

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Directorate:	Corporate Services	Function:	Access to Council Services via the Worcestershire Hub
Assessment by:	Owen Raine	Related Policies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ From Contact to Closure ➤ Race Equality Scheme ➤ Equalities and Diversity Scheme
Date:	14 th December2006	Related Procedures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Contact Centre Procedures (telephony) ➤ Call Handling Procedures ➤ Face to face contact ➤ Online services
Equality Impact Assessment Working Group	Owen Raine & Paul Grubb		

Step and page in Toolkit	Description of Step	Checklist
1	<p>Identify all aims of the function</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To act as a single and initial point of contact for council services. 2. Make council services accessible to all through various channels. 3. Accurately record relevant customer information. 4. Liaise with, and support other service areas across Worcestershire whilst providing the customer facing front end. 5. Resolve the vast majority of customer enquiries at the first point of contact, and pass enquiries on to other service areas where necessary. 6. Sign post customer, where appropriate, to other organisations, bodies and sectors. 7. Provide a consistent and high level of service. 	<p>How will you do that?</p> <p>Refer to procedural guidelines (available on request).</p>
2 2.1	<p>Summary of research</p> <p><u>Age</u></p> <p>Research shows that in Worcestershire people aged over 65 comprise only 20% of the adult population. Services which have a greater usage by adults aged over 65, include Concessionary Travel and Social Care Services. Services which have a greater usage by those under 65, include Recruitment and the School Admissions service.</p>	<p>What does the evidence show you?</p> <p>This is broadly in line with expectation and suggests that there is fair access to services relevant to age.</p>

<p>2.2</p>	<p>A MORI survey in 2002 shows that 30% of 65 year olds have access to the internet although this level reduces significantly for people over 70. No information is available in relation to telephone ownership other than 98% of the UK population having access to a mobile or fixed line phone. More recent MORI research indicates that 82% of people over 60 make more use of their landline than mobile phone.</p> <p><u>Disability</u></p> <p>People with a long term illness or physical disability comprise 16.7% of the county's population.</p>	<p>Research confirms a high degree of phone ownership in the older population and that this is an accepted technology which is easy to access, allows service delivery and can save the need for a specific journey. Making more services accessible over the telephone, and indeed offering a range of access channels may actually <i>encourage</i> uptake of services and increase ease of access, especially to those who may have mobility problems or difficulties travelling.</p> <p>Due to the nature of telephony services those with physical disabilities community will encounter fewer barriers when accessing services this way. However the Hub does present alternatives, for example via face-to-face or online, the latter possibly being of particular relevance to younger age groups</p>
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<p>2.3</p>	<p><u>Gender</u></p> <p>Gender distribution across the full range of ages in the County is fairly even up to the age of 70 after which the population is split in the ratio of 60/40 women to men.</p> <p>In the first half of 2006 54% of contact to the Hub was from females. Looking at the telephony channel alone, 58% of contact was from females. It is also worth noting that out of requests raised over the web, via the self-service channel, males raised 62.5% of requests.</p> <p>CRE statistics from 1996 indicate that, nationally, there can be a considerable difference in the percentage of women in each ethnic group who are economically active. For those who are economically active, there are implications for their ability to access services, with less opportunity within the working week and also problems with accessibility to IT, telephony and transport. An EOC research paper shows that working women spend 4.5 hours per day on direct childcare and other household activities and as such face additional time restrictions when trying to access services</p>	<p>and also a comprehensive option for those with physical impairments.</p> <p>Further analysis may need to be undertaken to determine which services are more likely to be accessed by men.</p> <p>The split of access to services between men and women is proportionate to the population of Worcestershire.</p> <p>Further research may be needed to identify whether there would be any demand to extend availability of face to face or telephone access to the service to benefit working women who are also carers.</p>
<p>2.4</p>	<p><u>Race</u></p> <p>BME communities equate to 2.5% of the county's under 65 population and 0.5% of the population over 65.</p> <p>MORI research shows a minimal difference in white and ethnic minority</p>	<p>Developments to promote the web as an access channel to services may promote equality.</p>

