

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL - IMPACT ASSESSMENT Empty Homes Strategy 2010 to 2014

WHY DO I NEED TO DO AN ASSESSMENT?

This Impact Assessment isn't designed to 'catch you out'. It is designed to help you think about and improve the way you deliver your services by ensuring that they are as inclusive as possible.

It will help you to test the impact on people when reviewing or developing new policies, strategies and functions to find out if there is any adverse impact or illegal discrimination or any unmet need or requirements.

Legislation imposes duties on local authorities to promote equality and tackle discrimination related to Age, Disability, Gender (includes marital status, gender reassignment), Race (colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality) Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, However, we have also included discretionary but important additional categories relevant to our District in this assessment process: People Living in Rural Areas, People living in Urban Areas, People on Low Incomes and People for whom English is not their first Language.

To comply with legislation the Council is required to publish its Impact Assessments and these will be made available on our website.

WHAT HAS TO BE IMPACT ASSESSED?

You need to do an Assessment when reviewing, making changes to or developing new and existing policies, strategies and functions that are relevant to equality. This can be determined as follows:

RELEVANT – Impact Assessment must be done

- The policy, strategy or function will impact on people (residents, staff or people living, visiting or working in Braintree District)
- The policy, strategy or function may benefit some people or communities and not others

NOT RELEVANT – Impact Assessment not needed

- No intended impact on people
- The policy, strategy or function is administrative only

HOW DO I DO THIS ASSESSMENT?

By answering the questions in the following Assessment template you will be able to consider any possible positive or negative impacts that a new or existing policy, strategy or function may have on defined groups, using data as evidence, and take action accordingly.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT – INITIAL SCREENING

Name of Policy, Strategy or Function being assessed	Empty Homes Strategy 2010 - 2014
Is this a new or existing Policy, Strategy or Function?	New policy
Person responsible for the assessment	Alison Weaver and Tim Lucas
Service Area	Housing Research and Development
Head of Service	Joanne Albini
Date	July 2010

1. What is the main purpose of the Policy, Strategy or Function?

The purpose of the Empty Homes Strategy is to detail how the council will look to make better use of the housing stock and reduce the number of empty properties across the district under the following aims:

- Reduce the number of long term empty properties in the district;
- Provide a range of incentives to owners to help bring empty homes back into use;
- Provide schemes that make empty homes available to people in housing need; and
- Consider whether enforcement action is appropriate and value for money

2. Who else will be involved in the delivery of this Strategy, Policy or Function?

If so, state who they are. They will need to be involved in producing this Impact Assessment

The following BDC teams will be involved in the delivery of the strategy in addition to the Housing Service:

- Environment
- Planning
- Council tax

3. Who are you delivering your service to/who will be affected by the Strategy, Policy or Function?

- Owners of empty properties
- Private landlords
- BDC staff members in Housing, Environment, Planning and Council Tax
- Parish Councils and district councillors

A. C. Weaver
July 2010

4. To ensure that you have all available information that could help you to undertake this Impact Assessment complete the following table to evidence which of the following sources of information you are using, or intend to use, to assess the impact of the Policy, Strategy or Function on people within the following equality groups: Disability, Race (colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality) Religion or Belief, Sex (marital status, gender reassignment), Sexual orientation, Age, People living in rural areas, People living in urban areas, People on low incomes, People for whom English is not their first language. **The sources listed are for guidance so please add/substitute your own categories as appropriate.**

Source	Reference (date/ relevant publication, etc)
Performance Indicators/Targets	We monitor performance of bringing empty properties back into use by using BVPI 64. The number of empty homes returned to use 2009/2010 was 88 and for 2008/2009 were 125.
User Satisfaction Surveys	n/a
Consultation results (new and existing)	<p>The Draft Empty Homes Strategy was consulted upon during summer 2010. Comments were sought from the following stakeholder groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Owners of empty properties ➤ Councillors ➤ Parish Councils ➤ Local Committees of the three main towns ➤ BDC Planning, Environment and Council Tax staff
Staff monitoring data	n/a
Complaints information	Some issues were raised about the strategy from stakeholders during the consultation period and have been considered and responded to. Some comments have prompted amendments and changes to be made to the final strategy.
Demographic profiles (census, etc)	<p>We use the following data to help us develop a profile of the district and to inform our strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration of households into and out of the district available from ONS (Office of National Statistics); • Details of mean and median local salaries by place of residence and by place of work available from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance available from Nomisweb; • Details of current population and population projections from the Projecting Older People Population Information (POPPI) website
Local Needs Analysis (internal or external sources)	<p>We commissioned Fordham Research to carry out a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) of the district which was undertaken during 2007. Since publication of the report in 2008 we have produced annual updates covering the following broad areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing needs; • Market activity; • Affordability; and • Migration <p>We are looking into commissioning a new SHMA for publication 2012-2013.</p>
Staff Survey results	n/a
Research reports	<p>Reports from the Council Tax providing details of the empty properties in the district are ran annually. Figures of the number of long term empty properties in the district are submitted as part of the Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (HSSA).</p> <p>Additionally reports on housing needs can be run to obtain up to date details of housing needs of households in the district.</p>
Best Practice Information	The Private Lease Scheme is the main mechanism used for returning properties back into use. The scheme is implemented by Colne Housing Society across a number of districts and involves effective working with private landlords.
Benchmarking data	HSSA submissions providing figures for the number of long term empty properties can be used to benchmark against our comparator local authorities.
Expert views of people representing the equality groups	

