

Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment



Service area	Directorate of Environment and Community Services – Housing Services Division
Date of assessment	20 th May 2011
Name of strategy/policy/function/service to be assessed	Home Improvement Agency – an operational and managerial merger of Huntingdonshire District Council’s service with that of South Cambridgeshire District’s and Cambridge City Councils
Is this a new or existing strategy/policy/function/service?	A new function of the three merged services – Each service is presently separate
Name of manager responsible for strategy/policy/function/service	Head of Housing Services, HIA Manager
Names of people conducting the assessment	Housing Policy & Research Officer, Head of Housing Services
Step 1 – Description of strategy/policy/function/service	
Describe the aims; objectives and purpose of the strategy/policy/function/service (include how it fits in to wider aims or strategic objectives).	<p>Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to helping people to live in homes that are decent, comfortable and secure. The council provides two types of assistance to enable people to repair or adapt their homes.</p> <p>Firstly, “<i>repairs assistance</i>”. This is available to help low income households pay for essential building maintenance work. It is usually paid as an interest-free loan secured against the property and paid back only when the property is sold. If the client does not have much equity in the property, repair assistance can be made as a grant, which need not be paid back so long as the client carries on living in the property for at least five years.</p> <p>Secondly, “<i>disabled facilities grants</i>” - this is a local council grant to help towards the cost of adapting homes to enable clients to continue to live there. A grant is paid when the council considers that changes are necessary to meet applicants needs, and that the work is reasonable and practical</p> <p>It is proposed that the services offered by three separate Councils – South Cambridgeshire District</p>

<p>Describe the aims; objectives and purpose of the strategy/policy/function/service (include how it fits in to wider aims or strategic objectives) (continued)</p>	<p>Council, Cambridge City Council, and Huntingdonshire District Council be operationally and managerially merged, whilst retaining their own budget at district level.</p> <p>This EIA will look at the effects of merging the service at an equalities level, with particular regard to how the change in operational and managerial structure, as well as the location, will affect the delivery of the service, with particular regard to the 8 ‘protected characteristics’ outlined below</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age • disability • gender reassignment • pregnancy and maternity • race –including ethnic/national origins, colour/nationality • religion or belief – includes lack of belief • sex • sexual orientation
<p>Are there any (existing) equality objectives of the strategy/policy or function/service?</p>	<p>The Huntingdonshire Home Improvement Agency itself does not have any clearly stated equality objectives but the tenets of the Council’s Single Equality Scheme http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/HDCCMS/Documents/Equality/Huntingdonshire%20District%20Council%20Single%20Equality%20Scheme.pdf</p> <p>state that the objectives of the Council are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing your community and equality mapping • Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment • Community engagement and satisfaction • Responsive services and customer care • A modern and diverse workforce <p>“<i>Knowing your community and equality mapping</i>”, apply to this particular service. “<i>Growing Success</i>”, the Council’s corporate plan for 2010/11, has a community aim of “<i>Housing that meets individuals’ needs</i>” – under this, are number of objectives “<i>to support opportunities for the vulnerable to live independently</i>”, with one components - “<i>adapting homes of disabled or older people to enable them to remain independent in their own homes</i>”, which meets the needs of the equality objectives of the service</p>

Who is intended to benefit from the strategy/policy/function/service and in what way?

Repairs Assistance Grant (RA) is aimed at helping low income families who are owner occupiers and tenants carry out small scale work to their homes. It is available for moderate repairs and improvements, basic security measures and adaptations and is usually paid as a loan or charge on the property. It is not aimed at any one particular community, other than those who would otherwise have difficulties resourcing the work concerned.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are aimed at enabling disabled applicants who might not be able to pay for adaptations, to remain in their present accommodation, and so are predominately aimed at the disabled community, and due to the high incidence of disability in older age groups, the pensioner community within the district.

Step 2 – Data

What baseline **quantitative data (statistics)** do you have about the strategy/policy/function/service relating to equalities groups (e.g. monitoring data on proportions of service users compared to proportions in the population), relevant to this policy?

Taken from the statistics collected as part of the normal monitoring of the users of the service, the 3 district Council's users can be categorised under the following service user equalities groups a) Older People, b) Older People with Mental Health problems, c) Frail Elderly, d) Mental Health, e) Learning disability, f) Physical or sensory Disability and g) Other

Key words for PI	Cambridge HIA	Hunts HIA	South Cambs HIA	Total
Service User by Group:				
a) Older People	79	79	74	232
b) Older People with Mental Health problems	0	0	1	1
c) Frail Elderly	52	94	36	182
d) Mental Health	1	0	0	1
e) Learning disability	0	0	0	0
f) Physical or sensory Disability	27	160	8	195
g) Other disability	12	16	17	45
Total	171	349	136	656

