

Equality Impact Assessment: Report and EIA Action Plan

Purpose

<p>What is being reviewed?</p>	<p>Supported & Specialist Housing Strategy 2026 – 2036</p> <p>The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 requires English local authorities to develop local supported housing strategies and needs assessments, focusing on national standards, licensing, and better resident outcomes</p> <p>The Supported and Specialist Housing Strategy 2026 – 2036 sets out BCP’s aspirations over the next 10 years to deliver a choice of good quality accommodation to those BCP residents we support. The strategy focuses on the following resident groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people (over 65) • Working age adults with physical disabilities, long term conditions and/or sensory impairments • Adults with severe and enduring mental illness • Adults with learning disabilities and/or autistic people • People with complex housing histories and/or experiencing homelessness • Young people <p>The strategy considers projected future demand for supported and specialist housing across BCP and sets out how the council plans to meet this need up to 2036. It incorporates recent in-depth work from Housing and Social Care to provide a comprehensive view of the priorities for the next ten years.</p>
<p>Service Lead and Service Unit:</p>	<p>Strategic Housing & Partnerships - Housing and Public Protection Tracey Kybert – Specialist Housing Programme Lead</p>
<p>People involved in EIA process:</p>	<p>Tracey Kybert – Specialist Housing Programme Lead Kim Ward – Housing Related Support Commissioning Manager Ben Tomlin - Head of Strategic Housing & Partnerships Kelly Deane - Director of Housing and Public Protection Kieron Wilson - Portfolio Holder Stakeholders and those with Lived Experience of Specialist and Supported Housing</p>
<p>Date/s EIA started and reviewed:</p>	<p>September 2025</p>

Background

BCP’s population is expected to see significant changes in the coming years, which will drive increased demand for supported and specialist housing.

The Supported and Specialist Housing Strategy (2026-2036) is proposed to meet both local needs and new national requirements under the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, which places a statutory duty on local authorities to develop a Supported and Specialist Housing Strategy and prepare for licensing and compliance with forthcoming National Supported Housing Standards. This legislation aims to improve quality, safety, and accountability in supported housing provision.

Locally, the BCP area faces significant demographic and social changes, including an ageing population, rising demand for accessible and adaptable homes, and increasing numbers of residents with severe mental illness, learning disabilities, and complex housing histories. Without a clear, long-term strategy, there is a risk of widening health and housing inequalities.

Strategic Housing Partnership commissioned PPL to complete a comprehensive needs assessment on supported and specialist housing. This work was essential to meet both local priorities and new statutory requirements under the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, which requires local authorities to produce a Supported Housing Strategy, implement licensing schemes, and comply with forthcoming National Supported Housing Standards.

The needs assessment provides robust evidence on:

- Current and future demand for supported and specialist housing across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.
- Gaps in provision for key cohorts, including older people 65+, adults with disabilities, people with severe and enduring mental illness, learning disabilities/autistic people, young people (18-24), and those experiencing homelessness.

When delivering this Supported and Specialist Strategy, we will adhere to a set of key principles shaped by the needs assessment and informed by conversations with residents, staff, stakeholders and partners:

- **Genuine choice and control:** BCP Residents should have meaningful choices, not only the type of accommodation, but also in where they live and who they live with, so that their accommodation truly feels like home.
- **Independence:** Our goal is to enable residents to live as independently as possible, supported by housing options that empower and give them control over daily life.
- **Flexible care & support:** Housing and support must adapt to residents' changing needs, day by day, month by month, and year by year.
- **Person-centred approach:** Housing decisions will start with the individual, their needs, preferences and what matters most to them. Housing assessments, allocations, and planning will place the individual at the heart of every decision, and we will develop housing that reflects this.
- **Homes for life:** For those residents seeking long-term options, we aim to provide not just housing, but a place where they can settle and call home. Thoughtfully designed, adaptable homes, and long-term planning will help achieve this.
- **Partnering with unpaid carers:** Quality housing benefits not only tenants, but also families, unpaid carers, and the wider community. We will work closely with unpaid carers to design and deliver housing and support that considers their role and networks.
- **Transparency:** We recognise there is more to do to deliver a supported and specialist housing provision that meets all our residents' needs. We will be honest about what we can and cannot provide and clearly communicate what residents can expect.

- **Community-centred design:** Housing should foster connection and wellbeing. We aim to create spaces that bring residents together, encourage social interaction, strengthen community ties and enhance wellbeing.