Other – please state	
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5. Based on the data indicated in question 4, assess the impact that the Policy, Strategy or Function could have on the groups below. The impact could be positive i.e. it will benefit this group, it could help to promote equality, access, or improve relations within equality groups. The impact could be negative i.e. it could disadvantage them. You need to explain the reasons for the impact assessment you have made

Equality Group	Category	Positive Impact	Negative Impact/ Risk	Explanation
Age	Children 0-16	N/A		
	Young People 17-25			
	Ages 26-59			
	Older People 60+			
Disability	Blind/Partially Sighted	N/A		
	Deaf/Hearing Impaired			
	Wheelchair user/mobility difficulties			
	Learning Difficulties			
	Mental Health Difficulties			
	Learning Difficulties			
Gender	Women	N/A		
	Men			
	Transgender			
Race	White including English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Eastern European (Polish Slovak, etc) Other White background – please specify	N/A		

	Asian including Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Other Asian background – please specify		
	Black including Caribbean, Somali, Other African, Other Black background – please specify		
	Mixed Dual Heritage including White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, Other mixed background – please specify		
	Gypsies/Travellers		
Religion/Belief	Buddhist	N/A	
	Christian		
	Hindu		
	Jewish		
	Muslim		
	Sikh		
	Other – please specify		
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian Gay men Heterosexual Bi-sexual	N/A	
Social Inclusion	People living in rural areas	✓	The strategy highlights that empty properties can bring down the

	People living in urban areas	✓		appearance of the surrounding area and by taking action to return empty properties into use and working to prevent properties from becoming empty in the first place should help benefit communities in both rural and urban areas.
	People on low incomes	N/A		
	English not first language			
Other (optional)	Use to define Impact on any groups specific to this Strategy, Policy or Function not listed above.			<p>Private landlords are a key stakeholder group with regards to implementing the Empty Homes Strategy. This strategy aims to promote effective use of housing stock and can help support private landlords bring their properties back into use.</p> <p>The strategy recognises the negative impact properties remaining empty can have on surrounding communities and therefore enforcement action is identified in the strategy as a possible tool to be used by the council to bring properties back into use.</p>

6. Based on your answer to question 5, could the Policy, Strategy or Function discriminate against any of the groups below either directly or indirectly

NOTE: Direct Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another in a comparable situation because of their racial or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when an apparently neutral provision or practice would disadvantage people on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, unless the practice can be objectively justified by a legitimate aim

Group	Direct	Indirect	If Yes state how
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	Yes/No	Yes/No	
Age	No	No	
Disability	No	No	
Gender	No	No	
Race	No	No	
Religion/Belief	No	No	
Sexual Orientation	No	No	
Social Inclusion	No	No	

7. Referring to your answers to questions 5 and 6, can you easily minimize or remove any negative impacts identified and if so how?

N/a

**8. If the negative impacts cannot be minimized or removed, they need to be justified. Please explain how and what the evidence for this is.
You may want to refer back to the monitoring data you listed in Question 4 to answer this question.**

N/a

9. If you have identified any impacts as positive in Question 5, are there any further ways in which can you adapt the policy, strategy or function to increase or extend its positive benefits for equality groups? Please explain your reasoning.

N/a

10. Based on the information you have now provided in this assessment please proceed as follows:

Equality Impact Assessment	Action
No negative impacts have been identified and this has been justified with evidence	Go to Q11 and Sign Off
Negative impacts were identified but have been minimized or removed	Go to Q11 and Sign Off
There is insufficient evidence to reach a valid conclusion on the Impact	Go back and collect additional evidence/data and then complete a new Assessment
Negative impacts were identified but have not been minimized, removed or justified	Complete the Action Plan below and then sign off by completing Q11

11. Sign Off

Assessment Completed by (name & signature)	Alison Weaver
Senior Manager (name & signature)	Joanne Albini
Date:	

A copy of the signed Impact Assessment and any Action Plan should be retained and appended to the relevant Policy/Strategy document or Business Plan. A signed hard copy and an electronic copy should be sent to Charmaine Dean, Head of Community Services. It is a statutory requirement to publish the results of Equality Impact Assessments. We will make these available on our website.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN

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July 2010

You now need to develop and implement an Action Plan to address the negative impacts identified that could not be minimized, removed or justified.

This should include more detailed research, further data collection or consultation with representatives from the equality group(s) who you have identified as being likely to suffer a negative impact/be disadvantaged by the Policy, Strategy or Function being assessed.

ACTION PLAN

Equality Group (eg young people, blind/partially sighted, etc)	Negative Impact Identified	Action	By Who	Start Date	End Date

ACTION PLAN MONITORING

How will you monitor progress of your Action Plan? And at what intervals?	
How frequently will this monitoring take place?	
Who will be responsible for this?	

Now go back to question 11 to complete and sign off this Assessment