

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provides a record of both the **process** and **decision**. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.
- whether or not equality, diversity, cohesion and integration is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an impact assessment.

Directorate: Environment and Housing	Service area: Housing Leeds
Lead person: John Statham / Rob McCartney	Contact number: x43233 /x43480

1. Title: Establishing a Council Lettings Agency and the Future Policy Direction for the Regulation of the Private Rented Sector

Is this a:

Strategy / Policy

 Service / Function

 Other

If other, please specify

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

The report proposes the establishment of a Council Lettings Agency run by the Council and a range of new policy initiatives for the improved regulation of the Private Rented Sector (PPRS)

The Council will run a Lettings Agency, initially for landlords within the Private Sector Lettings Scheme, but then rolled out to other landlords to provide an ethical service. This will assist those “accidental” landlords who need advice and help and will steer them away from poor practice in the sector. It will also offer an alternative within the market utilising the Council as a brand. The service offered can be flexible from property letting through to a full managed service.

New policy directions are required in the regulation of the PRS. This paper proposes

a range of options that would steer council resources away from regulating those that provide good quality accommodation to those offering an illegal product within the low market areas. Specifically creating a Leeds Rental Standard for those landlords who provide good quality accommodation offering a kite mark of quality with the option to self-regulate, establishing a rogue landlord unit to tackle whole portfolios of certain landlords, extending the Leeds Neighbourhood Approach and considering Selective Licensing and an improved charging policy.

3. Relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

All the council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – city wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Also those areas that impact on or relate to equality: tackling poverty and improving health and well-being.

Questions	Yes	No
Is there an existing or likely differential impact for the different equality characteristics?	x	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns about the policy or proposal?		x
Could the proposal affect how our services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		x
Could the proposal affect our workforce or employment practices?		x
Does the proposal involve or will it have an impact on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment • Advancing equality of opportunity • Fostering good relations 	x	

If you have answered **no** to the questions above please complete **sections 6 and 7**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above and;

- Believe you have already considered the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 4**.
- Are not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 5**.

4. Considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

If you can demonstrate you have considered how your proposals impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you have carried out an impact assessment.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below (use the prompts for guidance).

- **How have you considered equality, diversity, cohesion and integration?** (think about the scope of the proposal, who is likely to be affected, equality related information, gaps in information and plans to address, consultation and engagement activities (taken place or planned) with those likely to be affected)

The private rented housing sector is an increasingly important housing option for people who are homeless or in acute housing need given the shortage in supply of social housing, the capacity to meet a housing need on an immediate or short notice basis and that accommodation offered can often be furnished. Nevertheless, the most disadvantaged members of society are disproportionately affected by inadequate standards of housing provision and landlordism – whether that be poor standards of repair, limited security of tenure, affordability and harassment/other inappropriate behaviour by landlords or lettings agents. The most disadvantaged members of society are often unwilling to come forward to report poor standards of private rented accommodation or landlordism for fear of retaliatory action by landlords. The most disadvantaged members of society often live in areas where poor standards of private rented accommodation are concentrated – this in turns exacerbates neighbourhood blight and inhibits social mobility.

- **Key findings** (think about any potential positive and negative impact on different equality characteristics, potential to promote strong and positive relationships between groups, potential to bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other, perception that the proposal could benefit one group at the expense of another)

The establishment of a Council Lettings scheme, operating on a commercial basis and targeted at homeless people or in acute housing need, will serve to raise standards of private rented accommodation and landlordism that the most disadvantaged members of society are able to access. Tenants can be certain that they are being offered accommodation that has been maintained to a good standard and that the landlord is reputable. Reputable landlords can also be confident that the vetting of prospective tenants, and the proactive level of tenancy support, means that the letting of properties to homeless people/others in acute housing need is a reasonable business proposition. The high level of tenancy support will also encourage small scale property owners to let properties to homeless people.

The PRS regulation proposals are targeted at those landlords that fail to provide decent accommodation that meet the minimum legal standards, utilising the full range of the Council's regulatory powers. This will ensure that those disadvantaged residents living in poor quality accommodation will receive a more targeted service. This leaves those landlords already meeting or exceeding the legal standards to be part of the Leeds Rental Standard. A key aim of the new standard is that it will act as a catalyst to other landlords to improve and be part of the Standard so as to be sure they can let their properties. The measure in the report can also be included in any larger area based work

that the Council might undertake in response to the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

The combined impacts of the proposals in this report should benefit those most disadvantaged and living the PRS.

- **Actions**

(think about how you will promote positive impact and remove/ reduce negative impact)

The Council has an existing Private Sector Lettings scheme and the Council Lettings scheme will build on this existing successful scheme. It is envisaged that the development of the Council Lettings scheme will be an incremental process with the service needing to demonstrate to landlords that the service offer is an attractive one to them and this will be achieved through successful tenancies being established. The use of the Housing Regulation Team, to inspect property standards, and Property and Contracts, to carry out on-going repair work, will serve to raise the standard of accommodation offered to homeless people.

We will consult with landlords through existing routes – Leeds PRS Housing Forum, Local Landlord Forums, Annual Conferences, strategic working with the relevant landlord associations. We will promote the Leeds Rental Standard so that it is seen as a brand of excellence and one which landlords will aspire to. It will be supported by an inspection regime to ensure standards are maintained.

5. If you are **not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you **will need to carry out an impact assessment.****

Date to scope and plan your impact assessment:	
Date to complete your impact assessment	
Lead person for your impact assessment (Include name and job title)	

6. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening

Name	Job title	Date
John Statham	Head of Housing Partnerships and Housing Growth	02/02/16
Rob McCartney	Head of Housing Support	02/02/16
Date screening completed		02/02/16

--	--

7. Publishing	
<p>Though all key decisions are required to give due regard to equality the council only publishes those related to Executive Board, Full Council, Key Delegated Decisions or a Significant Operational Decision.</p> <p>A copy of this equality screening should be attached as an appendix to the decision making report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Services will publish those relating to Executive Board and Full Council. • The appropriate directorate will publish those relating to Delegated Decisions and Significant Operational Decisions. • A copy of all other equality screenings that are not to be published should be sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk for record. <p>Complete the appropriate section below with the date the report and attached screening was sent:</p>	
For Executive Board or Full Council – sent to Governance Services	Date sent:
For Delegated Decisions or Significant Operational Decisions – sent to appropriate Directorate	Date sent:03/02/16
All other decisions – sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk	Date sent: