



South Kesteven District Council

Equality Impact (Initial Analysis)

Interim Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

Service Area:	Lead officer: Julie Edwards	Date of Meeting
Legal & Democratic Services	Assessors: Jo Toomey	16/09/16
	Neutral Assessor: David Lambley	

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

We are carrying out a review of polling districts (these are smaller areas of Parliamentary Constituencies and local government wards) and polling places (buildings that house polling stations where electors go to vote).

A recent review of boundaries for the Lincolnshire County Council area means that we need to adjust some of our polling districts and polling places, so that they meet criteria set out in the Electoral Commission guidance on how to carry out a review: [guidance on the review of polling districts and polling places](#).

Considering the accessibility of polling places and polling stations for all electors in the area is a key part of the review.

As the review is an interim review, we are only proposing a small number of changes to the current arrangements.

Is this a new or existing policy? Existing

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	Potential for negative impact	<p>There was the potential for a negative impact on children who accompany their parents to polling stations where their polling station is a pub and could potentially restrict the hours their parents would vote. The potential impact is mitigated because those polling stations are housed in rooms that are separated from the bar area; they are neither open for drinking nor the sale of alcohol.</p> <p>We recognise that elections can have an impact where polling stations are housed in schools. In these instances it is the</p>

		<p>responsibility of the head teacher to manage any safeguarding conflict by putting appropriate measures in place. These measures vary between schools – some head teachers will make the decision to close for the day, while others are able to provide a room with direct access that does not conflict with areas populated by children.</p> <p>Residents living in SKDC sheltered housing schemes also lose access to their communal room for the day. This is offset by providing a polling station that is very conveniently located for them to access.</p>
Disability	Potential for negative	<p>We are keen to provide local polling stations in as many areas are possible. Some of the villages have very limited community venues from which to choose and not all of those buildings are accessible.</p> <p>Where there is a need, we provide ramps to assist with steps or thresholds. We will also provide additional lighting if there is a need.</p> <p>In moving polling stations or introducing new polling stations, door width is a key consideration.</p> <p>Provision is also available within election procedure for Presiding Officers to take the ballot paper(s) outside to the voter if they cannot enter the polling station. Electors are also able to apply to vote by post if they would prefer to vote personally, or by proxy.</p> <p>Potential impact for staff. We will include an additional sheet when we write out to staff and that will be taken into consideration when allocating staff</p>

Race	No impact	
Gender Reassignment	No impact	
Religion or Belief	Potential for negative impact	<p>Where polling stations are housed in pubs, they are located in separate rooms that are not open for drinking or serving alcohol.</p> <p>Some of the villages in the district are so small the only type of community building they have is a church. If an elector did not feel comfortable entering a church because of their religious beliefs, they are able to apply to vote by post or proxy.</p> <p>If concerns are raised by staff members about appointment to a polling station in a church, we will look to move them.</p>
Sex	No impact	
Sexual Orientation	Potential for negative impact	Where polling stations are in a church it is where there is no other alternative. We are aware of the potential that some voters may not feel able to vote in a church because of the views of that faith on their sexual orientation. People are informed well in advance of where their polling station will be. If the voter did not feel able to vote in that polling station, they would have sufficient time to apply vote by another method.
Pregnancy and Maternity	No impact	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No impact	

Carers	Potential for negative impact	A carer may have to take the person for whom they care with them to the polling station. If the polling station is not accessible for the person for whom they care and the carer cannot leave them alone outside, polling station staff could use the same provisions in place for electors with disabilities that are unable to gain access to the building.
Other Groups (e.g. those from deprived (IMD*) communities; those from rural communities, those with an offending past) *(IMD = Indices of multiple deprivation)	Rural communities	Where possible a polling station will be put into all communities – we try and encourage polling stations in those very rural communities to help improve access and make voting as convenient as possible. Wherever we can we try and maintain polling stations in their rural communities.
General comments	Places we choose are determined by polling district boundaries, so the two aspects are interlinked. Polling districts are firstly determined by ease of access (travelling distance) and electorate, and then a suitable and safe venue within a polling district is identified for use. Every effort is made to find accessible, well lit, prominently located buildings to use as polling places.	

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)

At each election polling station inspectors submit reports giving feedback on polling stations, including accessibility issues. These reports are fully reviewed and action is taken to address issues that have arisen. Polling station staff also feed-back on the polling stations in logbook; these reports are also followed-up.

Any building we consider for use as a polling station is visited when we make an assessment of accessibility and plan any action that would remove barriers to voters. PO checks just before elections.

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

As part of the review, we publish our draft recommendations so that members of the public can provide feedback. We also actively seek feedback from:

- Returning officers
- Members of Parliament
- District Councillors
- County Councillors
- Parish Councils
- Local Constituency Political Parties
- Disability and access groups
- People or organisations with expertise in relation to the access of premises or facilities for people with disabilities

We take this feedback into account when developing final proposals.

When invitations are sent to prospective polling station staff we will ask them about whether any of the protected characteristics may affect where they could be appointed.

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"/>
<i>If you have checked option a) you can now send this form to the Lead Officer and your Neutral Assessor for sign off</i>		
b)	Adjust the proposal to remove barriers identified by equality analysis or to better promote equality.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>If you have checked option b) you will need to answer questions b.1 and b.2</i>		
c)	Adverse impact but continue	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>If you have checked option c) you will need to answer questions c.1</i>		
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.

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): *Julie Edwards*
(Name and title) Elections and Democratic Services Team Leader

Date completed: *07/11/16*

Signed (Neutral Assessor): *David Lambley*
(Name and title) Corporate Fraud Officer

Date signed off: *07/11/16*