

Equality Impact Assessment Recording Form

This is a new and important process that will require different perspectives to be considered and, in some cases, difficult decisions may need to be made about policy and service delivery.

Whilst it is necessary to identify a lead officer, it is advised that they do not undertake the impact assessment on their own, but set up a group comprising a diverse range of staff responsible for delivery the service, there may also be an opportunity to include a customer, stakeholder, partner or critical friend to get a more rounded understanding of the full implications of the policy, practice, service or function.

For more information on carrying out the assessment please refer to the guidance notes or contact the Equalities and Diversity Officer or your Department's Equality Champion.

STEP1 Equality Impact Assessment Team

Name of Policy, practice, service or function: Customer Service and Access Strategy

Assessment Team Leader Name: Jason Spencer

December 2009

Directorate Responsible: Corporate Services

Service Area:

Business Support

Other members of the assessment team:

Name	Position	Area of Expertise
Jason Spencer	Business Support Manager, Company Secretary	Customer Service and Access
Katherine Taylor	Customer Service and Assess Review Assistant	Equality/Diversity Champion
Alan Jess	Tenant Federation	Service User
Lorraine Dung	Tenant Federation	Service User
Wilf Nightingale	Tenant	Service User
Phil Burnham	Tenant	Service User
Paul Marshall	Tenant	Service User

STEP2 Identifying the aims/objectives of the policy, practice, service or function

Questions

1	<p>What are the main aims and objectives or purpose of the policy, practice, service or function?</p> <p>To achieve excellent customer access and satisfaction.</p> <p>What outcomes do you want to achieve?</p> <p>To do this we need to put the customer at the heart of what we do, get customer service right first time every time, at the first point of contact and put any mistakes right quickly.</p>
2	<p>Are there any associated services, policies or procedures?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>If 'Yes' please list below</p> <p>As a customer facing service all Company Policies and Strategies are relevant to this Cross-Cutting Strategy as well as being a key element within the Business Plan 2009/10 and development of Business Plan 2010/11.</p> <p>This is a tenant facing service and thus is primarily based on information available about tenants and residents including tenant profile data.</p>
3	<p>Who is affected by this policy, practice, service or function, or by the way it is carried out? i.e. Who are the internal and external customers, groups, communities or any other stakeholders?</p> <p>All tenants, housing applicants, residents of North East Derbyshire.</p>

Questions

4	<p>Who implements, carries out or delivers the policy, practice, service or function? Please state where more than one person, team, department or body? – and include any outside organisations who deliver under procurement arrangements etc.</p> <p>RH Staff as set out in the Business Plan.</p>
5	<p>Is the policy, practice, service or function affected by external drivers for change? e.g. new legislation, national policy, external inspection etc.</p> <p>Yes – Our performance can be benchmarked against other similar organisations. See 2009/10 Business Plan - which sets out our operating Environment.</p>
6	<p>What existing or previous inspections of the policy, practice, service or function are there? E.g. Best Value Inspections, policy reviews, research into the effects of a policy or practice.</p> <p>Mock ALMO Inspection – November 2008. Self-Assessment for Audit Commission Inspection. Best Value Review of Customer Service and Access.</p> <p>What did they tell you?</p> <p>As set out in the Strategy.</p>

Questions

7 How is information about the policy, practice, service or function publicised?

Communication Plan.

Business Plan.

Web/internet.

Homing-In.

STEP 3 Equality Impact Assessment

Although this form is set out under the six strands of equality we are focusing on (race, disability, gender, age, religion and belief and sexuality), consider any impacts/barriers that might cross over between race/disability, gender/religion and belief, sexuality/age etc. or all three. Use the boxes on the next couple of pages to indicate where the policy, practice, service or function could have a positive or negative impact for different groups and your reasons.

Race

This question looks broadly at adverse impacts/barriers in terms of race, whilst the next page considers adverse impacts/barriers which may be particular to people from one ethnic group.

