



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Template

Before completing the EQIA please have a look at the [Dorset Council style guide](#) and also use the [accessibility checker](#) to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to read.

Some key tips

- avoid tables and charts, if possible please provide raw data
- avoid pictures and maps if possible.
- avoid using bold, italics or colour to highlight or stress a point
- when using numbering or bullet points avoid using capitals at the beginning unless the name of something
- date format is dd month yyyy (1 June 2021)
- use clear and simple language
- where you need to use technical terms, abbreviations or acronyms, explain what they mean the first time you use them
- if using hyperlinks, make sure the link text describes where the link goes rather than 'click here' Please note equality impact assessments are published on the Dorset Council [website](#)

Before completing this form, please refer to the [supporting guidance](#). The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to consider the equality implications of your policy, strategy, project or service on different groups of people including employees of Dorset Council, residents and users of our services and to consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality.

Where further guidance is needed, please contact the Inclusion Champion or the [Diversity & Inclusion Officer](#).

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

Review of policy

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

Both internal and external

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

- The allocations policy sets out how Dorset Council works with social landlords to manage the housing register and allocate housing fairly and transparently. It explains the choice-based lettings scheme, including registration, assessment, and property allocations processes, to ensure applicants understand how to access social housing.
- The policy provides guidance for housing and lettings officers, outlining clear criteria and procedures to support consistent decision-making. It promotes equality, prevents discrimination, and ensures effective use of housing resources to meet diverse community needs.
- Additionally, the policy supports strategic planning by enabling the collections of accurate data to inform future housing development and optimise the use of available stock to meet local demand and strategic housing goals.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

- Under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), local authorities are required to have a housing allocation scheme to ensure social housing is allocated appropriately. This policy complies with legal obligations, including the duty to give reasonable preference to certain groups such as those who are homeless, living in unsanitary or overcrowded conditions or needing to move for medical or welfare reasons.
- Social housing is essential for providing secure, affordable homes to those unable to access the private market. The Allocation Policy ensures that

available housing is distributed fairly, prioritising those in greatest need, including vulnerable individuals and families.

- The policy also responds to increasing demand and limited supply of social housing, with the need to support vulnerable groups, such as those experiencing homelessness, overcrowding or health-related housing needs. The Dorset Council Housing Allocation Scheme will apply to all Dorset Council residents.

Evidence gathering and engagement

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

- Housing Act 1996, Part 6
- Statutory guidance for housing allocations
- Tenancy standard, the regulator or social housing
- Housing and disabled people the human rights commission
- Housing Allocations for disabled people, local government ombudsman
- Domestic abuse and housing decision, local government ombudsman
- Medical assessments for housing applications, local government ombudsman
- The Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy
- The Housing Register
- Local housing data
- Internal consultation

During the 12-week statutory consultation of the Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy the following responses were received:

- Registered Providers – 1% or 7 responses
- Registered Provider tenants – 16.8% or 119 responses
- housing register applicants – 53.7% or 381 responses
- Elected members – 2.4% or 17 responses
- Parish and town councillors – 1% or 7
- members of the public – 22% or 156 responses

7. What did this tell you?

There are currently 6629 households on the housing register and we receive 400 – 500 new applications each month this tells us there is a high level of demand for social housing in the Dorset Council area. The number of lets made between 2024/25 was 978 with an average wait time of 18 months. This tells us that many applicants eligible to register will not be allocated a home quickly and can wait years

before a suitable home is found. This also tells us many people are living in homes that do not currently meet their need.

Data from the current housing register illustrates the average wait time for properties during 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

Bedsits - 31 allocations average wait of 14 months

1 bedroom – 423 allocations average wait of 17 months

2 bedrooms – 407 allocations average wait of 17 months

3 bedrooms – 105 allocations average wait of 25 months

4 bedrooms – 11 allocations average wait of 30 months

5 bedrooms – 1 allocation average wait time of 8 years

7.1 Equalities raised as part of the consultation on Housing allocation policy

A meeting was held with the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Panel to review and address comments raised during the consultation process, ensuring that principles of fairness and equality were upheld. The following key issues were discussed:

Local connection - the panel generally agreed with the proposed requirement for a two-year local connection. However, they recommended that the employment criterion should allow cumulative evidence rather than requiring two consecutive years. This means applicants who have worked in the area intermittently over a longer period can still demonstrate a local connection, ensuring fairness for those with seasonal or non-standard work patterns.