In numerical terms, Hunts HIA provide 53% of this user group overall, with Cambridge HIA providing 26% and South Cambridgeshire 21%.
The above figures, expressed as a percentage of these cases are tabulated below. It can be seen

What baseline **quantitative data (statistics)** do you have about the strategy/policy/function/service relating to equalities groups (e.g. monitoring data on proportions of service users compared to proportions in the population), relevant to this policy? (continued)

that the profile of the Service User by Group: varies between the 3 districts quite considerably, with Cambridge HIA and South Cambridgeshire HIA having around half the service users by group as “Older People”, whereas this forms around a quarter of the Hunts HIA service users by group. All have similar proportions of “frail elderly”, whereas Hunts HIA have considerably more “Physical or Sensory Disability” clients as a proportion of the service users by group.

Key words for PI	Cambridge HIA	Hunts HIA	South Cambs HIA	Total
Service User by Group:				
a) Older People	46%	23%	54%	35%
b) Older People with Mental Health problems	0%	0%	1%	0%
c) Frail Elderly	30%	27%	26%	28%
d) Mental Health	1%	0%	0%	0%
e) Learning disability	0%	0%	0%	0%
f) Physical or sensory Disability	16%	46%	6%	30%
g) Other	7%	5%	13%	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

In terms of BME applicants, numbers are historically low and are as depicted in the table below.

Key words for PI	Cambridge HIA	Hunts HIA	South Cambs HIA	Total
Fair Access: No. of new clients from a BME group	15	6	4	25
Fair Access: % of new clients from a BME group	2%	1.8%	0.8%	1.5%

Neither Huntingdonshire nor Cambridge City Council collects caller information at their Customer Centres specific to callers specifically requesting Home Improvement Agency services. The latest

<p>What baseline quantitative data (statistics) do you have about the strategy/policy/function/service relating to equalities groups (e.g. monitoring data on proportions of service users compared to proportions in the population), relevant to this policy? (continued)</p>	<p>figures, from when Housing Services in Huntingdonshire had their own reception in July 2007 - showed that there were 9 enquirers a month at the counter - an average of one every other working day.</p>
<p>What qualitative data (opinions etc) do you have on different groups (e.g. comments from previous consumer satisfaction surveys/consultation, feedback exercises, or evidence from other authorities undertaking similar work), relevant to this strategy/policy/function/service?</p>	<p>The three agencies concerned in South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City and Huntingdonshire regularly canvass opinions from service users and receive a substantial number of respondents who are very happy with the service, often in excess of 90%. Part of this derives from the responsiveness of the service that allows officers to respond quickly to a request for a visit from a Caseworker. This would need to be protected under any future arrangements.</p>
<p>The Equality Act 2010 requires us to consider the impact of our services on the protected characteristics of; Age, Disability, Gender, (including Gender Reassignment), Disability, Marriage /Civil Partnership, Sexual Orientation and Religion and Belief. Click on the link below for definitions of the protected characteristics listed. http://initiatives.huntsdc.gov.uk/Equality%20and%20Diversity/Equality%20Act%202010/Glossary%20of%20terms.doc</p>	
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on different racial groups; this refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins. Gypsy/Travellers are distinct group within this category.</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>The effects of moving the HIA for Cambridge and Huntingdonshire will affect all racial groups equally within the 2 areas. This is mainly because there are no particularly large concentrations of any particular ethnic group in Cambridge or Huntingdonshire. If one racial group were concentrated in an area that was previously accessible, and now was not, this could be construed to be discriminatory. Additionally, we know from the statistics mentioned previously that the number of BME users of the HIA service are very small in percentage and actual terms. We are also aware from ONS and County Council data that there are no substantial concentrations of particular eligible ethnic groups within Cambridge and Huntingdonshire. This is evidence that it is very unlikely that the move of the combined Agency to Cambourne would have a differential impact on different racial groups</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on gender, including transgender people?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>The service itself is used equally by both genders – we are presently unaware of any users of the service with transgender status. Because data is not routinely collected on transgender status, presently we cannot offer quantitative data as evidence to help analyse the effects of this change. However, like gender, it is not felt that the transgender population would be affected disproportionately, if the service’s management were relocated to Cambourne.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact in terms of marriage and civil partnership</p>	<p>As marital status forms no determining part of the application, assessment or payment process, it is extremely unlikely that any change to the policy itself would unduly advantage or disadvantage any particular applicant, and by that token, if the service’s operational headquarters were moved to</p>

