



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Partial Assessment Form

Policy, practice, function or project assessed	Reception Service, South Cambridgeshire Hall
Lead Officer	Rachael Fox
Team	Rachael Fox, Richard May and Paul Williams
Start date of assessment	28 January 2011
Completion of assessment	

Please use this form to record your findings in relation to the assessment of an existing policy, function, service or practice.

A. POLICY, PRACTICE, FUNCTION OR PROJECT TO BE ASSESSED

A1. Please describe what are the main aims, objectives, purpose and intended outcomes of the function?

The Reception service consists of two full-time Customer Services Officers (CSO) providing first-point-of-contact services to customers visiting the Council's principal offices at Cambourne. Whilst the CSOs' role involves close liaison with front-line service operatives, the scope of this assessment is limited to the physical environment, services and information available in the Reception Area, rather than to specific services (primarily planning, benefits, housing, licensing), procedures for which have been subject to separate impact assessments.

A2. Is this function associated with any other Council policy or priority?

Yes, as above. The Reception Service provides first-point-of contact services for all visitors to the Council Offices, whether impromptu or to attend pre-arranged meetings.

A3. Who are the intended beneficiaries/stakeholders of the function? How many people are affected and from what sections of the community?

Our reception seeks to provide a high-quality first-contact to all customers who include the full range of stakeholders – residents and businesses in the district, visiting representatives of other councils, public and private sector organisations. Analysis undertaken in November 2010 as part of a corporate review of customer contact estimates that, excluding pre-arranged meetings, Reception receives over 16,000 visitors each year. A breakdown of equalities information will be discussed in parts B1 and B” of this EqIA.

A4. Is the function corporate and far-reaching?

Yes – it impacts on all the Council's front-line and support services.

A5. Are you expecting to make any significant change to the service in the near future? If so, please give details.

We are currently undergoing an accommodation review to identify possible improvements in accessibility and customer care e.g. Child's play area, ICT equipment in private meeting rooms.

The recent closure of the cash office has affected residents, though alternative measures have been put in place to ensure that they can pay money by other methods.

We are also looking into the possibility of placing computers in private meeting rooms to improve the speed of service we provide (whilst keeping patient confidentiality), and creating a 'chip and pin' area for customers to ensure patient confidentiality. Similarly, we are currently investigating the possibility of creating a breastfeeding area in Reception. All of these will have a significant, but positive impact, on the service we provide.

A6. Is this a new policy?

No.

B. EVIDENCE/ DATA and CONSULTATION

It is important to consider all information that is available in determining whether the policy or function could have a differential impact. Please attach examples of monitoring information, research or consultation reports.

B1. What monitoring or other information do you have about relevant target groups, which will show the impact of the policy or function?

The Council carries out ongoing satisfaction surveys of its visitors, supported by quarterly insight interviews (launched November 2010) to explore in detail who visits us, why, and their assessment of the standards of service offered. During early 2011, the Council will also be consulting electronically on preferences for contacting the Council in person and by other means, in order to capture the views of those who, by choice or compulsion, do not visit our offices.

The insight interviews include equality monitoring questions to assist in building up an accurate profile of our customer groups; at present the response rate (12 people) is too low to draw accurate conclusions about the impact the policy may be having on specific target groups. However, it is still useful to use this information as a starting point.

The monitoring questions showed that 17% were under 24 years old, 33% were aged between 25 and 34, 33% were aged between 45 and 59, and 17% were aged between 65 and 74. There were no respondents over the age of 75. Whilst this is not an issue at present, if future monitoring shows similar results, it may need to be considered why older people are not visiting our offices.

People from a number of races were interviewed, as well as members of the LGB community.

Slightly more males responded to the equality questions than females.

B2. Have you compared the data you have with the equality profile of the local population? What does it show?

Analysis of equalities data generated from the reception surveys will become a routine aspect of follow-up reports, in order to identify variances from the general district profile around key areas such as specific groups visiting the offices as opposed to using other forms of contact, as well as under-represented groups who, for various reasons, do not visit our headquarters.

Although the data we currently have is limited, in general terms it does match the equality profile of the local population. Statistics from 2009 show that 29% of the South Cambs population were between the ages of 25 and 44. This corresponds with our survey data, where 33% were in this age bracket. However, the statistics also show that in 2009 7% of South Cambs' population was over the age of 75. As our equalities monitoring showed no respondents over the age of 75, it demonstrates that 7% of the population is not using our Reception service. As we are still in the early stages of monitoring this equality data however, it is impossible to judge its relevance at present.

B3. Have you identified any improvements or other changes that could be made from monitoring the data?

This will follow from the analysis generated from the surveys referred to in B1-B2 above.

B4. Have you consulted or involved external stakeholders about the policy or function? If so, what were their views?

Yes – as identified above, the Council has put in place ongoing processes to harness and act upon our customers' feedback in relation to equalities and general issues.

B5. Have you undertaken any consultation with staff to assess their perception of any impacts of the policy or function? If so, what has been learnt from them?

Consultation with services providing face-to-face customer contact is an ongoing process; these discussions will measures to ensure equality of opportunity and access e.g. chip-and-pin service for Council Tax and other payments.
At present there is a lack of a formal mechanism via which staff can comment on Reception as a service. This is something that we are going to consider providing in the future.

B6. Please provide information about any other consultation, research, or involvement undertaken in relation to this impact assessment.

As above.

