

Equalities and Diversity Impact Assessment

NS 3.26

Customer Access Point Review



Durham County Council – Altogether Better equality impact assessment form

NB: Equality impact assessment is a legal requirement for all strategies plans, functions, policies, procedures and services. We are also legally required to publish our assessments.

You can find help and prompts on completing the assessment in the guidance from page 7 onwards.

Section one: Description and initial screening

Section overview: this section provides an audit trail.

Service/team or section: **Projects and Business Services**

Lead Officer:

**Head of Service, Projects and Business Services
Customer Relations, Policy & Performance**

Start date 21st October 2013

Dorothy Emerson Service Improvement Officer (Equalities)

Subject of the Impact Assessment: (please also include a brief description of the aims, outcomes, operational issues as appropriate)

This assessment relates to the review of Customer Access Points (CAPs) and the future of face to face access to services. The review is also linked to the review of our Customer First Strategy and MTFP (budget) savings targets.

CAPs provide access to information, advice and services in a number of locations around the county. Although many of the enquiries and requests for information are dealt with quickly or signposted to other help there are some people who access services through the CAPs, the most common is for benefits but help is also provided for bin collections, council tax, bus passes, housing, planning and licensing. In the financial year 2012/13 there were almost 300,000 interactions with just over half being 'signposting'. There are some enquiries which currently require face to face contact or for which customers prefer face to face contact, these include:

- enquiries which require original documents to be produced;
- familiarity with staff and their understanding of the individual's case;
- help with forms because of literacy or other difficulties;
- enquiries which need paper documents, such as planning applications.

There are a number of reasons for the review of face to face access including the need to make savings in the current financial climate, the Government's guidance for more use of online services and responding to customers who want quick and easy ways to access information or help. However we also recognise that some people will continue to rely on face to face help in the future.

Four possible options have been identified for consideration by Cabinet, full details are included in the Cabinet report but, in summary, they are:

Option 1 – includes the closure of Spennymoor CAP and changes to Stanley, Newton Aycliffe and Bishop Auckland CAPs.

Option 2 – Spennymoor CAP would remain open and Newton Aycliffe, Bishop Auckland and Peterlee CAPs would be run on an appointment system.

Option 3 – this considers closing Bishop Auckland and Stanley CAPs

Option 4 – move to alternative methods with only four CAPs remaining in place.

For each option there would be additional support provided by working with partners and other local organisations to offer information and signposting.

Who are the main stakeholders: Public / Employees / Elected Members / Partners/ Specific audiences/Other (please specify) –.

Elected Members, General public – County Durham Residents, Durham County Council Employees, Partners

Is a copy of the subject attached? No

A copy of the subject can be obtained by contacting the Head of Service, Projects and Business Services

Initial screening

Prompts to help you:

Who is affected by it? Who is intended to benefit and how? Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups? Is it likely to affect relations between different communities or groups, for example if it is thought to favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others? Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality?

Is there an actual potential negative or positive impact on specific groups within these headings Indicate :Y = Yes, N = No, ?=Unsure

Gender	?	Disability	?	Age	?	Race/ethnicity	N	Religion or belief	N	Sexual orientation	N
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Given the range of enquiries there are potential impacts from each option. The most likely impacts are on gender, disability and age as national and local evidence suggests that women, older and younger people and disabled people are more likely to rely on local services for a number of reasons including access to transport, caring responsibilities, ease of access, lack of internet access and computer skills. None of the options are likely to have a particular impact on race, religion, belief or sexual orientation.

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

There is national and local evidence which shows that women, older people and disabled people may rely on local services due to lack of personal transport, reliance on carers and combining a number of activities in one visit, for example shopping, health appointments or caring responsibilities.

People needing help with Housing Benefit or Council Tax account for one of the largest requests in CAPs, there is some evidence from the customer satisfaction surveys that there may be a higher number of disabled people using this service.

Decision: Proceed to full impact assessment – Yes Date: 21st October 2013

If you have answered ‘No’ you need to pass the completed form for approval & sign off.

Section two: Identifying impacts and evidence- Equality and Diversity

Section overview: this section identifies whether there are any impacts on equality/diversity/cohesion, what evidence is available to support the conclusion and what further action is needed.

