

## Colchester Borough Council

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

#### Section 1: Initial Equality Impact Assessment

Name of policy\* to be assessed:

- Customer Access and Channel Management

(\*Please note that the term 'policy' is used broadly to include a service, strategy or key decision.)

#### 1. What is the main purpose of the policy?

- The aim is to actively promote a 'self-service culture' where most information and processes are made available online.
- To support an active programme of channel migration including where appropriate, restricting conventional channels to proactively manage channel shift.
- To introduce an "assisted self-service" team to help support, educate and enable customers self-serve in the future.
- 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. Are there changes to an existing policy being considered in this assessment? If so, what are they?

- Review of current policy

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

- Customers
- Visitors
- Staff

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

- 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'.

6. 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

7. Are you aware of any relevant information, data, surveys or consultations<sup>1</sup> which help us to assess the likely or actual impact of the policy upon customers or staff? *If so provide details and include a link to the document or source where available.*

- Following the introduction of the express zone we have conducted customer satisfaction surveys regarding the service we offer.

The Council's surveys and consultations include 'equality monitoring information' to help us identify any particular concerns or views expressed by any

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<sup>1</sup>Click on [Customer Insight](#) 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 staff intranet, 'Colin'.

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.

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'<sup>2</sup> and those who do not<sup>3</sup>
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not<sup>4</sup>

Not all policies help us to meet the 'general duty', but most do.

*Where applicable, explain how this policy helps us to meet the 'general duty':*

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

- 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.
- 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.

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

- It gives more opportunity for customers to access to our online services as they are available 24/7
- Greater access to our services for those who find it more difficult to attend our offices
- Assisted self-service enables customers to learn online skills
- Enables us to free up time and services for more vulnerable customers

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

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

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

- We have clear lines of dialogue with key organisations and groups including Age UK, Youth Enquiry Service, YMCA, Fair Access to Colchester and Colchester and Tendering Women’s Refuge. This can help to help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- CBC introduced the “Go Online Advisor” post, who works in the community as a “digital eagle” developing computer skills.
- Introduction of the Express zone in the Library and Community HUB where customers can access our online services themselves but also get guidance on what they need to do from a member of staff.

9. The Council has an important role in improving residents’ health under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. This relates to both its ‘core functions’ (such as housing, leisure, green spaces and environmental health) and to its ‘enabling roles’ (such as economic development, planning and engaging with communities)<sup>5</sup>. The Council recognises that its Public Sector Equality Duty and its role in improving health are interrelated and mutually supportive. This is especially true across the ‘protected characteristics’ of age and disability.

*“Health inequalities are the unjust and avoidable differences in people's health across the population. They come from the unequal distribution of income, wealth and power and influence the wider determinants of health such as work, education, social support and housing. Currently, in England people living in the least deprived areas will live around 20 years longer in good health than those in the most deprived areas. Reducing health inequalities means giving everyone the same opportunities to lead a healthy life, no matter where they live or who they are.”*

- The adoption of online Customer Access, as an additional option to the existing assistance available will improve the ability of all residents to report issues, request services or monitor applications by across core functions and enabling roles supported by the online systems.

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

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<sup>5</sup> The King’s Fund: [The district council contribution to public health: a time of challenge and opportunity, 2015](#)

'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+)	<p>Flexibility in accessing our services</p> <p>Freeing resources to work with more valuable customers</p> <p>More cost-effective service delivery</p>	<p>Customers can choose the channels that best suit their needs and are also 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.</p> <p>With sufficient reduction in telephone and face to face contact we will be able to work closer in identifying these customers and their needs.</p> <p>This will improve the service levels across all channels, giving a better customer journey to all.</p>	<p>Online access</p> <p>Education to customers</p>	<p>Some people may have difficulty accessing/using computers due to technological barriers.</p> <p>Customers may not be aware of the change in how to contact us, so re-education is needed</p>
	Younger people (17-25) and children (0-16)	As above	As above	As above	As above
Disability	Physical	As above	As above	<p>As above plus:</p> <p>Access issues</p>	<p>As above Plus:</p> <p>Customers with mobility issues and no means to go online at home, may not be able to use the express zone to gain access to online services</p>

