

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Name of Policy/Service/Function Access 2 Services Programme, People and Places Wireless City	
Date of Assessment November 2007	
Directorate Environment and Regeneration	
Head of Service David Wilde	
Names and Roles of the people carrying out the EIA Usha Parmar, Customer Services Manager Environment and Regeneration Ikenna Akpom, Emerging Technologies & ICT Strategy Officer	
Why is the Equality Impact Assessment being done?	Management Board Report Cabinet Report New Policy Change to existing policy Minor decision with potentially major impact on equality On Current EIA Schedule

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Summary of proposal and specify whether this is a universal or targeted service

The Access 2 Services Programme is one of the 5 strategic programmes currently in progress across the Council, along with the Efficiency Review, Towards Excellence, Building Schools for the Future and the 2012 Strategic Programme. The Access 2 Services Programme follows on from the "Improving Access to Services" inspection in 2006 and the main objective is to enable residents, businesses and visitors to be able to access the services they want, the way they want, when they want.

The proposal, agreed by Cabinet in April 2007, is for BT to implement a Wi-Fi Wireless City network infrastructure in Waltham Forest and further develop the existing strategic network services BT provide to the Council, based on a public/private partnership commercial model.

A public private partnership Wireless City network deployment with BT would allow the Council improve its performance, and meet its priorities and objectives by supporting mobile access to back office applications, economic regeneration, and social inclusion, without the Council having to provide capital funding to build a Wireless City network.

In partnership with the LSP, Regeneration look to develop and implement a joint 5-year employment, enterprise and skills strategy to reduce economic disadvantage and worklessness, and close the equality gaps that are currently identified for specific ethnic communities, women and young people, and this initiative supports that aim.

Benefits include:

- potential for Waltham Forest to be one of the leaders in next generation electronic access for our residents, businesses and visitors to the borough
- reduction of anti-social behaviour and crime through the use of mobile wireless CCTV camera monitoring
- social inclusion and mobile access to online health advice, and medical services
- complement the current Building Schools for the Future programme, by providing mobile access to online skills development and training content and booking of learning materials

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- support the current regeneration programme by providing the communications infrastructure to improve economic competitiveness, attract businesses to the Borough and promote growth and retention of local jobs
- providing mobile access to online Council services, e-voting, e-polling and community group websites

This is a universal service.

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

2.1.1 Age Equality

There is positive impact for young people through the increased opportunities for electronic access, particularly as this generation is likely to be familiar with maximising the benefits this scheme presents. There is positive impact for young people with increased economic, employment and skills opportunities and improved quality and safety of the environment.

2.1.2 Disability equality

There is positive impact for disabled people with increased economic, employment and skills opportunities and improved quality and safety of the environment enabling disabled people to get out and about more easily, and have increasing choices.

2.1.3 Gender equality

There is positive impact for women through increased access as part of the regeneration work skills initiatives. There is positive impact for women with increased economic, employment and skills opportunities and improved quality and safety of the environment that meets their needs.

2.1.4 Race equality

There is positive impact for ethnic and new communities with increased economic, employment and skills opportunities and improved quality and safety of the environment particularly with the lead up to the 2012 Games.

There is negative impact if the issue around reducing social divide is not addressed. It is necessary to enable equality of opportunity through digital means in order to increase access to knowledge and information and reduce and minimise the digital social divide.

There is also a higher proportion of deprivation within BAME and newly arrived communities, and the need to facilitate equal electronic access would need to be addressed through targeted resources.

The majority of small businesses in the borough are owned by ethnic proprietors and run by ethnic staff, it is therefore necessary that this core group has equal opportunity to realise the benefits of the initiative.

There would need to be increased awareness raising through targeted communications for this equality group.

2.1.5 Religion/Beliefs

There is positive impact for faith communities with increased economic, employment and skills opportunities and improved quality and safety of the environment that will be driven through the LSP.

2.1.6 Sexual Orientation

Neutral

3. Questions this assessment addresses

3.1 What kind of equality impact may there be?

This initiative has a positive impact for all communities and businesses

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

The number of people likely to be affected is large as this could potentially involve all people living in the borough, all businesses in the borough and all staff of Waltham Forest Council.

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

Positive

As in point 2, there is both positive and negative impact.

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

Gender, Disability and Race

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?

NA

3.7 Where and how can that information be obtained?

NA

4. Action Planning Questions

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

- To ensure there is targeted communications with ethnic businesses and BAME communities to explain how the initiative works
- To ensure it provides equality of opportunity to realise the benefits.
- To reduce and minimise social divide and, reduce and minimise digital and knowledge divide by considering free service provision for identified socio-economic groups and vulnerable groups.
- It would be beneficial to liaise with Regeneration and Olympics team for synergies in objectives.

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?

Pending discussion with BT.

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

See action plan in pint 6 below.

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

No

5. Conclusions and Next Steps

The initiative has positive impact for Waltham Forest residents and businesses, and whilst it is a commercial venture, with the lead up to the 2012 Games it is necessary for the Council and BT to consider how it can deliver equality of opportunity by having free service access for vulnerable groups identified in pint 2 above. This should be discussed in context to BT's social responsibility policy.

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

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

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Communications plan for Access 2 Services.

6. Action Plan

Item	Action required	Lead Officer	Time Scale	Comments/Outcomes	Status
1.	Discussions with BT to address the impact on Race equality for ethnic businesses and BAME and newly arrived communities in Waltham Forest and providing equality of opportunity.	Ikenna Akpom			
2.	Walled Garden access for identified socio-economic groups.	Ikenna Akpom		enabling access to Council services through the internet.	
3.	Free Wifi access for identified estates.	Ikenna Akpom		Reducing social divide, enabling access to knowledge and information.	
4.	Undertake targeted communications with identified groups through Voluntary Action Waltham Forest http://www.frontlineonline.org.uk Tel: 0208 521 0377 Fax: 0208 521 1672 email: info@voluntaryaction-wf.org.uk	Ikenna Akpom			
5.	Presentation at ethnic business forum/ associations managed by Regeneration, contact Munawar Hussain x6746	Ikenna Akpom			
6.	Liaise with Regeneration and Olympics teams for joint working on objectives around skills development and employment targets.	Ikenna Akpom			