

Colchester Borough Council

Equality Impact Assessment Form - An Analysis of the Effects on Equality

Section 1: screening stage

Name of policy, service or strategy to be assessed:

- Customer Access and Channel Management

1. What is the main purpose of the policy, service or strategy?

- The aim is to actively promote a 'self-service culture' where information/simple processes are made more readily available through the web site through a four year phased programme of investment and consequent savings.
- To support an active programme of channel migration including where appropriate, restricting conventional channels to proactively manage channel shift.
- The introduction of web based self service to reduce the demand of high volume call centre telephone based enquiries.
- To encourage customers to access or interact with services via channels other than those they normally choose which involves behaviour change on the part of the customer.

2. What main areas or activities does it cover?

- Website
- Telephone
- Face to Face
- Email
- Letters.
- Self- service
- Access to information
- New Media

3. Who are the main audience, users or customers who will be affected?

- Customers
- Visitors
- Staff

4. What outcomes do you want to achieve from the policy, service or strategy?

- Improved customer care from increased number of first point of contact resolution and 24 hour access to information.
- Improved level of service
- Efficiency and cost savings
- Reaching and engaging with 'harder to reach' demographics and customer groups
- To ensure that all channels have access to the same information to accommodate 'channel hopping'.

5. Are other service areas or partner agencies involved in delivery? If so, please give details below:

- All service areas of the Council are involved in delivery.
- External partners are also involved including Essex County Council, NHS, Libraries, DWP

6. How does the policy, service or strategy help to further or facilitate to our 'general duty'¹ to:

(a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation?

(b) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a 'protected characteristic'², and those who do not?³

(c) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?⁴

¹ These 3 points summarise the 'general duty' as it applies to public sector organisations in the Equality Act 2010

² The Equality Act's 'protected characteristics' include age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sex and sexual orientation. It also covers marriage and civil partnerships, but not for all aspects of the duty.

³ This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to: (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it, and (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

⁴ This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to (a) tackle prejudice, and (b) promote understanding.

Please complete the following in order to identify how the policy, practice or strategy furthers the aim of the 'general duty':

'Protected characteristic' group		How does it help to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'?	How does it help to 'advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?	How does it help to 'foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?

'Protected characteristic' group		How does it help to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'?	How does it help to 'advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?	How does it help to 'foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?
Age	Older people (60+)	<p>Customers are able to choose the channel that best suits their needs to either access information or contact the Council which helps to eliminate potential discrimination.</p> <p>Customers have access to a range of language and easy read options or are able to obtain translation services in a format suitable for them.</p>	It helps to 'advance equality of opportunity' by providing choice of contact channel and that individual needs are met as fairly and comprehensively as possible particularly hard to reach groups eg young people or vision impaired customers	We have clear lines of dialogue with key organisations and groups that represent older people including Age UK and the Older People's Forum. This can help to help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
	Younger people (17-25) and children (0-16)	As Above	As Above	<p>The CSC attends and inputs to the annual 'information day' a gathering of local partners delivering services for young people. This allows the CSC to remain informed with regards to the needs of younger people.</p> <p>We also have clear lines of dialogue with groups that represent the younger people such as the Youth Enquiry Service and YMCA.</p> <p>The above can help to help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.</p>

'Protected characteristic' group		How does it help to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'?	How does it help to 'advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?	How does it help to 'foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?
Disability	Physical	As Above	As Above	We have clear lines of dialogue with groups that represent the people with disabilities including 'Fair Access to Colchester.' The above can help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding. The above can help to help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
	Sensory	As Above	As Above	As above
	Learning	As Above	As Above	As above
	Mental health issues	As Above	As Above	As above
Ethnicity ⁵	Other – <i>please specify</i>	As Above	As Above	
	White	As Above	As Above	
	Black	As Above	As Above	We have clear lines of dialogue with groups that represent BME groups including TACMEP. The above can help to help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
	Chinese	As Above	As Above	As above
	Mixed Ethnic Origin	As Above	As Above	As above

⁵ National Census 2011 categories are: Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian (Asian or Asian British), African, Caribbean, Other Black (Black or Black British), White and Black African, White and Asian, White and Black Caribbean (Mixed), British, Irish, Other White (White), Chinese, Other (Other Ethnic Group).

'Protected characteristic' group		How does it help to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'?	How does it help to 'advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?	How does it help to 'foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?
	Gypsies/ Travellers	As Above	As Above	We liaise with Essex County Council to help tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
	Other – <i>please state</i>			
Language	English not first language	As Above	As Above	BME groups are less likely to have English as a first language. We have clear lines of dialogue with key support agencies that represent BME groups including TACMEP. The above can help to help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Women who are pregnant or have given birth in last 26 weeks	As Above	As Above	
Religion or Belief	People with a religious belief (or none) ⁶	As Above	As Above	We have clear lines of dialogue with groups that represent different religious groups including North East Essex Faiths Forum. This can help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
Sex	Men	As Above	As Above	

⁶ For example, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh or no religious belief.