Banding name changes - the panel supported changing the banding system from alphabetical to numerical, as this provides a clearer and more structured approach. However, concerns were raised about the original band descriptions:

- Band 1 – Urgent housing need
- Band 2 – Priority need
- Band 3 – Unmet housing need
- Band 4 – Other housing need

The panel felt that “priority” and “urgent” were too similar, “unmet” could be perceived as discriminatory, and “other” could be considered dismissive of someone’s housing needs. Following feedback, the proposed bands for the new policy are:

- Band 1 – Urgent need
- Band 2 – High need
- Band 3 – Medium need
- Band 4 – Low need

This revised terminology is clearer, avoids negative connotations, and better reflects levels of housing need in a fair and respectful way.

Income Savings and capital - the panel agreed with the proposed income and savings limits, as they align with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Universal Credit (UC) thresholds. However, concerns were raised that older people could be unfairly impacted—particularly those who own their own home but can no longer remain there due to suitability, affordability, or adaptability issues. This risk is mitigated within the policy, which allows applicants who own a property that is unsuitable and cannot be adapted or afforded to join the housing register.

Overcrowding - the panel expressed concerns about the age limits used in the Bedroom Standard for determining overcrowding. Under the Bedroom Standard, same-sex children can share a bedroom until the age of 21, which is less generous than the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) standard, where individuals aged 16 and over are entitled to their own bedroom.

However, while the Bedroom Standard will be used to assess overcrowding for banding purposes, it is not used to assess bedroom need. Applicants will still be able to bid on properties that meet the LHA standard. This means families who are not classed as overcrowded under the Bedroom Standard will be able to bid on larger homes, reducing any disadvantage caused by the stricter criteria.

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

- Members of the Housing Team
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Engagement Panel

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No

Is an EQIA required?

Yes

Not every proposal will need an EqlA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqlA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqlA, please answer the following question:

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has

been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.
- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different [protected characteristics](#).

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age (55+)	Negative	Current housing allocations policy (2021-26) The current allocations policy includes an exception for people aged 55 or over who do not have a local connection to the Dorset Council area, allowing them to be considered for housing. This exception was originally introduced to help fill properties that were hard to let. However, this is no longer necessary because there is now sufficient demand from eligible applicants with a local connection. Proposed Housing allocations policy (2026-31) Under the proposed policy, anyone who does not have a local connection to the Dorset Council area, regardless of age, will not be able to join the housing register. As of 7 January 2026, we anticipate this impacting 559 households.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age (16+)	Positive	Current housing allocations policy (2021-26) The current allocations policy requires applicants to have a local connection to the Dorset Council area. This can be shown by living in the area for two years, living in the area for three out of the last five years, or having close family who have lived locally for at least five years. Proposed Housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed policy simplifies this requirement. Applicants will need to show two years of continuous residency or a two-year family connection, in line with the national Code of Guidance, which recommends that two years is a reasonable period to establish a local connection.
Age (16+)	Negative	Current housing allocations policy (2021-26) The current policy allows those that are working to apply to the housing register after one year. Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposal in the new policy is to increase the local connection timescale to two years. This change may disadvantage individuals who move to Dorset for employment or who have recently started working locally, as they will need to wait longer before being eligible for social housing.
Age (16+)	Positive	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31)