<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact in terms of marriage and civil partnership (continued)</p>	<p>Cambourne, this would not advantage or disadvantage married couples, or lesbians and gay men in a civil partnership. Because data is not routinely collected on marriage or civil partnership status, presently we cannot offer quantitative data as evidence to help analyse the effects of this change. However, like gender, it is not felt that those in marriages or civil partnerships would be affected disproportionately if the services management was relocated to Cambourne.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact in terms of pregnancy and maternity (e.g. pregnant or breast feeding women)</p>	<p>It could be argued that pregnant and/or breastfeeding women from Huntingdonshire and Cambridge City would have to travel further to speak to an officer if the service for the 3 district Councils were combined and relocated to Cambourne, and that they would suffer inconvenience if they had to travel a longer distance than previously. However, under the combined service it is proposed that, as now officers will visit applicants in their homes to explain and undertake applications, and if/when applicants have any concerns. The numbers of callers at the City Council and Huntingdonshire District Council offices themselves are very small, and so it is unlikely that pregnant woman or women who are breastfeeding will form a significant proportion of these callers. Because data is not routinely collected on pregnancy or maternity status, presently we cannot offer quantitative data as evidence to help analyse the effects of this change. However, like gender, it is not felt that the pregnant and maternity population would be affected disproportionately if the services management were relocated to Cambourne.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on disabled people? What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>It could also be argued that disabled applicants from Huntingdonshire and Cambridge City would have to travel further to speak to an officer if the service for the 3 district Councils were combined and relocated to Cambourne, and that they would suffer inconvenience if they had to travel a longer distance than previously. However, under the combined service it is proposed that, as now officers will visit applicants in their homes to explain and undertake applications, and if/when applicants have any concerns.. As the numbers of callers requesting information on RAs and DFGs at the City Council and Huntingdonshire District Council offices form a minute percentage of callers, and disabled applicants, a smaller proportion still, it is unlikely that disabled people will suffer a differential impact as a consequence of the move. Therefore, it is not felt that the disabled population would be affected disproportionately if the service's management were relocated to Cambourne.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on lesbian, gay man, bisexual or heterosexual (straight) people? What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>As sexuality status forms no determining part of the application, assessment or payment process, it is unlikely that any change to the policy itself would unduly advantage or disadvantage any particular applicant, and by that token, if the service's operational headquarters were moved to Cambourne, this would not differentially advantage or disadvantage lesbians, gay men, bisexuals or heterosexual people. Because data is not routinely collected on sexuality, presently we cannot offer</p>

	quantitative data as evidence to help analyse the effects of this change. However, like gender, it is not felt that lesbians, gay men, bisexuals or heterosexual people would be affected disproportionately if the services management was relocated to Cambourne
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on younger or older people?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on grounds of religion or belief?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>As religion or belief forms no determining part of the application, assessment or payment process, it is unlikely that any change to the policy itself would unduly advantage or disadvantage any particular applicant, and by that token, if the service's operational headquarters were moved to Cambourne, this would not advantage or disadvantage those of any religion or belief. Because religion or belief data is not routinely collected, presently we cannot offer quantitative data as evidence to help analyse the effects of this change. However, like gender, it is not felt that those of any particular belief would be affected disproportionately if the service's management was relocated to Cambourne</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact in terms of specific characteristics of Huntingdonshire e.g. Rural isolation</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>The service itself is used by applicants all over the affected area. Whilst the City does not have any areas of rural isolation, something of the order of 80% of Huntingdonshire is rural, and some of the area suffers from poor transport links, difficulty in accessing local services and a lack of effective broadband. However, as mentioned in other responses under the combined service it is proposed that, as now officers will visit applicants in their homes to explain and undertake applications, and if/when applicants have any concerns, whether these were rural applicants or not. It is therefore not thought that those suffering rural isolation would be affected disproportionately if the service's management were relocated to Cambourne.</p>
<p>Conclusion(s)</p>	<p>From the available evidence, the move of the service to Cambourne for residents of Huntingdonshire and Cambridge does not appear to have differential impact on any of the protected characteristic groups. This is because very few applicants visit the Huntingdonshire or Cambridge offices to speak to HIA staff, and the great majority of contact is made via the telephone, or by officers calling at the homes of the applicants and clients themselves, neither of which would not substantially alter if the offices were moved to Cambourne.</p>

Action plan and timetable		
Objective	Action	Target/Timetable for completion of
Monitoring users pre and post a potential move	<p>Presently HIA monitoring does not comply with corporate monitoring structures, which hampers the effective production of Equality Impact Assessments. It is suggested that the Agency amend their forms accordingly, with immediate effect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include a wider range equality questions in future monitoring forms and customer satisfaction survey <p>It is felt that, whilst the impact of the move to Cambourne will be minimal as regards equalities issues, this is something that needs to be monitored pre and post a move</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Analyse responses by equality groups to satisfaction surveys and benchmark against previous responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Immediately ○ By March 2012
Promote service to rural areas	<p>It is proposed that Parish Councils be asked to promote the service and any detailed changes to it to ensure the service , and information surrounding it, remains accessible to a wide variety of applicants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Immediately