The expected outcomes of the strategy are:

- Improved housing choice and accessibility for vulnerable groups, including older people, disabled adults, young people, and those experiencing homelessness.
- Compliance with national standards and licensing requirements, ensuring quality of accommodation and safeguarding vulnerable individuals.
- Better integration of housing and support services, reducing reliance on institutional care and promoting independence.
- Enhanced pathways for prevention and move-on, reducing homelessness and improving wellbeing.

The strategy is designed to benefit:

- Older residents in need of age-appropriate or extra care housing.
- Adults with physical disabilities, sensory impairments, or long-term conditions requiring adapted homes.
- People with severe and enduring mental illness in need of supported living or floating support.
- Adults with learning disabilities and/or autistic people seeking self-contained and dignified accommodation.
- Young people, including care leavers and those at risk of homelessness.
- Individuals experiencing homelessness or complex housing histories, through more housing-led accommodation solutions.

The Council's Supported & Specialist Housing Steering Group will oversee delivery of the strategy and its accompanying delivery action plan.

Consultation and Research

This strategy has been developed with extensive input from stakeholders across the Council, including Adults and Children's Commissioning, Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, and Housing. We have also engaged with provider partners, residents, unpaid carers and families, as well as statutory partners in health and criminal justice. Data and analysis from both local and national sources have informed the needs assessment underpinning this strategy.

As we move into implementation, we will continue meaningful dialogue with residents and communities to ensure that housing solutions reflect real experiences and meet the needs of those who use them.

Findings

People with protected characteristics may experience homelessness differently and often encounter additional barriers when trying to access suitable accommodation.

The strategy will affect those of:

- **Different Ages**

Older People

People over 65 years old who have Care Act eligible needs, and/or require specialist or adapted accommodation. This includes those with a limiting long-term illness or condition which significantly impacts day to day activities, such as a mobility impairment, a serious personal care disability, a serious visual impairment, or a serious hearing loss.

Our engagement through the needs assessment has informed us that choice matters and most older people prefer not to live in a care or residential home. Therefore, we will prioritise providing housing that supports independence.

Challenges for Older People

Older people (65+ years) face significant challenges in accessing housing that meets their changing needs, driven by a chronic shortage of suitable options, financial barriers, and physical limitations.

To address these issues, the strategy proposes offering a diverse range of accommodation options to reflect the diverse needs and preferences of older people across BCP.

Over the next 10 years, we will aim to:

- Collaborate with housing providers and housing developers to deliver a wide range of retirement housing options that are well designed, adaptable, accessible and promote independence and community living.
- Expand extra care housing across BCP, offering residents access to 24/7 care and support within a community setting.
- Review hospital discharge pathways to ensure people can transition into supported and specialist housing quickly when ready to leave hospital
- Upgrade age-designated housing by improving accessibility and refurbishing or replacing schemes that do not meet key standards
- Continue supporting housing adaptations, and ensure adapted homes are reallocated to those who need them most.
- Modernise sheltered housing using best practice learning, and resident feedback to improve service models.
- Improve access to information about specialist housing options for older people, making it clear and easy to find, and provide support for those who may struggle with online resources.

Young People

Care experienced young people aged 18-24, former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), young people aged 16-24 experiencing homelessness.

We recognise that young people requiring specialist and supported housing come from diverse circumstances and backgrounds. Our provision must reflect this diversity offering meaningful choice, adapting to changing support needs, enabling positive transitions; and setting young people up for a successful future.

Challenges for young people

Young people, and care leavers (CEYP) face a critical shortage of affordable, suitable homes, exacerbated by low incomes, high upfront costs, and insufficient social housing. These barriers often push them into unsafe situations, temporary accommodation, or exploitation, impacting mental and physical health, education, and long-term stability. Key barriers include landlord reluctance, lack of support pathways, and the unaffordability of private rentals.

To address these challenges the strategy recommends:

Over the next 10 years, we will aim to:

- Review Children's Social Care commissioned accommodation within the context of wider services for young people, ensuring value for money.
- Remodel supported and specialist housing provision for young people to provide genuine choice, following St. Basil's Positive Pathway and the Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework.
This should focus on:
 - Family-type supported accommodation (Staying Put / Supported Lodgings)
 - Young People designated supported accommodation (short stay or crisis, foyers, low–high levels of support)
 - Housing First
 - 'Step-down' provision (independent tenancies with floating support, Staying Close)
 - Develop an easily accessible crisis/short-stay service to assess young people's housing and support needs in a safe setting.
 - Ensure no young people under 25 are accommodated within the adult homelessness pathway.
 - Replicate the successes of the SHAP intensive support service, applying lessons learned to promote independence and successful move-on

Those with physical disabilities

Working age adults between the ages of 18 and 64 years old with Care Act eligible needs often require specialist or adapted/ accessible housing to support daily living. This group includes individuals with a long term conditions that significantly impact their independence, such as mobility challenges, personal care requirements, or serious visual or hearing impairments. Older adults with physical disabilities are taken into consideration within the older people cohort.

