

North Yorkshire Home Choice – Sub regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme



Equality Impact Assessment

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012 DRAFT

Contents:

Number	Description	Page
1	Service Area and Function	2 - 3
2	Equalities Impact Assessment - summary	3 - 8
3	Monitoring Framework	9
4	Summary of the Key issues and Actions arising from JRF Evaluation of North Yorkshire Home Choice 2012/13	10 - 15

Appendices

Appendix 1: Consultation Summary (Autumn 2009)

Appendix 2: Equalities Action Plan

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

1. Service Area and Function:

Name of service area / function:	Lead officer for this EIA:
Housing (North Yorkshire Sub Regional Choice based Lettings)	Name: Karen Jackson, Project Manager Phone Number: 01904-554237 Job Title: North Yorkshire Home Choice Co-ordinator
Describe the service area / function: North Yorkshire Home Choice	
<p>North Yorkshire Home Choice is the brand name given to affordable housing let using a Choice Based lettings (CBL) system supplied by Abritas. The scheme was developed following a period of consultation – a summary of the key issues arising and actions arising can be found at Appendix 1 – Consultation Summary & Actions Arising Autumn 2009. Participating landlords advertise all properties available to let using a variety of means including the internet and applicants registered with North Yorkshire Home Choice are able to register an interest for those properties that they wish to be considered for.</p> <p>Properties are advertised on a 6-day cycle Thurs – Tues. All bids are automatically shortlisted by the Abritas CBL system and subsequently verified prior to the offer of accommodation to the successful bidder. The principle for selecting the successful applicant is set down in the lettings policy; which takes into account law and guidance on local authority lettings schemes for Affordable Housing, including that which relates to housing need.</p> <p>The government recommends that local authorities develop sub-regional schemes. North Yorkshire Home Choice Partnership Board which includes representation from Craven, Ryedale, York, Hambleton, Richmondshire, Selby and Scarborough local authorities and their Large Scale Voluntary Partners was formed to develop a sub-regional scheme. This means that households seeking accommodation within the partnership area are able to complete a single application form and a joint approach to assessing and letting of properties is undertaken in accordance with the North Yorkshire Home Choice Allocations Policy.</p> <p>Primarily North Yorkshire Home Choice will advertise partner organisation social housing lettings but since introduction in 2010 has been developed further to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other Housing Association properties available for let within the Partnership Area• Low Cost Home Ownership options• Council accredited private sector landlord or Empty Homes Grant properties available for let• Home Swap opportunities• Information on adapted properties	

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

EIA start date:	EIA finish date:.	Date EIA reviewed:	EIA signed off by:.
June 2009	No end date	To be reviewed Quarterly/Annually Last Reviewed: Nov 2012	Sub Regional Equalities Monitoring Group established by the Project Board

2. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) – summary document

CBL was evaluated by the CLG during 2004 and this document formed the basis of the original EIA in 2009 to summarise the key impacts and responses required in relation to the 6 Equality Strands and external factors including Financial Inclusion and rurality of the partnership area.

Our EIA is a working document which has subsequently been updated in light of further *national* and sub-regional research evidence including:

- a) 2004 National Evaluation of CBL
- b) Welfare Reform 2012
- c) Joseph Rowntree Foundation Research 2012:
- d) Localism Act 2012
- e) Allocation of accommodation