Question 9 considers impact/barriers for different ethnic groups within the five broad census headings.

8	<p>Identify adverse impacts/barriers of the policy or procedure on people who may be disadvantaged because of their race.</p> <p>Tenant Profile - Status Survey identifies 98.4% White British, 0.5% White Irish and 0.5% White Irish. No other significantly large groups.</p> <p>No adverse impact identified. In some cases documents are translated into Polish to assist a small group of Polish speakers and we have subscribed to the Talkback Translation Service for other languages.</p>	
9	Broad categories used in 2001 census	Identify any adverse impact/barriers of the Policy, practice, service or function on people who may be disadvantaged because of their race.
	• Asian or Asian British	
	• Black or Black British	
	• Chinese	
	• Dual Heritage	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any other people 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gypsies and Travellers 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asylum Seekers and Refugees 	
10	<p>Where do you think improvements could be made for people of different racial groups?</p> <p>See 8 above.</p>	

Gender

It is worthwhile remembering that women and men have different priorities in relation to what services they want and different needs for how these are provided. Men-only or women-only delivery for some services could be an option.

11	<p>Identify any adverse impact/barriers of policy, practice, service or function on people who may be disadvantaged because of their gender.</p> <p>Tenant Profile – 41% Male and 59% Female – The revised Strategy recognises the need to obtain more profile information on people using different communication channels. The Policy recognises that different customers have different needs</p>	
	Women	<p>There was a perception that men may be more likely to use new technology to access services. This would result in women being disadvantaged if significant investment in new technology. There is currently no evidence to support this – we will test this during the life of the Strategy.</p> <p>Women who have been victims of Domestic Violence may not wish to speak to a male employee about sensitive issues. There are more women working in the Area Offices and in the Contact Centre than men so alternatives are usually available – we need to make sure that training helps customer facing employees identify people who may be vulnerable as a result of their life experiences and accommodate this.</p>
	Men	<p>Most of the employees working within the Area Office Team and in the Customer Contact Centre are women; this may result in some men not wishing to use these access channels. The proposals to developing more access channels may mitigate against this.</p>
	Transgender	<p>The number of people who fall into this category is not significant but there is a risk that personal prejudices of employees may result in people being disadvantaged. Equality and Diversity Awareness training already received will mitigate against this.</p>
12	<p>Where do you think improvements could be made for people experiencing disadvantage because of their gender?</p> <p>No significant adverse impact.</p>	

Disability

All service providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities, including physical features of premises, so it is advisable to anticipate any adjustments that may be required. Consider the barriers faced by different groups of people with disabilities as listed in the boxes below. Note also that changes to legislation mean that conditions such as MS, HIV and cancer are now included under the DDA from the time of diagnosis.

13	<p>Identify any adverse impact/barriers of policy, practice, service or function on people who may be disadvantaged because of their disability.</p> <p>According to the profile, 48% of all tenants have indicated that they have some form of disability. Where appropriate the Company's approach to vulnerability may flag up individuals who may be vulnerable in certain circumstances because of their disability and therefore receive an enhanced level of service.</p>	
People with physical or mobility impairments	<p>Physical access to the buildings may impact upon this group of service users. We have carried out a survey of all the public facing premises we use to make sure they are accessible and where required have made modifications. Increasing the number and quality of access channels will help people with a disability access services without physically going to an office.</p>	
People with sensory impairments (hearing, visual and speech)	<p>Visual Impairment – Publications are available in suitable formats and “Homing-In” is available as an audio file. The website can be viewed as text only, in a larger font and through Browsealoud. ID badges have instructions in Braille on how to verify the identity of an employee.</p> <p>Hearing Impairment – Area Office employees have received training in using basic sign language which has already received positive feedback from service users.</p>	
People who use mental health services	<p>We do not know/share enough detail re. this user group. We too often list complainers as persistent complainants, generally cross, without considering whether there is a need for mental health support or whether this is already being given. Link age to dementia possibilities.</p> <p>Awareness training allows customer facing employees to recognise cases where this may be an issue.</p>	
People with learning disabilities	<p>Local knowledge from Area Office staff, DLO, identifies where Tenants have literacy problems - use of face to face contact is maintained has been captured as part of the implementation of our approach to vulnerability. Awareness training allows customer facing employees to recognise people who may have difficulty accessing our services due to a disability. This group may need more assistance in accessing our services, for example, some tenants need support from the Area Office Staff in diagnosing and reporting a repair through the Contact Centre.</p>	

