

# Equalities Monitoring – Services

## Appendix G – Welfare & Housing Service and Forestcare

### Annual Report – 2017-18



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## ***Preface***

The new council plan 2016-19 is centred on a new narrative supported by six strategic themes. One of those themes is 'Strong, safe, supportive and self-reliant communities' and good quality, affordable housing is a crucial element of this theme.

The Housing service within Bracknell Forest Council covers the following areas of service delivery:

- Forestcare, which provides a community alarm service and other vital out-of-hours services
- Homelessness
- Advice and assistance with housing options
- Housing and Council tax benefits administration
- Housing register
- Advertising housing association properties and nominations for vacancies
- Housing strategy and enabling the delivery of more affordable homes
- Supporting People
- Provision of performance information

The purpose of equalities monitoring is to ensure the Council is providing a fair and equitable service to all residents.

To ensure the service is fair and equitable, monitoring has been undertaken in terms of:

- Access to the service
- Outcomes

It has been analysed by the following equality groups:

- Age
- Race
- Sex
- Disability
- Religion
- Sexual Orientation

The three remaining protected groups, marriage and civil partnerships, gender reassignment and pregnancy/maternity will be considered for future reports when data is available.

# Housing Service

## ***1. Introduction***

The Housing Service deals with all aspects of housing need, but in particular:

- Homelessness and Homeless Prevention
- Housing Register - BFCMyChoice
- Shared Ownership (Homebuy)
- Nominations to Housing Associations
- Assistance with securing private sector tenancies
- Management of temporary accommodation for homeless households

We give housing advice and assistance in confidence on a wide range of issues including homelessness prevention, tenancy rights and domestic violence.

We work closely with colleagues in other teams and agencies such as the Community Mental Health Team, the Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities, Occupational Therapists, Childrens Services, and so on (particularly when dealing with vulnerable applicants).

Those who access our services are recorded on the housing and homeless registers.

All the housing register, homeless register, homeless preventions and lets data below has been taken from the housing IT system, Abritas:

- Housing Register Active Applicants as at 01/04/2018
- Lettings between 01/04/2017 to 31/03/2018
- Homeless Applications during 01/04/2017 to 31/03/2018
- Homeless Acceptances during 01/04/2017 to 31/03/2018
- Homeless prevention cases completed between 01/04/2017 to 31/03/2018

## 2. Access

To assess whether people have equal access to housing services, the profile of people on the housing register has been compared against the population of Bracknell Forest.

The tables below are based on active applications on the housing register as at April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 and homeless applications during the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. The Bracknell Forest population data is taken from the ONS 2017 mid-year estimates and the 2011 Census.

**Table 1a: Housing Register by Age**

Age group	Housing register %	Bracknell Forest population %
18-39	68%	37%
40-59	24%	37%
60-79	6%	21%
80+	2%	5%

*N.B. Percentages may not sum due to rounding.*

**Table 1b: Homeless Applications by Age**

Age group	Homeless applications %	Bracknell Forest population %
18-39	72%	37%
40-59	27%	37%
60-79	1%	21%
80+	0%	5%

*N.B. Percentages may not sum due to rounding.*

Sixty-eight percent of people on the housing register are aged 18 to 39 compared to 37% of the wider Bracknell Forest population. However, this is expected due to the nature of the service which works with newly formed households and young families struggling to secure private rented accommodation.

**Table 2a: Housing Register by Race (excluding unknowns)**

Race	Housing register %	Bracknell Forest population %
White	89%	91.8%
Mixed	2%	1.3%
Asian	2%	4.7%
Black	4%	1.8%
Other	2%	0.4%

**Table 2b: Homeless Applications by Race (excluding unknowns)**

<b>Race</b>	<b>Homeless applications %</b>	<b>Bracknell Forest population %</b>
<b>White</b>	92%	91.8%
<b>Mixed</b>	0%	1.3%
<b>Asian</b>	3%	4.7%
<b>Black</b>	4%	1.8%
<b>Other</b>	1%	0.4%

The percentage of people of a White racial background who are on the housing register or who made homeless applications is similar to that of the Borough.

