

West Lothian Council: Equality Impact Assessment

A. About the function, service, policy, procedure, project etc

- 1 What is the name of the function/service/policy/procedure/project etc (called “policy” from this point) to be assessed?

Housing & Building Services Voids Policy

- 2 What were the results of the screening for relevance?

Screening for relevance is conducted by asking the following 4 questions of the topic:

1. *Which aspects of the General Duty does it relate to?*
2. *Is there evidence or reason to believe that some groups could be affected differently? Which groups?*
3. *How much evidence do you have?*
4. *Is there any public concern that functions/policies are operated in a discriminatory manner?*

The policy has a medium/high level of relevance to:

- Race Relations Act 1976 (RRA Amendment Act 2000 & 06)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA Amendment Act 2005 & 06)
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- CRE Code of Practice for Rented Housing
- Recommendations of McPherson Report
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Gender Equality Act 2007

Definition

A void property is the service definition of a vacant property.

Purpose and Scope

This document defines the standards to be applied by Housing & Building Services staff during Void inspections. Operational guidance is also included on the standard that each room and facility within the property should be at before re-letting the property to a new tenant.

The policy covers the following:

Living room

Kitchen

Bathroom

Bedrooms

Front/rear doors

External

Decoration

Internal fixtures & fittings

Safety Checks (gas/electrics)

Wind/Watertight security

Furnishings (temporary tenancies)

Floor coverings

Following a Voids Management Assessment and Review in October 2004 an Improvement Plan was prepared with recommendations and actions to be taken.

To ensure that these are now in place and to identify any new areas for improvement, a review was undertaken in February 2008 of the Voids Management Improvement Plan. The original improvement plan was used a checklist with progress and compliance being checked against this. A number of housing offices were visited in addition to the Building Services depot trades people. The voids repair team at Bathgate were also questioned and the front line CIS team was asked about the process from their point of view. The checklist was found to be complete with some of the actions no longer required as the process has improved and moved on.

Due to the process led nature and the minimum standards involved in compliance with the void policy, there is no concern over discriminatory practice. Customer satisfaction in this area is consistently high and the recent Community Scotland inspection found the voids process to be particularly robust. Void turnover in West Lothian has always been of a benchmark standard with very little concern in any aspect of the service.

The efficiency of this policy actually reduces the risk of any discrimination in a wider sense as properties are freed up very quickly to an equal standard therefore promoting good relations within the communities they are in as new tenants are able to take residence up without the undesirable practice of empty houses populating the area.

Performance overall remains good, with all staff following the process consistently.

3 Briefly describe the aim of the policy etc.

What needs or duties is it designed to meet? Who are the intended beneficiaries? How will it affect employees? How will it affect the community and the different groups of people within it?

Is the service contracted out or delivered under a service-level agreement or with partners? Who else is involved?

In what way will you involve any of these people in the impact assessment process?

B. Gathering the evidence and assessing the impact

4 Is there any evidence (or reason to believe) that this policy could have a different effect on some groups of people compared to others? (e.g. different needs, different experiences, different outcomes, different rates of participation, different abilities to access opportunities).

Is there an adverse impact around race, gender, disability, faith, sexual orientation, age, health, etc? What are the reasons for this adverse impact?

5 Please describe the evidence or reasoning you have used to make your judgement. What existing data for example (qualitative or quantitative) have you used to form your judgement? Tell us about the information as it applies to different groups (e.g. by race, gender and disability etc).

6 Are there any unmet needs/requirements that can be identified that affect any of the specific groups?

C. Making changes and promoting equality

7 If in your judgement, the policy etc does have an adverse impact, can you modify the policy to reduce/eliminate any adverse impact?

You need to think whether your modifications will:

- have a positive or negative effect on the promotion of equality of opportunity for any group
- help eliminate discrimination in any way
- encourage or hinder community relations.

- 8 If you cannot modify the policy to reduce adverse impact, consider if the impact can be justified and explain. (It is unlikely that you will be able to justify any impact which amounts to unlawful discrimination.)

If the impact cannot be justified, how do you intend to deal with it?

D. Consultation

- 8 What steps have you taken/are you taking to consult externally as part of your assessment?

Whom have you consulted? What methods did you use? How long was the consultation period?

Have you consulted any “experts”? Did you involve any people in the affected groups in some other way during the process?

E. Next steps

- 10 What were the results of the consultation?
What have you done with the results i.e. how do you intend to use the information gathered as part of the consultation?

11 Have you published the results of that consultation? If so, where?
What arrangements were made to reach specific groups affected?

12 What are your recommendations based on the conclusions of this assessment?

13 Please provide us with separate information about how you intend to monitor this policy in future. What is the review date set for this policy?

14 How will you publish the results of this assessment? What methods will you use?
What arrangements are there to reach specific groups affected?

15 Have you conducted any other types of impact assessment on this policy? (e.g. health, financial, environmental).

16 Is there anything else you wish to add?

Assessment made by:	Sarah Kelly
Others involved in assessment:	
Summary of assessment (this will be published). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What you did ▪ What evidence you used 	Conduct Screening for Relevance/Equality Impact Assessment Assessment & Review report February 2008

	Communities Scotland Inspection Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What you found 	No evidence or perceptions of discrimination.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What consultation you undertook 	N/a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What changes you made 	N/a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What will happen next. 	This summary will be presented to Housing & Building Services Management Team with the recommendation that the Capital Programme Policy is assessed separately.
Manager's Signature	
Date:	
Service area and job title:	

When you have completed this form, please take a copy and send it to your service representative on the Corporate Working Group on Equality and/or the Equality Officer.