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

EQUALITY STRAND	IMPACT	RESPONSE
Race	<p>The 2004 National Evaluation of CBL does not suggest any negative Equality Impact on the grounds of race. On the contrary, early evidence suggests CBL encourages racial integration.</p> <p>Barriers, which may have a racial/national dimension, relate to recent immigrants who do not speak English to a high standard. Evaluation suggests that non-English speakers or persons where English is not the first language have the most difficulty in accessing CBL.</p> <p style="color: red;">The JRF research confirmed the importance of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing a range of options to help people whose first language is not English to access the scheme • providing a consistent service to Gypsy, Travellers and Showpeople 	<p>a) Website: The North Yorkshire Home Choice website has a ‘Google Translate’ facility. However the JRF research in 2012 concluded that this had limitations so actions to improve access to other options such as Language Line have been included within the Equalities Action Plan.</p> <p>b) Application Form: includes the following opportunities for applicants to request assistance or translation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front Cover: “If you need help in person, please contact your local housing office, full contact details are given at the end of this document.” in five relevant languages (Urdu, Polish, Turkish, Fijian, Cantonese) • Section 2 – Help to Use This Scheme – Q19 • Section 10 – Equalities Monitoring – Q71 & 72 – information in another language • Section 10 – Religion – Q74 – Cultural or religious requirements • Section 11 – Communication Q79,80,81,82 – preferred method/language of communication • An “ if you need help with translation.” message will be integrated into the hard copy application form and scheme guide in <p>c) The call centre provided by the IT supplier provides help in 20 languages, including those above.</p> <p>d) Actions to scope the service available for Gypsy, Travellers and Showpeople has been included within the EIA.</p>

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

EQUALITY STRAND	IMPACT	RESPONSE
<p>Disability</p>	<p>Taking a broad view of the term 'Disability' National Evaluation suggests that CBL will impact on</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very elderly or infirm 2. People with learning Difficulties 3. People with limited literacy <p>One should also add people with mental health issues</p> <p>The National Evaluation found that CBL enables key and support workers to have an increased involvement in the housing needs of their clients, due to the public advertising of vacancies.</p> <p>The JRF research confirmed that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vulnerable groups were not disadvantaged by CBL • there are potential inconsistencies across the area in banding decisions for Health & Well Being Gold banding • there were disproportionately fewer older persons bidding and a high numbers of older persons requiring assistance to bid and adapted properties in some partnership areas. 	<p>Interventions to reduce negative impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ACCESS: CBL enables customers to bid from home (or key local Public Access Centres (PACs)) by internet or phone, which may be of great assistance to these groups in many cases. Property Sheets are available at all PACs and training of library staff in some areas. ✓ SURGERIES: Gypsy and Travellers can take advantage of drop in Surgeries in Selby or assistance from the G&T Support service provided by Horton Housing ✓ ASSISTANCE TO REGISTER/BID: On application to NY Home Choice the support requirements of individuals are identified and appropriate assistance given. With informed consent, support workers, advocates or friends/relatives can bid on behalf of an applicant. Where such applicants have not identified an advocate, Housing Options staff will contact them to establish their support needs and put in place an assisted bidding service where necessary. An AUTOMATED BIDDING service : (where bids are placed by the IT software) will also be available where necessary. ✓ GUIDES: The web site provides a guide to 'Supporting Others' and an Easy Read version of the Guide to NY Home Choice. Copies are also available at PACs. Easy Read User Guides are provided for customers with Learning Disabilities or those with literacy problems. ✓ TRAINING: Training has been delivered to support workers across the County – including Support Workers for the following client groups: Mental Health, vulnerable adults, adults with learning/physical disabilities, young people. <p>A review of these interventions and on-going training for support workers and PAC staff has been included within the EAP.</p> <p>Actions to address the findings of the JRF research have been included within the EAP to ensure consistency of banding decisions through investigation, training and learning from good practice in other areas. These will further improve the review and monitoring processes already in place.</p>

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – **NOV 2012**

EQUALITY STRAND	IMPACT	RESPONSE
Gender	No specific impacts noted by the National Evaluation or JRF Research.	
Sexuality	No specific impacts noted by the National Evaluation or JRF Research.	
Religion /Belief	No specific impacts noted by the National Evaluation or JRF Research..	See Race above item d)
Age	<p>There is considerable cross over with the disability heading. Again, the fact that CBL entails the public advertising of properties can make it easier for key workers or relatives to support the elderly in seeking a new home.</p> <p>Generally, older and disabled people may be less likely to have IT access in the home and in some cases may have greater difficulty in accessing public offices.</p> <p>The JRF research identified a “Mismatch” of bidding patterns of elderly persons which requires further investigation to ensure that North Yorkshire Home Choice is not adversely affecting their ability to bid/access affordable housing. This is especially important due to the increase proportion of older persons in North Yorkshire.</p>	<p>Interventions to reduce negative impact as detailed above for the DISABILITY strand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACCESS • ASSISTANCE TO REGISTER/BID • GUIDES • TRAINING <p>Lack of IT skills: Home Choice applicants are able to access ID Skills Courses at their local library.</p> <p>√ AWARENESS RAISING: Opportunities taken up within each local district to increase awareness of the scheme and help available to older persons. E.g. Elder Persons Reference Group in Craven.</p> <p>√ REACHING OUT TO THE ELDERLY: New 2012. Further interventions specific to older persons to be explored and developed during 2013 to support existing methods of access/bidding for affordable housing. Further work required to understand the potential barriers that older people experience to inform further actions for inclusion in the EAP.</p> <p>Access to available properties via Digital TV is commonplace in other CBL schemes nationally. This option will be considered at the first review of this scheme.</p>
EQUALITY STRAND	IMPACT	RESPONSE

