



South Kesteven District Council

Equality Analysis (Stage 1)

Customer access strategy

Service Area: People, Projects and Performance	Lead officer: Sue Griffiths	Date of Meeting 31/12/13
	Assessors: Sue Griffiths Joyce Slater	
	Neutral Assessor: Jo Toomey	

1. Name and description of policy/service/function/strategy

Customer Access Strategy

As the Council provides a large number of services to its customers, the customer access strategy will ensure customer services are delivered in a consistent cost effective and empathetic manner. It will inform how our customers will access our services and their preferred method for how we contact them.

It seeks to ensure that however people wish to access our services we seek to meet that demand with an equitable access to services. This includes across a wide range of service channels, for example online, face to face at 4 geographical sites across the district, telephone, twitter and other social media, email, home visits.

The strategy is based around 5 key themes aimed to improve customer access. It will be supported by an action plan that will help the council meet these objectives.

Is this a new or existing policy?

New

2. Complete the table below, considering whether the proposed policy/service/function/strategy could have any potential positive, or negative impacts on groups from any of the protected characteristics (or diversity strands) listed, using demographic data, user surveys, local consultations evaluation forms, comments and complaints etc.

Equality Group	Does this policy/service/function/strategy have a positive or negative impact on any of the equality groups? Please state which for each group	Please describe why the impact is positive or negative. If you consider this policy etc is not relevant to a specific characteristic please explain why
Age	Positive impact	The delivery and implementation of this strategy is not determined by any individual protected characteristic however the customer access strategy provides the potential for a positive impact because of the number of different channels through which the customer can choose to contact the council. The range of channels has been designed so that there are methods of communication with which all generations will be comfortable.
Disability	Positive impact	The delivery and implementation of this strategy is not determined by any individual protected characteristic however the range

		<p>of access channels will allow the Council to support individuals with specific needs.</p> <p>For example the Council uses sign language interpreters, language line, use of specialist support, live chat, specially trained staff, home visits and text relay. Website functionality includes access to different accessibility format options that customers can select according to their needs. The Council will also make documents available in other formats on request including Braille, large print, easy read and audio.</p> <p>For those customers who prefer to access the Council face to face, induction loops are located in customer service centres and area offices including Bourne Community Access Point. All offices offer level or ramped access.</p> <p>Portable induction loops are available for officers undertaking home visits.</p>
Race	Positive impact	<p>The delivery and implementation of this strategy is not determined by any individual protected characteristic however the Council provides access to interpreters as well as the alternative language functionality of the website.</p> <p>For customers who prefer to access our services face to face, the Council uses Language Line for instant translation.</p> <p>We can also provide hard copies of information in alternative languages on request.</p>
Gender Reassignment	Neutral impact	<p>The delivery and implementation of this strategy is not determined by any individual protected characteristic.</p>
Religion or Belief	Neutral impact	<p>The delivery and implementation of this strategy is not determined by any individual protected characteristic.</p>

Sex	Neutral impact	The delivery and implementation of this strategy is not determined by any individual protected characteristic.
Sexual Orientation	Neutral impact	The delivery and implementation of this strategy is not determined by any individual protected characteristic.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Neutral impact	The delivery and implementation of this strategy is not determined by any individual protected characteristic.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Neutral impact	The delivery and implementation of this strategy is not determined by any individual protected characteristic.
Carers	Positive impact	Home visits, telephony, live chat and access to on line channels have the potential to assist residents and their carers.
Other Groups (e.g. those from deprived (IMD*) communities; those from rural communities, those with an offending past) *(IMD = Indices of multiple deprivation)		<p>We recognise that South Kesteven is a large rural district. For those customers who wish to access our services face to face, we provide 4 contact centres in the main urban areas (Grantham, Bourne, Stamford and the Deepings). These local centres provide options that minimise travel for all residents</p> <p>We also recognise that not all residents can afford web connectivity. To support these customers alternative access methods are available or, if customers are able to access any of the area offices, staff will be able to facilitate their access to online services.</p> <p>The range of channels available provide alternatives for customers who do not want to access services online. For those customers who do want to access services online but lack the confidence, staff will be able to facilitate this.</p> <p>The extreme rurality of the district</p>

		<p>also affects the availability of broadband. South Kesteven forms part of the onLincolnshire broadband project but is one of the last districts in the county that will see any improvements (work scheduled for 2014/15). We know that there are areas that either do not have broadband access or where broadband connection speeds are very slow. So that these customers are not disaffected we feel it is important to maintain a variety of access methods.</p> <p>For any customers who have low levels of literacy we provide appropriate assistance. The variety of access channels available also means that there is a range of options and the customer can find the one that best suits their needs.</p>
<p>General comments</p>	<p>Staff members who are trained in customer services ensure that all customers are treated with respect and dignity regardless of protected characteristic.</p> <p>The purpose of the strategy is to improve access to services for all our customers The council has a community focus forum which is a group of individuals who represent a variety of protected characteristics.</p> <p>Vulnerable customers are those that because of age, disability, disadvantage (e.g. language or literacy difficulties) or risk of abuse need support to access council services equitably.</p>	

3. What equality data/information did you use to inform the outcomes of the proposed policy/service/function/strategy? (Note any relevant consultation who took part and key findings)

We consulted with the citizens' panel, which as far as possible is reflective of the demographic profile the district, to better understand the access preferences of our residents.
Information on current customer service and experience was used
Best practice was sought from a range of other councils to understand the use of technology to assist customers and to learn lessons from their experience.

If there are any gaps in the consultation/monitoring data, how will this be addressed?

The strategy recognises that our knowledge of our customers tends to be service based or through the citizens' panel and the strategy highlights this.
The development of the action plan will pick up on this.

4. Outcomes of analysis and recommendations (please note you will be required to provide evidence to support the recommendations made): Please check one of the options.

a)	No major change needed: equality analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or for negative impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A stage 2 analysis will follow the development of an action plan		
If you have checked option a) you will need to complete a Stage 3 analysis when your policy/service/function/strategy has been implemented		
b)	Adjust the proposal to remove barriers identified by equality analysis or to better promote equality.	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you have checked option b) you will need to answer questions b.1 and b.2		
c)	Adverse impact but continue	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you have checked option c) you will need to answer questions c.1		
d)	Stop and remove the policy/function/service/strategy as equality analysis has shown actual or potential unlawful	<input type="checkbox"/>

b.1 In brief, what changes are you planning to make to your proposed policy/service/function/strategy to minimise or eliminate the negative equality impacts?

b.2 Please provide details of whom you will consult on the proposed changes and if you do not plan to consult, please provide the rationale behind that decision.

If you have checked option b) you will need to complete a Stage 2 equality analysis

c.1 Please provide an explanation in the box below that clearly sets out your justification for continuing with the proposed policy/function/service/strategy.

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If you have checked option c) you will need to complete a Stage 2 equality analysis. You should consider in stage 2 whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact.

Signed (Lead Officer):
(Name and title)

Sue Griffiths
Head of People, Projects and Performance

Date completed:

24/12/13

Signed (Neutral Assessor):
(Name and title)

Jo Toomey
Principal Democracy Officer

Date signed off:

31/12/13