

# Cambridge City Council Equality Impact Assessment

Completing an Equality Impact Assessment will help you to think about what impact your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service may have on people that live in, work in or visit Cambridge, as well as on City Council staff.



The template is easy to use. You do not need to have specialist equalities knowledge to complete it. It asks you to make judgements based on evidence and experience. There are guidance notes on the intranet to help you. You can also get advice from Suzanne Goff, Strategy Officer on 01223 457174 or email [suzanne.goff@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:suzanne.goff@cambridge.gov.uk) or from any member of the Joint Equalities Group.

## 1. Title of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service:

The introduction of an electronic switchboard.

## 2. What is the objective or purpose of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

Currently customer services receive an average of 9000 switchboard calls per month. Approximately 60% of these calls are answered by a concierge customer service advisor at the Guildhall, the remaining 40% of calls overspill into the CSC for answering.

Over 70% of customers calling the general enquiries line 01223 457000 know the person or department they want to speak to and the operator simply transfers the call as requested on a cold transfer basis.

The remaining 30% of customers calling the number need assistance to understand what their needs are. Once this has been established the call is again cold transferred to the person or department identified.

The purpose of introducing the electronic switchboard is to improve the experience of customers calling Cambridge City Council.

Historically customers calling the general enquiries number have received an almost an immediate answer. To maximise efficiencies and to ensure that staffing levels are highest where the complicated queries are received, dedicated staffing levels have been reduced for this service and an overflow system has been introduced.

This has resulted in longer queuing times for customers to have their calls answered initially.

The electronic switchboard system will mean customers will not queue to have their call answered, by saying the name of the service or person they want to speak to their call will automatically be forwarded.

Where customers do not know the person or department they want to speak to their call will be directed to the customer service centre for an advisor to assist them.

The objective for the strategy is to:

- To provide a more immediate answer service for our customers
- To create capacity in the CSC to cope with peaks in demand and to enable more focus on the complex queries and vulnerable customers
- To achieve savings target of £15,000.

## 3. Who will be affected by this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick those that apply)

Residents

Visitors / customers calling the customer service centre

Staff

A specific client group or groups (please state):

**4. What type of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service is this? (Please tick)**

- New  
 Revised  
 Existing

**5. Responsible directorate and service**

Directorate: Business Transformation

Service: Customer Services

**6. Are other departments or partners involved in delivering this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?**

- No  
 Yes (please give details):

The general enquiries line services the whole council so there will need to be a communications plan and a mechanism to promote the understanding of how it will work and what actions departments need to take on an ongoing basis to make sure that customers are directed correctly when they call.

## 7. Potential impact

Please list and explain how this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service could **positively** or **negatively** affect individuals from the following equalities groups.

When answering this question, please think about:

- The results of relevant consultation that you or others have completed (for example with residents, people that work in or visit Cambridge, service users, staff or partner organisations).
- Complaints information.
- Performance information.
- Information about people using your service (for example whether people from certain equalities groups use the service more or less than others).
- Inspection results.
- Comparisons with other organisations.
- The implementation of your piece of work (don't just assess what you think the impact will be after you have completed your work, but also think about what steps you might have to take to make sure that the implementation of your work does not negatively impact on people from a particular equality group).
- The relevant premises involved.
- Your communications.
- National research (local information is not always available, particularly for some equalities groups, so use national research to provide evidence for your conclusions).

**(a) Age** (any group of people of a particular age, including younger and older people – in particular, please consider any safeguarding issues for children and vulnerable adults)

Anticipated score = - 2

Younger people will not be adversely affected by this strategy. They are used to self-service options and can navigate through them without difficulty.

Older people could be adversely affected by the introduction of this service. Automated options can be difficult for older people to use however there will be a clear option to speak to an advisor if required.

A number of other local authorities including Windsor and Maidenhead are using an electronic switchboard. They have experienced a reduction in call volumes needing an advisor intervention of at least 50%. On the basis that this outcome is replicated at Cambridge City Council customers of any age will experience:

- An immediate answer and transfer to the person or department they need to speak to – which will reduce frustrations and complaints
- The customer service centre performance for calls answered will improve, enabling older customers to have their queries dealt with quicker.
- Communications will be carried out via Cambridge matters and the web site.

A review of the initiative will take place after 6 months which will look at customer feedback, complaints and performance to establish if the benefits of the initiative have been realised and how our customers are using the service.

**(b) Disability** (including people with a physical impairment, sensory impairment, learning disability, mental health problem or other condition which has an impact on their daily life)

Anticipated score = - 2

People with learning disabilities, mental health problems could be adversely affected by the introduction of this service.