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		The proposed allocations policy increases the local connection requirement from one year to two years for working applicants ensures consistency and fairness across all applicants, regardless of employment status. It supports community stability by encouraging individuals to establish a stronger connection to the area before accessing social housing. This approach helps manage demand on the housing register, prioritising those with a more established link to Dorset. It also aligns with the national Code of Guidance, which recommends two years as a reasonable period to demonstrate a local connection.
Disability (visible and non-visible)	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy continues to support applicants with disabilities by ensuring adapted properties are prioritised for those who require them. This helps make best use of available stock and ensures that homes meet the specific needs of applicants. Additionally, applicants who no longer require adapted properties are placed in a high housing need band to facilitate appropriate re-housing, ensuring fairness and efficient use of resources.
Disability (Neurodivergence such as ADHD, Autism etc.)	Positive	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed simplified banding system provides a clear and structured framework for assessing housing need. For people who are neurodivergent, the impact of housing can be complex and may require additional consideration. We do not rely solely on information provided by the applicant; we also consider

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		relevant details from professionals involved in their health or support needs. Our team can offer practical assistance with the application process. This includes completing the form on the applicant's behalf, guiding them through it step by step, or arranging a home visit. We can also meet applicants at selected libraries to provide support in a comfortable and accessible setting.
Care Experience	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would negatively or positively impact individuals based on care experience.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would negatively or positively impact individuals based on gender reassignment or gender identity. Access to the housing register and the assessment of housing need remain based on objective criteria such as local connection, housing circumstances, and vulnerability, without regard to gender identity
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect individuals based on their marital or civil partnership status. Eligibility and priority for housing are determined by housing need, local connection, and other objective criteria, regardless of relationship status.
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) Under the proposed Allocation Policy, pregnant women will be eligible for an additional bedroom from the point at which a MATB1 certificate is provided—typically around 12 weeks into

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		pregnancy. This is an improvement on the previous policy, which only granted an additional bedroom within 12 weeks of the expected due date. The change ensures earlier recognition of housing need and supports better planning and stability for expectant mothers.
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect individuals based on race or ethnicity. All applicants are assessed equally based on housing need, local connection, and other objective criteria.
Religion and belief	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect individuals based on religion or belief. All applicants are assessed equally based on housing need, local connection, and other objective criteria.
Sex (consider men and women)	Positive/Negative	Current housing allocations policy (2021-26) The current policy uses the local Housing Allowance (LHA) bedroom standard when assessing overcrowding. Under this standard: • Children under 10 share a bedroom regardless of sex. • Children of different sex require their own room from age 10 • Children of the same sex can share a room until they are 16 • Individual 16 or over require their own room Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) At the time of drafting this assessment the impact could be positive or negative depending on individual circumstances. The proposed policy replaces the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) standard with

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		the Bedroom Standard when assessing overcrowding, this is a nationally recognised measure aligned with statutory guidance. The Bedroom Standard provides a clear and consistent framework for assessing overcrowding based on household composition. Under this standard: • Children under 10 share a bedroom regardless of sex. • Children aged 10–20 can share if they are the same sex. • Individuals aged 21 and over require their own bedroom. This approach ensures fairness and transparency across all applicants and supports better management of housing stock. The policy also retains flexibility by allowing additional bedrooms where there is a welfare or medical need, ensuring that households with specific health or care requirements are not disadvantaged.
Sex (consider men and women)	Negative	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The Bedroom Standard is less generous than the LHA standard, which previously allowed individuals aged 16 and over to have their own bedroom. As a result, fewer households will be classed as overcrowded under the new measure, which may delay access to larger homes for some families. Larger families may experience longer waiting times for suitable accommodation.
Sexual orientation	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect individuals based on sexual orientation. All applicants are assessed equally

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		based on housing need, local connection, and other objective criteria.
People with caring responsibilities	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect individuals with caring responsibilities. All applicants are assessed equally based on housing need, local connection, and other objective criteria. If there is a sleeping overnight carer the additional bed need will be assessed accordingly.
Rural isolation	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect individuals in rural areas. The policy supports applicants in rural areas by offering flexible and accessible application methods. Applications can be completed online from home or at public access points such as libraries. Additionally, support is available over the phone, with staff able to complete back-office applications on behalf of applicants or provide in-person assistance if required or a paper application. This ensures equitable access to the housing register regardless of geographic location.
Socio-economic deprivation	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed changes to the allocations policy are not expected to have a disproportionate impact on individuals or households experiencing socio-economic deprivation. The policy continues to assess housing need based on clear criteria such as homelessness, overcrowding, and medical or welfare needs, which apply equally regardless of income or social status. Access to the housing register remains based on housing need rather than financial circumstances, and support is available for applicants who may require assistance with the application process.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Single parents	Neutral	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy does not introduce any changes that would affect single parents. Their housing needs continue to be assessed based on household composition, housing circumstances, and other objective criteria.
Armed forces communities	Positive	Proposed housing allocations policy (2026-31) The proposed Allocation Policy provides additional reasonable preference to members of the UK Armed Forces. In addition, there is a new band for family members of service personnel

