SARTH Common Allocations Policy Equality Impact Assessment

Name of project, policy, function, service or proposal being assessed	SARTH Common Allocations Policy (CAP)
Names and roles of officers completing this assessment	Gary Jordan (Cartrefi Conwy), Roy Carroll (Tai Clwyd), Nik Weatherall (WWH), Neil Moffat (Clwyd Alyn), Viv Perry(North Wales Housing), Faye Davies (FCC), Dawn Kent (FCC)
Department or Directorate	Housing Departments in each partner
Contact details of lead officer for this assessment	Lead Officers as on SARTH Steering group
Date assessment completed	13.06.13.

1. **Aims and Objectives of the project, policy, function, service or proposal being assessed**

		Action Points (these have been transferred to section 3)
Is this an existing project, policy, function or service, a review or a new proposal?	New policy; existing function	
What are the aims and objectives of the service?	AIM: To allocate our social housing stock in a transparent, fair, consistent and accessible way, which prioritises the people in our communities according to their housing needs and which meets our legal requirements. (p.2 in CAP) OBJECTIVES (GUIDING PRINCIPLES, p. 5 in CAP):	

	- To ensure that preference for social housing is given to those in housing need and that those in greatest need are given the highest priority. - To give higher priority to applicants with a local connection to the area for which they are making an application than to those who have no such connection - To ensure that the system is fair, confidential and accessible to all potential applicants. - To make the best use of all the available housing stock - To ensure consistency in the way in which applicants are treated by all the partner organisations - To provide a responsive service that treats everyone as an individual - To empower applicants and support them to make informed and realistic choices about where they want to live - To provide appropriate, accurate and realistic advice relating to the availability of affordable housing at the point of application - To maximise applicant satisfaction and improve the applicant service	
What are the main activities of the service?	To allocate social housing and provide housing options advice.	
Will the service be contracted out or commissioned?	No	

Will it be delivered in partnership?	Delivery is to be decided by all partners. Delivery may be led by one or more partners.	This should be monitored for equality impact when decision is made.
Which staff members will carry out the function?	To be decided. Will be designated officers in administering partner organisations. Lets to be done by each partner landnord.	This should be monitored for equality impact when decision is made. Comprehensive training will be required for those involved in delivery of function
Who is responsible for the service?	Heads of service for each partner.	
Whose needs is this service designed to meet? How does it fit in with the wider aims of the organisation?	Everyone who comes to us looking for housing: - To offer advice to each customer on affordable housing - Register those identified by policy to be in need - Allocate social housing to those identified to be in most need The policy fits with the wider aims of each partner.	1. There should be a fundamental review of monitoring to determine how to monitor the effect of advice: - Storing information - Monitoring outcomes - Record all responses, including those who do not want to say/respond - How will IT allow us to do this? – this should be considered when specifying and procuring IT 2. Each partner to provide reference for where it fits with wider aims

| Are there any aspects of the service which will be governed by the service provider's judgement? If so, is there clear guidance for staff to prevent any bias? | Yes, decisions relating to the following:
Eligibility (section 6);
Local connection (section 10);
Banding and registration (section 11 and appendix);
Reduced priority (section 12);
Allocation in relation to household size (section 13 and 14);
Offers and refusals (section 15)
Removal from the register (section 16);
Development of local letting policies (section 17);
Review of allocation policy (section 18);
Reviews and appeals (section 19) | Robust procedures must be developed to give guidance for interpreting the scheme. The procedural document should be developed as a live document and continually reviewed. Training should be provided on interpretation of policy.
Links should be made to legislation, e.g. 1996 housing act and 2002 homelessness act, as stated in policy.
These aspects should be considered when determining service model used. |

2. Notes on analysis

Each partner carried out an analysis of their register to assess the impact of the proposed policy. This involved reassessing applicants and banding them in the new scheme. Cartrefi Conwy carried this out for their whole register. Other partners carried through partial analyses, depending on what was possible with their registers. Each partner looked at cases to estimate the impact. There was no observed impact resulting from moving from the current scheme to a banding scheme. This was judged to be consistent with the intended approach to base the scheme on the housing act categories. However, various actions were identified to ensure there was no impact resulting from how the policy is implemented and administered. These are set out below.