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

<p>Financial Inclusion</p>	<p>Financial Inclusion has emerged since the “recession” or “downturn in the economy” since 2010 as an area for concern for local authorities in North Yorkshire where many of its rural areas are characterised by lower wages. In response a North Yorkshire Financial Inclusion Strategy has been developed and forums established within each area to deliver key actions identified.</p> <p>The Welfare Reform Act 2012 and preceding Public Spending Review benefit cuts has had an adverse financial effect on households and increased pressure on social housing. For example, the Under-occupancy restrictions for social housing tenants due April 2012 – potentially will see an increase in households downsizing, seeking home swap options and/or at risk of accruing rent arrears</p>	<p>Issues specific to the implementation of North Yorkshire Home Choice are in terms of minimising the cost to the applicants in accessing the scheme. Predominantly the scheme is accessible via the internet, however, for those people without internet connection or who wish to access the scheme or seek advice/assistance in person they are able to do so using the following methods of contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by telephoning their local housing office to access Property Sheet, bidding by phone and accessing advice and assistance • by using the Automated bidding Line • by visiting their local housing office. <p>All calls to local housing offices or the Automated Bidding line uses an 0300 for phone bidders charged at a local rate whether using a landline or mobile phone.</p> <p>Following the evaluation of the scheme – the feasibility of outreach/housing surgeries will be considered.</p> <p>In 2012 Mutual Exchange Properties were included in the weekly advertisements and as at Nov 8 there were 85% more Mutual Exchange properties advertised than social housing lets available.</p>
<p>Rurality</p>	<p>North Yorkshire is predominantly rural and over half of its population live in</p>	<p>Problems of access have been addressed in the following ways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach activity, based on self identification as vulnerable

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

	<p>areas defined as 'sparse' or 'super sparse'. This can make accessing services more difficult.</p> <p>The JRF research found that applicants are most likely to bid in York and least likely to bid in Richmondshire or Craven. Applicants from lower priority bands stand a much better chance of being housed in some areas.(notably Craven and to a lesser extent Ryedale Selby & Hambleton) than others (notably York & Scarborough).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self identification as vulnerable, with a named advocate• Assisted bidding• Automated bidding• Operation of the scheme remotely via phone or internet• Access to Officer support at public offices.• Maximisation of the number of Public Access Centres (including libraries and community venues) at a local level• Use of free advertising opportunities (i.e. posters in key public places and advice centres e.g. CABs)• The opportunity to bid by post, which will help anyone uncertain about phone or internet bidding• Drop in “surgeries” at Selby District Council for Gypsy & Travellers• Horton Housing support services for Gypsy and Travellers across North Yorkshire <p>Raising awareness of scheme and access points at community events</p> <p>Awareness raising amongst key 3rd and public sector partners has taken place and will continue to do so. This will maximise the range of people able to act as assisted bidders or advocates for vulnerable customers. The profile of CBL and its implementation has been promoted in particular to Supporting People teams, Social Services, Parish councils, Local housing forums and General public</p> <p>A network database for the distribution of the Property Sheet via email has been established through this process.</p> <p>The regular monitoring of the scheme and changing environment in terms of pressure on public services to maximise resources and reduce costs will inform future interventions required or improved upon to target resources to where they are needed most.</p>
--	---	---

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

3. Monitoring Framework:

The 'Equalities Monitoring Group' (EMG) established 1st May 2009 continues to operate as a sub group of the Board to monitor the implementation of the scheme to ensure that no – one client group or household falling within the equality strands identified are adversely affected by the introduction of the scheme. (Please see EMG Terms of Reference).

