

Charnwood Borough Council

Equality Impact Assessment 'Knowing the needs of your customers and employees'

■ Background

An Equality Impact Assessment is an improvement tool. It will assist you in ensuring that you have thought about the needs and impacts of your service/policy/function in relation to the protected characteristics. It enables a systematic approach to identifying and recording gaps and actions.

■ Legislation- Equality Duty

As a local authority that provides services to the public, Charnwood Borough Council has a legal responsibility to ensure that we can demonstrate having paid due regard to the need to:

- ✓ Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- ✓ Advance Equality of Opportunity
- ✓ Foster good relations

For the following protected characteristics:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership
5. Pregnancy and maternity
6. Race
7. Religion and belief
8. Sex (Gender)
9. Sexual orientation

What is prohibited?

1. Direct Discrimination
2. Indirect Discrimination
3. Harassment
4. Victimisation
5. Discrimination by association
6. Discrimination by perception
7. Pregnancy and maternity discrimination
8. Discrimination arising from disability
9. Failing to make reasonable adjustments

Note: Complete the action plan as you go through the questions

■ **Step 1 – Introductory information**

Title of the policy	Customer Service Strategy
Name of lead officer and others undertaking this assessment	Sue Hayles/ Simon Jackson
Date EIA started	July 2016
Date EIA completed	September 2016

■ **Step 2 – Overview of policy/function being assessed:**

Outline: What is the purpose of this policy? (Specify aims and objectives)
<p>The Customer Services Strategy aims to consider the management and improvement of customer services in all service areas. It will aim to provide a clear framework to deliver the Council's value of 'putting the customer at the heart of everything we do'.</p> <p>The Strategy is themed around customer insight, culture, access and quality and contains objectives addressing these areas.</p> <p>A fundamental aspect of the Customer Services Strategy is to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all our customers through the design of new or updated customer access Channels. However it is also recognised that within the Strategy that our own staff are able to understand and provide services to all our customers whilst recognising their differing needs. Service developments will be informed by consultation with the public and partners.</p>
What specific group/s is the policy designed to affect/impact and what is the intended change or outcome for them?
<p>The Strategy aims to achieve positive outcomes in both service design and delivery, and in employment for all everyone in Charnwood.</p> <p>The Equality Strategy identifies real and achievable objectives for the Council which will enable it to fulfil its commitment to 'putting the customer at the heart of everything we do'. By achieving the objectives set out in the Strategy the Council will achieve positive outcomes for individuals and communities in service design, delivery and employment. Therefore a wide range of people will benefit from the positive outcomes achieved through this Strategy with the main beneficiaries being the residents of Charnwood, Council employees and partners across other organisations.</p>
Which groups have been consulted as part of the creation or review of the policy?
<p>A web-based consultation during the summer of 2016 with customers/partners/stakeholders seeking to identify hard-to reach, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and providing an insight in to how we might engage effectively with those customers.</p>

■ **Step 3 – What we already know and where there are gaps**

List any existing information/data do you have/monitor about different diverse groups in relation to this policy? Such as in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation etc.

Data/information such as:

- Consultation
 - Previous Equality Impact Assessments
 - Demographic information
 - Anecdotal and other evidence
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- Consultation on draft Customer Service Strategy
 - Census Data
 - Charnwood Residents Survey 2015

What does this information / data tell you about diverse group? If you do not hold or have access to any data/information on diverse groups, what do you need to begin collating / monitoring? (Please list)

By utilising both national and local data, it is statistically evident that the communities of Charnwood are diverse based on all of the protected characteristics. The Customer Service Strategy will therefore seek to ensure effective service delivery and equality of access and opportunity for all of our customers.

Within both national and local data, there is little local information on sexual orientation and gender reassignment. This may potentially create barriers when supporting these two protected groups.

■ **Step 4 – Do we need to seek the views of others? If so, who?**

In light of the answers you have given in Step 2, do you need to consult with specific groups to identify needs / issues? If not please explain why.