Cartrefi Conwy mapped the points awarded to current applicants onto the proposed SARTH Banding scheme. An analysis was then made of different size properties in Llandudno and in Penmaenmawr to look at the potential impact on the protected characteristics.

Clwyd Alyn examined their list and estimated which current applicants would no longer be registered because they would not meet the criteria. This allowed them to consider whether this effect disproportionately affected any group.

Flintshire council and North Wales Housing examined a particular area, in Connah's Quay and Colwyn Bay respectively, and re-banded the applicants in the SARTH bands. This allowed them to see whether there was any disproportionate effect on any group.

The results are set out in the table below.

Age	Impact or potential impact of the change to proposed SARTH banding scheme	Actions to mitigate
Identify the impact/potential impact of the service on older people and younger people.	No observed impact due to banding scheme. Flintshire County Council (FCC) looked at 2 bed properties in Connah's Quay. No significant impact by age. Cartrefi Conwy (CC): considered 1,2,3 and 4 bed properties in Penmaenmawr. There was no significant swing from one age group to another. Clwyd Alyn (CAHA): examined which applicants would be removed from the list. Estimated this to be 329 out of 2109, and there is normal spread across age groups: <table><tr><td>Age group</td><td>Number of people</td></tr><tr><td>17-24</td><td>57</td></tr><tr><td>25-44</td><td>147</td></tr></table>	

	45-59	65			
	60+	59			

North Wales Housing (NWH): Looked at Colwyn Bay flat 1 or 2 bed. Ages range across age spectrum and are spread across the bands. No identified impact.

Gender	Impact or potential impact	Actions to mitigate
Identify the impact/potential impact of the service on women, men and transgender people.	FCC: allocations to couples are slightly raised in the model. This is not significant. CAHA: the split between males and female main applicants in the group who come off the register in the model is as expected: Male=119; female=210. This is similar to the overall picture. CC: Overall, there is no significant impact. The case of I bedroom properties shows on first examination, some impact. However, the nature of the impact varies when we look at different bands. To enable this analysis, we looked at how many people ell into each band in the proposed policy. This determined the size of the groups into which to break the current register. We then broke the current register into the same size groups, so we can compare the same segments of the list. We included group 5, corresponding to the people who would be removed from the register in SARTH (44 applicants) and the people who fell into the bottom group of 44 in the current register. This gives the following table:	Procedural clarification is needed regarding when people are deemed to be sharing facilities. The EIA has been done by Cartrefi Conwy on the assumption that people still living at home, but over 18, are viewed as sharing facilities with people not part of their household and hence given band 2 or 4, depending on local connection. If the interpretation is counter to this, a further analysis should be done to ensure no impact occurs, particularly in relation to I bedroom properties.

Band/ group	CC current register		SARTH proposed scheme		
	F	M	F	M	TOTAL
1	1	5	5	1	6
2	15	24	9	30	39

3	0	0	0	0	0
4	9	7	5	11	16
Unregistered/5	17	27	23	21	44

We see more females in band 1 compared to group 1 in the current register and also more females in band 5 (unregistered compared to bottom of current register); we see more males in bands 2 and 4. Overall, we might interpret this has a swing in favour of males, though the increased number of females in band 1 might mean that in reality more females would be re-housed – it would depend on supply.

However, when we look at the reasons for these changes, we see that they are a result of justifiable policy decisions and not arbitrary discrimination:

In considering actual examples of female applicants who have moved down the list and would be unregistered in SARTH, we see that they are all either owner-occupiers or private tenants who are under-occupying. They get points for this in Cartrefi Conwy's scheme but would not get any priority in SARTH, because they are not tenants of a partner landlord. So, this apparent negative impact on females is due to the policy of giving priority to under-occupying tenants of partner landlords but not to other people under-occupying, and is a policy decision in response to welfare changes.