The Equalities Monitoring Framework (Agreed Sept 2011) includes the monitoring of

- a) Profile of the register - **report to the Partnership Board/EMG detailing:**
 - Ethnic profile of those registered with the scheme
 - Additional needs identified of those registered
 - Age profile of register
 - Number of applicants indicating need for additional support with bidding
 - Number of clients requiring adapted properties

- b) Bidding behaviour – **report to the Partnership Board/EMG detailing:**
 - How people bid
 - And, for each bidding method, breakdown by
 - Age
 - Ethnicity
 - Additional needs

- c) Outcomes – **report to the Partnership Board/EMG detailing:**
 - Percentage of lets to each band
 - Lettings outcomes by age, ethnicity and additional needs – with comparison to register, banding and bidding profiles
 - Lets to applicants cross border – within the partnership area, and from without
 - And how many disabled adapted properties let to applicants with an identified need for those adaptations





- d) Customer Complaints – **report to the Partnership Board/EMG detailing nature and customer profile of complaints to inform service improvement.**

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012


4. Summary of the Key issues and Actions arising from JRF Evaluation of North Yorkshire Home Choice 2012/13:

This document is a working document and as such is updated and amended annually and following the completion and publication of evaluations carried out. In 2012 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation funded the University of Birmingham and Heriot-Watt University to carry out an Evaluation of North Yorkshire Home Choice. The full report is due in 2013. The EIA has been reviewed 2012 in light of their initial findings and the relevant interventions required included within the Equalities Action Plan (see APPENDIX 2):

i. Evidence Paper 1: Analysis of CBL Data

Issue Area	Evaluation Response
Gold Banding	 Variances across Area in relation to Need help bidding, Serious health/well-being issue and requirement for adapted property . Need to ensure consistency in interpretation of the policy, thresholds applied and resources available across the area to address these variances. Investigation at a local level to confirm if there are significant contextual issues affecting results (i.e. particular profile of applicants in one area to another such as elderly, disabled)
Good Neighbours	 Variances across Area requiring further investigation to ensure standardisation of assessment processes between partner landlords. Issue for EIA as affects ability of applicants requiring to move/downsize due to financial reasons.
Non Bidders	 Significant number of non-bidders and limited information as to why. Important for EIA to ensure that those who have expressed that they need help with bidding are having their needs met.
Vulnerable Groups	 On the whole vulnerable people are not disadvantaged with the exception of older persons. “Need to reach out to older persons” and develop actions accordingly

ii. Evidence Paper 2: Home Choice Customer Perspectives: Survey results









Issue Area	Evaluation Response
Customer Service contacts	 The importance of face to face contact and leaflets was evidenced. This has relevance for the EAP to ensure staff are well trained and informed and the website/leaflets are up to date, clear and draw attention to key sources of information and how to use them for more effective bidding. Work required to address issue of consistency and quality of advice given

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

iii. Evidence Paper 3: Review of Customer Facing Materials:

The focus of this evaluation was the Scrutiny of customer-facing materials and bidding methods with regards to their usefulness for vulnerable users. The evaluation was completed in December 2011 and the full report is appended to this document.










In brief the key findings of the evaluation of documents/website were:

Document/media	Evaluation Response
Key areas covered	
Application Form:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation • Easy read/Braille 	 It is reasonable to provide Translation, large print and/or Braille copies of this form on request. Recommendation: Review annually
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to use the scheme 	 Recommends amendment to request vulnerability details of applicants who require advocate. Action already actioned in subsequent revision of Application Form 2011.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of vulnerabilities 	 The list is restrictive with only 5 “closed” options covering broad areas Recommendation: Extend list and include lack of English or literacy skills and Mental health issues.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants under 18 	 Useful category capturing information to link to legal responsibilities. Recommendation: Link questions to outcome star data collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptations 	 List of adaptations in place or required does not include relevant adaptations for visually impaired Recommendation: Include “reflective stripes”, facilities/space for guide dogs Q35 does not include adaptations required by other household members: Recommendation: change wording to “what adaptations do you or other people in your household need.....”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health, housing and support 	 Missed opportunity to collect relevant data on all household members. Recommendation: To amend in accordance with Appendix B. Change wording to “ Do you or your family have health or disability problems that are affected by your current home and could be improved by moving to another home?”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equalities Monitoring 	 Useful data collection for Equalities Monitoring Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication 	 Collects vulnerability information but options for communication incomplete Recommendation: Include Home visit


NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

Document/media	Evaluation Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key areas covered • Other issues 	<p>⇒ Recommendations: Consideration of including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signature for advocate • Posting of property sheets • Tenancy sustainment support referral • Economic status details <p>Use of “registration” and “application” interchangeable throughout document has already been action in subsequent revision of Application Form 2011.</p>
<p>Guide to completing the application form:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation • Easy read/Braille 	<p>⇒ It is reasonable to provide Translation, large print and/or Braille copies of this form on request. Recommendation: Review annually</p>
<p>Easy Read Guide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation • Easy read/Braille • Map 	<p>⇒ Format of guide is easy to follow. It has clearly benefitted from plain English review. It is reasonable to provide Translation, large print and/or Braille copies of this form on request. Recommendation: To add accessibility, translation or assistance-related information.</p> <p>⇒ Recommendation: Amend Graph to be meaningful in black and white</p>
<p>Full Scheme Guide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last Page 	<p>⇒ Does not include notice of assistance for people with reading/completion difficulties Recommendation: Include assistance details</p>
<p>NY Housing Allocation Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last Page 	<p>⇒ Does not include notice of assistance for people with reading/completion difficulties Recommendation: Include assistance details</p>
<p>Guide to supporting Others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last Page 	<p>⇒ Does not include notice of assistance for people with reading/completion difficulties Recommendation: Include assistance details</p>
<p>Home Choice Website :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation facilities 	<p>⇒ Browsealoud, Google Translate and changeable text-size available. Recommendations: Google Translate has “limitations” and should promote Language Line and put icon on all pages.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charitable status 	<p>⇒ Link to further details of housing associations Recommendation: Change name of link to “restrictions”</p>



NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

Document/media	Evaluation Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key areas covered 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acronyms 	 CBL is used without explaining what it stands for Recommendation: Ensure use full title when first used within a document/page or only use descriptive term “Home Choice”.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property Search 	 Dummy link leading no where Recommendation: Delete (?)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverts 	 Identical pictures used Recommendation: Include caption “picture of similar and not actual property”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorable date Login 	 Use of date may not be “memorable” Recommendation: Explore other formats for memorable data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent Lets list 	 Clarity required for Band and Priority Band Date titles amended to Band and Priority Date. Consideration of providing information in another format not possible within confines of system
Registration Form (online)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time to complete 	 Applicants only have 30 minutes to complete first section before “time out” and data not saved. Recommendation: To extend period or have a “save later” option
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area selection 	 Electronic application includes facility to select areas of choice although not clear if subsequently able to bid for properties outside this selection Recommendation: To provide clarity on webpage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIN /Memorable data 	 Applicants receive Memorable date, PIN Number (in date format) and Unique reference number Recommendation: To rationalise requirement for memorable data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erroneous messages 	 After first few pages message “ You currently do not have an active social housing application. Click here.....” Recommendation: Delete message At end of process – message displayed “Currently you are not eligible to bid...” Recommendation: Replace with “You can’t bid yet because your application is pending.”





