

Colchester Borough Council

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

Section 1: Initial Equality Impact Assessment

Name of policy/ decision to be assessed:

- This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) relates to Colchester Borough Council's provision of in person customer services at the Library and Community Hub, Trinity Square, Colchester, Essex CO1 1JB

1. What is the main purpose of the policy/ options report?

- To ensure equality of access for customers engaging with Colchester Borough Council's services located at the Library and Community Hub

2. What main areas or activities does it cover?

- The provision of an Express Zone – predominately used for self-serve or assisted self-serve transactions
- Access to specialist advice for customers who are vulnerable or who have complex enquiries / cases

3. Are there changes to an existing policy being considered in this assessment? If so what are they?

In person service delivery has in recent years developed in the following ways:

- The creation of a new public space (Express Zone) in the Library and Community Hub for digital (online) self-service
- Training Advisors to assist customers to self-serve if needed
- The provision of a Telephone service within the Hub where customers can speak to a specialist Officer who will resolve any requests or issues immediately
- Provide customers with a 'drop in' service, delivered by a dedicated and highly trained Team, to help the most vulnerable residents or those with particularly complex issues
- Work with partners to provide a range of support services for customers

4. Who are the main audience, users or customers who will be affected by the policy?

- Customers accessing services
- Community Partners
- Internal services

5. What outcomes do you want to achieve from the policy?

- To ensure service provision is accessible
- To direct bespoke support to those in need
- The delivery of services is adaptable to the persons need
- To build community resilience
- To foster positive relations

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

- Essex County Council
- Colchester Borough Homes
- Key partners within the local community who provide support to local residents for financial and debt advice, housing advice and other support services

7. Are you aware of any relevant information, data, surveys or consultations¹ which help us to assess the likely or actual impact of the policy upon customers or staff?

- Customer satisfaction will be measured through customer feedback by our Research and Demand Team

8. The 'general duty' states that we must have "due regard" to the need 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 not³

¹Click on [surveys or consultations](#) for more information. The Council's surveys and consultations include 'equality monitoring information' to help us identify any particular concerns or views expressed by any particular group or 'protected characteristic'. It can also help us to assess how representative of our customers the respondent group is. Local Data on the Protected Characteristics is available [on this page](#) of the Hub.

²The 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.

(c) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not⁴

The policy helps us to ‘eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation’ in the following way(s):

- In-Person services and our customer environment continues to develop and evolve alongside our customer’s changing needs, whatever these maybe
- The Customer Support Team, based within the hub, are highly trained. They are tasked to support customers to access services in a way that is suitable to their circumstance. The team identify why customers have come in and what they want or need to do, they will also establish whether a customer is deemed to be vulnerable or not and establish if the enquiry is of a complex nature
- Depending on the vulnerability of the customer or the nature of their enquiry they will either: Signpost to a computer / iPad (including assisting customers to use the online services) or signpost to the CBC phone or arrange an immediate appointment with a Customer Support Officer for customers who are vulnerable or who have complex enquiries / cases
- The Customer Support Team have received training in matters of equality. Furthermore, service specific training has provided officers with a wide understanding of need and appropriate support. Finally the team has designated safeguarding officers who are able to formally report matters through appropriate channels
- Private interview rooms are available upon request

The policy helps us to ‘advance equality of opportunity’ in the following way(s):

- The team directs support without conditionality. Also those that are deemed vulnerable or affected by complex issues be able to access support in methods that most suit their circumstances.

The policy helps us to ‘foster good relations...’ in the following way(s):

- The Library and Community Hub is a partnership space. It is intended that support mechanism are developed that include a wide range of community partners. This approach will foster community resilience and help develop a wider network of advice and support for customers.

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.

9. This section helps us to identify any disproportionate impacts. Please indicate in the table below whether the policy is likely to particularly benefit or disadvantage any of the 'protected characteristics'.

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
Age	Older people (60+)	Yes	<p>Customers who come into the Hub will go to the Express Zone which is conveniently located on the ground floor near to the entrance. There is provision for officers to manage customer enquiries in this area and they are able to provide assisted self-serve or refer to an immediate appointment with a Customer Support Officer.</p> <p>The team are trained in dementia awareness and we have designated dementia champions/friends within the team. Furthermore the Hub is a designated 'keep safe' location. The team have established partnerships links with Colchester 360 and Age Concern Colchester allowing for wider referrals to be provided.</p>	None identified	
	Younger people (17-25) and children (0-16)	Yes	<p>The Express Zone is a modern and inviting space that has been carefully designed to ensure barriers are not created through impression or design.</p> <p>The area has a generous seating area where families with young children can be seated as services are accessed.</p> <p>Ease of access has been created through the use of ICT enabled devices which follow changes in the way some customers now prefer to conduct</p>	None identified	