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
	Sensory	As above	As above, customers have different choices in contacting us including telephone (also for text phone users), face to face and online. Also, upon request, we can send out documents in braille.	As above	As above
	Learning	<p>Flexibility in accessing our services</p> <p>Freeing resources to work with more valuable customers</p> <p>More cost-effective service delivery</p>	<p>Customers can choose the channels that best suit their needs and are also 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.</p> <p>With sufficient reduction in telephone and face to face contact we will be able to work closer in identifying these customers and their needs.</p> <p>This will improve the service levels across all channels, giving a better customer journey to all.</p>	<p>Online Access</p> <p>Education to customers</p>	<p>Some people may have difficulty accessing/using computers due to technological barriers.</p> <p>Customers may not be aware of the change in how to contact us, so re-education is needed</p>
	Mental health issues	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Other – <i>specify</i>				

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
Ethnicity <sup>6</sup>	White	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Black	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Chinese	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Mixed Ethnic Origin	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Gypsies/ Travellers	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Other – <i>please state</i>				
Language	English not first language	As above plus:  "language line"  Other translation services	As above plus:  Instant telephone translation services may be accessed for customers; Face to face translation services can also be arranged where appropriate  Customers who wish to use on online services can use free online translation tools, such as google translate.	As above	As above

<sup>6</sup> 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		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
Pregnancy and Maternity	Women who are pregnant or have given birth in last 26 weeks	<p>Flexibility in accessing our services</p> <p>Freeing resources to work with more vulnerable customers</p> <p>More cost-effective service delivery</p>	<p>Customers can choose the channels that best suit their needs and are also 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.</p> <p>With sufficient reduction in telephone and face to face contact we will be able to work closer in identifying these customers and their needs.</p> <p>This will improve the service levels across all channels, giving a better customer journey to all.</p>	<p>Online access</p> <p>Education to customers</p>	<p>Some people may have difficulty accessing/using computers due to technological barriers.</p> <p>Customers may not be aware of the change in how to contact us, so re-education is needed</p>
Religion or Belief	People with a religious belief (or none)	As above	As above	As above	As above
Sex	Men	As above	As above	As above	As above



'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
	Women	As above	As above	As above	As above
Gender Reassignment <sup>7</sup>	Transgender/ Transsexual	As above	As above	As above	As above
Sexual Orientation	Bisexual, Heterosexual, Gay or Lesbian	As above	As above	As above	As above
Marriage and Civil Partnership	People who are married or in a civil partnership	As above	As above	As above	As above

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

**Some people may have difficulty accessing/using computers due to technological barriers.**

- The introduction of the express zone provides Customers with access to our online services with support from a member of staff when needed
- We also introduced a go online advisor who works within the community as a “digital eagle”
- The new website was built to work across all platforms i.e. mobile, tablet and desktop. This ensures services are available to a wider audience than just those with a PC.

**Customers may not be aware of the change in how to contact us, so re-education is needed**

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<sup>7</sup> 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.

- We work with a multitude of outside agency’s involving this group, including Social Services, CAB, Youth Enquiry Services and the YMCA. This to enhance the awareness of the services we provide.

**Customers with mobility issues and no means to go online at home, may not be able to use the express zone to gain access to online services**

- By working to enable more customers to self-serve we can offer more support to more vulnerable people

12. Could the policy discriminate<sup>8</sup> against any ‘protected characteristic’, either directly or indirectly<sup>9</sup>?

**No, due to the steps taken (listed above) Customer services are able to deliver the same services to all customers across all protected characteristics.**

**Summary and findings of Initial Equality Impact Assessment**

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

Findings	Action required
A. No negative impacts have been identified <input type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and finish.
B. Negative impacts have been identified but have been minimised or removed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and finish.
C. Negative impacts could not be minimised or removed <input type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and complete a full impact assessment – Section 2.
D. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement. <input type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and complete a full

<sup>8</sup> 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’.

<sup>9</sup> If you answer ‘yes’ to question 11 (above) you will need to complete the following section *and* go on to complete Section 2 in order to conduct a full Equality Impact Assessment.

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

- Rob Molnar, Systems Development Manager

15. Date of completion:

- 16.12.2019

16. Date for update or review of this screening<sup>10</sup>:

- 16.12.2022 unless any there are any significant changes to the policy

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<sup>10</sup> This is normally three years, but not always: You may know that the policy itself will be reviewed earlier in which case the EqIA should be reviewed at that time. Or, in the case of a five-year strategy, you may want to have a review date of five years. In the case of a “one off” decision, such as closing a service, a review date may not be needed - in which case you should indicate ‘N/A’. In any event, the review date should be brought forward if you receive information or feedback which raises new concerns, or if the public policy context changes. You can speak to the [Equality and Safeguarding Co-ordinator](#) for more advice.