	People who have a non-visible condition such as epilepsy or diabetes	As above
14	Where do you think improvements could be made for people experiencing disadvantage because of their disability? See above.	

Age

When answers the following questions consider the needs of the wider age range of District

15	Identify any adverse impact/barriers of policy, practice, service or function on people who may be disadvantaged because of their age.	
	0-9	Caring responsibilities may disadvantage Tenant Households from accessing services, resulting in isolation.
	10-15	Caring responsibilities may disadvantage Tenant Households from accessing services, resulting in isolation.
	16-19	School leavers, high level of teenage pregnancies. Additional support for new Tenants. This group may be more accepting of the use of new technology and new access channels.
	20-29	This group may be more accepting of the use of new technology and new access channels
	30-44	This group may be more accepting of the use of new technology and new access channels
	45-59	Employment discrimination - Rents/Leasehold Service Standards, Strategies/Policies, Corporate Debt Recovery Policy.
	60-64	This group may be more likely to be affected by an age related disability and make it harder to access face to face services although that may be their preferred way to contact us. It has been shown that older tenants may need more assistance in accessing our services; for example, some tenants need support from the Area Office Staff in diagnosing and reporting a repair through the Contact Centre.
	65-74	As above
	75-over	As above

16	<p>Where do you think improvements could be made for people experiencing disadvantage because of their age?</p> <p>The assessment suggested that older tenants tended to be much more fearful of debt than younger tenants who were more accustomed to the idea of credit. It was noted that the use of arrears on rent statements could cause unnecessary concern to these tenants and result in avoidable contact. More consideration should be given to the format and content of correspondence to avoid using terms that may cause concern – the Editorial Panel can assist with this.</p>
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Religion and Belief

17	Identify any adverse impact/barriers of policy, practice, service or function on people who may be disadvantaged because of their religion or belief.
	Christian
	Buddhist
	Hindu
	Jewish
	Muslim
	Sikh
	Other
	No religion or belief
18	<p>Where do you think improvements could be made for people experiencing disadvantage because of their beliefs or religion?</p> <p>The profile shows that 78.7% of tenants are Christian, 17.3% none and 3.55% other. There are therefore no significant issues identified.</p>

Sexuality

19	Identify any adverse impact/barriers of policy, practice, service or function on people who may be disadvantaged because of their sexuality.	
	Lesbian, gay or bisexual people	95.3% of tenants consider themselves to be straight, 1% bisexual, 0.8% gay and 3% other. There are no significant issues identified.
20	Where do you think improvements could be made for people experiencing disadvantage because of their sexuality? See 11 above.	

Other Categories

21	<p>Rural/Urban</p> <p>This is a real issue for RH Ltd. and must be addressed in the implementation of the Service Access Principles Strategy. The Strategy looks at providing services out of other locations such as libraries to broaden access.</p> <p>Some areas within the District although more “urban” still have limited access to other communities if people do not have access to a car – although providing services in these areas may cost the Company more per transaction, withdrawal of this service could disadvantage these groups.</p>
22	<p>Any other</p> <p>In a recent survey we identified that 9% of those surveyed did not have a Bank Account. Withdrawal of cash payment facilities could have a detrimental impact on their ability to pay their rent. The levels of access to a Bank Account in each area need to be considered when developing services</p>