**Table 3a: Housing Register by Sex**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Housing register %</b>	<b>Bracknell Forest population %</b>
<b>Female</b>	66%	51%
<b>Male</b>	34%	49%

**Table 3b: Homeless Applications by Sex**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Homeless applications %</b>	<b>Bracknell Forest population %</b>
<b>Female</b>	74%	51%
<b>Male</b>	26%	49%

The sex is determined by the person who completes the application. Therefore, if a couple apply, the sex recorded is that of the primary applicant actually completing the form. This suggests more women take the lead in completing the application forms rather than a reflection of the family composition of those on the housing register. The percentages of homeless applications are taken from women as they tend to be the carers of children, which would be the basis of their homeless application.

**Table 4a: Housing Register by Disability.**

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Housing register %</b>	<b>Homeless applications %</b>
<b>No</b>	83%	77%
<b>Yes</b>	17%	23%

**Table 4b: Homeless Applications by Disability.**

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Housing register %</b>	<b>Homeless applications %</b>
<b>No</b>	83%	77%
<b>Yes</b>	17%	23%

The disability question on the housing and homeless register asks if the applicant has a disability and does not require any proof. There is no direct meaningful comparable datasets. However, the 2011 Census shows that 14.6% of the Bracknell Forest population aged 16 or over had a limiting long term illness.

**Table 5a: Housing Register by Religion.**

Religion	Housing register %	Bracknell Forest population %
Christian	48%	65%
Buddhist	1%	<1%
Hindu	0%	1%
Jewish	0%	<1%
Sikh	0%	<1%
Muslim	2%	1%
None	44%	30%
Other	6%	<1%

**Table 5b: Homeless Applications by Religion.**

Religion	Homeless applications %	Bracknell Forest population %
Christian	33%	65%
Buddhist	0%	<1%
Hindu	2%	1%
Jewish	0%	<1%
Sikh	0%	<1%
Muslim	4%	1%
None	54%	30%
Other	8%	<1%

In terms of religion, there has been an increase in those stating a religion of 'None' each year over the past five years, which accounts for the higher percentage of 44% compared to the 2011 census figure of 30%. Seventy-two percent of homeless applications (Table 1) are within the 18-39 age group, where religion is less commonly identified.

**Table 6: Housing Register by Sexual Orientation**

Sexual Orientation	Housing register %
Heterosexual	95%
Bisexual	1%
Gay	1%
Lesbian	1%
Other	3%

**Table 6b: Homeless Applications by Sexual Orientation**

Sexual Orientation	Homeless applications %
Heterosexual	90%
Bisexual	5%
Gay	0%
Lesbian	0%
Other	5%

Nationally there are conflicting figures for sexual orientation. The Office for National Statistics estimates that 1.5% of the population are lesbian, gay or bisexual.<sup>1</sup> Stonewall, a charitable organisation that lobbies on behalf of the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) population, states that no-one knows how many LGB people there are but that government actuaries estimate it to be around 6% of the population. It is therefore not possible to assess whether the housing register reflects the population in terms of sexual orientation until more reliable data is available. However, the figures above will be used to determine whether outcomes are equal – see below.

### 3. Outcomes (Social Housing Lets)

During 2017-18, 347 households from the housing register were nominated by the council and took up tenancies within social housing. These are referred to as 'lets'. Twenty-eight percent of these were sheltered properties going to households aged over 55 years, who have their own trend in equalities data. So this needs to be taken into consideration when doing a direct comparison to those on the overall housing register. It should also be noted that in some cases where the numbers are extremely small the percentages should be interpreted with caution.

**Table 7: Housing Lets by Age**

Age group	Housing Lets	Housing Lets %	Housing register %
18-39	189	54%	68%
40-59	68	20%	24%
60-79	65	19%	6%
80+	25	7%	2%

*N.B. Percentages may not sum due to rounding.*

There is a smaller percentage of lets in the 18-39 age group. This age group includes new families who mainly require family size accommodation for which there is less availability. It also includes young single adults living at home who often are not actively bidding. The larger percentage in the 60 or over age group is due to 28% of all lets being for sheltered properties.