A number of other local authorities including Windsor and Maidenhead are using an electronic switchboard. They have experienced a reduction in call volumes needing an advisor intervention of at least 50%. On the basis that this outcome is replicated at Cambridge City Council customers of any age will experience:

- An immediate answer and transfer to the person or department they need to speak to – which will reduce frustrations and complaints
- The customer service centre performance for calls answered will improve, enabling older customers to have their queries dealt with quicker.
- Communications will be carried out via Cambridge matters and the web site.

A review of the initiative will take place after 6 months which will look at customer feedback, complaints and performance to establish if the benefits of the initiative have been realised and how our customers are using the service.

**(c) Gender**

Anticipated score = 0

This initiative will not adversely impact this equalities group.

**(d) Pregnancy and maternity**

Anticipated score = 0

This initiative will not adversely impact this equalities group.

**(e) Transgender** (including gender re-assignment)

Anticipated score = 0

This initiative will not adversely impact this equalities group.

**(f) Marriage and Civil Partnership**

Anticipated score = 0

This initiative will not adversely impact this equalities group.

### **(g) Race or Ethnicity**

Anticipated score = - 2

Some people within the race or ethnicity equalities group could be affected by this initiative.

Customers whose first language is not English could be adversely affected by the introduction of this service, however there are options for customers to exit the system and speak to an advisor. Our experience within the CSC has shown that a very small percentage of customers that contact us by telephone are unable to speak English; they prefer to seek advice face to face where an interpreter is more easily facilitated.

A number of other local authorities including Windsor and Maidenhead are using an electronic switchboard. They have experienced a reduction in call volumes needing an advisor intervention of at least 50%. On the basis that this outcome is replicated at Cambridge City Council customers of any age will experience:

- An immediate answer and transfer to the person or department they need to speak to – which will reduce frustrations and complaints
- The customer service centre performance for calls answered will improve, enabling older customers to have their queries dealt with quicker.
- Communications will be carried out via Cambridge matters and the web site.

A review of the initiative will take place after 6 months which will look at customer feedback, complaints and performance to establish if the benefits of the initiative have been realised and how our customers are using the service.

### **(h) Religion or Belief**

Anticipated score = 0

This initiative will not adversely impact this equalities group.

### **(i) Sexual Orientation**

Anticipated score = 0

This initiative will not adversely impact this equalities group.

### **(j) Other factors that may lead to inequality – in particular – please consider the impact of any changes on low income groups or those experiencing the impacts of poverty (please state):**

I do not anticipate this initiative causing inequality in any other way.

## 8. If you have any additional comments please add them here

## 9. Conclusions and Next Steps

- If you have not identified any negative impacts, please sign off this form.
- If you have identified potential negative actions, you must complete the action plan at the end of this document to set out how you propose to mitigate the impact. If you do not feel that the potential negative impact can be mitigated, you must complete question 8 to explain why that is the case.
- If there is insufficient evidence to say whether or not there is likely to be a negative impact, please complete the action plan setting out what additional information you need to gather to complete the assessment.

All completed Equality Impact Assessments must be emailed to Suzanne Goff, Strategy Officer, who will arrange for it to be published on the City Council's website.  
Email [suzanne.goff@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:suzanne.goff@cambridge.gov.uk)

## 10. Sign off

Name and job title of assessment lead officer: Clarissa Norman, Customer Services Operations Manager

Names and job titles of other assessment team members and people consulted:  
Jonathan James, Head of Customer Services

Date of completion: 16<sup>th</sup> December 2014

Date of next review of the assessment: 6 months from implementation, likely to be September 2015



## Action Plan

**Equality Impact Assessment title:** Electronic switchboard

**Date of completion:** 16<sup>th</sup> December 2014

Equality Group	Age
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	Older customers who have difficulty hearing or processing information may struggle with using the system
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	There will be options available for customer to exit the system to speak to an advisor. A review of the impact the system has will be undertaken using customer feedback as a key aspect of the review.
Officer responsible for progressing the action	Clarissa Norman
Date action to be completed by	October 2015

Equality Group	Disability
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	Customers who find it difficult to process information or who have mental health problems may find it difficult to use the system.
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	There will be options available for customer to exit the system to speak to an advisor. A review of the impact the system has will be undertaken using customer feedback as a key aspect of the review.
Officer responsible for progressing the action	Clarissa Norman
Date action to be completed by	October 2015

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Transgender</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Race or Ethnicity</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	Customers whose first language is not English may not be able to understand how to ask for the person /department they need to speak to.
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	<p>Within the system, there will be parameters built in where customers pressing their key pads repeatedly will be diverted to the contact centre.</p> <p>A review of the impact the system has will be undertaken looking at the number of customers abandoning the system, at which point and how they do this. Customer feedback will also be reviewed.</p>
Officer responsible for progressing the action	Clarissa Norman
Date action to be completed by	October 2015

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Religion or Belief</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

Equality Group	Sexual Orientation
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Other factors that may lead to inequality</b>	
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	