



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:

Housing Standards and Tenants Rights Enforcement Policy 2026

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

Review of policy, project, strategy, project or service

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

External (residents, communities, partners)

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

This policy sets out what renters, owners, landlords, letting agents or any other person involved in the letting or management of residential accommodation, can expect from the Council when we are dealing with non-compliance of the relevant statutory provisions associated with the Private Rented Sector (PRS).

This ranges from enforcement action to resolve unsafe housing conditions, action to protect tenants rights and formal action to deal with illegal eviction and harassment.

The policy also provides guidance for authorised officers to ensure enforcement action is taken in line with the relevant statutory provisions and statutory guidance associated with the PRS.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

The Renters Rights Act 2025 received Royal Assent on the 27 October 2025. The Act introduces a new tenancy system, underpinned by a new enforcement framework. The provisions will apply to all assured tenancies in the private rented sector from 1 May 2026.

To ensure compliance, the Act is accompanied by the introduction of new and strengthened local authority enforcement powers and duties. This creates new criminal breaches and offences and expands the use of civil financial penalties of up to £7,000 for lower-level breaches and up to £40,000 for more serious offences. It will also introduce a package of updated investigatory powers for authorised council officers.

Dorset Council is a Local Housing Authority (LHA) and LHAs are under a new duty to enforce the new powers. There is also a corresponding duty for councils to report on their enforcement activity, leading to increased local and national accountability and transparency.

The new legal provisions include new powers and duties including the following:

- to make certain acts of discrimination in the lettings process unlawful [Rental discrimination under the Renters' Rights Act 2025 - GOV.UK](#).
- provisions to end so called, 'rental bidding', when potential tenants make bids to rent a property [Rental bidding: a guide for local authorities and councils - GOV.UK](#).
- unlawful for a landlord to ask for rent in advance – this is when a landlord or letting agent asks a tenant to pay rent before it is due. This includes paying rent before the tenancy starts [Asking for rent in advance: guidance for local authorities - GOV.UK](#)

To successfully enforce the new legal provisions and comply with our new duties, the Council must update its Housing Standards Enforcement Policy.

Evidence gathering and engagement

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

The strategy was developed with assistance from and input from national bodies and recognised good practice including:

- the national coordinating group; '*Operation Jigsaw*', a government funded initiative designed to promote collaboration, consistency and readiness across PRS teams in England for the Renters Rights Act 2025.
- Our new policy is based on a model national policy adopted by the Association of Chief Environmental Health Officers in England ('ACEHO').

We also used data from:

- research and analysis of the local and national housing context – a review of legislation, statutory guidance and work with national bodies such as Operation Jigsaw and ACEHO.
- English Housing Survey, Census data
- Council strategies and plans - review of local housing strategy and the corporate plan.
- Information from internal and external engagement - contact with landlords via social media and Weymouth Landlords Group
- Internal staff workshops/discussions with housing standards team and homelessness teams.

7. What did this tell you?

Data shows that there are over 27,000 rented properties in Dorset.

The number of private landlords is not known and there is no reliable estimate. The PRS varies from professional landlords with a portfolio, who use accredited letting agents, all the way to small scale, non-professional people involved with letting accommodation, who may not even view themselves as landlords.

Renter's demographics

The most common age group in the PRS was 25 to 34 years in the year ending March 2024, according to data from the Family Resources Survey.

Dwellings in England's private rented sector consistently have a higher proportion of serious hazards, compared with other tenures (English Housing Survey (EHS) from the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government)

Just under a third of private renters (32%) and a similar proportion of social renters (31%) had dependent children (EHS)

The highest proportion of households with a Household Reference Person (HRP) in either full or part-time work were those with a mortgage (93%) and private renters (76%). Related to age profile, these were also the tenures with the greatest proportion of working age HRPs. (EHS)

Around one in three households (31%) in the private rented sector had one or more household members with a long-term illness or disability (EHS)

Private renters in the lowest two income quintiles were more likely to spend more than 30% of their income on rent, compared to social renters and mortgagors (EHS)

With over a third of PRS households nationally containing children, any barriers to family access (e.g., “No children” policies—bemoaning unlawful under RRA 2025) may affect equality outcomes

Legal observations

There is a significant shift in the way in which central government wants local councils to enforce the ‘Landlord Legislation’ under the Renters Rights Act 2025. Previously councils exercised considerable discretion over legal action, however the 2025 Act now places a duty on local councils to deal with non-compliance of the Landlord Legislation formally, either by issuing a Civil Financial Penalty or instigating prosecution proceedings.

In both cases ‘checks and balances’ come from the need for councils to be satisfied that progressing in either way meets the ‘evidential test’ and ‘public interest test’ detailed by the [Code for Crown Prosecutors](#) (Crown Prosecution Service).

The overarching direction of the legal changes and the associated statutory guidance is one of not merely achieving compliance but punishing offenders and ensuring that prosecution and/or Civil Financial Penalties are used as a clear deterrent.

While the aim is that tenants stand to benefit from a reformed tenancy system with associated robust enforcement, the changes leave many landlords nervous about how future compliance will be dealt with. The Councils policy and government direction of travel does clearly indicate that there is a reasonable expectation of professionalism from landlords and in the event of non-compliance they need to be treated as informed professionals.

