

## Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)



<b>Service area</b>	Customer Services
<b>Date of assessment</b>	July 2013
<b>Name of strategy/policy/function/service to be assessed</b>	Customer Service Strategy
<b>Is this a new or existing strategy/policy/function/service?</b>	Existing
<b>Name of manager responsible for strategy/policy/function/service</b>	Julia Barber
<b>Names of people conducting the assessment</b>	L Sboui & Kat Sexton
<b>Step 1 – Description of strategy/policy/function/service</b>	
Describe the aims; objectives and purpose of the strategy/policy/function/ <b>service</b> (include how it fits in to wider aims or strategic objectives).	<p>The vision for the Council is to offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible services; that provide customers with choice as to where, when and how they access services.</li> <li>• Excellent quality services which always strive to exceed customer’s expectations and resolves enquiries, where possible, during the customer’s first contact.</li> <li>• Responsible services which are cost effective, efficient and delivered through a highly trained workforce.</li> </ul> <p>The Strategy is aligned with the Corporate Plan, Corporate Consultation &amp; Engagement Strategy, Web Strategy and Single Equality Scheme.</p> <p>There are two parts to the Strategy, Part one aims to ensure that delivering high quality customer service is at the heart of everything the council does.</p> <p>Part two focuses on customer contact channels and recognises</p>



	<p>the role of different delivery channels (telephone, online, in person etc) and managing the drive to improve customer service and reducing the cost of service management which will include encouraging online self serve where appropriate.</p>
<p>The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, the Council also needs to demonstrate its compliance with the Equality Duty. The Council therefore needs to understand how its decisions and activities impact on different people, specifically employees and how they are affected by policies and practices. An Equality Impact Assessment is the current method by which the Council can assess and keep a record of the impact of new or amended strategies, policies, functions or services.</p> <p>The council retains these duties even when outsourcing services or providing shared services.</p> <p><i>Definition of Adverse Impact - occurs when a decision, practice, or policy has a disproportionately negative effect on a protected group. Adverse Impact may be unintentional</i></p> <p>Adverse impact can be measured statistically:</p>	
<p>Are there any (existing) equality objectives of the strategy/policy or function/<b>service</b></p>	<p>The Strategy makes clear that that the delivery of local government services in Huntingdonshire are built around the needs of customers alongside the need to deliver improved services through available channels within a changing financial environment.</p> <p>The Strategy commits to finding out more about our customers, what their needs are and how best these needs can be met and acknowledges that a better understanding of customers will help the council to remove any barriers which result in some sectors of the community being harder to reach or may not access services.</p> <p>There are two specific objectives relating to equality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure our services are accessible to those who cannot travel –</li> </ul>



	<p>offer mobile and flexibly delivered services where there is a clear business case, particularly in rural locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure services are accessible to all regardless of protected characteristics and that staff are sensitive to needs of all customers – ensure continued attendance on equality &amp; diversity related awareness courses</li> </ul>
<p>Who is intended to benefit from the <b>strategy</b>/policy/function/service and in what way?</p>	<p>Customers, employees, and Members</p>
<p>What are the intended outcomes of this <b>strategy</b>/policy/function/service?</p>	<p>Overall the council wants to deliver excellent customer service and value for money for the taxpayer. More specifically the Strategy sets out where the council want to be in five years time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure that the customer is at the heart of everything we do as a council</li> <li>• To be clear about what we can do and aspire to achieve</li> <li>• To be an innovative and continually improving council</li> <li>• To provide consistently excellent service across the authority and all contact channels</li> <li>• To be clear about what we can and can't provide as a council and be clear about what customers can expect from us</li> <li>• To be an open, honest, accountable and proactive council.</li> <li>• To get it right first time</li> <li>• Making the most of improvement projects</li> </ul>



Step 2 – Data	
What baseline <b>quantitative data (statistics)</b> do you have about the strategy/policy/function/service relating to equalities groups (e.g. monitoring data on proportions of service users compared to proportions in the population), relevant to this policy?	
What <b>qualitative data (opinions etc)</b> do you have on different groups (e.g. comments from previous consumer satisfaction surveys/consultation, feedback exercises, or evidence from other authorities undertaking similar work), relevant to this strategy/policy/function/service?	
Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>different racial groups</b> ; this refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. Gypsy/Travellers are distinct group within this category.  What evidence do you have for your answer?	There is evidence of varying levels of awareness and take-up of statutory services. However, staff do attend equality & diversity awareness training to improve understanding and awareness of all equality groups.
Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>younger or older people</b> ?  For some services this should include consideration of impact in terms of safeguarding young people.  What evidence do you have for your answer?	Older people can find it harder to get to services and may be less familiar with modern technology. mobile services may be very important to this group. Older people in both rural and urban areas can experience higher levels of social exclusion; they may also experience particular issues in accessing timely and responsive transport which can impede access to many services. Appendix 1 Digital Inclusion and Exclusion considers access to the internet by age and disability.

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<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>gender, including transgender people</b>?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Men and women may access services in different ways and at different times. However, staff do attend equality &amp; diversity awareness training to improve understanding and awareness of all equality groups.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>part time/full time</b> employees?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>disabled people</b>?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Appendix 1 Digital Inclusion and Exclusion considers access to the internet by age and disability.</p> <p>Pathfinder House is an accessible customer service centre and staff attend awareness sessions which consider disabilities and the barriers people experience and how to provide assistance.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact in terms of <b>marriage and civil partnership</b>?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact in terms of <b>pregnancy and maternity</b> (e.g. pregnant or breast feeding women)?</p>	<p>No adverse impact identified</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>lesbian, gay man, bisexual or heterosexual (straight) people</b>? What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Research undertaken by Stonewall has demonstrated that many LGB people can still experience discrimination in their everyday lives. From police stations to family courts and from housing to health services, gay people remain uncertain of fair treatment, and uncertainty which is often derived from personal experience</p>

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	<p>However, staff do attend equality &amp; diversity awareness training to improve understanding and awareness of all equality groups.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on grounds of <b>religion or belief</b>? What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>There is evidence of varying levels of awareness and take-up of statutory services. Staff do attend equality &amp; diversity awareness training to improve understanding and awareness of all equality groups.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact in terms of specific characteristics of Huntingdonshire e.g. <b>Rural isolation</b></p>	<p>Older people in both rural and urban areas can experience higher levels of social exclusion; they may also experience particular issues in accessing timely and responsive transport which can impede access to many services. The Strategy includes an objective to ensure services are accessible to those who cannot travel – to offer mobile and flexibly delivered services where there is a clear business case, particularly in rural locations.</p>



### Findings

The Strategy aims to balance the delivery of services that are built around the needs of customers alongside the need to deliver improved services through available channels within a changing financial environment. The Strategy commits to finding out more about customers, what their needs are and how best these needs can be met and acknowledges that a better understanding of customers will help the council to remove any barriers which result in some sectors of the community being harder to reach or may not access services. The only area where there could be potential for adverse impact is around the focus on channel migration to online services, this may exclude some people from accessing services or information about services due to age, disability, ethnicity or socio economic status. Currently information about customers in terms of their protected characteristics is not available, with careful management; the new CRM system will provide an opportunity to gather data about customers in a more systematic manner.

### Recommendations

- Use CRM system to gain a better understanding of the demographic profile/protected characteristics of customers.