On the other hand, the observed swing from males to females at the very top of the list (band 1 in SARTH compared to the top 6 on Cartrefi Conwy's current list) is simply a result of the SARTH policy of prioritising under-occupation of their tenants and of urgent medical. In this case, these were disproportionately female.

When we considered 2,3 and 4 bedroom properties in Penmaenmawr, we did not observe similar swings and similar skewed consequences of the SARTH policy. Overall, we have the following results for Penmaenmawr applicants:

Band/ group	CC current register		SARTH proposed scheme		
	F	M	F	M	
1	4	5	8	1	9
2	46	32	41	37	78
3	1	0	1	0	1
4	11	8	7	12	19
5	69	40	74	35	109

Overall, the picture shows no significant impact in any direction.

Regarding the interpretation of the policy we make the following comment: In making their analysis, Cartrefi Conwy followed their own current policy regarding when to classify people as sharing facilities. This means that people who stay at home and live with their parents would get sharing facilities points when they become 18 9cartrefi Conwy call this "insecure tenancy" but classify it as sharing facilities for pointing. The partnership needs to agree the procedural interpretation of 2sharing facilities" in the SARTH policy and ensure that the decision does not impact one group over another. If the procedural decision is different to Cartrefi Conwy's interpretation, then an analysis of the impact should be made, in particular in relation to I bedroom properties, where this may have most impact. Whilst this was brought out by the analysis of sex, it is a more general point and will be recorded as such in section 3 of this document.

NWH: no significant change was observed.

Disability	Impact or potential impact	Actions to mitigate

| Identify the impact/potential impact of the service on disabled people (ensure consideration of a range of impairments, e.g. physical, sensory impairments, learning disabilities, long-term illness). | Partners found it difficult to transfer the information on their current registers across to the SARTH bands in order to re-band applicants. Partners acknowledged the general difficulty in determining when to award medical or disability points and the difficulty in determining the exact reason why points or bands were awarded in their current schemes in order to translate this into the SARTH scheme.

This is evidence that the wording should be changed slightly to make this task more precisely achievable. It is suggested that we change the band 1 category 1© definition to: "has serious physical or mental illness, disability or mental condition or behavioural disorder, which is causing serious dysfunction to themselves or the family unit such that they are completely unable to cope in their present accommodation and re-housing would alleviate the problem. For example, terminal illness or advanced progressive condition."

The purpose of this is to make it clear that this case is at a higher level of unsatisfactory housing than the band 2 case. This will allow the assessing organisation to differentiate more easily between levels of medical need and award bands in a way that does not significantly change how prioritisation is done. On the other hand the development of the accessible housing register should deliver a better service to customers. Moreover, the decision to allow disabled people to register on the general needs and accessible registers will increase options. This way, adaptable properties will also be available.

NWH: limited evidence that disabled people might be more advantaged - of 11 disabled people in the list for Colwyn bay, 4 moved from band 2 to band 1. | Ensure procedural guidance is clear to guide assessment.

Ensure evidence is required.

Ensure implementation and training emphasize equal access to housing and policy of giving disabled people preference for adapted housing and giving disabled people access to adaptable housing. |
| **Race/Ethnicity** | **Impact or potential impact** | **Actions to mitigate** |

Identify the impact/potential impact of the service on Black and minority ethnic (BME) people.	The data is partial because of people not giving information. But what we have shows very few people from different ethnicities on the registers, which reflects the general population. For example, CAHA evidence shows 18 out of 329 people removed from the register are non white British. This reflects the background population: DCC: 99.3% are white British FCC: 97.8% white British CCBC: 98.2 white British	
Sexual Orientation	**Impact or potential impact**	**Actions to mitigate**
Identify the impact/potential impact of the service on gay, lesbian and bisexual people.	There are too few people on the register who state they are not heterosexual for meaningful analysis.	Try and make monitoring better going forward to enable analysis.
Gender Re-assignment/ Identity	**Impact or potential impact**	**Actions to mitigate**
Identify the impact/potential impact on transgender people.	There is not enough data on the register for meaningful analysis	Try and make monitoring better going forward to enable analysis.
Pregnancy and	**Impact or Potential impact**	**Actions to Mitigate**

