a range of data and

¹ Click on [Customer Insight](#) for more information. The Council's surveys and consultations include 'equality monitoring information' to help us identify any concerns or views expressed by any particular group or 'protected characteristic'. It can also help us to assess how representative of our customers the respondent group is. Local data on the 'protected characteristics' is available online by searching for Census 2021.

impact of the policy upon customers or staff? If so, provide details and include a link to the document or source where available.	information, taken from national and local sources and anticipates future trends in housing and homelessness so that the Council can incorporate into our strategies a set of responses to address those needs. It was reviewed and updated in advance of the strategy review. • Consultation Event - key stakeholders including partner organisations that work directly with people that are homeless attended as part of the review of homelessness in Colchester. • Online Survey - open to all residents, the survey requested their input on the proposed Aims for the new Strategy. • In Person Service User Consultation – the Council and its partners engaged with people of different demographics who had lived experience of homelessness to understand their experiences and needs. All feedback from the consultation activities are appendices to the strategy document.
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2. Public Sector Equality Duty	
The ‘general duty’ states that we must have “due regard” to the need to: (a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation (b) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a ‘protected characteristic’² and those who do not³ (c) foster good relations between people who share a ‘protected characteristic’ and those who do not	
Not all projects help us to meet the ‘general duty’, but most do. Please evidence below.	
The policy helps us to ‘eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation’ in the following way(s)	• Identifying the housing and support needs of vulnerable groups and helping them to access accommodation and support services that can provide information and advice. • Ensuring fair access, consistent decision-making, and reasonable adjustments for protected groups. • Setting clear standards, training, and accountability so services, identify and challenge discriminatory practice and respond appropriately to harassment or abuse
The policy helps us to ‘advance equality of opportunity...’ in the	• Building equality duties into service design and delivery.

² The Equality Act’s ‘protected characteristics’ include age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sex and sexual orientation. It also covers marriage and civil partnerships, but not for all aspects of the duty.

³ This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to: (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a ‘protected characteristic’ that are connected to that characteristic; (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant ‘protected characteristic’ that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it, and (c) encourage persons who share a relevant ‘protected characteristic’ to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

following way(s)	• Recognising the needs of vulnerable groups and providing equal opportunity to access support and accommodation to those people that are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
The policy helps us to 'foster good relations...' in the following way(s) ⁴	• Promoting understanding and cooperation between different communities, service users and providers through inclusive engagement, partnership working, and fair access to support. • Tackling stigma, improving communication and ensuring services are respectful and responsive to diverse needs.

3. Health Inequalities

The Council has an important role in improving residents' health under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. This relates to both its 'core functions' (such as housing, leisure, green spaces and environmental health) and to its 'enabling roles' (such as economic development, planning and engaging with communities). The Council recognises that its Public Sector Equality Duty and its role in improving health are interrelated and mutually supportive. This is especially true across the 'protected characteristics' of age and disability.

"Health inequalities are the unjust and avoidable differences in people's health across the population. They come from the unequal distribution of income, wealth and power and influence the wider determinants of health such as work, education, social support and housing. Currently, in England people living in the least deprived areas will live around 20 years longer in good health than those in the most deprived areas. Reducing health inequalities means giving everyone the same opportunities to lead a healthy life, no matter where they live or who they are."

Where applicable, explain how this policy helps us to improve health/reduce health inequalities for residents

The strategy recognises that people who experience homelessness are likely to have greater health needs than those that don't which impacts on their life expectancy. These needs may often be unmet. Therefore, the strategy has identified key actions to improve access to health services for people that are homeless to reduce health inequalities. These are available to view in the Action Plan.

⁴ This involves having due regard to the need to (a) tackle prejudice, and (b) promote understanding.

4. This section helps us to identify any disproportionate equality impacts. Please indicate in the table below whether the policy is likely to particularly benefit or disadvantage any of the protected characteristics.