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

Although the below groups or organisations have not been contacted directly about this EQIA, information obtained from them has informed the content of the assessment.

- Housing Options and Homelessness Teams

- Landlord Groups including Weymouth Landlord Forums
- Engagement with interested parties via social media posts and comments
- National coordinating bodies and groups such as Operation Jigsaw
- Association of Chief Environmental Health Officers in England ('ACEHO')

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

The implementation of the new Renters Rights Act 2025 is accompanied by a comprehensive project plan and communications strategy, to ensure that the correct messages are sent and received from all relevant stakeholders including landlords, tenants, letting agents and others including advice services such as Citizens Advice and the Lantern Trust.

No further information is needed at this time; however, the communications strategy will continue to identify issues which need to be considered from a wider policy perspective including equality issues.

Is an EQIA required?

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

Yes

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.
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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	Neutral	The policy has no predicted impact on this protected characteristic
Disability	Positive	Most if not all disabled people will receive a benefit payment of some kind, whether means tested (e.g. Universal Credit) or a non-means tested allowance (e.g. Personal Independence Payment). The Renters Rights Act 2025 enacts new legal provisions to make discrimination in the letting process to persons in receipt of benefit unlawful. e.g. a ban on processes and adverts which are discriminatory.
Care Experience	Unclear	Further data required see Action plan
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral	The policy has no predicted impact on this protected characteristic
Marriage or civil partnership	Positive	62 percent of families with children are married couples (ONS 2023). The Renters Rights Act 2025 enacts new legal provisions to make discrimination in the letting process to families with children. e.g. a ban on processes and adverts which say 'no children'
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive	The Renters Rights Act 2025 enacts new legal provisions to make discrimination in the letting process to families with children e.g. a ban on processes

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		and adverts which say 'no children' Although the pregnancy of an existing tenant is not specifically mentioned in the guidance it does state that rental discrimination includes <i>unfair treatment of people in the Private Rented Sector who have children or are believed to have children</i>. Importantly, it notes that a landlord's belief (even if incorrect) still counts as discrimination.
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral	The policy has no predicted impact on this protected characteristic
Religion and belief	Neutral	The policy has no predicted impact on this protected characteristic
Sex (consider men and women)	Neutral	The policy has no predicted impact on this protected characteristic
Sexual orientation	Neutral	The policy has no predicted impact on this protected characteristic
People with caring responsibilities	Positive	Those providing care are more likely to receive a benefit payment such as Carers Allowance. The Renters Rights Act 2025 enacts new legal provisions to make discrimination in the letting process to persons in receipt of benefit unlawful. e.g. a ban on processes and adverts which are discriminatory.
Rural isolation	Neutral	The policy has no predicted impact on this protected characteristic
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive	The policy will assist those living in the poorest rented housing. There is a close connection between poor housing conditions and deprivation and therefore the policy has to

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		potential to reduce discrimination and advances equality of opportunity for this particular group. The Renters Rights Act 2025 enacts new legal provisions to make discrimination in the letting process to persons in receipt of benefit unlawful. e.g. a ban on processes and adverts which say 'no DSS' or 'professionals only' Making rental bidding unlawful should mean that those on lower income are not locked out of the Private Rented Sector from rental bidding wars, which favour those with higher disposal income. Making 'Rent in Advance' unlawful will prevent lower income households with the least disposable income from being locked out of the Private Rented Sector
Single parents	Positive	The Renters Rights Act 2025 enacts new legal provisions to make discrimination in the letting process to families with children. e.g. a ban on processes and adverts which say 'no children'
Armed forces communities	Neutral	The policy has no predicted impact on this protected characteristic

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

There is the potential for the new policy to positively impact the following protected characteristics:

- Disability
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

- People with caring responsibilities
- Socio-economic deprivation

The amended policy has neutral impact for the following protected characteristics:

- Armed forces communities
- Rural isolation
- Sexual orientation
- Sex
- Gender reassignment and Gender Identity
- Age

The amended policy has an unclear impact for the following protected characteristics:

- Care Experience

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
Tenants and particularly those with protected characteristics are unaware of their new rights under the Renters Rights Act 2025	As part of the communications strategy, ensure that tenants are appropriately targeted including any local groups or organisations who represent population groups with the protected characteristics of: • Disability • Care Experience • Marriage or civil partnership • Pregnancy and maternity • People with caring responsibilities • Socio-economic deprivation	Steve March	End of August 2026
It is not known how those with Care Experience will be impacted by the policy	Carry out appropriate research to assess how those with Care Experience are impacted by the policy. Identify if the policy change is predicted to have a positive, negative, neutral or unclear impact on this protected characteristic and assess what actions may develop from this to amend the action plan accordingly.	Steve March	End of August 2026

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqlA:	Steve March
Officers involved in completing the EqlA:	Steve March, Rachel Elford, Coralie McGown
Date of completion:	16 February 2026
Version Number:	1
EqlA review date:	30 April 2028

Equality Lead Sign Off:

Next Steps:

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

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