

Equality Impact Assessments 2012

Pay Review project

Findings

The purpose of an EIA of the outcomes of Phase One of the Pay Review Project (review of existing job evaluation framework) was to provide reassurance that any amendments to job evaluation guidance did not result in adverse impact on any group of employees sharing a protected characteristic. The initial findings raised some queries; therefore amendments to the job evaluation guidance framework were reviewed again for clarification and justification. Some minor changes were then made to the guidance and all posts were moderated again, this did result in some scores changing. An equality analysis was repeated and found slightly less impact.

Recommendations:

- Inbucon need to confirm that the scheme is still valid, whereupon we can be confident from Phase One that there is no adverse impact in the scheme itself and how it is being applied. It is recommended that the amended scheme is forwarded to Inbucon, as suggested, to ensure that the changes do not undermine the validity of the scheme.
- However equality analysis once 80% of posts have been evaluated is an option and would provide further reassurance to the Pay Review Project Board that the JE Scheme is not creating any adverse impact on any group of employees sharing a protected characteristic .
- An EIA of the proposed pay modelling structure should be completed to examine how the new scores fit into the new structure and the impact of this on salaries. An EIA on the Job Families work stream should also be completed, either by LGSS or the Corporate Team.
- LGSS has raised a concern regarding reference to 'years experience' and whether this could indirectly discriminate

Council Tax Support Scheme

Findings

Data relating to the individual characteristics is not available for all claimants and restricts the analysis than can be carried out. One of the reasons for this is that some claimants are 'passported' to the council from the DWP. It should also be noted that the district has a small non-White population and therefore an even lower number of non-White claimants. Very little information on claimants by sexual orientation or religion and belief.

The bulk of the assessment has been based on the impact of the draft scheme on protected groups. Following the statutory consultation, the following matters should be considered when considering the final CTS scheme.

The proposals to take some Child Benefit and Child Maintenance into account in calculating the amount of Council Tax Support due would have a detrimental effect on those in receipt of these payments, many of whom are female. While at least one other local authority has considered making changes to these income disregards and rejected this on equality grounds, it should be noted that these payments have only been fully disregarded in recent years and that these disregards were not introduced on equality grounds. Proposals still allow some income from these payments to be disregarded.

Recommendations:

- Further consideration of how the council chooses to define vulnerable groups e.g. not just the severely disabled

Refuse & recycling round rescheduling

Findings

Review of refuse and recycling rounds is likely to entail changes to collection dates and will require residents to adapt and some objection is inevitable however this will be minimised by careful planning and phasing of the implementation. Effective communication with residents has already been identified as essential along with ensuring that systems for complaints resolution will need to be effective and properly resourced. Planning already involves, and will continue to involve, close consultation between Operational teams, Customer Services and Corporate Team. One of the aims of the project is to ensure effective communication and this will entail considering the different needs of our residents and tailoring this communication to suit. A comprehensive communication plan has already been developed and if followed any potential impact will be minimised.

Recommendations

- All publicity and information material concerning the new refuse & recycling rounds is accessible to all i.e. ensuring that different formats are available as appropriate (clear print, large print, Braille, different language, audio) as well as ensuring that the speech enabling function on the council website is accessible for those, for example, with dyslexia, people with learning difficulties or low literacy levels, people with impaired or limited vision.
- Include a statement(s) about information being available in different formats in the letter to residents.
- Monitor impact e.g. missed collections and analyse if there are any communication issues causing this.

Charging for second green bin

Findings

The aim of the proposal is to set out the case for reducing the cost of the refuse and recycling service by introducing a charge for second green bins. Potential net income has been identified and with a proposed start date for charging new and existing customers from June 2013.

The proposal identifies that the imposition of a charge for a 2nd green bin on a small proportion of residents is a fairer system in that the majority of residents do not benefit from this extra bin. The proposals also identifies that if exemptions were allowed, the complexities of administering the system would be significant and lead to an increase in the administrative costs, whilst at the same time losing the income. The EIA identified potential impact in terms of:

- residents on low income or benefits may struggle to pay for their second bin
- age or disability may make it harder for residents to transport their waste independently to recycling centres if they are unable to pay for a second bin

The aim of the proposal is to set out the case for reducing the cost of the refuse and recycling service by introducing a charge for second green bins, However, if the council were to allow exemptions the complexities of the administering the system would be significant and lead to an increase in the administrative costs, whilst at the same time losing the income. All residents already have one green bin therefore it is proposed that there are no exemptions to the charge for a second green bin.