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

The revised Allocation Policy introduces several changes aimed at improving fairness, consistency, and alignment with best practice. Positive impacts include additional preference and increased priority for Armed Forces applicants, moving from Band B (high housing need) to Band 1 (priority housing need), and earlier recognition of housing need for pregnant women, who will now qualify for an additional bedroom when they are 12 weeks pregnant and receive their MATB1 certificate rather than 12 weeks before their due date as set in the current allocation policy.

The shift to the Bedroom Standard provides a clear, nationally recognized measure of overcrowding and retains flexibility for welfare or medical needs, ensuring vulnerable applicants are not disadvantaged.

Local connection requirements have been simplified to two years' residency, making qualification easier to demonstrate.

However, some negative impacts are anticipated. The Bedroom Standard is less generous than the LHA standard, meaning fewer households may be classed as overcrowded, potentially delaying access to larger homes. Applicants aged 55 and over without a local connection will no longer be eligible, and the increase in employment-based local connection from 12 months to two years may disadvantage older applicants who are working. These changes reflect a balance between

managing housing stock effectively and prioritising those in greatest need, while maintaining safeguards for applicants with specific health or care requirements.

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Review of Consultation Feedback	Some of the proposed changes in the policy may still require further amendment during the democratic process.	Service Manager Housing Register and Lettings	April 2026
Staff Training	The Housing Register and Lettings Team, Registered Providers and other Housing Teams to receive specific training on the Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy and the actions in the EqIA.	Service Manager Housing Register and Lettings. Letting Team Leader, Housing Register Team Leaders	May 2026
Amendments to Existing Applications	The proposed new policy has several changes to the current version. If the new policy is approved this will result in all existing applicants requiring a new band and approximately 2,500 existing applicants having their current banding reassessed. Depending on individual circumstances this will result in a higher or lower priority or being removed from the register altogether. All affected applicants will be contacted and the Huume system will be updated to reflect the changes and the applicants notified.	Service Manager Housing Register and Lettings. Letting Team Leader, Housing Register Team Leaders	On going from April 2026
Reasonable Adjustments to service delivery must be embedded	Reasonable adjustments will continue to be embedded across all processes to ensure accessibility and inclusion. Information will be provided in alternative formats where required, such as large print, audio, or other accessible options. Any changes to application forms, letters, and emails will incorporate accessibility considerations, and support will be offered to applicants who need assistance completing forms or understanding communications. Comms will be sent before the policy is implemented and during implementation to ensure the public, internal and external services are aware of the changes. This will be monitored and staff training given as required.	Service Manager Housing Register and Lettings. Letting Team Leader, Housing Register Team Leaders. Comms Team (Rachael Ballard)	Ongoing

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Being Flexible and Agile	Over the remaining time until this proposed policy and its potential changes are implemented, circumstances may change, and we will need to react to these changes and take appropriate action, including updating this EqIA if appropriate. All changes will require monitoring and reporting on after implementation to ensure there is no discrimination or any one group impacted unfairly.	Service Manager Housing Register and Lettings	Ongoing from November 2025

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Sarah How and Martin Short

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Sarah How, Martin Short, Cara Buckley, Neil Morland (consultant)

Date of completion:28/11/2025

Version Number: 4

EqIA review date:20 April 2026

Equality Lead Sign Off:

Next Steps:

- the EqIA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.
- EqIA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to [Diversity and Inclusion Officer](#)