Maternity		
	No observed impact. In CAHA analysis, 47 out of 329 who come of the list are pregnant. This reflects the background data for the whole list.	
Marriage/Civil Partnership	**Impact or Potential impact**	**Actions to Mitigate**
	No observed impact.	
Religion and belief	**Impact or potential impact**	**Actions to mitigate**
Identify the impact/potential impact of the service on people of different religious and faith groups.	No observed impact. CAHA results table for applicants who would come off the list: | Religion	Number of people
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Hindu	1
Muslim	1
Christian	67
No religion	61
Not known/didn't say	199 | FCC and NWH also observed no impact.	
Language	**Impact or potential impact**	**Actions to mitigate**

Identify the impact/potential impact of the service on people of different language groups.	CAHA results table for applicants who would come off the list:	

Preferred Language of communication	Number of people
Welsh	1
Hungarian	1
English	182
Not declared	142

Transfer tenants	**Impact or potential impact**	**Actions to mitigate**
Identify the impact/potential impact of the service on transfer tenants	CAHA: 50 out of 329 applicants coming off the list are transfer tenants. These were tenants who were not in housing need and so this is a reasonable impact.	

3. Actions identified

Policy Amendments – these have been incorporated into the revised policy and taken to steering group

Strand	**Observation**	**Task**
Disability	Partners identified the difficulty in reassessing applicants in order to estimate the impact. It was agreed that the wording should allow the assessment to prioritise in a similar way to how partners currently prioritise and thus should not have a substantial impact. On the other hand the development of the accessible	Change the band 1 category 1© definition to: "has serious physical or mental illness, disability or mental condition or behavioural disorder, which is causing serious dysfunction to themselves or the family unit such that they are completely unable to cope in their present accommodation and re-housing would alleviate the problem. For example, terminal illness or advanced progressive

	housing register should deliver a better service to customers. Moreover, the decision to allow disabled people to register on the general needs and accessible registers will increase options. This way adaptable properties will also be available.	condition."
Sexual Orientation	DCC report feedback that young people sometimes become homeless because of issues related to them coming out in their local community. This may relate to hate crime or fear of violence and should be considered a reason to give band 1 priority	Do we need to amend wording in scheme to make it clear that this qualifies as band 1?
Pregnancy/ Maternity	In policy, a pregnant woman is eligible for 1 or 2 bedrooms and may justifiably refuse a 1 bed. Same argument would hold where pregnant woman already has children and would become eligible for more than 2 bedrooms.	Insert statement in policy that where woman is pregnant a review of their bedroom entitlement would be undertaken and they may be eligible for larger property?

Procedures outcomes – to be done during development of procedures and on-going

Strand	Observation	Task
all	Judgements are required in making assessments in relation to, e.g.: • Eligibility (section 6); • Local connection (section 10); • Banding and registration (section 11 and appendix),	Ensure all areas where staff must make judgements have clear guidance and governance relating to equalities considerations and legislation.

	including application form and medical assessment; • Reduced priority (section 12); • Allocation in relation to household size (section 13 and 14); • Offers and refusals (section 15) • Removal from the register (section 16); • Development of local letting policies (section 17); • Review of allocation policy (section 18); • Reviews and appeals (section 19)	
all	ASB. Policy proposes sanctions which can be applied if people have ASB. Policy has been amended to clearly state that each case must be examined in light of mitigating circumstances, including mental health.	Procedural developments need to ensure guidance is given on fair implementation of this.
All	The analysis was made on the assumption that people who are over 18 and sharing facilities at home with their parents or others would be classified as sharing facilities.	Procedural clarification is needed regarding when people are deemed to be sharing facilities. The EIA has been done by Cartrefi Conwy on the assumption that people still living at home, but over 18, are viewed as sharing facilities with people not part of their household and hence given band 2 or 4, depending on local connection. If the interpretation is counter to this, a further analysis should be done to ensure no impact occurs, particularly in relation to I bedroom properties.
disability	Giving false information. People with mental health problems or disability may give false information unintentionally or without understanding the consequences.	Guidance on how to deal with this fairly is required.

