

Stage 1: Equality Impact Assessment

1. What are the main aims, purpose and outcomes of the Policy and how do these fit with the wider aims of the organisation?

The website redesign project started in 2011 to make it simpler to use, to make things easier to understand and to make top tasks more visible. The new website was launched on 23 May 2013.

Through the redesign and also by completely rewriting all the content the site is more customer focused. The aim of the project was to reduce the number of face-to-face and call centre transactions and to encourage customers to use the council's online services. The purpose of this is to save money and fulfil the Kent-wide channel shift strategy.

One of Maidstone council's key priorities is 'Great People' - Corporate and Customer Excellence with outcomes of having customer focused services that residents are satisfied with and effective, cost efficient services delivered across the borough.

2. How do these aims affect our duty to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the act.**
- **Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**
- **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

The council's new website is available to everyone, whether that is at home on their own PC, on a mobile device or on one of the Gateway's PCs. The website is also 'AAA' compliant and has a high contrast, larger text size and browsealoud offering for those with visual or hearing impairments and a language translation function.

3. What aspects of the policy including how it is delivered or accessed could contribute to inequality?

None, As mentioned above the new website has different versions of the templates for those with visual or hearing impairments. The website also has a translation section which allows the user to put the site into a wide range of languages. Alternative contact methods are also available.

4. Will the policy have an impact (positive or negative) upon the lives of people, including particular communities and groups who have protected characteristics? What evidence do you have for this?

The new website provides an online platform for customers to use our services or find information regardless of any protected characteristics. It will have a positive impact as there will be more services available online. All other existing access to service points such as the contact centre and gateway are still available providing customers with more choice about how they contact us. Website activity will be monitored using Google Analytics and our own Site Feedback form.

If the answer to the second question has identified potential impacts and you have answered yes to any of the remaining questions then you should carry out a full EQIA set out as stage 2 below.

Stage 2: Equality Impact Assessment

Name of Policy/Service/Function
New Website Redesign Project
Purpose
What are you trying to achieve with the policy / service / function?
The new website provides an online platform for customers to access the council's services at a time and place that is convenient to them. With fewer pages, fewer documents, fewer links and more concise information the customer is able to complete their journey online quickly.
Who defines and manages it?
Sandra Marchant, Customer Services Manager Karen Jeal, Website Officer
Who do you intend to benefit from it and how?
Anyone who comes into contact with the council including people who live in, work in or visit the borough, staff, members and partners.
What could prevent people from getting the most out of the policy / service / function?

Customers who do not have access to a computer or mobile device.
How will you get your customers involved in the analysis and how will you tell people about it?
<p>Customers have the opportunity to provide site feedback telling the web team what they thought was good or bad about the information they've used on the site. This feedback is logged each month and some comments are taken on board and the service improved as a result. The web team also has a Twitter and Facebook account for the website and these channels also allow customers to get involved and give feedback.</p> <p>Providing an email address is supplied or contact details given the web team will get back to every customer.</p>
Evidence
How will you know if the policy delivers its intended outcome / benefits?
Visits to the website will be high and feedback will be positive. This is measured by using Google Analytics and our own Site Feedback form.
How satisfied are your customers and how do you know?
Site Feedback is used to measure customer satisfaction. The feedback form has been in place since the go live date. We are also using some user testing software called 'Loop11' which allows us to connect with our customer focus group to continue to make improvements to the site and make sure it is still fulfilling its purpose.
What existing data do you have on the people that use the service and the wider population?
Customer name and email address is recorded on Site Feedback form, but is not a mandatory field. We are using Mosaic data analysis to see the profile of our customers and where they come from. Website visits and top pages are also

recorded using Google Analytics so we know how many customers are visiting us and what services they are coming on the site for, what devices they use, where they're from and how long they are staying on the site for.

What other information would it be useful to have? How could you get this?

Are you breaking down data by equality groups where relevant (such as by gender, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity)?

No, any data maintained is not broken down by different equality groups.

Are you using partners, stakeholders, and councillors to get information and feedback?

Yes. We have used these groups for the initial user testing in the BETA phase and we will continue to use partners, stakeholders and councillors in the future to make improvements to the site.

Impact

Are some people benefiting more – or less - than others? If so, why might this be?

The needs of all customer groups have been taken into account when designing the new website to make sure it is accessible to all.

Actions

If the evidence suggests that the policy / service / function benefits a particular group – or disadvantages another - is there a justifiable reason for this and if so, what is it?

The website is designed around the principle of fairness and providing a service

for everyone.
Is it discriminatory in any way?
No
Is there a possible impact in relationships or perceptions between different parts of the community?
Some customers may think that by using our online services or certain online services they will get their enquiry dealt with quicker. This is not the case. All services online are dealt with within the same time frame.
What measures can you put in place to reduce disadvantages?
We can offer more PCs in our face-to-face service so that those without a computer can still get the information they need quickly without waiting. We can offer workshops for those who are not as confident using online services.
Do you need to consult further?
No
Have you identified any potential improvements to customer service?
Various changes have been identified as part of the customer service improvement programme and a lot relate to channel shift and providing services in a more efficient way and giving customers more choice in how they can access services that is more likely to meet their needs.
Who should you tell about the outcomes of this analysis?
This is a corporate project so the Corporate Leadership Team is fully aware of and support the changes identified in the programme.
Have you built the actions into your Service Plan or Policy Implementation Plan with a clear timescale?
Any changes in the Corporate Improvement Programme that affect the website

have been built into the Customer Services Service Plan as appropriate.

When will this assessment need to be repeated?

When there is a policy or service change for the website.