<sup>1</sup> Measuring Sexual Identity: An Evaluation Report, Theodore Joloza, Joanne Evans, Rachel O'Brien, Office for National Statistics, Sept. 2010



**Table 8: Housing Lets by Sex**

Sex	Housing lets	Housing lets%	Housing register %
Female	223	64%	66%
Male	124	36%	34%

The table above shows that lets are broadly in line with the sex of the applicant. As more main applicants are female they have a higher proportion of lets. As stated previously, the higher proportion of female main applicants is merely a reflection of who takes the lead in completing the application form.

**Table 9: Housing Lets by Disability**

Disability	Housing lets	Housing lets %	Housing register %
No	255	77%	83%
Yes	77	23%	17%

Households with a disability will often get medical priority resulting in a higher band on the housing register and thus greater opportunities of being housed.

**Table 10: Housing Lets by Race (excluding unknowns)**

Race	Housing lets	Housing lets %	Housing register %
White	302	90%	89%
Mixed	7	2%	2%
Asian	2	1%	2%
Black	14	4%	4%
Other	10	3%	2%

*N.B. Percentages may not sum due to rounding.*

**Table 11: Housing Lets by Sexual Orientation**

Sexual Orientation	Housing lets	Housing lets %	Housing register %
Heterosexual	281	97%	95%
Bisexual	2	1%	1%
Gay	1	0%	1%
Lesbian	0	0%	1%
Other	6	2%	3%

Lettings, in terms of race and sexual orientation, were broadly in line with those on the housing register.

**Table 12: Housing Lets by Religion**

Religion	Housing lets	Housing lets %	Housing register %
Christian	156	52%	48%
Buddhist	1	0%	1%
Hindu	2	1%	0%
Jewish	1	0%	0%
Sikh	0	0%	0%
Muslim	8	3%	2%
None	117	39%	44%
Other	17	6%	6%

As lets are partially based on length of time on the register, it could be expected that the Christian percentage would be higher as the increase in 'None' religion has been a more recent trend. Also, a large number of lets have gone to older people who identify more as being Christian.

#### ***4. Statutory homelessness, homeless prevention and relief***

A household will be considered as statutorily homeless by their local authority if they meet specific criteria set out in legislation. In cases where an authority is satisfied that an applicant is eligible for assistance, is in priority need, and has become homeless through no fault of their own; the authority will owe a main homelessness duty to secure settled accommodation for that household. Such households are referred to as acceptances. Priority need groups include households with dependent children and/or a pregnant woman and individuals who are vulnerable in some way.

From 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, Bracknell Forest Council made 142 homeless decisions. Homeless duty was accepted for 81 of these 142 cases.

Homelessness prevention and relief activity may be carried out by local authorities on behalf of households, whether they are in priority need or not. Prevention refers to positive actions taken by local authorities to provide assistance to households who consider themselves to be at risk of homelessness, which enable them to remain in their existing accommodation or obtain an alternative for at least the next six months.

During 2017-18, Bracknell Forest Council successfully prevented homelessness in 259 cases.

The Department for Communities & Local Government publishes quarterly statistics on homeless data for England. This data includes the race and age of homeless acceptances. Other equality strands are not included and no equality data is published for homeless preventions.

The equality tables below are based on Bracknell Forest data for the period; 81 homeless acceptances and 259 successful homeless prevention cases. As some households chose not to answer some equality questions, the numbers and percentages are based only on those where an answer was given.

**Table 13a: Homeless Acceptance by Age**

Sixty-two percent of homeless acceptances during the period were for applicants aged 40 or under.

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Homeless acceptances</b>	<b>Homeless acceptances %</b>
<b>0-19</b>	0	0%
<b>20-39</b>	50	62%
<b>40-59</b>	30	37%
<b>60-79</b>	1	1%
<b>80+</b>	0	0%

**Table 13b: Homeless Prevention by Age**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Homeless preventions</b>	<b>Homeless preventions %</b>
<b>0-19</b>	7	3%
<b>20-39</b>	154	59%
<b>40-59</b>	73	28%
<b>60-79</b>	25	10%
<b>80+</b>	0	0%

**Table 14a: Homeless Acceptance by Sex**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Homeless acceptances</b>	<b>Homeless acceptances %</b>
<b>Female</b>	62	77%
<b>Male</b>	19	23%

**Table 14b: Homeless Prevention by Sex**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Homeless preventions</b>	<b>Homeless preventions %</b>
<b>Female</b>	177	68%
<b>Male</b>	82	32%

The sex represents the primary applicant. Often the female is the primary carer if there are dependent children. 'Households with children' was the primary reason for priority need in 73% of those accepted as homeless during the period.