			<p>transactions with ourselves.</p> <p>The Express Zone is also situated adjacent, but with demarcation, to the children's library and play zone. This can be particularly beneficial to families with young children.</p> <p>The team have established partnerships links with Colchester Youth Enquiry Service which is also conveniently located in an adjacent building.</p>		
Disability	Physical	Yes	<p>Our operations in the Hub are accessible to those with disabilities.</p> <p>The team are available to provide assisted self-serve or fully assisted support.</p> <p>Within the Hub there is a Welfare Benefit Specialist Team who assist with benefit entitlement and income maximisation to those with disabilities.</p>	Yes	Disability could prevent access to Hub considering it is a town centre location.
	Sensory	Yes	As above. Additionally web service are enable with 'brose aloud' functionality.	Yes	As above
	Learning	Yes	As Above	Yes	As above
	Mental health issues	Yes	As above Additionally members of the team have received mental health awareness training and have established links with mental health support provision in the Borough.	Yes	As above

	Other – <i>specify</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ethnicity ⁵	White	Yes	Colchester Borough Council operates a Diversity Steering Group led by our Equality and Safeguarding Co-ordinator. The Hub manager is a member of this forum which allows for information exchange between our front facing team and Equality coordinator. How to preserve equality of access is a common theme of the group and a number of initiative have taken place to under pin open access to services. An example being a community event held in the Hub under the banner of REACH - <i>Realising Equality Access at the Community Hub.</i>	None identified	
	Black	Yes	As above	None identified	
	Chinese	Yes	As above	None identified	
	Mixed Ethnic Origin	Yes	As above	None identified	
	Gypsies/ Travellers	Yes	As above. Additionally the team has links to the Essex County Council's Countywide Traveller Unit.	None identified	
	Other – <i>please state</i>	n/a		n/a	
Language	English not first language	Yes	The team have access to 'language line' which allows for equal access for those who do not have English as a first language. Specific headsets have been purchased which allows the use of language line in a discreet conference environment. The team also have established links with organisations that support communities	None identified	

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).

			who may have language barriers, in some cases this has led to bespoke meetings where interpreters have been provided for the customer by the representing agency or organisation.		
Pregnancy and Maternity	Women who are pregnant or have given birth in last 26 weeks	Yes	<p>The Express Zone area has a generous seating area where families with young children can be seated as services are accessed.</p> <p>Ease of access has been created through the use of ICT enabled devices which follow changes in the way some customers now prefer to conduct transactions with ourselves.</p> <p>The Express Zone is also situated adjacent, but with demarcation, to the children's library and play zone. This can be particularly beneficial to families with young children.</p> <p>It is noted registrar services can also been accessed within the hub.</p> <p>Private interview rooms are available upon request.</p>	Yes	If a specialist interview is required and the customer is accompanied by a young child then ease of access to services could be affected especially when discussing critical issues.
Religion or Belief	People with a religious belief (or none)	None Identified	A wide range of services are provided to customer in the hub – these include matters relating to Housing and Welfare Benefits. Officers are trained to provide expert advice. Private interview rooms are available where the most sensitive of issues could be discussed or where the customer requests the same.	Yes	Some communities may be reluctant to access Council service as they may view their own community as their first point of call.
Sex	Men	Yes	As above	None Identified	
	Women	Yes	As above	None	

				Identified	
Gender Reassignment ⁶	Transgender/ Transsexual	Yes	Awareness training has been provided to the team to ensure equality of access	None Identified	
Sexual Orientation	Bisexual, Heterosexual, Gay or Lesbian	Yes	As above	None Identified	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	People who are married or in a civil partnership	Yes	As above	None Identified	

10. If you have identified any negative impacts (above) how can they be minimised or removed?

Yes.

Disability - Service provision can also be provided through alternative means if the disability prevents access to services in the Hub, this could include a Home Visit where necessary.

Our online service provision and telephony channels are well established allowing for remote access.

Pregnancy and Maternity - Private interview rooms are available upon request. Service provision can also be provided through alternative means if necessary especially in matters relating to Housing need.

Religion or Belief – the Hub team are keen to help residents from communities which would not normally access services. Information of service provision is cascaded through Colchester’s ‘Independent Advisory Group’ and contacts and relationships have been formed through the team’s participation of the Diversity Steering Group. In September 2017 an event was held in the Hub where members of diverse communities were invited to a meeting at the Hub to ensure our services were cascaded and ease of access was demonstrated.

⁶ The protected characteristic of gender reassignment is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as “a person proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.” This is a personal process that may involve medical interventions such as counselling, psychotherapy, hormone therapy or surgery, but does not have to. NB: It is generally held that transgender people disguise their features or clothing to resemble their preferred sex, whereas transsexual people wish to change their body to completely resemble their preferred sex.

11. Could the policy discriminate⁷ against any 'protected characteristic', either directly or indirectly⁸?

No.

Summary and findings of Initial Equality Impact Assessment

Findings	Action required
Negative impacts have been identified but have been minimised or removed <input type="checkbox"/>	Jason Granger 23 October 2017

13. Name and job title of person completing this form: Jason Granger – Customer Interventions Manager

14. Date of completion: 23 October 2017

15. Date for update or review of this screening: October 2020

⁷ 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'.

⁸ If you answer 'yes' to question 11 (above) you will need to complete this section *and* go on to complete Section 2 in order to conduct a full Equality Impact Assessment.