

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Initial Screening

Title of EQIA	Face to Face processes during Covid-19
Date	13.11.20
Officer carrying out screening	Stephanie Peck & Janine Last
Service Area	Customer Services
Project Sponsor	

The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are: **Disability, Age, Sex (gender), Gender reassignment, Marriage/civil partnership, Pregnancy/maternity, Race, Sexual orientation and Religion/belief.**

The purpose of this Equality Impact Assessment is to achieve the following.

By law we must have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Further information on each of the characteristics can be found at the end of the document.

1. Project/Proposal/ Service changes

What is proposed?	The Customer Service Centre continues to review its processes during the Covid-19 pandemic, to ensure Customers can still come to the centre to use public PC's and telephones to access the Council's services.
Why are the changes being introduced?	The changes made are in response to government guidance in relation to COVID-19. There were significant changes implemented for a duration i.e. during lockdown #1 some have since been lifted but many remain in place. Guidance will continue to be updated and changes made, and services updated on their processes.
What evidence is being used to support this equality impact analysis?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home, But Not Alone guidance for the Suffolk Advise and Support Service • Government guidance on people needing access to public pc's (cascaded via TMT/CMT) • Covid-19 social distancing guidance • DWP • Age UK Suffolk
How will this change be implemented?	Changes are being implemented via instruction from TMT/CMT in response to national guidance

2 Equality Impact Analysis

Who is affected?	Impact (positive/negative/no change)	Explanation of impact	Actions to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact
Age	Positive	<p>Face to Face (F2F) assistance has been limited at the Customer Service Centre (CSC) to an emergency appointment basis. Customers are still able to walk-in to use public PCs and Phones, but to speak to an Advisor 121 they have to make an appointment. Customers who might have limited access or ability to use online could be at a disadvantage on how to access assistance or guidance on services provided by the Council such as Housing, Council Tax, Benefit, Business Rates (including Grants & Rate Relief) Waste, Leisure, HBNA, Environmental and any other General Enquiries.</p>	<p>The Contact Centre has had no restriction on its availability and access to customers. Customers still have the opportunity to call the Customer Services via Phone or use their online forms to make contact. Staff are trained to assist customers with queries. Customer Services staff are also kept up to date on what services are available to residents i.e. Benefits, HBNA, Housing issues, Financial Hardship, Business Rates (including Grants & Rate Relief) Waste Collection, Leisure Facilities for well-being. Customer Services have also advised staff to ensure that they allow adequate time for each call to ensure the customers query has been dealt</p>

Who is affected?	Impact (positive/negative/no change)	Explanation of impact	Actions to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact
		<p>Everyone that does visit the CSC has to wear a face covering including staff</p> <p>IBC have been promoting its access to services and advice on its website, but this might not be accessible to everyone that might not have the access or ability to view online.</p>	<p>with. Average Handling Times are not being scrutinised currently.</p> <p>Staff have been given fully transparent face shields/visors to be worn, so customers can still physically see what the Advisor is saying to them i.e. mouth not covered up.</p> <p>Tenancy Services has been proactively contacting their elderly tenants by phone to check on their welfare. The 'Home, But Not Alone' (HBNA) service also distributed a postcard to every household in Suffolk, promoting the freephone number. If a resident called this number and wanted to speak to IBC, these calls were then transferred to Customer Services, where experienced staff would deal with their enquiries. If the customer needed greater assistance, then an online form is submitted to a dedicated team of staff deployed to man these requests. The team then liaise with the customer and work alongside other agencies to</p>

Who is affected?	Impact (positive/negative/no change)	Explanation of impact	Actions to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact
		<p>Customers that are Shielding/CEV Group who are not able to access F2F contact for advice or assistance.</p> <p>Age UK Suffolk is no longer running a service wef 24.07.20. Many elderly residents used this service to access support. With this service removed some residents might be unsure of where they can now seek advice.</p>	<p>get the customer the assistance they require. There has also been proactive outbounds calls made to the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Group (CEV) to check if they need any assistance or support.</p> <p>HBNA is supporting the Shielding/CEV group. Proactively contacting them by phone or follow up letter to check if they need support. The list of individuals are coordinated via SCC. A full team of staff in the back office are working through these outbound calls and signposting cases where assistance is required</p> <p>SCC has been advertising what alternative support from other organisations are available to residents that would have previously accessed this service, and also HBNA are able to signpost to other agencies when contact is made.</p>

Who is affected?	Impact (positive/negative/no change)	Explanation of impact	Actions to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact
Disability	Positive	<p>Face to Face (F2F) assistance has been limited at the Customer Service Centre (CSC) to an emergency appointment basis. Customers are still able to walk-in to use public PCs and Phones, but to speak to an Advisor 121 they have to make an appointment. Customers who might have limited access or ability to use online could be at a disadvantage on how to access assistance or guidance on debt recovery, or where to seek advice, if they have limited access to F2F contact.</p> <p>Reducing the amount of F2F contact with customers may make it difficult to assess if someone needs additional help and support. The customer is triaged on arrival and should the CSA</p>	<p>The Contact Centre has had no restriction on its availability and access to customers. Customers still have the opportunity to call the Customer Services via Phone or use their online forms to make contact. Staff are trained to assist customers with queries. Customer Services staff are also kept up to date on what services are available to residents i.e. Benefits, HBNA, Housing issues, Financial Hardship, Business Rates (including Grants & Rate Relief) Waste Collection, Leisure Facilities for well-being. Customer Services have also advised staff to ensure that they allow adequate time for each call to ensure the customers query has been dealt with. Average Handling Times are not being scrutinised currently.</p> <p>Staff are trained a listen for trigger points when speaking to customers. If they are all concerned regarding a safe guarding issues they a can raise a case signpost or refer the customers to other</p>