<p>2.5</p>	<p>group's access to the internet. Council for Racial Equality studies in ethnic issues in relation to access to healthcare found that Asians are more likely to suffer from long-term illnesses or disabilities, which restrict daily activities. This research also showed that all ethnic minority groups (except the Irish) were less likely to drink to excess than the general population. The research shows that people from Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups were more likely to have problems in terms of social functioning and women from these groups were more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression than white women. Overall, people from all ethnic minority groups were more likely to be unsatisfied with their experiences of health related services.</p> <p><u>Language</u></p> <p>The 2001 census did not include any questions on language so the varying linguistic need of customers and citizens cannot be fully analysed. Call monitoring has not yet been undertaken to analyse differing language requirements, however research into this field could help accurately identify areas where Language Line could make services more accessible. Since the last census in 2001, an increasing number of economic migrants from the extended EU, particularly from Poland, means that the way in which we currently provided language services may not keep pace with changing demand.</p>	<p>Exploring ways of making translation services accessible to ethnic minority groups who do not have English as a first language may be beneficial.</p> <p>This has implications for call handling for customers with English as a second language, and that there could be a greater and perhaps a not yet fully recognised need for people in these communities to access social care or preventative services. Building confidence in these groups to encourage trust and ensure those who need services come forward may mitigate reluctance to engage with services via the Hub</p> <p>The Worcestershire Hub telephone service currently offers Language Line as a facility for assisting people who do not have English as a first language. This service may need to be more aggressively marketed and effectively used both internally and externally to make all stakeholders aware of the option and the</p>
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2.6	<p><u>Religion</u></p> <p>Information on the religious beliefs of people contacting the Hub is not collected. Research shows that 78.7% of the population in Worcestershire are said to be of the Christian faith. However, there does not appear to be a significant difference on access to services based solely on religious belief</p>	<p>benefits it can offer. Interpretation and translation needs face both face and online, are signposted to Ethnic Access Link. However, there is currently no accreditation of Ethnic Access Link interpreters or translators. The Hub may need to ensure that accredited translators and interpreters are in place as and when needed.</p> <p>CSAs need to be sensitive to cultural and religious practices which may impact on service delivery.</p>
2.7	<p><u>Cross Cutting themes</u></p> <p>Analysis of recent ODPM research on Contact Centres and E-Government supports the Hub model as having the potential to improve equality of access. The Hub offers a range of access channels to services, which have been designed to overcome potential barriers to access which might be experienced by minority groups. Analysis of current qualitative feedback from the Hub, (complaints and</p>	<p>1. A wider range of information about and access to online services provided by a range of organisations could be made available by creating</p>

compliments), does not identify any adverse trends and broadly supports the distribution of age, gender and ethnicity of the contact population. Consultation work on customer channel preference undertaken over a number of years on behalf of the Hub identifies the telephone as the preferred method of contacting the Council with 48% of people using this communication channel followed by 20% who prefer to write and 17% that prefer face-to-face contact. Currently Email and Internet access account for 14% of contact although 26% of the sample group had accessed information about Council services electronically at some time. The consultation also shows that only 28% of the sample group had heard of the Worcestershire Hub and that not all of these knew where the nearest Hub was. There was a significantly higher level of awareness of the location of the Service Centres for people in the 65 and over age group and a slightly higher level of awareness among men. No ethnic group breakdown was available. This survey was submitted to COMB on 28th Feb 2006 and highlighted that 57% of respondents stated that they would like to contact the Council outside of office hours as well as identifying that existing satisfaction levels with general Council services vary in different districts.

The Council's citizen's panel considered the issue of access to information (through libraries) in November 2004 and found that 33% of people living in urban parts of the county visited the library at least once a month. This research also showed that the extending evening opening hours and weekend hours were two of the three options most likely to increase use of the service.