No further consultation required at this stage.

■ **Step 5 – Assessing the impact**

In light of any data/consultation/information and your own knowledge and awareness, please identify whether the policy has a positive or negative impact on the individuals or community groups (including what barriers these individuals or groups may face) who identify with any 'protected characteristics' and provide an explanation for your decision (please refer to the general duties on the front page).

	Comments
Age	<p>The Strategy and the Council's commitment to fairness and respect in all elements of customer service is likely to have a positive impact on individuals and communities with regards to the protected characteristic of age, particularly relating to the three general duties of the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>Different/ new opportunities for service delivery (i.e. online customer service) may create potential barriers for older people, thus putting this group of people at a disadvantage as they may not use internet services as frequently or confidently as a younger demographic who have grown up with the</p>

	<p>technology.</p> <p>In order to mitigate any adverse impact in the foreseeable future, no changes will be applied to the current access channels. Therefore, face to face, telephone and paper communication will continue to be open channels and run alongside the online channel.</p>
<p>Disability (Physical, visual, hearing, learning disabilities, mental health)</p>	<p>The Strategy and the Council's commitment to fairness and respect in all elements of customer service is likely to have a positive impact on individuals and communities with regards to the protected characteristic of disability, particularly relating to the three general duties of the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>Effective communication is key to ensuring individuals do not face barriers to access. Mitigating actions to remove any barriers include the use of Plain English (and consideration of Easy Read where appropriate).</p> <p>In order to mitigate any adverse impact in the foreseeable future for this protected characteristic, no changes will be applied to the current access channels. Therefore, face to face, telephone and paper communication will continue to be open channels and run alongside the online channel. Monitoring of this protected characteristic will be essential to ensure barriers continue to be removed and negative impacts are not experienced by customers.</p>
<p>Gender Reassignment (Transgender)</p>	<p>The Strategy and the Council's commitment to fairness and respect in all elements of customer service is likely to have a positive impact on individuals and communities with regards to the protected characteristic of gender reassignment, particularly relating to the three general duties of the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>A potential barrier here is access to, and availability of relevant information. There is little local information on gender reassignment as the Council, and many other organisations, do not have a range of equality monitoring information to support this group.</p>
<p>Race</p>	<p>The Strategy and the Council's commitment to fairness and respect in all elements of customer service is likely to have a positive impact on individuals and communities with regards to the protected characteristic of race, particularly relating to the three general duties of the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>However, with regards to race, some individuals may potentially experience barriers due in terms of language if English is not their first language. Effective communication is key to ensuring individuals do not face barriers to access. Mitigating actions to remove any barriers, including the use of Plain English and offering the Council's interpretation and translation service.</p>

<p>Religion or Belief (Includes no belief)</p>	<p>The Strategy and the Council's commitment to fairness and respect in all elements of customer service is likely to have a neutral and/ or positive impact on individuals and communities with regards to the protected characteristic of religion or belief particularly relating to the three general duties of the Equality Act 2010.</p>
<p>Sex (Gender)</p>	<p>The Strategy and the Council's commitment to fairness and respect in all elements of customer service is likely to have a positive impact on individuals and communities with regards to the protected characteristic of sex particularly relating to the three general duties of the Equality Act 2010.</p>
<p>Sexual Orientation</p>	<p>The Strategy and the Council's commitment to fairness and respect in all elements of customer service is likely to have a positive impact on individuals and communities with regards to the protected characteristic of sexual orientation, particularly relating to the three general duties of the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>A potential barrier here is access to, and availability of relevant information. There is little local information on sexual orientation as the Council, and many other organisations, do not have a range of equality monitoring information to support this group.</p>
<p>Other protected groups (Pregnancy & maternity, marriage & civil partnership)</p>	<p>The Strategy and the Council's commitment to fairness and respect in all elements of customer service is likely to have a neutral impact on individuals and communities with regards to the protected characteristic of pregnancy & maternity and also marriage and civil partnerships particularly relating to the three general duties of the Equality Act 2010.</p>
<p>Other socially excluded groups (carers, low literacy, priority neighbourhoods, health inequalities, rural isolation, asylum seeker and refugee communities etc.)</p>	<p>The Strategy and the Council's commitment to fairness and respect in all elements of customer service covers a variety of other groups such as: rural isolation, deprivation, health inequality, carers, asylum seeker and refugee communities, looked after children, deprived or disadvantaged communities. The Strategy and outcomes arising from it is likely to have a positive impact on individuals and communities.</p>

