

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 or from any member of the Joint Equalities Group.

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

Telephony self-serve – 24/7 information giving and information gathering service.

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

The service provided by advisors within the CSC is end to end. Customers appreciate this service as their enquiries are dealt with at first point of contact.

The operational issues around this service provision are that when there are peaks in demand or after bulk mailings have been sent to customers, council tax recovery notices for example, customer waiting times are adversely affected.

As a consequence of the team being multi-skilled in a range of service areas, customers can be making a call for homelink for example and because council tax reminders have been issued, the availability of a staff member to assist them is reduced due to the increased number of contacts the reminders have prompted.

Over recent months there has been a range of advancements in the options for customers to self-serve. Where they have access and the ability, customers can now apply for homelink, housing benefit, register for Council Tax and inform us about changes in circumstances on line without this task needing to be dealt with by an advisor.

We have trialled triaging customers calling with queries which can now be dealt with via self-serve by asking them to complete the relevant web form themselves. The results are that a majority of customers are happy to complete the forms themselves.

This approach has created a degree of capacity within the centre, however our ability to cope with peaks in demand has not been resolved and we are noticing an increased number of complaints from customers concerning our waiting times.

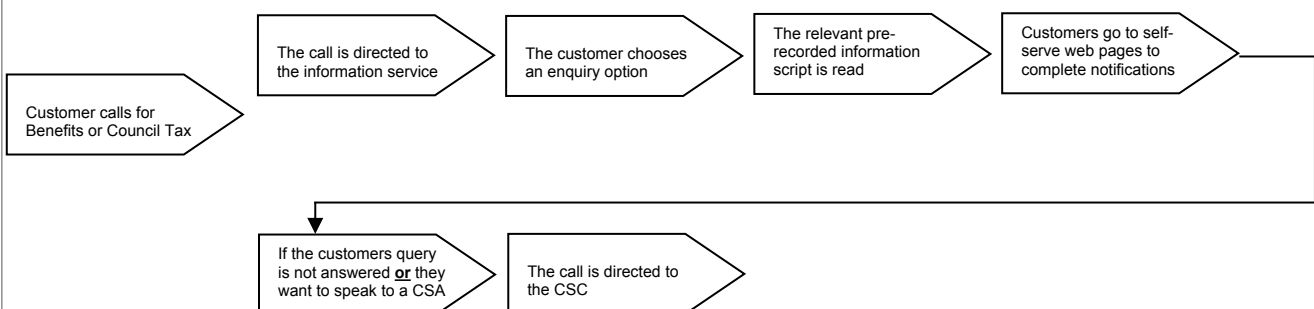
We are implementing the 24/7 information giving and gathering service on a pilot basis for the Council Tax and Benefits service areas.

The service is designed to give 24/7 information on the basic and general information most frequently asked of the CSC team. The maximum time a customer will spend in the self service module is 2 minutes 30 seconds.

Because the service is automated there is no queuing for customers and they do have the option to be put through to an advisor.

If this is successful there is scope for this to be widened to include other departments.

The information giving and gathering service works as below:



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

The objective for the strategy is to:

- widen the information provision we are currently able to provide through CSA's and our web pages
- To provide more immediate answers to the basic questions customers have
- 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 £50,000.

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):

Revenue and Benefits services – discussions have taken place with the relevant managers explaining the initiative and plans will be put into place to mitigate any potential transfer of workload.

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, if they are hard of hearing they are not able to adjust the volume to hear what the messages are saying. They are also unable to ask clarification questions.

A number of other local authorities including Tower Hamlets and Bristol city council are using this system. They have experienced a reduction in call volumes needing an advisor intervention of at least 30%. On the basis that this outcome is replicated at Cambridge City Council customers of any age will experience:

- An immediate answer to their questions – 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

Some people with disabilities will not be adversely affected by this strategy. Customers who struggle to converse, or have a physical impairment but need to access information or provide change in circumstances details may prefer to use the self-service option.

People with learning disabilities, mental health problems could be adversely affected by the introduction of this service. Automated options can be difficult for people to use if the customer cannot ask clarification questions.

A number of other local authorities including Tower Hamlets and Bristol city council are using this system. They have experienced a reduction in call volumes needing an advisor intervention of at least 30%. On the basis that this outcome is replicated at Cambridge City Council all customers calling the CSC will experience:

- An immediate answer to their questions – 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.

Which will benefit those customers who do need to converse with an advisor

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 = 1

This initiative will not adversely impact this equalities group, indeed the extension of information provision to 24/7 and the enhanced opportunities to provide information to the council will enhance the services we will be providing.

(d) Pregnancy and maternity

Anticipated score = 1

This initiative will not adversely impact this equalities group, indeed the extension of information provision to 24/7 and the enhanced opportunities to provide information to the council will enhance the services we will be providing.

(e) Transgender (including gender re-assignment)

Anticipated score = 3

This initiative will not adversely impact this equalities group, indeed the extension of information provision to 24/7 and the enhanced opportunities to provide information to the council will enhance the services we will be providing.

(f) Marriage and Civil Partnership

Anticipated score = 1

This initiative will not adversely impact this equalities group, indeed the extension of information provision to 24/7 and the enhanced opportunities to provide information to the council will enhance the services we will be providing.

(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.

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- An immediate answer to their questions – 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.

Which will benefit those customers who do need to converse with an advisor

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 = 1

This initiative will not adversely impact this equalities group, indeed the extension of information provision to 24/7 and the enhanced opportunities to provide information to the council will enhance the services we will be providing.

(i) Sexual Orientation

Anticipated score = 1

This initiative will not adversely impact this equalities group, indeed the extension of information provision to 24/7 and the enhanced opportunities to provide information to the council will enhance the services we will be providing.

(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

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: 16th December 2014

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

Action Plan

Equality Impact Assessment title: Telephony self-serve - 24/7 information giving and information gathering service.

Date of completion: 16th 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 self service
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	There will be options available for customer to exit the self-serve 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 self-serve system.
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	There will be options available for customer to exit the self-serve 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	Gender
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	Pregnancy and Maternity
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	Transgender
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	Marriage and Civil Partnership
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	Race or Ethnicity
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	Customers whose first language is not English may not be able to understand the information being given within the system.
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

Equality Group	Religion or Belief
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	

Other factors that may lead to inequality	
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	