The evaluation of the bidding methods concluded:

Method	Evaluation Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key areas covered 	
Bidding by Phone	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated phone line 	 Automated and multi-lingual telephone line not advertised in Easy Read Guide Recommendation: Include number in Easy Read Guide

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type Talk 		Facility is not available Recommendation: Consider providing facility for people with speech and hearing difficulties
Bidding on Line		Unable to test

The evaluation of assistance available concluded:






Method		Evaluation Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key areas covered 		
Assistance/support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual Impairment Learning Disability Mobile Travellers 		Consistency of assistance and availability of home visits across the Sub-region is unknown Recommendation: Scope assistance available for each client group and document/signpost
Induction Loops / Language line		Consistency of Hearing Loops & Language Line across the Sub-region PACs is unknown Recommendation: Scope availability of Loops across sub-region PACs
Postal copies of Newsletter		Unable to request Recommendation: Review policy of no postal newsletters (?)
Newsletter adverts		In English only Recommendation: more use of symbols and pictures

The recommendations have been included within the Equalities Action Plan and when actioned will address access and utilisation issues for the following client groups:

- Clients with visual sensory impairment
- Clients with hearing impairment
- Clients with mobility difficulties
- Clients with poor or no command of English
- Clients with learning difficulties
- Clients with literacy difficulties
- Mobile Travellers

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

iv. Evidence Paper 4: Focus Groups and Depth Interviews:

Issue Area	Evaluation Response
Priority groups, support and barriers	 Uncertainty that the needs of vulnerable groups are reflected in Home Choice priorities, barriers have been overcome and whether rurality is an issue or not. Further investigation or on-going monitoring required to ensure that we are not complacent.
People with learning difficulties	 Mis-fit/match of whether Home Choice can meet the long term or emergency housing needs of people with a learning difficulties. Further work required to ensure that “road map” to housing for LD “fits” with Home Choice and Social Care support requirements.
Support worker role	 Looking specifically at Mental health and G&T – how can support be organised in a consistent way across the Area and also provide consistent advice.
Training for Support workers	 Identified need for rolling programme of training for support workers across the Area to promote access to support and consistency of advice
Financial constraints affecting external support services	 Intervention required to mitigate the potential loss of external support services – through increasing support capacity of statutory services e.g. Libraries?

v. Evidence Paper 5: Lettings in North Yorkshire: Before and after Home Choice:

Initial reading of the analysis has not identified any specific issues for the EIA/EAP

Consultation Summary (Autumn 2009)

This Project is Sub Regional involving seven local authority areas.

Each authority had consultation arrangements in place already relating to the operation of its Affordable Housing Allocation Scheme. These arrangements remain in place post NY Home Choice implementation. Typically, the seven authorities and their partners undertake Customer Satisfaction surveys with new tenants, which covers the experience of being an applicant.

The scheme presently involves a range of stakeholders:

- The seven local authorities with their three transfer partners
- A number of Independent Housing Associations operating in North Yorkshire
- The York and North Yorkshire 'Supporting People' services
- NYY PCT
- North Yorkshire HARP (Housing Advice Resource Project – an independent housing advice agency)

Subsequent to the finalising of the initial 'draft proposal', the formal Consultation period commenced w/c 27th July 2009 for 12 weeks. This included:

- A minimum of 7 open days for the public and for invited agencies with an interest in this matter.
- All applicants to receive a copy of the draft proposal and to have an opportunity for comment
- Focus groups of staff drawn from each of the 10 partners
- A questionnaire for the public
- Co-ordinated media strategy
- Attendance by staff involved in the project at public forums such as Parish councils etc
- A briefing for from the Project Manager for all stakeholders.
- Drop in sessions for specific groups, extending beyond the formal consultation period.

There was also on-going Consultation activity. The cross partner sub group examining the Medical Need and Vulnerability strategy within the emerging new scheme was invited by the Project Board to continue for the lifetime of the entire project. The Sub Group was re-named the 'Equalities Monitoring Group' and carries out the following tasks: (Please refer to the Equalities Monitoring Group Terms of Reference)

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

- Ensure the key recommendations of this assessment are implemented
- Monitor emerging good practice in this area
- Ensure the access needs of all a scheme users are met

This group developed the User Guides for people with Learning Disabilities and/or literacy skills.

The results of Consultation were incorporated into the final design of the scheme; a full report of the formal public Consultation is available on request from the Project Manager karen.jackson@york.gov.uk or on www.northyorkshirehomechoice.org.uk.