For adults with long-term conditions, having the right housing can be life changing. It enables people to maintain independence, exercise choice, and stay connected to their community.

Challenges for people with physical disabilities

People with physical disabilities face major housing challenges, including a severe shortage of accessible homes, lengthy waits for suitable social housing, high costs for adaptations. These factors often lead to unsuitable living conditions, poor health, social isolation, and increased reliance on care. Many working age adults with long term conditions struggle with accessibility in their current homes, and residential care is frequently used as a fall-back option, despite not being the preferred choice for younger adults.

To address these challenges the strategy recommends:

Over the next 10 years, we will aim to:

- Expand extra care provision to increase the availability of schemes for wider range of residents
- Prioritise supported living designed for wheelchair users, ensuring accessibility is integrated into new developments or refurbishments.
- Ensure equitable access to supported housing options across all areas of BCP
- Collaborate with housing providers to increase the supply of wheelchair accessible homes

- Continue supporting housing adaptations, and ensure adapted houses are re-allocated to those who need them most
- Review tenancy support for individuals lacking mental capacity to sign a tenancy, where residential care is not appropriate
- Develop flexible commissioning models that can adapt to residents' changing needs over time

Those with learning disabilities and/or people with autism

People aged 18 and over with a Learning Disability and/or autism, who have assessed care and support needs under the Care Act 2014. This group includes those living with family or carers, residents in care homes, people transitioning from inpatient settings, and young adults transitioning to adult services.

Challenges for people with learning disabilities and or and/or people with autism

People with learning and/or autism face significant housing challenges include a shortage of suitable and accessible homes, limited personalised support, complex funding arrangements, and environments that can be overwhelming due to sensory factors. Poor planning for changing needs, such as aging carers or dementia, further compounds these issues. Many people remain in inappropriate, long-term hospital settings because of insufficient community-based options, leading to institutionalisation and poor outcomes.

To address these challenges the strategy sets out the following priorities for the next 10 years:

- Expand choice for residents by developing high-quality, mixed provision with a strong focus on increasing self-contained accommodation.
- Ensure all new housing for people with learning disabilities and/or autism includes en-suite facilities to promote dignity and independence.
- Review and improve matching processes and guidance, to give residents as much choice as possible in shared living arrangements.
- Assess all existing accommodation for safety and accessibility and take action to address any gaps.
- Enhance provision for autistic adults with low levels of support needs, ensuring options reflect their preferences and independence goals.
- Develop bespoke housing solutions for individuals with high levels of need, aligned with the Transforming Care agenda and tailored to those with "challenging behaviours".
- Strengthen joined-up care planning, integrating housing preferences with wider care and support needs, and considering access to complementary services such as day opportunities.
- Improve access to mainstream general needs housing with floating enabling people with learning disabilities and/or autism to live independently in the community.

Those with mental disabilities

People with serious and enduring mental health needs, who have assessed care and support needs under the Care Act 2014 and/ or are eligible for aftercare under the Mental Health Act 1983. This can include those discharged from inpatient acute and rehabilitation units, residents in care homes, and young people transitioning to adult services.

Housing can play a transformative role in the lives of people with severe and enduring mental illness, serving as a vital foundation for mental health recovery and wellbeing for individuals.

Challenges for people with a mental illness

People with severe and enduring mental health needs face significant housing barriers, including stigma & discrimination, a shortage of suitable and affordable homes, and the complexity of matching support needs with available housing. Additional challenges include poverty, insecure tenancies that increase the risk of homelessness, and difficulty navigating health and housing systems. These factors often result in unstable living situations and poorer health outcomes.