disability	Convictions and evictions – sections on sanctions. These may have happened illegally or without reasonable consideration of the person's disability or condition.	procedures should clarify that individual circumstances relating to disability or mental health may have led to evictions or convictions and these may mitigate the sanctions we would want to apply.
disability	People with a disability may require longer to arrange viewings or to make a decision on accepting or refusing an offer.	procedures must make clear that more time and support may be required for viewings and acceptance/refusals.
disability	Some people may require larger properties/extra bedrooms for, e.g. carer or storage of equipment.	The procedural document should give examples and clarify interpretation.
Disability and ethnicity	Complicated forms can be a barrier to those with learning difficulties or sensory impairment or language difficulties. Reliance on telephone or internet may also disadvantage certain people with communication difficulties.	Ensure forms are as clear and simple as possible. Access to the service should be by a diverse variety of means, including face to face, possibly with support, e.g. at central location or home visit. Ensure support is available and easily accessible for people to get advice and to apply. Ensure procedures and training makes clear duty to ensure access and support applicants. Need to ensure information is provided in alternative forms.
ethnicity	Gypsy and traveller customers: how would they be treated under the scheme if they wanted to leave their nomadic life?	Procedures should make clear that in this case, the applicant should be referred to homelessness, which would assess the case and this would normally apply. Awareness should be raised within

		this community about allocations.
ethnicity	Some people will require communication in different languages	Procedures must make clear that we will communicate in different languages and offer support.
Religion and belief	People may require particular facilities in a property for religious or cultural reasons. For example, Muslims or Jews may require two sinks in the kitchen or a shower.	Procedures must make clear that this would constitute reasonable grounds for refusal of viewing or offer.
Religion and belief	People within some religions/cultures may seek viewings/interviews with staff of particular gender and require particular cultural sensitivities to be met, e.g. taking off of shoes in house.	Procedures and training should ensure these factors are widely known and followed in the service.
Religion and ethnicity	Extended families are more likely in certain cultures. There is a danger that properties will not be available for such large families or that officers may not consider the extended family as part of the household.	Procedures should ensure it is clear that extended families can be part of household. Shortage of certain property types should be considered in relation to demand and development. Recording of enquiries, need and advice given will allow this to be monitored in relation to extended family size.
Sexual Orientation	DCC report feedback that young people sometimes become homeless because of issues related to them coming out in their local community. This may relate to hate crime or fear of violence and should be considered a reason to give band 1 priority	Procedures should highlight this possibility that someone may be fleeing hate crime or threat /fear of violence in relation to sexuality. This should be followed by homeless teams and homeless assessment should ensure correct communication

		to application officers so correct banding is awarded.
Age	ASB is related to age and so younger applicants will be more affected by sanctions than older, on average.	Procedures should make clear that implementation of policy should be fair, reasonable and legal.
Pregnancy/Maternity	In policy, a pregnant woman is eligible for 1 or 2 bedrooms and may justifiably refuse a 1 bed. Same argument would hold where pregnant woman already has children and would become eligible for more than 2 bedrooms.	Procedures should make clear that it is reasonable for someone to refuse a property when they are pregnant and will require extra bedroom within short space of time. This would apply whenever the future birth of a child may mean they become eligible for a larger property. Insert statement in policy that where woman is pregnant a review of their bedroom entitlement would be undertaken and they may be eligible for larger property.
Welsh language	Policy and approach needs to be bilingual.	1. Adhere to Welsh language legislation. 2. Ensure policy is available in Welsh. 4. Do housing options services need to be bilingual or have proportion of Welsh speaking officers? This may vary by area.