5. Summary of the Key issues and Actions arising:

Summary	Action Identified	Intervention completed
Key issues identified	1. Access for applicants with low literacy level or very little English.	√
	2. Access issues for people who are chaotic or very elderly/infirm	√
	3. Ensure the public can receive advice and support at a properly facilitated office or Customer Access Point.	√
	4. Ensure that geographically isolated customers can access the scheme, even without IT access in their home.	√
	5. Need for a variety of information formats	√
Key action points	1. Establishment of the 'Equalities Monitoring Group for the lifetime of the project, with representation from the ten partners and relevant stakeholders.	√
	2. Need for the scheme to embrace an outreach strategy for isolated or vulnerable customers	√
	3. User Guides in a variety of formats for different needs	√
	4. Need for assisted bidding for identified highly vulnerable clients on the basis of informed consent.	√
	5. Need for the public to be able to access the scheme both from home or from a public office, without financial disincentive.	√

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

Equalities actions identified by the lettings scheme:

Action Identified	Intervention completed/progress
The EMG will jointly develop the guidance on health with the NHS.	The EMG sample a percentage of medical assessment forms to check that consistency is being achieved
Tailored user guides for certain groups (hearing impaired, sight impaired, speakers of some languages other than English, people with Learning Disabilities, etc) will be provided	User guides completed
Where necessary and with informed consent, <i>assisted bidding</i> will be undertaken by an appropriate key worker, friend or relative on behalf of their client	Bidding patterns are monitored to identify vulnerable clients who are not bidding
People who are self identifying as vulnerable will be contacted to establish how they can be supported	Integrated within application registration process
The scheme will ensure that applicants can highlight support needs on their application form	Integrated within application registration process
Automated bidding will be available to customers on a referral basis	Integrated within application registration process
Applicants will be able to receive help completing an application at any public office supporting the scheme	A flexible approach will be taken as to what constitutes a 'public office' supporting the scheme. Information on the scheme could be provided from a variety of locations.

Three at risk issues were highlighted and addressed prior to implementation:

- (1) A method for sampling health assessments to be formulated - this will need the design of a common interview form - completed
- (2) Support to people who have self identified as vulnerable could be less effective or frequent due to possible staffing cuts – not raised as an issue post implementation
- (3) The likelihood is that there will be fewer locations in rural places that can support the scheme, again as a result of the public expenditure cuts, Customers who are simply disenfranchised by geography/lack of internet access will be able to make informal telephone contact with participating offices, such customers could also be assisted at existing outreach Housing Management surgeries provided by partner landlords. These solutions will be partly compromised by public expenditure cuts – potential cuts to library services were not implemented and other access points within voluntary and community group buildings were identified.

The EMG has met regularly to advise the board on how to progress these commitments and issues highlighted as needing attention.

Equalities Action Plan (EAP) 2012

Action description	By who?	By when?	Comments
RACE			
<p>Gypsy, Travellers and Show People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To scope assistance available across the Area To investigate how support can be organised in a consistent way across the Area to provide a consist level and quality of advice. 	<p>XX in association with Supporting People and Horton Housing</p>		
<p>Non-speaking/reading English:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To investigate limitations of “Google Translate” to see if alternative vocabulary could be used To scope availability of Language Line across the area and address gaps in provision 	<p>XX in association with NYCC Community Cohesion workers</p>		
DISABILITY			
<p>Visual and Hearing Impairment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To scope assistance available across the area for people with Visually impairment To scope availability of Induction Loops across the area and address gaps in provision To investigate Type Talk options for people with speech and hearing difficulties 			