Who is affected?	Impact (positive/negative/no change)	Explanation of impact	Actions to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact
		<p>on triage have concerns regarding a safeguarding issue they are trained to identify, signpost or refer as appropriate.</p> <p>Everyone that does visit the CSC has to wear a face covering including staff.</p> <p>IBC have been promoting its access to services and different advice on its website, but this might not be accessible to everyone that might not have the access or ability to view online.</p>	<p>organisations that they think could provided additional support.</p> <p>Staff have been given fully transparent face shields/visors to be worn, so customers can still physically see what the Advisor is saying to them i.e. mouth not covered up.</p> <p>Tenancy Services has been proactively contacting their elderly tenants by phone to check on their welfare. The 'Home, But Not Alone' (HBNA) service also distributed a postcard to every household in Suffolk, promoting the freephone number. If a resident called this number and wanted to speak to IBC, these calls were then transferred to Customer Services, where experienced staff would deal with their enquiries. If the customer needed greater assistance, then an online form</p>

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		<p>Customers that are Shielding/CEV Group who are not able to access F2F contact for advice or assistance.</p> <p>The Customer Service Centre has removed desks, PC's and Telephones to allow for social distancing. This has reduced the clutter, improved the natural light good lighting and the</p>	<p>is submitted to a dedicated team of staff deployed to man these requests. The team then liaise with the customer and work alongside other agencies to get the customer the assistance they require. There has also been proactive outbounds calls made to the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Group (CEV) to check if they need any assistance or support.</p> <p>HBNA is supporting the Shielding/CEV group. Proactively contacting them by phone or follow up letter to check if they need support. The list of individuals are coordinated via SCC. A full team of staff in the back office are working through these outbound calls and signposting cases where assistance is required.</p> <p>Removing a lot of clutter in the Customer Service Centre makes it light and airy. The reduction in public PC's, telephones also reduces the amount of background noise that can make</p>

Who is affected?	Impact (positive/negative/no change)	Explanation of impact	Actions to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact
		introduction of a 'walk in' and 'walk out' walk flows to adhere to socially distancing.	people feel with sensory loss uncomfortable. The contrasting colours on the floors to direct people to walk a one-way system, also helps to identify the walk ways. Clear wording on signs, which are placed slightly lower than normal on signs assist people to navigate the Customer Service Centre and the security guard is also on hand to guide customers if required.
Gender reassignment	No changes	No impact has been identified in addition to the above	
Pregnancy and maternity	No changes	No impact has been identified in addition to the above	
Race	No changes	No impact has been identified in addition to the above	
Religion or belief	No changes	No impact has been identified in addition to the above	
Sex	No changes	No impact has been identified in addition to the above	
Sexual orientation	No changes	No impact has been identified in addition to the above	

Who is affected?	Impact (positive/negative/no change)	Explanation of impact	Actions to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact
Marriage and civil partnership	No changes	No impact has been identified in addition to the above	

Q. The report helps us to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment & victimisation' in the following way(s):

A. The impact of F2F Changes within the Customer Service Centre from the covid-19 pandemic do not impact everyone equally. This means that the response will impact some groups of people more than others. The report helps by identifying the actions and reasonable adjustments needed to mitigate the adverse impact that has been identified

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

A. It will help us to minimise any disadvantage identified to meet the needs of different groups or where there are gaps that need to be looked at.

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

A. It will help to promote understanding of why these decisions have been taken and the impact they will have on the different groups.

Q. The new provisions will be reviewed in the following way(s):

A. Monthly or as and when guidance and legislation changes

3 Sign Off

Assessment Author:		
Project Sponsor:		

Please provide any supporting documents in the appendices below.

Appendix 1 – Definition of the nine Protected Characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010

Age	Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (for example 32 year olds) or range of ages (for example 18 - 30 year olds).
Disability	A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
Gender reassignment	This refers to a person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a change from one gender to another. The Equality Act introduced a number of changes to the legal protection of transgender and transsexual people. The Act no longer requires a person to be under medical supervision to be protected - for example, a woman who decides to live permanently as a man (or visa-versa), but does not undergo any medical procedures is protected by law.
Marriage and civil partnership	Marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage between same-sex couples. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).
Pregnancy and maternity	Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
Race	This refers to a group of people defined by their race, skin colour, and/or nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. The term ethnic minority community is used to define a group of people that is numerically smaller than the predominant white British community. This includes people from communities such as such as Irish, Turkish, Cypriot, Eastern European and Travelling people.
Religion and belief	The term "religion" refers to both the personal practices related to communal faith and to group rituals and communication stemming from shared conviction. Belief can include religious and philosophical beliefs, including lack of belief (e.g. atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in this definition.
Sex (Gender)	This refers to either a male (man) or female (woman).
Sexual orientation	Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Further information on the protected characteristics can be found on the [Office of Public Sector Information Website](#)