C1. IMPACT OF THE POLICY OR FUNCTION

Assess the potential impact on each of the following protected characteristics. The impact could be negative, positive or neutral. If you assess a negative impact for any of the groups then you will need to assess whether that impact is low, medium or high. Refer to the evidence you use.

DESCRIPTION OF IMPACT	Nature of Impact (Positive, Neutral, Adverse)	Extent of Impact (Low, Medium, High)
AGE: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different age groups.	Neutral	
The Reception Service aims to provide all customers with a high quality service irrespective of age.		
DISABILITY: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on disabled people.	Neutral	
The facilities at Reception are fully accessible to customers with disabilities e.g. low desk for wheelchair access, Disabled toilet and doors, hearing loop at Reception desk, translation services available on request. We are also considering how we can further our service; we are hoping to put bright markings on the floor from the entrance to the reception desk to aid those who are visually impaired, and will look into how we can help those who use sign language as means of communication		
GENDER REASSIGNMENT: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on people that have changed gender identity.	Neutral	
The Reception Service aims to provide all customers with a high quality service irrespective of gender.		
MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on people who are married or in a civil partnership.	Neutral	
The Reception Service aims to provide all customers with a high quality service irrespective of marital status.		
PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on pregnant or maternal mothers and those women who wish to breastfeed.	Neutral	
The Council is investigating making separate provision for breast feeding facilities ; currently facilities are available in the disabled toilet only.		

RACE: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different ethnic groups, including national origins, colour and nationality.	Neutral	
The Reception Service aims to provide all customers with a high quality service irrespective of race. We also offer a translation service, which we are hoping to advertise more clearly in the reception area.		
RELIGION/BELIEF: Identify the potential impact the policy or function on different religious/faith groups.	Neutral	
The Reception Service aims to provide all customers with a high quality service irrespective of religion/belief.		
SEX: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on men and women.	Neutral	
The Reception Service aims to provide all customers with a high quality service irrespective of sex.		
SEXUAL ORIENTATION: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on lesbian, gay men, bisexual or heterosexual people.	Neutral	
The Reception Service aims to provide all customers with a high quality service irrespective of sexual orientation.		

OTHER CHARACTERISTIC SPECIFIC TO SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE – RURALITY: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on people who are rurally isolated.	Neutral	
The Council's location may be difficult to reach for customers in outlying areas, especially in the south-east of the district, which are furthest away. The Council has transport information available at its offices and a regular bus service to Cambridge stopping immediately outside the premises during peak hours (8-10am and 4-7pm); however, further research is required to establish if there are customer groups who are excluded from visiting due to rural isolation.		

PLEASE NOTE: Following completion of the section above, if the nature of the impact is adverse then you may need to proceed to a full equality impact assessment.

<p>C2. Could you minimise or remove any adverse or potential impact that is high, medium or low significance, in advance of a full impact assessment? Explain how.</p> <p>N/a</p>
<p>C3. Does the policy or function actively promote equal opportunities and good community relations? Or could changes be made so that it does so?</p> <p>Yes. The Reception service welcomes all customers, including those with protected equality characteristics. The Council has in place ongoing feedback and equality monitoring processes to ensure an environment of continuous improvement in response to constructive customer feedback. By this means, equality issues arising can be addressed. However, we recognise that certain areas could benefit from further development, and are working to address these, e.g. translation service and access to the building.</p>
<p>C4. Please provide any further information, qualitative or quantitative that does not fit into the questions but you feel has a likely impact on this assessment.</p> <p>None.</p>

D. CONCLUSIONS			
D1. Was there sufficient data to complete the partial assessment?	Yes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	If “NO”, what arrangements are in place for evidence gathering and continuing with the assessment? Yes
	No?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
D2. Is the outcome of the partial assessment that the policy or function would have an adverse impact (medium or high impact) on one or more target group?	Yes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	If “YES”, will you proceed to a full assessment? If so, what arrangements are in place to carry out the full assessment? No
	No?	<input type="checkbox"/>	

D3. Is the outcome of the partial assessment that the policy or function would have a neutral or positive impact on equalities?	Yes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	If “YES”, have you included proposals in the Action Plan to further improve the impact of the policy or function on equalities? Yes, although specific actions will also be taken forward under existing service and project plans.
	No?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you plan to review the service or policy again in future to assess whether there has been any change? If so, when? The service is constantly reviewed in light of feedback and emerging service priorities. Has the Equalities Steering Group and the Consultative Forum reviewed the assessment? If so what were their comments? No.
D4. Do you have any other conclusions/outcomes from the partial assessment?			

ACTION PLAN for enhancing existing practice

Recommendation/ issue to be	Planned Milestone	Planned	Officer	Progress
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addressed		completion of milestone (date)	Responsible	
Actions to enhance existing practice will be taken forward as part of existing service and project plans, and in response to ongoing feedback from customers in relation to access channels.				
Development of reception satisfaction survey for internal staff.				
Look into translation service, and possibility of providing floor guidance lines for visually impaired visitors. Look into possibility of having an over-arching disability audit.				
Take forward the idea for a breast feeding area.				

RESOURCES

Does the above action plan require any additional resources?

See above.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING

Please give your plans for monitoring the achievement of the above actions.

See above.

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SIGN OFF: The officers below confirm that this partial assessment has been completed in accordance with the Council's guidance

Signature of Lead Officer

Date:

Signature of Corporate Manager or Chief Officer:

Date:

Please retain the original form on your service area and return a copy of the completed form to the Equality & Diversity Officer.