**Table 15a: Homeless Application by Race**

Race	Bracknell Forest %	Homeless applications	Homeless acceptances	Homeless acceptances %
White	91.8%	86%	64	84%
Mixed	1.3%	1%	0	0%
Asian	4.7%	4%	4	5%
Black	1.8%	5%	5	7%
Other	0.4%	4%	3	4%

**Table 15b: Homeless Prevention by Race**

Race	Bracknell Forest %	All Homeless prevention casework	Successful Homeless preventions	Successful Homeless preventions %
White	91.8%	89%	198	89%
Mixed	1.3%	2%	7	3%
Asian	4.7%	2%	3	1%
Black	1.8%	5%	9	4%
Other	0.4%	2%	6	3%

The data shows that when analysing race the homeless services are accessed fairly in line with the Borough's population.

**Table 16a: Homeless Acceptance by Religion**

Religion	Bracknell Forest %	Homeless acceptances	Homeless acceptances %
Christian	65%	21	35%
Buddhist	<1%	0	0%
Hindu	<1%	2	3%
Muslim	<1%	4	7%
None	30%	30	50%
Other	<1%	3	5%

**Table 16b: Homeless Prevention by Religion**

Religion	Bracknell Forest %	Homeless preventions	Homeless Preventions %
Christian	65%	86	45%
Buddhist	<1%	2	1%
Hindu	<1%	1	1%
Muslim	<1%	4	2%
None	30%	91	47%
Other	<1%	9	5%

When looking at the religion figures in comparison to Bracknell Forest data, it must be remembered that the latter data is based on the 2011 Census. In addition, those using our services are from more limited age groups where 'no religion' is more prevalent.

**Table 17a: Homeless Acceptance by Sexual Orientation**

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Homeless acceptances</b>	<b>Homeless acceptances %</b>
<b>Heterosexual</b>	58	89%
<b>Bisexual</b>	3	5%
<b>Gay</b>	0	0
<b>Lesbian</b>	0	0%
<b>Other</b>	4	6%

**Table 17b: Homeless Prevention by Sexual Orientation**

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Homeless preventions</b>	<b>Homeless Preventions %</b>
<b>Heterosexual</b>	180	95%
<b>Bisexual</b>	3	2%
<b>Gay</b>	1	1%
<b>Lesbian</b>	1	1%
<b>Other</b>	5	3%

**Table 18a: Homeless Acceptance by Disability**

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Homeless acceptances</b>	<b>Homeless acceptances %</b>
<b>No</b>	59	79%
<b>Yes</b>	16	21%

**Table 18b: Homeless Prevention by Disability**

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Homeless preventions</b>	<b>Homeless Preventions %</b>
<b>No</b>	199	83%
<b>Yes</b>	42	17%

## Forestcare Lifelines

Please note that in one household there may be two people assigned to a unit and so the total number of clients varies over the following data.

### 1. Sex

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	917	32%
Female	1,928	68%
Total	2,845	100%

### 2. Disability

Of the households that completed the equalities forms, 1,475 stated they have at least one resident with a disability. However, because of the nature of the service and the age of the customer base it would be expected that a large number would have a disability.

### 3. Race

Race	Forestcare	Forestcare %	Bracknell Forest population %
White	2,036	98.5%	91.8%
Mixed	8	0.4%	1.3%
Asian	19	0.9%	4.7%
Black	5	0.2%	1.8%
Other	0	0%	0.4%
<i>Sub-Total</i>	<i>2,068</i>	~	~
Not Known	66	~	~
Refused	1	~	~
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,135</b>	~	~

The higher percentage of white compared to the population is reflective of the age group of Forestcare customers being older, in which there is a much higher percentage of white (97% of people aged 65+ identify as White).

