

# **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

## **1. Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 The Food Safety team within Business Regulation, Consumer Protection, carries out the work detailed in the The Food Law Enforcement Service Plan ( FLESP). Their remit is to protect and improve public health and details of how this is carried out are on page 9 of the FLESP.

The FLESP has been prepared in accordance with the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement ( 2000) which requires all Local Authorities to produce a service plan dedicated to food safety enforcement.

This plan is an important part of the process to ensure national priorities and standards are addressed and delivered locally, provide objectives for the future by identifying major issues that cross service boundaries and improve food safety throughout the borough.

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

The client groups affected by this plan are food business owners and anyone who lives, works or visits Waltham Forest.

This plan potentially affects all of the six equality groups because everybody within the borough buys and eats food and drink and may have cause to make a complaint about it. Similarly all food business owners and people suffering from an infectious disease can belong to any one of the six groups

## **3. Questions this assessment addresses**

### **3.1 What kind of equality impact may there be?**

It is estimated that 80% of the food business owners (FBOs) in Waltham Forest are BME and male. In terms of religion, a high proportion of these are Muslim and 35% of all butchers are Halal.

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

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

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

Clearly any enforcement action which is taken will mainly affect BME groups in terms of FBOs. However, before any enforcement action is taken there is

an escalating scale with guidance and advice at one end and prosecution at the other. Guidance is often accompanied by leaflets on a wide variety of subjects which are published in 9 different languages. The WF Interpreting service is also used to overcome severe language barriers. The Food & Safety team follows the principles of the Enforcement Concordat and also the Environmental Services Enforcement Protocol which is available on the Waltham Forest Internet at:

<http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/index/environment/es-enforcement-protocol.htm>

This document sets out the general approach to enforcement matters including those of dealing with vulnerable groups. When taking formal enforcement action there is a negative impact on the FBO but this is outweighed by the positive impact on all users of that food businesses in terms of protecting their health. For example, the closure of a restaurant for 1 week will have an adverse affect on the FBO but may safeguard the health of hundreds of users of that restaurant and protect them from food poisoning.

### 3.5 Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination?

The impact could not constitute unlawful discrimination as it is a statutory requirement.

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

It would be useful to gauge the probability and extent of this impact and attempts have been made previously to determine this. During 2004, the team asked FBOs to complete an Equality Monitoring Form at the end of the food inspection. This was often not welcomed by the owners who may have already spent 2 hours going through the inspection with the officer and did not want to spend more time on this. Also it disadvantaged the officer as owners saw it as yet another burden being placed upon them. In doing this assessment the team recognises the importance of equality monitoring information being collected and will revisit this issue as part of the action plan.

A Business Satisfaction Survey was run in 2006 and this returned a 98% satisfaction result. The Team will look at analysing the results by equality groups in the next Survey to identify any potential issues.

### 3.7 Where and how can that information be obtained

Since 2004, the team has run a stall every year at the Consumer Protection Customer panel day to specifically try to access members of the public to inform them of our service. A Customer Panel newsletter is also sent out six times per year.

Food Safety Week – the team actively participates in this every year specifically targeting the young in schools and also running stalls outside food shops to target all users of the shop.

Smokefree – this year the team is implementing smokefree legislation in all 7,000 workplaces in Waltham Forest. Visits will be made and leaflets

delivered to most of those premises to prepare them for the 1<sup>st</sup> July. Drop-in days and information on the website have also been covered.

#### **4. Action Planning Questions**

##### **4.1 What action do we need to take to reduce negative impact?**

See section 3.2,3.3,3.4 above.

##### **4.2 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?**

The action proposed should mitigate any adverse consequences.

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

Information can also be obtained on the council website, by calling at the office in Blackhorse Road, via e-mail or telephone. Officers will also collect food complaints from a customer's home address if they are unable to attend the offices.

##### **4.1 Do we need to undertake any further consultation or research?**

It would be useful to carry out a further survey for FBOs and also one for people using the service for advice or with a complaint.

#### **4. Conclusions and Next Steps**

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

Further customer and business surveys to be carried out in 2007-08.

#### **5. Action Plan**

<b>Action required</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Time Scale</b>	<b>Comments/Outcomes</b>
Customer satisfaction survey including analysis of equalities monitoring information	A. Cockerill	By April 08	Dependent upon Business Support personnel availability
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