'Protected characteristic' group		How does it help to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'?	How does it help to 'advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?	How does it help to 'foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?
	Women	As Above	As Above	We have clear lines of dialogue with groups that represent women including the Colchester and Tendring Women's Refuge. This can help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
	Transsexual / gender reassignment	As Above	As Above	We have clear lines of dialogue with Outhouse East which represents this group which can help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay and bisexual	As Above	As Above	We have clear lines of dialogue with Outhouse East which represents these groups which can help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
Marriage and Civil Partnership ⁷	People who are single, married or in a civil partnership	As Above	not applicable	not applicable

7. Are there any concerns that the policy, service or strategy could have a differential impact in terms of equality?

- Yes

Please use the table below to indicate how the policy, service or strategy could have a positive or negative effect on any of the following equality groups (known under the Equality Act as 'protected characteristics'). Include reference to any consultation, data or information that you have used in making this assessment about positive or negative effects.

⁷ Our legal duty in respect of 'marriage or civil partnership' extends only to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination.

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could disadvantage the group
Age	Older people (60+)	X	This group could benefit by being provided with a choice of channels that best suit their needs and by being able to access information 24/7. Out of hours services are also available such as 24 hour payment line, benefit and council tax benefit application forms.	X	Some older people may have difficulty accessing/using computers due to technological barriers.
	Younger people (17-25) and children (0-16)	X	As above		
Disability	Physical	X	As Above	X	Some people with a disability may have difficulty accessing/using computers due to physical, sensory or communication barriers.
	Sensory	X	The development of live web chat facilities and video conferencing as an alternative to telephone, post and emails channels could improve access for those with hearing impairment. Browse-Aloud as well as Braille and Audio-CD formats can also particularly benefit this group.		
	Learning	X	As Above		
	Mental health issues	X	As Above		
	Other – <i>please specify</i>				
Ethnicity	White	X	As Above		
	Black	X	As Above		
	Chinese	X	As Above		
	Mixed Ethnic Origin	X	As Above		
	Gypsies/ Travellers	X	As Above		
	Other – <i>please state</i>				

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could disadvantage the group
Language	English not first language	X	Google Translate can particularly benefit this group.		
Pregnancy and Maternity	Women who are pregnant or have given birth in last 26 weeks	X	As Above		
Religion or Belief	People with a religious belief (or none)	X	As Above		
Sex	Men	X	As Above		
	Women	X	As Above		
	Transsexual / gender reassignment	X	As Above		
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay and bisexual	X	As Above		
Marriage and Civil Partnership	People who are single, married or in a civil partnership	X	As Above		

8. Could the policy, service or strategy unlawfully discriminate⁸ against any 'protected characteristic', either directly or indirectly?

- No

9. If you have identified any negative impacts above, have you been able to minimise or remove them, and if so, how?

Some older people may find it difficult to access Council services due to technological barriers

We mitigate this risk by the availability of assisted service, being face to face customer contact at Angel Court both by appointment and on demand.

⁸ The Council has a general duty to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'. Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another in a comparable situation because of their 'protected characteristic' whether on grounds of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, ethnicity; religion or belief; sex (gender), sexual orientation, or marriage and civil partnership. Indirect discrimination occurs when an apparently neutral provision or practice would nevertheless disadvantage people on the grounds of their 'protected characteristic' unless the practice can be objectively justified by a legitimate aim.

Some people with a disability may have difficulty accessing/using computers due to physical, sensory or communication barriers.

We mitigate this risk by:

- the 'Assisted Service' which includes face to face customer contact at Angel Court and home visits by appointment.
- the development of live web chat facilities and video conferencing as an alternative to telephone, post and emails channels
- the availability of Browse-Aloud, Braille and Audio-CD formats

NB: In 2011 the customer service centre commissioned a public survey on how customers access council services. See <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/5867/Accessing-Council-Services-Survey>

Responses we used to support the Council customer excellence programme and provide an insight into how the future provision of customer service could be delivered.

Customer Insight intelligence like telephone call data, mystery shopping and customer feedback were used to identify areas of improvement within the Council and work to eliminate process failure and unnecessary cost to the customer.

Summary and findings of Initial Equality Impact Assessment – screening stage

10. Please put a tick in the relevant box to confirm your findings, and what the next step is:

Findings	Action required
Likely negative impacts have been identified but have been minimised or removed. ✓	Sign off screening and finish.

11. Name and job title of person completing this form:

- Anita Frost

12. Date of completion:

- January 2013

13. Date for update or review of this screening:

- January 2016