#### 4. Religion

Religion	Forestcare	Forestcare %	Bracknell Forest population %
<b>Christian</b>	1,444	85.4%	64.8%
<b>Buddhist</b>	2	0.1%	0.8%
<b>Hindu</b>	12	0.7%	1.7%
<b>Jewish</b>	1	0.1%	0.2%
<b>Sikh</b>	1	0.1%	0.4%
<b>Muslim</b>	6	0.4%	1.2%
<b>Other</b>	0	0%	0.5%
<b>None</b>	225	13.3%	30.4%
<b>Sub-Total</b>	1,691	~	~
<b>Not answered</b>	37	~	~
<b>Total</b>	1,728	~	~

Again, the higher percentage of Christian and stated religions compared to the population is reflective of the age group of Forestcare customers being older, and in which older generations have greater affiliation to Christianity. “More people aged 50 and over considered themselves to be Christian than in the overall population of England and Wales, 82.9% compared with 71.7%.” ONS Focus on Older People 2005 publication.

#### 5: Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation	Forestcare	Forestcare %
<b>Heterosexual</b>	1,707	95.9%
<b>Bisexual</b>	1	0.1%
<b>Gay</b>	4	0.2%
<b>Lesbian</b>	2	0.1%
<b>Other</b>	0	0%
<b>Refused</b>	66	3.7%
<b>Total</b>	1,780	~

# Welfare Service

## 1. Introduction

The Welfare Service administers housing benefit on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions, the Bracknell Council tax reduction local scheme, and discretionary welfare payments of crisis grants, home emergency grants, discretionary housing payments and council tax hardship. Both housing benefit and council tax reduction are means-tested benefits requiring the collection of information about people's financial and household circumstances. The service undertakes benefit assessments, collection of overpayments and works with the Department for Work and Pensions by referring cases for fraud investigation.

The Government's Welfare Reform Act 2012 has introduced various changes over the last few years including those such as the Benefit Cap and Social Sector Size Restriction which has as a result affected customer's entitlement to Housing Benefit as well as other welfare benefits. The Local Council Tax Discount Scheme introduced income bands in April 2017. The introduction of Universal Credit from September 2015 has meant that single people who are available for work have had to claim their housing costs through Universal Credit via the Department for Work and Pensions instead of Housing Benefit. Since 23 May 2018 Universal Credit Full Service has been implemented, which has resulted in the majority of new claims for all types of household now having to claim their housing costs through Universal Credit instead of Housing Benefit. This will be reflected in next year's report as we expect the Welfare Service caseload to decrease.

At Bracknell Forest Council two emergency discretionary welfare schemes are administered; crisis grants and home emergency grants. The purpose of these schemes is to help people who have an unforeseen financial crisis. As the awards are discretionary the Council has to consider each application carefully, based on the circumstances of each individual.

The purpose of equalities monitoring is to ensure the Council is providing a fair and equitable service to all residents. Monitoring has been undertaken in terms of:

- Access to the service
- Outcomes

It has been analysed by the following equalities groups:

- Race
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Disability

Sex has not been analysed as this is just the sex of the person completing the application form rather than the household receiving the benefit. Women tend to fill in the application more often than men.

We are not currently able to analyse the remaining protected groups however this can be considered for future reports when data is available.



## 2. Access to the service

Customers are able to access the Welfare Service by various means. The service is open to all members of the public via appointments in person to our reception. Whilst we encourage face to face contact with customers to enable us to look at ways to maximise their income where possible, we appreciate that not all customers wish to, or are able, to access our service via this route and so customers can contact us by telephone and email. Since November 2017 the service encourages all customers to make a new claim and report any change in circumstances to housing benefit and local council tax reduction via an online e-benefits account. We will, however, offer appointments, when needed, to customers who have difficulties claiming online and we also offer home visits for customers who are not able to come into our offices due to ill-health or disability.

We work closely with stakeholders and access can be via referrals to stakeholders who are able to visit on our behalf. Access could also be via signposting from stakeholders or other organisations or by claims made via the Department for Work and Pensions.

To assess whether people have equal access to the benefits service in terms of race and sexual orientation we have looked at the equal opportunities section completed on our benefit application forms received during 2017-18 and on social fund applications made during 2017-18 and compared the data provided against the population of Bracknell Forest.

**Table 1: Housing Benefit and local Council Tax Reduction claims, and Social Fund applications by Race**

Race	Equal opportunity forms completed*	Percentage completed	Social fund applications **	Percentage received	Bracknell Forest population ***
White	581	94.3%	332	94.9%	90.6%
Mixed	7	1.1%	6	1.7%	2.0%
Asian	13	2.1%	6	1.7%	5.0%
Black	11	1.8%	5	1.4%	1.9%
Other	4	0.6%	1	0.3%	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>		<b>350</b>		

Source:\* Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Discount application forms. \*\* RB Solutions Social Fund.

