



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Name of EIA	Community Heat Metering Full Roll Out
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Completed By	Richard Hawson
Date of Completion	6 th July 2012

Section One:

1) What are you trying to achieve?

There are just over 6,000 dwellings managed by Sheffield Homes connected to the District Heating network. Over the last 5 years new community boilers have been installed on many sites and currently heating controls are being fitted. The final stage is for residents to be provided with heating meters to allow the amount of energy used to be measured and residents charged for what they use rather than a standard charge for all. Such a change will effect all residents. The heat meters will be provided via a new contract commencing in April / May 2013 with a three year duration.

2) Who will be affected?

All residents will be effected by this change to the way community heating is charged. We will be moving from a standard weekly amount e.g. average £12 per week to a new charging method which will consists of a standing charge per week and a rate per Kilowatt hour. This use of heat metering is being proposed as a fairer way to pay for heat, and in support of Sheffield Council commitments to reduce fuel poverty as well as impacts on climate change.

3. How will they be affected?

The current method of charging for heating is simple. it is a weekly charge which is paid as part of the rent. Many will consider the rent and heating charge as one payment. We are moving to completely separating the rent element from the heating charge element. The heating charge will consist of a standing charge to be connected to the system and a charge for the actual energy used per KWH. Tenants who presently enjoy heating and hot water 24/7 and are at home most of the time pay exactly the same as a tenant who spends considerable periods away from the tenancy e.g. out all day working. The new charging system will charge for the amount of energy used so it is clear that a frequent user will pay more than an infrequent user. It is possible some bill payers may therefore see an increase in their bills if they use the change arrangements to increase their heating pattern or temperatures. However the new heating controls currently being rolled out do allow residents to control their heating by turning down the thermostat and using the programmer to turn the heating on and off which previously was not possible. Most tenants will therefore be getting used to using less energy, and the expectation that most tenants will achieve lower bills as currently heating is provided for 16/17 hours (plus a night setback).

4. What measures if any are in place to address this?

The project to install heat meters will only be successful if we communicate successfully with residents. Whereas the physical installation of the heating meters is an important part of the project, of more importance is the resident understanding of the change in the way their heating and hot water needs will be charged in future. Some residents, if they do not change their heating lifestyle, may pay more. But small changes to heating lifestyle such as turning down the thermostat, keeping windows and doors closed during cold weather and not expecting heating to be on at a high level during the night will result in most of such residents paying any more than present. We believe most will pay considerably less.

Our concerns surround residents who refuse to take advice or do not understand the advice and this leads them to receive significantly higher heating and hot water bills. We are also particularly concerned about any resident who has a medical reason for having a consistently high indoor temperature who have specifically chosen a home connected to the community heating system. Any increase in their heating charges in such circumstances may be met with resistance. We must therefore identify residents who may be affected before the project commences and consider the options.

Individual and regular consultation will take place with all residents and help and support will be available for any vulnerable households. This is to help them manage their future heating bills, provide additional energy efficiency advice, debt management support and to make sure that they are receiving any Government support and assistance as part of this project.

Section 2

5) Please complete the following impact table and give reasons for each impact.

Profile group	Impact N°	Positive impact	Negative impact	Reason
Black and Minority Ethnic People			No	
Disabled people	1		Yes	Potentially disabled people may spend more time at home requiring their homes to be heated to consistent temperature for longer than other groups of people
Women			No	
Men			No	
Lesbian, Gay men, bisexuals			No	
Gender Re-assignment			No	
Marriage & Civil Partnership			No	
Pregnancy & Maternity	2		Yes	Potentially pregnant women and those looking after young children people may spend more time at home requiring their homes to be heated to consistent temperature for longer than other groups of people
Older people (60+)	3		Yes	Potentially people 60+ may spend more time at home as they are retired or working part time requiring their homes to be heated to consistent temperature for longer than other groups of people
Other age groups	4		Yes	Persons unemployed may spend more time at home and require their homes to be heated for longer periods than those in full time or part time employment
Religion/Belief			No	
Impact on Community Cohesion.			No	

Impact on Social Inclusion			No	
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Notes: Religions/belief covers a wide range of groupings the most common of which are Muslim, Buddhist, Jew, Christian, Sikh and Hindu. Consider Religion/Belief categories individually and collectively when considering positive and negative impacts.

6. What actions will be taken if there are negative impacts?

We will be trying to preempt any negative impacts by communication with people about the positive aspects of the changes such as a considerable reduction in the carbon emissions , a real opportunity for the majority of users to reduce their heat and hot water charges if used sensibly. However some residents will be effected and we must treat them sensitively whilst explaining in full the new charging system, which may cost them more. VAT will be charged at 5% as advised by Customs and Excise regulations. It could cost more if tenants continue to use the system as at present and do not make use of the heating programmer, thermostat and keep their doors and windows closed during spells of cold weather.

7. What communication / consultation process will be used to deal with the negative impacts identified?

We aim to:

Bring together a support team comprising income management staff supported by technical staff from HME

Identify vulnerable customers in advance

Identify customers in arrears

Identify customers who may struggle to meet their heating bills

Explain why we are changing

Explain the benefits of the change

Utilise letters, leaflets, telephone support, resident meetings

Opportunity for users to reduce their heating and hot water costs

8) If you have highlighted any negative impacts on the table above, please complete the action plan below - clearly stating the following:-

- The impact number (as identified on the impact table above)
- What action you will take
- Who will manage the task
- A date in which the task will be completed.

Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Please list below any recommendations for action that you plan to take as a result of this impact assessment.

Impact N°	Action required	Lead Officer	Timescale Resource	Comments
Page 34 3 and	<p>To support vulnerable people in general who may spend considerable periods of time at home and may be high demand users of heating and hot water. Specifically the disabled, those pregnant or on maternity, older 60+ people and others such as the unemployed who may be at home longer than average.</p> <p>We will: Provide options for payment and fully explain these options Ensure people understand the risks of non payment Inform people exactly how the new system works Use a variety of methods to inform such as face to face visits, drop in sessions, leaflets, follow up visits Specialist team to be available to carry out above Offer advice on energy reduction measures using specialist staff Ensure tenants homes are well insulated wherever possible Offer benefit advice to ensure tenants are claiming correctly The use of language line or staff with suitable language skills to tailor the service delivery</p>	Richard Hawson	Resources to provide this support will be available three months in advance of the first meter installation to ensure adequate preparation time	
All	A detailed Communication Plan for all tenants, leaseholders and freeholders affected by the changes.		On going with immediate effect.	Keep updating any changes to any communication that is required - this will be more needed when dealing with customers who do not have English as their first language.

Completed By	Richard Hawson
Date of Completion	9 th July 2012

Signed off Authorised	
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