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – **NOV 2012**

Action description	By who?	By when?	Comments
DISABILITY Contd.....			
Learning Disability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To scope assistance available across the area for people with Learning disability • To investigate whether Home Choice can meet the long term or emergency housing needs of people with Learning Difficulties and “fit” with Social Care support requirements. 			
Health & Wellbeing Priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure consistency of applying policy thresholds for health and wellbeing status: • To establish mechanism for sampling of health and well being cases • To investigate variances across area 	NY Homechoice coordinator and CYC	March 2012	From 2013 bi-monthly health & wellbeing meeting held. Review policy & process. Review cases. Promote consistency across SR.
Mental health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider focus on impacts of Homechoice on clients with mental health problems • To investigate how can support and advice be delivered in a consistent way across the Area 	Equalities Group	July 2012	Lorraine Gould to lead initial scoping – consider whether still relevant following JRF findings
Non-bidders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To investigate reasons for non-bidding • To investigate variances across the area • To address barriers to non-bidding 	Each Locality to confirm if there are significant contextual issues affecting results (i.e. particular profile of applicants such as elderly, disabled)		

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

Action description	By who?	By when?	Comments
AGE			
Reaching out to the elderly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consult with older persons groups • To investigate age specific barriers to access • To develop actions accordingly 			
FINANCIAL INCLUSION			
Good Neighbours: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure standardisation of Good Neighbour assessment processes between partner landlords to enable opportunities for households to downsize. 			
RURALITY (Access)			
Telephone Advertising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make recommendations to Project Board about roll out of telephone advertising service 	HF and NY Homechoice coordinator	March 2012	
Customer Face to Face contacts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) To carry out audit of PACs to identify and address gaps in provision across the area b) To introduce rolling programme of training for staff to ensure quality and consistency of advice given c) To develop interventions to mitigate the potential loss of external support services – through increasing support capacity of statutory services e.g. Libraries? 			

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – **NOV 2012**

Action description	By who?	By when?	Comments
WEBSITE AND DOCUMENT IMPROVEMENTS			
Amendments to Application Form: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of vulnerabilities to include lack of English , literacy skills and Mental health issues. • under 18 questions linked to outcome star • Increase Adaptation options/amend wording • Health Housing and support – amend wording • Communication – add home visit • Other issues to consider including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Signature for advocate ○ Posting of property sheets ○ Tenancy sustainment support referral ○ Economic status details 			
Amendments to Guides (Easy read, Scheme Guide, Allocations Policy, Supporting Others) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend colour of Map • Add Accessibility/translation info • Add assistance details on back page • Add automated phone line number 	Nina Pinder	May 2012	
Amendments to Website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of languageline due to limitations of Google Translate – include icons on all pages. • Amend Charitable status link to “restrictions” • Check and correct use of Acronyms 			

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – **NOV 2012**

Action description	By who?	By when?	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dummy links – deleted • Improve picture detail of adverts • Use of symbols in adverts • Explore memorable data formats 			
Improvements to on line registration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend period before timed out • Clarification for areas of choice • Rationalise “memorable” data (s) • Delete/amend erroneous messages 			
Review of all documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure Translation/Easy Read/Braille version “on request” meets customer requirements 	Equalities Group	Annually – July 2012	
Newsletter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increase use of symbols and pictures b) Improve “Recent Lets Page” to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better headings/clearer wording • ADD OTHER SUGGESTIONS AS PER RESEARCH 			
OTHER			
Monitoring Framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To produce monitoring framework reports and information quarterly • To develop plan for capturing and monitoring customer feedback • To refresh and revise EIA and keep under review 	NY Homechoice coordinator Equalities Group	By January 2012, and quarterly thereafter July 2012	Customer survey in place. Periodic review required - Revised Draft Version in light of JRF analysis Nov 2012
EMG Membership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review membership of Equalities Group to ensure appropriate scrutiny and support 	CYC – Adult Services?	January 2012	Further to feedback received about ongoing operation of Homechoice

NORTH YORKSHIRE HOME CHOICE – EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT V7 – NOV 2012

Action description	By who?	By when?	Comments
OTHER Contd.....			
Complaints & Review Procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop complaints and review procedures for Homechoice 	NY Homechoice coordinator/CYC	December 2011	Responsibility of Project Co-ordinator to monitor centrally.
Posted Newsletters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To annually review policy “not to send out Newsletters” 	Equalities Group	July 2012	
Up Bidding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To quarterly monitor the use of discretion used by landlords in advertising and letting 2+ bedroomed properties to singles/couples or others into larger properties than their bedroom need (as per Housing Benefit regulations) 			