

Appendix E – EIA Template

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Name of Policy/Service/Function	Access to Services Strategy and action plan
Date of Assessment	23 May 2007
Directorate	Corporate Services
Head of Service	David Wilde
Names and Roles of the people carrying out the EIA	David Wilde, HoS Penny Charlish-Jackson, CSU unit manager
Why is the Equality Impact Assessment being done?	Cabinet Report

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Council is putting a comprehensive Access to Services strategy in place to ensure we deliver our services in a way that meets the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors to the Borough. The action plan sets out how we will be transforming current service provision to better meet those needs whilst also seeking to increase efficiency.
- 1.2 It specifically addresses outstanding issues from the 2006 Customer Access Inspection whilst also converging our various channels to market through electronic delivery, customer segmentation and service prioritisation

2. Profile of groups affected as customers and/or staff

Implementation of this strategy has the potential to ensure we deliver our services in the most suitable way to any customer group. In this respect the proposal is relevant to people in all six equality groups. It also carries the risk that the Council could isolate a customer group by offering an access channel that the group mistrusts, is unable to engage with or is not in the right location. Again this is applicable across each of the 6 equality groups.

Therefore each access channel will be rigorously tested, using an EIA, to ensure it is fit for purpose.

There are a number of positive outcomes for customer groups which the strategy will deliver. These are highlighted in the action plan but the list is by no means exhaustive and we expect more opportunities to come about as the various workstreams in the action plan for delivering the strategy start to deliver.

2.1.1 Age Equality

Whilst older people are finding electronic service provision useful by avoiding the need to physical visit a location, there is the risk that those people not confident with this means of communication will be excluded.

2.1.2 Disability equality

Electronic access channels and supporting technology tools have greatly improved access to services for people with disabilities. This, combined with improvement to physical access points will continue to break down barriers to services for people with disabilities. The work being done to improve the accessibility of the Council's website for disabled people is positive in respect of disability equality

2.1.3 Gender equality

Development of access to services through intermediaries via voluntary groups will help to tackle perceived barriers to provision by working with people who have developed a strong bond of trust with users who may otherwise feel excluded. The Customer First policy actively seeks to address inequality through its standards of customer service provision and interaction with service users.

2.1.4 Race equality

This proposal will effect customers from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds including those who speak community languages and newcomers to the borough

2.1.5 Religion/Beliefs

This proposal will affect customers from a range of different faiths

2.1.6 Sexual Orientation

This proposal will affect the lesbian,gay, bisexual and transgendered comunity

3. Questions this assessment addresses

3.1 What kind of equality impact may there be?

Positive: greater ease to access to services for all customer groups across the council, through channels which help reduce the difficulties in engaging with us.

Risk: that a group may be isolated or excluded by limiting the access channels available

Mitigation: EIA on each access channels to ensure no-one is disadvantaged

3.2 How significant is it in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?

The strategy will impact on all residents, business and visitors. The Equality Impact Assessments to be completed on service delivery channels will seek to identify the impact on each of the 6 groups.

3.3 Is the impact positive or negative (or is there a potential for both)?

The impact will be positive by ensuring our services are accessible, customer oriented and available more widely in individual locations as well as across the internet and via the WFD call centre. Extending service provision through intermediaries and delivery partners reduces duplication, limits confusion and increases the ability to reach people. Consolidation of the Council's points of presence does run the risk of limiting choice of access in some areas if not assessed fully.

3.4 On what aspects of the Equality Duties will this impact be?

This proposal relates to the Council's duties to promote race, gender and disability equality and is particularly relevant to our disability equality objectives of enabling disabled people to live independantly

3.5 Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination?

No

3.6 What further information is required to gauge the probability and extent of the impact?

More detailed information about our population , our services and the geography of the Borough to ensure access to services is better targeted.

This is a workstream in the action plan to deliver the strategy and improve equality monitoring in respect of customers

3.7 Where and how can that information be obtained?

See 3.6

4. Action Planning Questions

1.1 What action do we need to take to reduce negative impact?

Further work to identify and mitigate any negative impact is being built into projects through EIAs and risk management using the Council's project management approach

1.2 If the action proposed will not fully mitigate adverse consequences for equality, or if the decision is to take no action, why is this, and can we justify it?

Not applicable

4.3 Can any further action be taken to promote equality of opportunity in relation to any of the equality strands?

By enabling access to services across a much range of channels, choice for the recipient is significantly improved and resources are better targeted to those people who would benefit from support around complex services. The Customer First policy will actively address inequality by applying high standards of care and professionalism for all customers. Technology solutions like Smartcards and kiosks open up access to transactional services whilst providing anonymity for the users (like free school meals).

1.3 Do we need to undertake any further consultation or research?

Yes, but taken into account as part of project delivery

4. Conclusions and Next Steps

4.1 The key areas, which were improved as a result of this assessment, were:

The EIA process identified that the Channels project within the programme is both critical to enhancing service provision for residents, businesses and visitors and is highly relevant to the promotion of equality. To ensure these aspects of the strategy have a positive impact each channel will be equality impact assessed individually as part of the development and delivery process

The people and places work-stream and the take-up workstream are also relevant to equality.

The inclusion of voluntary groups as service intermediaries also offers significant scope to break down traditional barriers to service provision through use of trusted sources, support and an understanding of the needs to specific groups

Therefore, each project within the Access to Services programme will contain a task to carry out an EIA on the likely deliverable once defined. This will then be reviewed at user acceptance testing and revisited once the outcome has been implemented to ensure it has delivered as expected. Equality monitoring will also be necessary to understanding the actual effect of these changes.

5. Action Plan

Action required	Lead Officer	Time Scale	Comments/Outcomes
Equality impact assessments will be built into the work programmes for the delivery of each of the “Channels” work-stream			
People and Places: Monitoring systems to assess satisfaction and access will include equality monitoring and key staff will be trained to encourage customers to	MC	2 years	This will enable better decision making around where to target services, having regard to equality needs

<p>provide equality monitoring information in confidence.</p> <p>Customer segmentation work will identify ways to include equality groups the Council will have a detailed understanding of the population profile by age and geographic location.</p>			
<p>Channels: electronic, call centre and face to face channels will be consistent and more interactive.</p>	<p>18 months</p>	<p>DW</p>	<p>A wider range of services will be accessible from each channel, reducing the need to deal with the council many times</p>
<p>Partnerships: service will be delivered jointly with delivery partners</p>	<p>3 years</p>	<p>DW</p>	<p>This will simplify relationships and reducing confusion</p>
<p>Take-up: Ensure the design of the self service channel is inclusive in respect of disability equality and that its implementation supports customers who are disabled, older and who speak community languages. costs will be reduced overall across the Council.</p>	<p>2 years</p>	<p>DW</p>	<p>This will free up resources for front line services. Better use will be made of the most appropriate channels for relevant services</p>
<p>WFD - In establishing the more effective points of presence this workstream will ensure inclusive consultation with all groups but with disabled people in particular. The findings will inform the development of the proposal and be part of the equality impact assessment arrangements</p>			