Improving access to and provision of online services will allow the council to operate more efficiently, and deliver resources accordingly with a view to providing a better, more consistent and higher standard of service delivery.

- a signposting service via county service web pages.
2. BEM groups are less likely to access services via the telephone/face to face channels, and because of language problems, may not feel confident in completing surveys presented in a customer service centre or via feedback over the telephone. Surveys need to target those from BEM groups who have accessed services via the Hub for accurate feedback. In addition, on-going consultation needs to identify why minority groups do not access services via the Hub
 3. With rising access to and preparedness to use the Internet to access service online, there are strong arguments to suggest that offering more services online would better meet minority group needs and allow us to reach more people.
 4. Opening hours of Hub face to face and telephone

		<p>contact centres need to be regularly monitored to try to ensure customers' needs are met.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">5. A greater number of online services may contribute to increasing access for some groups. Improvement and expansion of online services should be a priority for the county council and for the Worcestershire Hub, while the value of telephony and face-to-face provision should not be ignored for older members of the population.6. Investigating the potential for SMS text messaging may improve the numbers of young people feeling they can request services from the Worcestershire Hub7. Information relating to equalities and online services needs to be ongoing to ensure that quality services are accessible to all citizens and stakeholders across Worcestershire.
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SUMMARY OF POSITIVE AND NEUTRAL IMPACT

<p>3.1 Older and Disabled People</p>	<p>The Worcestershire Hub provides enhanced telephone access to county council services provides many older people with limited mobility the option of accessing a wide range of services, support and advice without leaving their home. Having a single point of contact means they can become familiar with staff, and the service they receive. Information systems and quality training plans ensure that appropriate advice and assistance is provided as is sign posting to other organisations that may also be of assistance. The contact centre technology employed allows us to measure demand on the centre and call wait times, so we can ensure a high level of service is provided to all our customers. The effect of the new contact arrangements has been positive and made many services more accessible. Further proposals to improve the quality of service are detailed in sections 4 and 5. If older people wish to access county council services, yet do not like to use the telephone, they have the alternative of using Hub face to face walk-in centres across Worcestershire where they will receive the same level of service, again by customer service advisors (CSAs).</p>
<p>3.2 Religion</p>	<p>The current arrangements do not reduce the level of service previously offered to people with different religions but does not significantly improve access. The effect of the new contact arrangements has been neutral – proposals to improve the quality of service are detailed in sections 4 and 5.</p>
<p>3.3 BME & minority languages</p>	<p>The current arrangements do not reduce the level of service previously offered to people with different languages and address some inequalities through the use of translation services. The effect of the new contact arrangements has been positive although further proposals to improve the quality of service are detailed in sections 4 and 5. Language Line service can be used by minority language customers to enable them to overcome any language barriers and access council services. Customers and CSAs may also use 'Language Line' to act as an interpreting service, resolving any language barriers which may exist between the customer and the CSA.</p>
<p>3.4 Gender</p>	<p>The extension of access to services addresses some access issues faced by working women with family commitments and therefore has a positive impact. Analysis of male access to the service shows a neutral impact for an under-represented group and proposals to improve the quality of service are detailed in sections 4 and 5.</p>
<p>3.5 Children</p>	<p>Staff employment and training ensures that a friendly and approachable service is offered to children who may wish to access council services. Staff are also aware of data protection issues, and various acts relating to child protection ensuring enquires are handled safely and responsibly. There are potential barriers around contacting a call centre, which we are aiming to address. The nature of council services, however, would suggest the demand from children is limited. We have acknowledged there is a latent demand for an SMS text messaging solution to contact the Hub, as an alternative to telephone or face-to-face centres, and recognise other access channels for children- such as Youthcomm, which can signpost children to Worcestershire Hub on-line.</p>