\*\*\* Based on Office for National Statistics Census 2011

Two-thousand, two-hundred and twenty-two new housing benefit and/or council tax reduction application forms were received during 2017-18, of which 601 customers completed the equal opportunities section on race and so the data above represents approximately 28% of the total number of customers making a claim for benefit during the financial year.

The proportion of customers making a benefit claim who have indicated they are from a mixed, Asian or black background has decreased this year compared to the welfare service data for the previous year and is lower compared to the wider Bracknell Forest population. As the number of equal opportunity forms completed by customers was significantly lower this year, perhaps due to changing to an online benefits service, this could account for the lower percentages in the ethnic minority groups as small numbers can lead to large swings in percentages. However this will

be closely monitored in future reports to ensure that there are no barriers when accessing our service.

Four-hundred and twenty-three social fund applications were made and equal opportunities data was recorded for 350 applications, representing 82.7% of the total number of applications, which is a good representation. Although small numbers can lead to large swings in percentages the table does indicate that the number of applications from an ethnic minority group is increasing compared to previous years' reports. However, the number of applications from Asian groups is still very low compared to Bracknell Forest data. We will continue to ensure that access to our service is available to all ethnic minority groups.

**Table 2: Housing Benefit and local Council Tax Reduction claims, and Social Fund applications by Sexual Orientation**

Sexual Orientation	Benefit forms completed*	Percentage completed	Social fund applications **	Percentage received	Bracknell Forest population ***
Heterosexual	184	97.4%	125	98.4%	98.2%
Bisexual, Gay or Lesbian	5	2.6%	2	1.6%	1.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>~</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>~</b>	<b>~</b>

Source: \* Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction application forms. \*\*RB Solutions Social Fund. \*\*\*Based on Office for National Statistics: Annual Population Survey and Mid-Year Population estimates 2015 for Bracknell Forest

Of the 2,222 applications received during 2017-18 the number of benefit customers who recorded their sexual orientation represents only 8.5% of the total customers. Although the numbers are small and so no firm conclusions can be drawn from the data, the percentage of gay, lesbian and bisexual customers claiming benefit continues to be slightly higher than the Bracknell Forest population estimates. This indicates that there are no barriers in these cases when accessing our services.

For social fund applications, although the data for sexual orientation continues to be recorded there were an additional 137 applications where the customer preferred not to say. The above table represents those who have stated their sexual orientation, which is similar when compared to Bracknell Forest population estimates. This indicates that there are no barriers accessing our services, however, due to the number recorded as 'prefer not to say' the data is, again, inconclusive in this year's report.

To assess whether people have equal access to the benefits service in terms of age and disability we have analysed our caseload data taken from our Northgate Benefits System for those making a claim for Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Discount, and from our RB Solutions Social Fund system for those making a social fund application.

A breakdown of our caseload by age is as follows:

**Table 3: Housing Benefit and local Council Tax Reduction claims, and Social Fund applications by Age**

Age Group	Benefit claims*	Percentage	Social fund applications**	Percentage received	Bracknell Forest population***
<b>18-39</b>	1,709	28.1%	217	51.4%	36.8%
<b>40-59</b>	1,797	29.6%	175	41.5%	38.0%
<b>60-79</b>	1,759	28.9%	30	7.1%	20.5%
<b>80+</b>	815	13.4%	0	0%	4.7%
<b>Total</b>	6,080	~	422	~	~

Where there is a joint claim the age is taken from the primary claimant

Source: \*Single Housing Benefit Extract. \*\*RB Solutions Social Fund. \*\*\*ONS 2017 Mid-Year Population Estimates

Despite the ongoing changes to welfare benefits due to the government's welfare reform and the decrease in our benefit caseload, our working age/pension age caseload split continues to remain static with only slight differences compared to previous year's reports. The number of benefit customers aged 60 or over, compared to the Bracknell Forest population is considerably higher and has historically been higher on previous reports. This is expected due to those customers being more likely to not be in employment and therefore have a lower income.