Customer Access

23	<p>How do customers currently access the service i.e. what are the access channels e.g. web, telephone, letter etc.</p> <p>This Strategy refers to all access channels</p> <p>What improvements can be made?</p> <p>This is the main focus of the Strategy.</p>
	<p>Are there any physical barriers to accessing the service</p> <p>As above.</p> <p>How are they overcome?</p> <p>As above.</p>
	<p>What customer involvement in setting the customer service standards i.e. opening hours, response times, availability etc.</p> <p>The Involvement Monitoring Group has received regular updates about the Customer Service and Access Project during 2009/10 and this will continue during 2010. A survey used to inform the Strategy was made available at the Area Offices and at Tenant drop ins, We have a Customer Service and Access User Group who have been actively involved in the project and development of the Strategy.</p>

STEP 4 Collecting the information and data about how the policy, practice, service or function impact on communities

Please record your information and data below with reference to:

- Deciding what information or data you will need or desire
- Using both quantitative and qualitative data
- Ensuring that where possible there is information that allows all perspectives to be considered
- Identified any gaps in the information/data and what it can tell you

Data or information	When and how collected	Source	What it tells you – please consider all 6 equality strands where possible	Gaps in information
Customer feedback and complaints	When a compliment or complaint is submitted	Compliments and Complaints reporting	All Strands are monitored	Recent changes to the layout at North Wingfield were a direct result of user feedback
Consultation and community involvement	Involvement Management Group, Customer Service and Access User Group	Qualitative feedback	As above	
Performance information including Best Value	Balanced Scorecard and Quarterly Performance Report Regular performance information received from the Contact Centre	Qualitative data is collected through observation and call recording Quantative information is produced automatically from the IT systems	As above	Need to reflect this in the Balanced Scorecard as there is a balance between quantative performance and quality.

Data or information	When and how collected	Source	What it tells you – please consider all 6 equality strands where possible	Gaps in information
Take up and usage data	We regularly monitor the number of visitors to various channels and the services they access.	Daily records at Area Offices and Contact Centre. Automated records from website, text messaging	Assumptions can be made about preferences for certain groups of tenants.	
Access audits or assessments e.g. DDA assessments	DDA office assessments	Audit Report	This assessment focuses upon physical barriers faced by people with a disability	

STEP 5 Monitoring

For this step it is important to refer to any monitoring information which is already held. As stated in the guidance notes arrangements need to be set up for effective monitoring if this is not already taking place.

	<p>How do we know whether our service is accessible to all groups?</p> <p>When we have more detailed profile information as referred to 5 above we can compare how services accessed compare to the overall tenant profile – this will help us to identify particular access channels and services that are used more by one group more than another and explore reasons for this.</p> <p>We already review Complaints to make sure that any failures in service delivery are not a direct result of a barrier resulting from a tenant or residents profile or background.</p>
	<p>If there is a lack of information, what research will be carried out, and for which groups?</p> <p>As set out in 4 above.</p>
	<p>If this is a new policy, or one not currently monitored, what are the arrangements to begin monitoring the actual impacts of the policy?</p> <p>This is an updated Strategy not a new one.</p>

STEP 6 Consultation

	<p>What have service users/non-users or other stakeholders (including employees) already told you about the policy and negative impacts?</p> <p>Who has been consulted and what methods were used?</p> <p>Business Plan consultation.</p> <p>Involvement Management Group.</p> <p>Customer Service and Access Review User Group.</p> <p>Tenant drop in days, Involvement monitoring.</p>
	<p>If you need to carry out further consultation, who will you be consulting with and by what methods?</p> <p>Ongoing consultation with users as services are developed including equality impact assessments.</p>

STEP 7 Equality Action Plan

Problem/barrier identified

Actions to overcome problem/barrier

Resources required Responsibility Target date –

See Customer Service and Access Service Action Plan