To address these challenges the strategy sets out the following priorities for the next 10 years:

- Engage with the market to prioritise delivery of the supported housing provision outlined in this strategy
- Review housing pathways for individuals with severe and enduring mental health needs, focussing on transitions from Children's to Adult services and improving access to mainstream general needs housing. This includes strengthening community support networks and enhancing floating support, including Shared Lives accommodation arrangements.
- Reassess eligibility criteria for Extra Care housing to improve access for people with severe and enduring mental health needs
- Review housing options and support models for individuals with forensic support needs, or dual diagnoses of severe and enduring mental illness and learning disabilities
- Improve access to information about accommodation options and simplify navigation through housing processes for residents
- Develop community building approaches within new and existing schemes, to create opportunities for social connection and wellbeing.
- Create a bespoke, small-scale scheme for young people transitioning to adult services, drawing on best practice and lessons learned from similar initiatives

People with complex Housing Histories and/or experiencing homelessness

Single households, including couples, aged 25 and over who are experiencing homelessness.

Challenges for people with complex housing histories

Single people and couples over the age of 25 with histories of substance misuse and trauma often experience a "revolving door" of homelessness. Complex and overlapping needs make it difficult to secure and maintain stable, long-term accommodation. These individuals frequently face barriers when accessing both temporary and permanent housing.

To address these challenges the strategy sets out the following priorities for the next 10 years:

- Remodel and reprofile provision within the pathway to strengthen our housing-led approach, focusing on:
 - Housing First
 - Floating support in mainstream accommodation (basic or intensive)
- A Single homelessness accommodation-based pathway aligned with best practice standards
- High-stability housing for individuals requiring long-term, 24/7 onsite support

- Conduct targeted reviews on the experiences of specific groups whose needs are often unmet in traditional supported housing contexts.
- Review service performance monitoring to ensure alignment with a housing-led approach and priorities that matter most to residents.
- Establish formal mechanisms for co-design and strategic engagement with housing providers, leveraging the supported housing provider forum.
- Review the pathway allocation system to enable greater flexibility and personalisation in matching residents to suitable accommodation.
- Increase the proportion of self-contained, dispersed units within the pathway to promote independence and choice.
- Develop a strategic approach to managing the supported exempt accommodation market, as part of implementing the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023.
- Improve awareness and understanding of existing protocols and processes to support smooth transitions for people moving on from the pathway into settled tenancies

Other protected characteristics

- Different sexes
- Different genders
- Those who identify as trans
- Those who are pregnant/on maternity
- Those who are married/in a civil partnership
- People from different ethnic groups
- People with different religions or beliefs
- People with different sexual orientations
- People in different socio-economic groups
- People's human rights

This Equality Impact Assessment has considered groups not explicitly referenced in the Supported & Specialist Housing Strategy to ensure that inequalities are identified and mitigated. Inclusive service design standards, flexible commissioning models to ensure targeted engagement are embedded within commissioning plans and service specifications to reduce disadvantage. Measures such as accessible information in multiple formats, culturally sensitive approaches, and provision for gender-specific or faith-based needs have been incorporated to promote equity. Monitoring arrangements will be in place to track outcomes and ensure that no group is disproportionately excluded from the benefits of the strategy.

Each workstream as set out in the Action Plan will require further separate Equality Impact Assessments to be completed specific to each area of work.

Conclusion

Summary of Equality Implications

The Equality Impact Assessment for the Supported & Specialist Housing Strategy (2026–2036) has identified significant equality considerations across all protected characteristics. The strategy aims to improve housing choice, accessibility, and independence for vulnerable groups, including older people, disabled adults, those with mental health needs, learning disabilities, autistic people, young people, and individuals experiencing homelessness. Positive impacts include embedding inclusive design standards, flexible commissioning models, and culturally sensitive approaches to ensure equity.

Key Issues and Resolutions:

Older People (65+)

Issue: Under-supply of accessible housing and extra care options, leading to reduced independence and increased reliance on residential care.

Resolution: Expand extra care housing, modernise sheltered housing, upgrade age-designated schemes, and improve hospital discharge pathways.

Young People (16–24, including care leavers and UASC)

Issue: Lack of affordable, safe housing options, risk of homelessness, and barriers to private rental due to low income and landlord reluctance.

Resolution: Remodel provision using the Positive Pathway model, increase crisis/short-stay options, and ensure young people are not placed in adult homelessness pathways.

Adults with Physical Disabilities

Issue: Shortage of wheelchair-accessible homes and long waits for adaptations, resulting in unsuitable living conditions and isolation.

Resolution: Increase supply of accessible homes, prioritise supported living suitable for wheelchair users, and strengthen adaptation and reallocation processes.

Adults with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism

Issue: Limited choice of self-contained accommodation, lack of personalised support, and risk of institutionalisation.

Resolution: Expand supported living options, ensure en-suite facilities, improve matching processes, and develop bespoke housing for high-need individuals.

