



# Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

## INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

### Appendix 1

<b>Title of proposal:</b>  Introduction of Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy for Gateshead Council covering rent and service charges for residential properties and garages.	Age	Race	Sex	Gender reassignment	Disability	Religion or Belief	Pregnancy and Maternity	Sexual Orientation	Marriage and Civil Partnership	<b>Description of potential mitigation</b>
<b>Equality impact: (✓ all that apply. The assessment should also consider impact on council employees and carers where applicable)</b>  Annually the Council reviews it's rent and service charges to take account of inflation and other factors impacting the charges to tenants.  Rental increases will be applied equally to all HRA properties and therefore will not disproportionately impact a particular group.  Service charges will be calculated to ensure full cost recovery. This is to protect other tenants from	◀				◀					Increases in rent and service charges are subject to Government policy (The Rent Standard). Increases are limited to CPI +1% until 31 March 2026.  The Rent Standard also requests registered providers to limit service charge increases to within the same formula but allows flexibility to cover the recovery of the service cost.  In Gateshead over 70% of tenants are in receipt of welfare benefit either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. The proposal outlined in the policy to follow the formula for rents and service charges is in line with Government Policy and should therefore be



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<p>essentially contributing to costs that they are not responsible for. Where possible the proposed increases recover the full cost of services.</p> <p>We know that certain groups of tenants and types of accommodation such as older persons housing are subject to additional service charges as specified in the tenancy agreement.</p> <p>The Council does not know the full protected characteristics of all its tenants. We do know that a number of our tenants are older/younger and have disabilities so have identified these as being the most relevant to this impact assessment.</p>										<p>met by housing benefit or the housing element of universal credit.</p> <p>Information is accessible to tenants via the Council website regarding the services offered by Gateshead Council and our partners to assist tenants with paying their rent. Council services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice and Support Team - helping people to maximise their income.</li> <li>• Debt Advice Team – helping people manage their debts.</li> <li>• Rent and Income Team – helping people sustain their tenancies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Age:</b> There are 1,365 properties within sheltered accommodation which predominately has a minimum age of 60 that are likely to be disproportionately impacted due to the service charge increases associated with this type of accommodation.</p>	<p>Any reduction in the cost of a service is passed onto the tenant.</p> <p>Increases in rent will impact all tenants equally.</p>									
<p><b>Disability:</b> Demand for adaptations in council homes remains high, with a large proportion of residents defining themselves as having a disability.</p>	<p>The charges in these schemes are welfare benefit eligible and therefore given increases are in line with the Government policy they</p>									



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<p>In the last two years the Council has brought forward housing to specifically support people with disabilities.</p> <p>These properties have benefited from Homes England investment and as such are let on affordable rents with the service charges incorporated into the rent and will therefore be subject to increases which do not exceed the Government rent policy.</p> <p>Tenants requiring bespoke adaptations and extensions to their properties may incur additional charges as should the changes result in a change in the valuation of the property the rent for these properties may need be recalculated and may increase the amount payable.</p>	<p>should be met by benefits where tenants are eligible.</p>
<p><b>Health impact: (eg physical, mental health, wellbeing, substance misuse)</b></p> <p>The income raised through rents and service charges covers costs associated with their provision and the cost of delivering HRA services and will continue to ensure the sustainability of the HRA. This will enable continued investment in the housing stock including the development of new social housing to continue to meet the needs of Gateshead residents.</p> <p>The Health and Wellbeing Strategy identifies clear outcomes to support the delivery of “Gateshead Thrive”. Having access to good, safe housing is identified as one of the wider determinants of health and can play a vital role in the long-term health and wellbeing of an individual.</p> <p>The Asset Management Strategy underpinned by the HRA business plan outlines the priorities for investment in the stock. This not only includes maintaining standards required by legislation, but also additional investment in ensuring there is adequate resources to adapt and build new housing to meet the needs of those with disabilities and ensure older persons housing is fit for purpose.</p> <p>The Council’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 aims to eradicate rough sleeping in Gateshead, make homelessness a rare and one-off occurrence, and achieve positive</p>	<p>Any council tenants experiencing a negative impact on their health or wellbeing due to financial difficulties with increased rent and service charges, can access support from the specialist housing teams (advice and support, debt advice and rent and income) or from referrals to other partners as appropriate. All relevant information is provided on the Council website.</p>



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<p>outcomes for anyone who is homeless. The HRA will help to support delivery of this strategy through the provision of much needed new affordable homes, and in contributing to the delivery of services to support and realise sustainable tenancy solutions for vulnerable people.</p>	
<p><b>Socio Economic impact: (eg neighbourhood, ward, area of deprivation, household group, income, wealth)</b></p> <p>The policy applies to all tenancies regardless of their socio-economic status or location.</p> <p>Decisions on rent and service charge increases will be made on an annual basis considering a range of factors, including local context and potential socio-economic issues and impacts.</p> <p>Analysis of tenant impact undertaken as part of the annual rent setting process has indicated that it is those tenants not in receipt of benefits who will experience the increase in rent and service charges the most, as any proposed increases will not be offset by the benefits system but will need to be paid for from their household income.</p>	<p>See above regarding welfare support.</p>
<p><b>Environmental impact: (does the proposal impact on climate change and the Council’s commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030? Is the proposal in line with the Council’s Environmental Policy? Does the proposal increase natural resource use? Does the proposal increase waste? Does the proposal increase pollution? Does the proposal impact on wildlife? Does the proposal increase car use? Does the proposal increase energy use?)</b></p> <p>The proposed policy ensures the HRA continues to be sustainable which enables future investment in raising the standards of existing homes and building of new, more energy efficient affordable homes.</p>	
<p><b>Cumulative impact: (consider impact based on successive budgetary decisions relating to the proposal or is the proposal part of wider budgetary considerations that may collectively have an impact on service users, and is potentially at odds with the Thrive agenda)</b></p>	<p>Clients who are assessed for the provision of care call equipment will undergo a financial assessment to determine their ability to pay,</p>



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Some tenants are also Care Call recipients and the annual review of these charges will impact tenants in receipt of this service. The proposed impact of annual changes are assessed and subject to a tenant impact assessment to ensure the cumulative impact is understood.

and nobody will be asked to pay more than they are able to afford.

Depending upon the type of accommodation for some tenants the Care Call service charge is a requirement of the tenancy. Where this is the case, the charge is lower than the basic Care Call charge reflective of a housing sheltered scheme officer presence.

#### Summary of consultation/data/research undertaken to inform the assessment:

(eg feedback and engagement with service users, trade unions, employees, partners, public, benchmarking, case studies)

- Research was conducted on rent and service charge policies in place at other local authorities locally and nationally
- Consultation was undertaken with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group. The group made several recommendations which were implemented including – creation of a glossary, further explanation of terminology within the policy document, altering of document order to aid its understanding.
- Several operational, strategic and financial officers were consulted on the Policy

**Signed: (completing officer) Amy Davies – Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team Leader**

**Date: 02.09.24**

**Service Director: (approved)**



**Date: 07.10.24**