Although there has been a small increase the number of social fund applications, those from people aged 60 or over continues to remain significantly lower compared to the wider Bracknell Forest population. This is to be expected as someone over the age of 60 is more likely to be in receipt of a regular income such as a pension and more likely to be in long term housing. The small increase in this age group compared to last year's report could be due to the increasing age of being eligible for state retirement pension. Working age customers are more likely to be in and out of out of work benefits, which in turn can cause benefit delays and therefore requiring short term assistance from the social fund. When someone applies for Universal Credit they have a delay, on average, of 6-7 weeks before receiving their first benefit payment.

**Table 4: Housing Benefit (at 23/04/18) and local Council Tax Reduction claims (at 31/03/18) and social fund applications by disability (2017-18)**

Disability	Benefit claims*	Percentage	Social fund claims**	Percentage	Bracknell Forest population***
<b>No</b>	4029	65.4%	274	71.5%	85.4%
<b>Yes</b>	2131	34.6%	109	28.5%	14.6%
<b>Total</b>	6160	~	383	~	~

Source: \*Single Housing Benefit Extract based on the claimant or partner in receipt of Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance (care or mobility), Personal Independence Payment (daily living or mobility) Severe Disablement Allowance or the Support group of Employment & Support Allowance. \*\*RB Solutions Social Fund. \*\*\*ONS 2011, proportion of people who said they had a limiting long term illness (excluding those aged under 16)

The table shows that for both benefit claims and social fund claims we continue to have a much higher proportion of customers with a disability compared with the Bracknell Forest population. This indicates that there are no barriers when accessing our service and due to the nature of the service this higher percentage is to be

expected because someone with a disability is less likely to be able to work and therefore on a low income compared to someone without a disability, and so more likely to need the financial assistance.

### 3. Outcomes

To assess whether the protected groups who make a social fund claim achieve similar outcomes, data has been compared against those making a claim to those successful in their application.

**Table 5: Social Fund applications by Race (2017-18)**

Race	Social fund applications	Percentage of social fund applications that were successful
White	322	86.4%
Mixed	6	66.7%
Asian	6	100%
Black	5	100%
Other	1	100%

The table above shows that the percentage of successful applications from a mixed minority group is lower compared to the other groups, however as the total number of applications are low from this group then this will lead to large swings in percentages and no firm conclusions can be drawn.

**Table 6: Social Fund applications by Age (2017-18)**

Age Group	Social fund applications	Percentage of social fund applications that were successful
18-39	217	84.8
40-59	175	82.3
60-79	30	93.3%
80+	0	~

The table shows that the percentage of successful applications is very similar within the 18-39 and the 40-59 age groups. This year's report shows that there is an increase in the 60-79 age group, however this is to be expected as there has been an increase in the number of applications from that age group compared to previous years.

**Table 7: Social fund applications by disability**

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Social fund application</b>	<b>Percentage of social fund applications that were successful</b>
No	274	82.1%
Yes	109	92.7%

The table shows that the percentage of successful applications is higher where the customer has a disability. Although this does not determine whether a person will be successful or not, this does indicate that there are no barriers when making an application. A person with a disability may be more likely to have a lower income or be on an income related benefit which contributes to being eligible under our criteria.

To qualify for a payment under the council's social fund schemes there are certain criteria that has to be met. This can include being in receipt of an income related benefit, living in the borough for a certain specified length of time, and can normally only apply once in any financial year. The reasons recorded for the majority of rejected applications were due to not qualifying for the scheme.

Due to the current process how equality information is recorded we are unable to report on the outcomes for housing benefit and council tax reduction applications.

#### ***4. Recommendations***

With the introduction of an eBenefits system being introduced during 2018-2018 we will need to review the way equalities monitoring will be recorded and we will investigate ways in which we can report on outcomes for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claims.

## **Conclusion**

The Equalities Monitoring Report for Housing Services, Welfare Service and Benefit, and Forestcare Lifelines has reported on the equality groups of race, sex, disability, religion and sexual orientation.

For the three remaining protected groups, marriage and civil partnerships, gender reassignment and pregnancy/maternity; data is not available in sufficient numbers to allow meaningful analysis.

The next equalities monitoring report will be for the period 2018-19.