Adults with Severe Mental Illness

Issue: Stigma, insecure tenancies, and insufficient supported housing pathways, leading to instability and poor health outcomes.

Resolution: Increase supported living units, improve floating support, review eligibility for extra care, and develop small-scale schemes for young people transitioning to adult services.

People Experiencing Homelessness

Issue: High risk of repeat homelessness due to complex needs and lack of stable housing options.

Resolution: Strengthen housing-led approaches, expand Housing First and floating support, and increase self-contained units within homelessness pathways.

Other Protected Characteristics:

Inclusive service design standards and flexible commissioning models have been embedded to address potential inequalities for groups not explicitly referenced in the strategy. Measures include accessible information in multiple formats, culturally sensitive approaches, and provision for gender-specific or faith-based needs.

Risks

The most significant adverse risk identified through the Equality Impact Assessment is the potential failure to deliver an adequate supply of supported and specialist housing to meet projected demand across all priority cohorts.

Mitigation Measures

- Leveraging external funding streams (Homes England, NHS England, PWLB) and partnerships with Registered Providers.
- Using Council-owned sites for new developments and remodelling existing stock to create self-contained, accessible units.

- Regular monitoring of pipeline progress and equality outcomes through the Supported & Specialist Housing Steering Group.
- Stimulate provider interest in supplying suitable properties by offering commissioning incentives such as long-term contracts and guaranteed occupancy agreements

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Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Issue identified	Action required to reduce impact	Timescale	Responsible officer
<p>Older People 65+ Under-supply of accessible housing and extra care options, leading to reduced independence and increased reliance on residential care.</p>	<p>Expand extra care housing, modernise sheltered housing, upgrade age-designated schemes, and improve hospital discharge pathways.</p>	<p>To be determined by the Supported & Specialist Steering Group following approval of the strategy.</p>	<p>Tracey Kybert, Specialist Housing Programme Lead Housing Delivery Team Adults Commissioning Supported & Specialist Housing Steering Group</p>
<p>Young People (16–24, including care leavers and UASC) Lack of affordable, safe housing options, risk of homelessness, and barriers to private rental due to low income</p>	<p>Remodel provision using the Positive Pathway model, increase crisis/short-stay options, and ensure young people are not placed in adult homelessness pathways.</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>Tracey Kybert, Specialist Housing Programme Lead Supported & Specialist Housing Steering Group</p>
<p>Adults with Physical Disabilities Shortage of wheelchair-accessible homes and long waits for adaptations, resulting in unsuitable living conditions isolation and dependence on residential care settings.</p>	<p>Increase supply of accessible homes, prioritise supported living suitable for wheelchair users, and strengthen adaptation and reallocation processes.</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>Tracey Kybert, Specialist Housing Programme Lead Housing Delivery Team Supported & Specialist Housing Steering Group</p>
<p>Adults with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism Limited choice of self-contained accommodation, lack of</p>	<p>Expand supported living options, ensure en-suite facilities, improve matching processes, and develop bespoke housing for high-need individuals.</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>Siobain Hann, Head of Strategic Commissioning for Disabilities Adults Commissioning Supported & Specialist Housing Steering Group</p>

personalised support, and risk of institutionalisation.			
Adults with Severe Mental Illness Stigma, insecure tenancies, and insufficient supported housing pathways, leading to instability and poor health outcomes.	Increase supported living units, improve floating support, review eligibility for extra care, and develop small-scale schemes for young people transitioning to adult services.	As above	Siobain Hann, Head of Strategic Commissioning for Disabilities Adults Commissioning Supported & Specialist Housing Steering Group
People Experiencing Homelessness High risk of repeat homelessness due to complex needs and lack of stable housing options.	Strengthen housing-led approaches, expand Housing First and floating support, and increase self-contained units within homelessness pathways.	As above	Tracey Kybert, Specialist Housing Programme Lead Housing Related Support Commissioning Supported & Specialist Housing Steering Group
Other Protected characteristics: Different sexes Different genders Those who identify as trans Those who are pregnant/on maternity Those who are married/in a civil partnership People from different ethnic groups People with different religions or beliefs People with different sexual orientations People in different socio-economic groups People's human rights	Inclusive service design standards and flexible commissioning models to be embedded to address potential inequalities for groups not explicitly referenced in the strategy. Measures include accessible information in multiple formats, culturally sensitive approaches, and provision for gender-specific or faith-based needs.	As above	Tracey Kybert, Specialist Housing Programme Lead Housing Related Support Commissioning Contracts Team