	Identify the impact : does this increase differences or does it aim to reduce gaps for particular groups?	Explain your conclusion, including relevant evidence and consultation you have considered.	What further action is required? (Include in Sect. 3 action plan)
Gender	<p>Potential impacts relate to the loss of CAPs – Options 1, 3 and 4. This may mean additional travel and/or cost to access alternatives or increased reliance on online services.</p> <p>There is no evidence from the customer satisfaction survey results to indicate a disproportionate impact on gender.</p>	<p>Local and national evidence suggests that women are more likely to rely on local services. They are more likely to work part-time or have caring responsibilities which, combined with lower levels of access to private transport, means that they use services which are easy to access.</p> <p>There is a combined impact with age as there are more older women than men in the county.</p>	<p>Depends on Cabinet decision.</p>
Age	<p>Potential impacts relate to the loss of CAPs – Options 1, 3 and</p>	<p>Older people are more likely to use local services as a result of easy access. There</p>	<p>Depends on Cabinet decision.</p>

	<p>4. This may mean additional travel and/or cost to access alternatives or increased reliance on online services.</p> <p>Changing to an appointment system may impact on some age groups – those of working age in employment may prefer to make an appointment.</p> <p>There is evidence to show that older people are less likely to have internet access at home or have confidence in using online services.</p>	<p>are also more older women than men in the county, they are less likely to have access to private transport and may rely on others for care and support.</p> <p>The 2011 census shows that almost 18% of the county’s population are aged over 65. The customer satisfaction survey indicates that 14% of those answering the question were aged over 65.</p> <p>The customer satisfaction survey indicates that those who identified themselves as aged over 65 were likely to use the following services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefits - 36.36% • Council Tax - 31.17% • Bus Pass - 16.88% • Refuse and Recycling - 9.74% • Other -12.5%. 	
Disability	<p>Potential impacts relate to the loss of CAPs – Options 1, 3 and 4. This may mean additional travel and/or cost to access alternatives or increased reliance on online services.</p> <p>Relocation of CAPs may create a positive impact where the premises are more accessible. Changing to an appointment system may impact on some</p>	<p>Depending on the nature of their disability, some people may rely on others for care and support. Some online services can be difficult for disabled people to access, for example, those with learning disabilities or those who need specific computer software.</p> <p>The 2011 census shows that almost 24% of the county’s population have a disability.</p> <p>The customer satisfaction survey indicates that 16% of those answering the question were</p>	Depends on Cabinet decision.

	<p>disabled people, for example those relying on carers may find it more limiting.</p> <p>Changes to online systems can be more difficult for some disabled people but may also offer increased access for those who cannot travel to the CAP.</p>	<p>disabled.</p> <p>The customer satisfaction survey indicates that those who identified themselves as disabled were likely to use the following services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefits - 55.11% • Council Tax - 43.18% • Bus Pass - 9.09% • Blue Badge - 3.98% • Other - 12.5% 	
Race/Ethnicity	There is no evidence the options have a disproportionate impact on race or ethnicity.		
Religion or belief	There is no evidence the options have a disproportionate impact on religion or belief.		
Sexual Orientation	There is no evidence the options have a disproportionate impact on sexual orientation.		

How will this promote positive relationships between different communities?

Loss of CAP facilities may contribute to decline in some communities where other services are closing. Maintaining access to local services tends to offer opportunities for social contact.

Section three: Review and Conclusion

Summary: please provide a brief overview, including impact, changes, improvements and any gaps in evidence.

Each option may impact differently but the likely protected characteristics affected are gender, age and disability. Options 1, 3 and 4 include closures of Customer Access Points which would affect those who rely on local services. Increased use of online services may be a positive for some who cannot reach their local CAP but may have a negative impact for those who do not have easy access to the internet or have confidence in using computers.

Action to be taken	Officer responsible	Target Date	In which plan will this action appear
Review EQiA following Cabinet report	Mary Readman/Cheryl Duggan/Sue Kelley	January – February 2014	
When will this assessment be reviewed?	Date: January 2014		
Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?			
Head of Service - sign off:			Date:
Service equality representative - sign off: Mary Readman Customer Relations, Policy and Performance Manager			Date:

Please email your completed Impact Assessment to the Dorothy Emerson, Service Improvement Officer (Equalities) at dorothy.emerson@durham.gov.uk