ADVERSE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4. Equality Group	Adverse Impact & Evidence	Remedial Action Taken to Date	Potential Solutions	Actions Planned
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<p>4.1 Older People</p>	<p>Some older people may find a telephone contact disorientating or unacceptable in some way.</p> <p>Some older people may have difficulty getting to and therefore accessing services through the Hub Customer Service Centres</p>	<p>Hub staff have received extensive communications training (e.g. telephony techniques and giving good customer service). We have sought to minimise this risk by avoiding automation, recorded voices and through the use of a 'warm handover' with the Hub (see appendix).</p> <p>Customer can use the telephone as an alternative to visiting Hub centres.</p>	<p>Ensure quality of contact is monitored on an ongoing basis. Results should inform training plans and process revisions. Visiting Hub walk-in centres is an alternative to using the telephone to access services. Call monitoring equipment would enable us to monitor service levels and quality of advice given.</p> <p>Additional training for staff in Hub Customer Service Centres. For example, in relation to social care, ability to make appointments to meet Social Worker at Hub, or held regular drop in surgeries.</p>	<p>Implement quality monitoring programme.</p> <p>Add 'analysis of results' as a standing item to the agenda of quarterly Access Centre/ Hub liaison meeting. More social care training ns required, and planned, at Hub walk-in centres.</p> <p>Making more services accessible over the telephone may actually encourage uptake of those services and increase ease of access, especially to those who may have mobility problems or difficulties travelling. However, telephone costs may be high for less well off groups, including pensioners, who may travel free using the concessionary fares scheme on buses with fully disabled access.</p> <p>Develop appropriate training and investigate the feasibility of social workers</p>
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<p>4.2 Disabled People</p>	<p>Some difficulty for hearing impaired people who don't have access to email or minicom or interpreter.</p> <p>Disabled people may have access issues getting to Hub Customer Service Centres.</p>	<p>We have good minicom and email availability and we can get a BSC interpreter to Hub for an appointment. All service centres with loop facility as standard to train staff in how to use.</p> <p>Hub Centre design included provision for full disabled access, in consultation with service users.</p>	<p>Research into SMS technology and the benefits it could bring to various groups.</p>	<p>Joint procurement of an SMS texting solution (involve Deaf Direct in project)</p> <p>Investigate disabled access to Hub Customer Service Centres</p> <p>Further disability awareness training due to be delivered to all CSAs.</p> <p>Develop and publicise online services to encourage young disabled people to access services, and investigate the effectiveness of SMS for younger age groups.</p> <p>Making more services accessible over the telephone may actually encourage uptake of those services and increase ease of access, especially to those who may have mobility problems or difficulties travelling.</p>
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Cont'd Equality Group	Adverse Impact & Evidence	Remedial Action Taken to Date	Potential Solutions	Actions Planned
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<p>4.3 Gender</p>	<p>Possible adverse impact on women and/or men who would prefer later or weekend opening times.</p>	<p>The current service represents an extension of operating hours on the previous model with the Telephone contact now available between 8.30 am and 6.00pm Mon – Fri. Limited face-to-face access is available in selected Hubs on weekends.</p> <p>Some centres and services have emergency 'out of hours' numbers, e.g. Highways and Worcestershire Telecare.</p>	<p>Consider extending the hours of service.</p> <p>Have one out of hours emergency line for the whole of Worcestershire. Greater use of online services, which would be available 24hours per day.</p>	<p>Customer Satisfaction Consultation and review will identify demand level telephone traffic.</p> <p>Identify which services are currently accessed by men, and discover why there are disproportionately few men who contact us regarding social care.</p> <p>Understand the implications of economically active women for accessing services, and identify solutions</p> <p>Promote online services to mitigate gender related barriers.</p>
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<p>4.4 Race- BME groups, Language and religion</p>	<p>Under representation of BME contacts.</p> <p>Staff may be unaware of religious issues which affect service options</p>	<p>Access to Ethnic Access link signposted on publications, online, and in face to face situations</p> <p>We use Language Line, which enables very fast access to a translation service.</p>	<p>Produce information in other languages, explaining language line options and distribute to key locations.</p> <p>Promote greater use of internet for providing information in minority languages to enable 24/7 access</p>	<p>Pro-active marketing of Hub to BME group Revised publicity material to be produced in liaison with Equalities Group to ensure it meets access needs and requirements.</p> <p>Diversity training due to be delivered to CSAs, as well as process training on racial incident reporting (BVPI174&5) Engage with representative groups on ongoing basis to improve communications. Use ethnicity data on service use to prioritise provision of information in appropriate languages Ensure provision is appropriate and accredited</p>
<p>Cont'd Equality Group</p>	<p>Adverse Impact & Evidence</p>	<p>Remedial Action Taken to Date</p>	<p>Potential Solutions</p>	<p>Actions Planned</p>