		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
Age	Older people (60+)	Yes	People over 60 who are homeless would have priority for sheltered (supported) accommodation.	No	None identified.
	Younger people (17-25) and children (0-16)	Yes	Providing education and advice to young people on the realities of becoming homeless. Providing mediation to prevent homelessness. Providing support and access to accommodation for those experiencing homelessness.	No	None identified.
Disability	Physical	Yes	Working in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations in Colchester to provide support and accommodation for people with disabilities that are experiencing homelessness.	No	None identified.
	Sensory	Yes	Working in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations in Colchester to provide support and accommodation for people with disabilities that are experiencing homelessness.	No	None identified.
	Learning	Yes	Working in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations in Colchester to provide support and	No	None identified.

			accommodation for people with disabilities that are experiencing homelessness.		
	Mental health issues	Yes	Working in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations in Colchester to provide support and accommodation for people with disabilities that are experiencing homelessness.		None identified.
	Other – <i>specify</i>				
Ethnicity	White		None identified.		None identified.
	Black		None identified.		None identified.
	Chinese		None identified.		None identified.
	Mixed Ethnic Origin		None identified.		None identified.
	Gypsies/ Travellers		None identified.		None identified.
	Other – <i>specify</i>			Yes	Cultural mistrust of services
Language	English not first language			Yes	This group may be disadvantaged if they struggle to understand information or access services, reducing their ability to seek help or engage fully with support.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Women who are pregnant or have given birth in last 26 weeks	Yes	Priority for housing given to this group if they are experiencing homelessness.		None identified.
Religion or Belief	People with a religious belief (or none)		None identified.		
Sex	Men		None identified.		None identified.
	Women		Gender-specific risks (e.g. violence against women).	Yes	Gender-specific risks (e.g. violence against women).
Gender Reassignment	Transgender/ Transsexual		None identified.		None identified.
Sexual Orientation	Bisexual, Heterosexual, Gay or Lesbian		None identified.	Yes	LGBTQ+ safety concerns in accommodation

Marriage and Civil Partnership	People who are married or in a civil partnership		None identified.		None identified.
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5. If you have identified any negative impacts above, how can they be minimised or removed?

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead and Timeframe
English not first language (This group may be disadvantaged if they struggle to understand information or access services, reducing their ability to seek help or engage fully with support)	CBH provides free, accessible language assistance for tenants and residents. As part of its statutory reasonable adjustments, the housing provider facilitates telephone and face-to-face interpreting, as well as document translations. Commitment to accessible, clear information and improved signposting via the Frontline website. Strategy emphasis on accessible, responsive and inclusive services through the Customer Strategy. Work with RAMA and Essex Integration to improve access for migrants and refugees.	Various (CBH, CCC, RAMA). Ongoing.
Cultural mistrust of services	Commitment to co-production with people with lived experience to build trust and shape services. Expansion of multi-agency, community and voluntary sector partnerships, including faith/community organisations. A person-centred, trauma-informed approach highlighted through consultation findings and strategy aims	CCC, CBH. Ongoing.
Gender-specific risks (e.g. violence against women)	Specific actions to strengthen the housing response to domestic abuse, including Sanctuary Scheme and specialist support workers. Commitment to DAHA accreditation and embedding a domestic abuse champion	CCC, CBH. Ongoing.

	network. Recognition of domestic abuse as a key driver of homelessness in local data	
LGBTQ+ safety concerns in accommodation	Commitment to person-centred, trauma-informed and individualised support. Focus on improving quality and suitability of temporary accommodation. Emphasis on partnership working and tailored pathways for higher-risk groups	CCC, CBH. Ongoing.

6. Where there is a negative impact which has not been minimised or removed

If you have identified negative impact(s) on the 'protected characteristics' that have not been minimised or removed, is this considered to be 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'? If yes, state how

If a negative impact cannot be minimised or removed and cannot be objectively justified as being 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim', the policy should not be implemented as it could unlawfully discriminate.

7. Where there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement

If you identified that there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on whether there are any negative impacts on the 'protected characteristics', please outline below planned engagement and summary of findings from this.

7. Monitoring and Review

How will you monitor the impact of your project once it has been put into effect?

The Strategy will achieve its aims and objectives through the implementation of a 5-year Action Plan that will tackle homelessness in the city, by working closely with partner organisations and focusing on

	early interventions that prevent homelessness. The Action Plan is reviewed annually by the Project Group (which consists of the Council, CBH, ECC and all relevant Partner organisations) and a full report and update is published on the website.
Could this discriminate against any protected characteristic, either directly or indirectly?	No.
Completed by: Victoria Hanley	
Review Date: ⁵ May 2031	

Once this has been completed, please share with Stephen Kane, and decide whether it should be published on our website.

⁵ This is normally three years, but not always: You may know that the policy itself will be reviewed earlier in which case the EqIA should be reviewed at that time. Or, in the case of a five-year strategy, you may want to have a review date of five years. In the case of a “one off” decision, such as closing a service, a review date may not be needed - in which case you should indicate ‘N/A’. In any event, the review date should be brought forward if you receive information or feedback which raises new concerns, or if the public policy context changes.