Recommendations

Potential impact could be ameliorated by ensuring that all residents are informed of the 2nd green bin changes, setting out the reasons behind the decision and the alternatives that are available to them.

Lettings Policy

Findings

There are two areas where adverse impact has been identified, one relating to children and the other, pregnant women:

- Children may be disadvantaged by the new matching policy restricting the size of home offered
- Children with a disability will have to justify why they require separate bedrooms making applications take longer to process.

Pregnant women will not be offered accommodation including a bedroom for the child until the child is born unless any Housing Benefit shortfall in the rent can be met from other sources. These are as a result of Government legislation. In addition the requirements for allocating social renting are the same as the size requirements for those renting privately. Also to be considered is how to apply Discretionary Housing Payments locally and whether or not these can be used to reduce some of the impact, at least in the short term.

Recommendations

- Monitor impact of the changes
- Consider producing an FAQ leaflet.

Voluntary Sector Grant Awards for 2013-14

The grant funding for community-delivered services is from a **£259,660** budget (*£30k Community Chest retained*). Huntingdonshire District Council had not provided revenue grant or project funding since 2008, services have been commissioned instead. Most of the commissioning

agreements were for 5-years, ending 31 March 2013. During 2012 a new grant-system was debated and agreed by Members for 2013-14 onwards. During the debate it was recognised that not all organisations support the same sectors of society; the budget is limited and the demand for funding is likely to exceed the funds available. Members were mindful of the equality Impact assessment undertaken in relation to differing impact on various sectors of society.

This follow-on assessment of equality impact is looking at the consequences of the recommended award of funding for 2013-14 on those groups/individuals who rely on support from organisations whose bids were partially or completely unsuccessful.

Members had determined that qualifying criteria should apply to bids received. All applicants for grant aid must:

- be a not for profit organisation;
- be undertaking work within Huntingdonshire and must demonstrate a need for the service within the community that it serves;
- be engaged in activities which fit with the council's priorities and objectives;
 - Provision of independent advice service to include:-
 - Debt advice;
 - Benefit entitlement maximisation;
 - Homelessness
 - Appropriate signposting.
 - Voluntary sector capacity building;
 - Enhancement of volunteering and volunteering opportunities;
 - Provision of mobility services
- be properly managed and able to demonstrate that they are able to achieve the objectives for which the grant is applied for.

The availability of the grant and the criteria were advertised. The closing date for submissions for funding in 2013-14 was the 31st October by the closing date 11 submissions were received. 11 bids were received requesting funds totalling £547,106. The budget available for 2013-14 is £259,660.

Rather than attempting a pro-rata reduced allocation across all 11 bids; which could mean that a significant proportion of organisations, being no longer financially viable. The awards totalled: £261,000 and went to 6/11 bidders. All available monies have been allocated [on the basis of: criteria-fit, breadth & quality of service for residents and cost], there is a slight but not significant (0.5%) over-allocation [there is an additional £30k within a Community Chest that may prove to be under allocated or other fortuitous savings may arise in the year]. The bids have been spread across the Members' priority themes:

- Provision of independent advice services 2 awards
- Voluntary sector capacity building; 1 award

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- Enhancement of volunteering and volunteering opportunities; 2 awards
- Provision of mobility services 1 award

The awards were consistent with extensive Member enquiries during 2012 that led to the priority setting. The priorities themselves were designed to meet identified emerging needs for residents of Huntingdonshire.

Findings

No unexpected issues related to inequalities being created due to the targeting offers have been identified. The main issue arising from the awards were that no specific services for young people were included; such services were not within Members' agreed priorities. The District Council relies on the County Council's Office of Children and Young People to focus on main-stream services specifically designed for children and young people. As funding was limited Members were mindful to limit the risk of duplication of services/effort on some groups. Young people were a group deemed catered for by other organisations/systems, however the universal services were not limited by any age restriction.

A new set of grant awards have replaced the previous commissioning arrangements and have been provided within the available budget. There is no likelihood of an increased budget for Voluntary Sector Grant awards in the near future.