Where there are potential barriers, negative impacts identified and/ or barriers or impacts are unknown, please outline how you propose to minimise all negative impact or discrimination.

Please note:

- a) If you have identified adverse impact or discrimination that is illegal, you are required to take action to remedy this immediately.
- b) Additionally, if you have identified adverse impact that is justifiable or legitimate, you will need to consider what actions can be taken to mitigate its effect on those groups of people.

The Strategy is aimed at achieving better opportunities for more effective customer service, including more appropriate and accessible service design and delivery. However, it is recognised that positive outcomes are dependent upon the effective implementation of the Strategy.

One of the main barriers to the effective implementation of the Strategy is cultural, behavioural and attitudinal. A range of training for employees and elected members is a key way to tackle this. Additionally, the promotion of positive message and raising the profile of 'putting the customers at the heart of everything we do' across the authority will also support this.

Effective monitoring of all protected characteristic will be essential to ensure any potential barriers are removed at the earliest opportunity and negative impacts are not experienced by customers.

Summarise your findings and give an overview as to whether the policy will meet Charnwood Borough Council's responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity (please refer to the general duties on the front page).

It is the opinion that the Customer Service will comply with Charnwood Borough Council's equality and diversity responsibilities. It will further promote equal opportunities and achieve positive outcomes with the main beneficiaries being the customers of Charnwood Borough Council, Council employees and partners across other organisations.

■ Step 6- Monitoring, evaluation and review

Are there processes in place to review the findings of this Assessment and make appropriate changes? In particular, how will you monitor potential barriers and any positive/ negative impact?

Progress against the Strategy and Associated Action Plan will be monitored by Senior Management Team, via the number of complaints received by the Corporate Complaints Procedure and any associated projects by the Customer Service Programme Board.

How will the recommendations of this assessment be built into wider planning and review processes? e.g. policy reviews, annual plans and use of performance management systems.

The recommendations of this assessment will be built into the Strategy to ensure positive outcomes are achieved. Any identified recommendations will be available to use when planning future service delivery.

■ **Step 7- Action Plan**

Please include any identified concerns/actions/issues in this action plan: The issues identified should inform your Service Plan and, if appropriate, your Consultation Plan			
Reference Number	Action	Responsible Officer	Target Date
001	Continue to ensure that monitoring of the Strategy and associated action plan is carried out on an annual basis and allows for effective monitoring of outcomes.	S. Jackson	Ongoing
002	Upon completion, continue to monitor individual feedback or satisfaction levels to ensure that none of the protected characteristics are adversely impacted.	S. Jackson	Ongoing

■ **Step 8- Who needs to know about the outcomes of this assessment and how will they be informed?**

	Who needs to know (Please tick)	How they will be informed (we have a legal duty to publish EIA's)
Employees	✓	This assessment will be attached as an appendix to the Cabinet report and will also be published on the equalities pages of the website.
Service users	✓	
Partners and stakeholders	✓	
Others	✓	
To ensure ease of access, what other communication needs/concerns are there?		

■ **Step 9- Conclusion (to be completed and signed by the Service Head)**

Please delete as appropriate
I agree with this assessment / action plan
If <i>disagree</i> , state action/s required, reasons and details of who is to carry them out with timescales:
Signed (Service Head):
Date:

[Please send completed & signed assessment to Suzanne Kinder for publishing.](#)