

Equality Impact Assessment Stage Three – Telling the Story

Name of service area/policy/strategy reviewed

Unauthorised Occupants & Squatters Policy

Who was consulted and what were the issues?

Consultation undertaken & who was engaged

- Survey/Questionnaire to tenants who have expressed an interest through the menu of options to take part in surveys
- Staff via a questionnaire

Issues identified by staff

- There may be reason to believe less favourable treatment of equality groups as there may be instances where the unauthorised occupant/s do not speak or read English as their first language or are suffering from mental health problems or have learning difficulties
- You should engage with persons in equality groups by offering support where necessary
- There should be a section on the website where you can report unauthorised occupants or squatters
- You should visit all tenancies through existing contact i.e. gas servicing, census update or planned visits
- Engage with diversity groups by using census information to identify groups and target with specific consultation
- Awareness of the need to provide policy and information in alternative formats if requested
- Should be quicker timeline for abandonment so as to stop items such as boilers and kitchens being removed from vacant properties being
- Should have links with tenancy fraud agenda
- Move away from time limits and use term “as soon as practicable”

Issues identified by tenants

- If an incident should occur we would expect a quick and efficient response from CHA to protect the tenants already living in nearby properties
- CHA should promote this policy more on the website and in newsletters
- Have a specific service leaflet for this Policy
- Visit all CHA properties on a regular basis to ensure correct tenants are living at the address
- From this service I would expect less derelict houses and less squatters which runs down the housing in the area
- I believe there is less favourable treatment of equality groups and that some receive better treatment and put to the top of all waiting lists based upon their diverse needs.

Actions identified

Action	Who	When
<p>1 - Carry out a full review of the Unauthorised Occupants and Squatters Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out consultation with staff, tenants and Tenancy management Review Team. • Benchmark policy against other top performing Registered Providers and share/consider best practice. • Write revised policy and present revised policy to Board for approval. • Promote new policy on website, intranet and in newsletters. • Carry out “Kick Start” Event for staff once approved by Board. • Implement new procedure, advertise where appropriate. 	<p>Colin Croxton</p>	<p>August 2010</p> <p>August 2010</p> <p>August 2010</p> <p>September 2010</p> <p>September 2010</p> <p>September 2010</p>
<p>2 - Update CHA website to be more informative, interactive and easy to use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check other Registered Provider’s websites for examples of best practice. • Review any changes that need to be made with Julie McNally, Resident Involvement Officer. • Implement changes to tenant webpage/s. • Monitor effectiveness of changes made to website pages, and also assess how many people have utilised the information via the CHA website. 	<p>Colin Croxton</p> <p>Colin Croxton/ Julie McNally</p> <p>Colin Croxton</p> <p>Colin Croxton</p>	<p>August 2010</p> <p>August 2010</p> <p>September 2010</p> <p>December 2010</p>
<p>3 - Research and consider potential for annual tenancy updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark with other Registered Providers and review best practice in this area. • Discuss with staff and Tenancy Management Review Team • If process to be used implement, and monitor effectiveness, including reporting back on progress/performance to tenants. 	<p>Colin Croxton</p>	<p>August 2010</p> <p>October 2010</p> <p>December 2010</p>

Outcomes for customers

A number of recommendations from tenants will be used to shape changes to the Unauthorised Occupants and Squatters Policy, which include:

- Make the policy more user friendly and easier to understand for tenants
- Use less acronyms and abbreviations in the policy
- Ensure full use of tenant profiling
- Review the policy to ensure it does not contain unnecessary “red tape” which can slow up or hinder processes without having any legal standing
- Make the website more user friendly and informative/allow opportunity to report tenancy fraud etc.
- Provide the most secure form of tenure compatible with the purpose of providing housing and promoting sustainability of the community
- Improve work with partners and outside agencies in relation to tenancy fraud
- Have tenancy agreements in use which meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements
- Report back to tenants how CHA are meeting obligations in relation to offering and managing tenancies
- Develop services that support tenants to maintain their tenancy and to prevent unnecessary evictions
- Conduct regular tenancy audits to ensure the correct persons are occupying CHA properties

Conclusion

The assessment has enabled CHA to look closer at its Unauthorised Occupants and Squatters Policy and how best to provide a service, which is accessible to all.

Areas of action identified through the assessment will be incorporated into a wider action plan. The Action Plan includes a full review of Unauthorised Occupants & Squatters service will be undertaken by September 2010 and further potentials enhancements, which will be investigated and implemented, if appropriate, by December 2010.

All actions and service improvements will be included in the CHA Service Improvement Plan.