<p>4.7 Children</p>	<p>Children may find walk-in centres inaccessible, daunting or unapproachable.</p> <p>Phone calls from home maybe overheard by other people in the property which may make the child feel vulnerable.</p> <p>Cost of phone calls maybe a problem if child has limited credit on mobile phone.</p> <p>Children may not be aware of county services potentially available to them.</p>	<p>N/a</p> <p>N/a</p> <p>CSAs will call customers back if required, and then the local authority pays for the cost of the call.</p> <p>Promotional work for the Families Information Service (FIS) is currently being undertaken. Free seminars across the county are being advertised, however this is aimed more at parents. Some promotion goes on in schools.</p>	<p>Investigate text messaging SMS solution. A text messaging SMS solution could be more accessible and private to children.</p> <p>Investigate text messaging SMS solution. A text messaging SMS solution could be more accessible and private</p> <p>More promotional work needed to promote services to children, at schools, youth clubs and other places where children can access information.</p>	<p>Investigate potential for partnership working with Youthcomm.</p> <p>Consultation to understand needs of children with both children and service providers such as Youthcomm.</p> <p>Training for CSA's required on children related services so CSA know how to deal with enquiries and can handle with the required discretion.</p> <p>Continue work with FIS to ensure Hub can capture more situations where FIS can help children and families.</p>
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<p>5.</p>	<p>Formal Consultation</p>		
	<p>Consultation with a range of representative groups listed below can be undertaken to ratify analysis, findings and action plan.</p>		

	<p>Equality group</p> <p>Hearing Impaired Race Women Older People Cross cutting</p>	<p>Organisations to be consulted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Deaf Direct ➤ Race Equality Forums ➤ Women's Organisation ➤ Older People Forums ➤ Carers support group ➤ Citizens Panel available for consultation on access to county services 	<p>Use focus groups to undertake in depth study of specific issues relating to customer user groups</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Decision and Recommendation</p>	<p>Certain measures have been taken to ensure that there is a good level of equality of access to services and other supplementary actions have already been planned. Issues identified by this assessment are listed in sections 3 & 4 alongside recommended actions.</p> <p>An implementation action plan will be produced after the findings and recommendations have been consulted on and finalised.</p> <p>Equality objectives and targets identified in this action plan will subsequently be developed into a plan. Initial targets identified include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of culture/religious and disability awareness training to staff in each Customer Service Centre: 2007. • Ongoing monitoring of opening hours at Hub Service and Contact Centres. • Raise awareness of Language Line with a view to being able to better handle 	<p>Decision to be 'signed off' by Head of Service.</p>

		<p>enquires in languages other than English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement quality monitoring process for contacts and set baseline for future monitoring and targeting of gender, race, age, disability and religious groups. <p>These will be monitored through an annual review of contact statistics, user feedback and the quality monitoring process.</p>	
7	Publication of assessment results and monitoring arrangements	<p>The finalised assessment will be published on the Council's Equalities website and monitoring arrangements will be identified after consultation when targets are set. Results will also be published on the Council's Equalities web page, with a link from the service page.</p>	

Signed (Completing Officer).....

Dated.....

Signed (Lead Officer)

Dated.....