Service delivery development outcomes – to be done during service delivery development and ICT specification

Strand	Observation	Task
all	Assess delivery structure re. impact on equality, particularly in relation to partnership working	Assess delivery structure re. impact on equality, particularly in relation to partnership working
all	Monitoring: service delivery design should enable better recording of information on need and outcomes of advice given, in relation to equality and housing need IMPORTANT: specify IT to record presenting need in relation to equality and outcomes of getting advice.	Monitoring: service delivery design should enable better recording of information on need and outcomes of advice given, in relation to equality and housing need. Specify IT to record presenting need in relation to equality and outcomes of getting advice. Take this forward constructively with IT suppliers
gender	Location of HOT centres should not discourage women (or any other group) from attending	
Disability and ethnicity	Policy talks about need to make some things clear "in writing". Need to ensure information is also provided in other forms.	
Disability and ethnicity	Complicated forms can be a barrier to those with learning difficulties or sensory impairment. Reliance on telephone or internet may also disadvantage certain people with communication difficulties.	Ensure forms are as clear and simple as possible. Access to the service should be by a diverse variety of means, including face to face, possibly with support, e.g. at central location or home visit. Ensure support is available and easily accessible for people to get advice and to apply. Ensure procedures and training makes clear duty to ensure access and support applicants.
Religion and ethnicity	Extended families are more likely in certain cultures. There is a danger that properties will not be available for such large families or that officers may not consider the extended family as part of the household.	Procedures should ensure it is clear that extended families can be part of household. Shortage of certain property types should be considered in relation to demand and development. Recording of enquiries, need and advice given will allow this to be monitored in

		relation to extended family size. – ICT implications
Age	Having particular properties designated for particular age groups should be justified on basis of need.	This issue should be noted and fed into housing strategy by individual partners, to ensure the age designation of properties accords with recognised housing need. SARTH ICT should be specified to enable collecting of data on need in relation to age.
Age	Changes to housing benefit for people 35 and under - assumption they will share accommodation.	Needs monitoring. Budgeting advice should include this.
Welsh language	Policy and approach needs to be bilingual.	1. Adhere to Welsh language legislation. 2. Ensure all customer facing material is bilingual. 4. Do housing options services need to be bilingual or have proportion of Welsh speaking officers? This may vary by area.

Training outcomes – to be done in lead up to implementation and on-going

Strand	observation	Task
all	Equality awareness and issues should be embedded in service.	Setting up of HOTs must include equality training. Training outcomes should be embedded so that they are done for all new staff on ongoing basis.
Gender identity	Officers are not allowed to ask for evidence of gender reassignment and must be confidential.	Training must make clear what is good practice in relation to gender reassignment/identity.
all	Tasks require judgements	Training must ensure all areas where staff must make judgements have clear guidance and governance relating to equalities considerations and legislation.
all	As in procedures table	Pick up all the tasks listed under the policy and procedures above and cover in training.

Promotion and Marketing outcomes– to be done in lead up to implementation and on-going

Strand	Observation	task
ethnicity	Migrant workers should have awareness raised regarding rights and options	Promotion of SARTH leading up to implementation to migrant groups
age	Older people may not be aware of the policy or register or their options and hence miss out on opportunities.	Promotion of SARTH leading up to implementation to older people and groups
All	Awareness raising through community channels to all sections of community.	Awareness raising through community channels to all sections of community.

AHR development outcomes – being taken forward now by project officer and Jane Richardson. This to be fed through AHR group

Strand	Observation	task
disability	How will property type and matching of person to property be done?	Develop matching policy.
disability	Service needs to be accessible to all people with physical or mental disability and all vulnerable people.	Ensure service is accessible. Develop links with support agencies

APPENDIX B - SARTH CAP equality impact assessment 13 June 2013