

2012

Equality Analysis

Guidance and Form



Brent Council Equality Analysis Form

Please contact the Corporate Diversity team before completing this form. The form is to be used for both predictive Equality Analysis and any reviews of existing policies and practices that may be carried out.

Once you have completed this form, please forward to the Corporate Diversity Team for auditing. Make sure you allow sufficient time for this.

1. Roles and Responsibilities: please refer to stage 1 of the guidance	
Directorate: Customer Services, Regeneration and Growth Service Area: Entire Council	Person Responsible: Name: Jeanette McGarry Title: Lead Customer Transformation Contact No: 020 8937 ext 6177 07787 274106 Signed:
Name of policy: The Customer Access Strategy	Date analysis started: Completion date Review date:
Is the policy: New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Old <input type="checkbox"/>	Auditing Details: Name: Sarah Kaiser Title: Head of Diversity Date September 2014 Contact No: x4521 Signed:
Signing Off Manager: responsible for review and monitoring Name: Margaret Read Title: Operational Director Brent Customer Services Regeneration and Growth Date: Contact No: 020 8937 1506 07867169832	Decision Maker: Name individual /group/meeting/ committee: Cabinet Date: 13 October 2014

Signed:

2. Brief description of the policy. Describe the aim and purpose of the policy, what needs or duties is it designed to meet? How does it differ from any existing policy or practice in this area?

The Customer Access Strategy sets out Brent's vision for transforming the way in which residents are able to access information, advice and services. It builds on the work already undertaken through the Future of Customer Services project and seeks to create modern and relevant access arrangements that are tailored to meet the needs of differing demographic groups, help us to respond positively to the financial pressures we face and to target our most personalised contact arrangements to those who are most vulnerable and have more complex needs. It offers various forms of access for customers including: the web, telephone and face to face. Currently, most contact by customers is via the telephone, the strategy aims to encourage the web to be the most used form of access.

3. Describe how the policy will impact on all of the protected groups:

Residents, businesses and visitors will be continue to be able to contact us by any of the following channels:

- (i) Web
- (ii) Telephone
- (iii) Post or email
- (iv) Face to face

There will be some changes to the way in which face to face access is provided from Willesden. This is dealt with in more detail later in this EIA

And we will contact them by web chat, telephone, post, email text, and social media.

Recent Mosaic Data tells us that the majority of residents prefer email contact (58.3%). –See the table at the top of p4

Channel Preference	Percentage of Brent households
Email	58.3
Landline	2.3

Mobile call	3.0
Post	15.3
Prefer not to be contacted	17.7
SMS	3.5

The Web

The web will offer personalised accounts via the introduction of a new web portal. The web portal will be **AA compliant** which means that our new web will be compliant with global access standards which particularly consider protected groups especially **people with disabilities**.

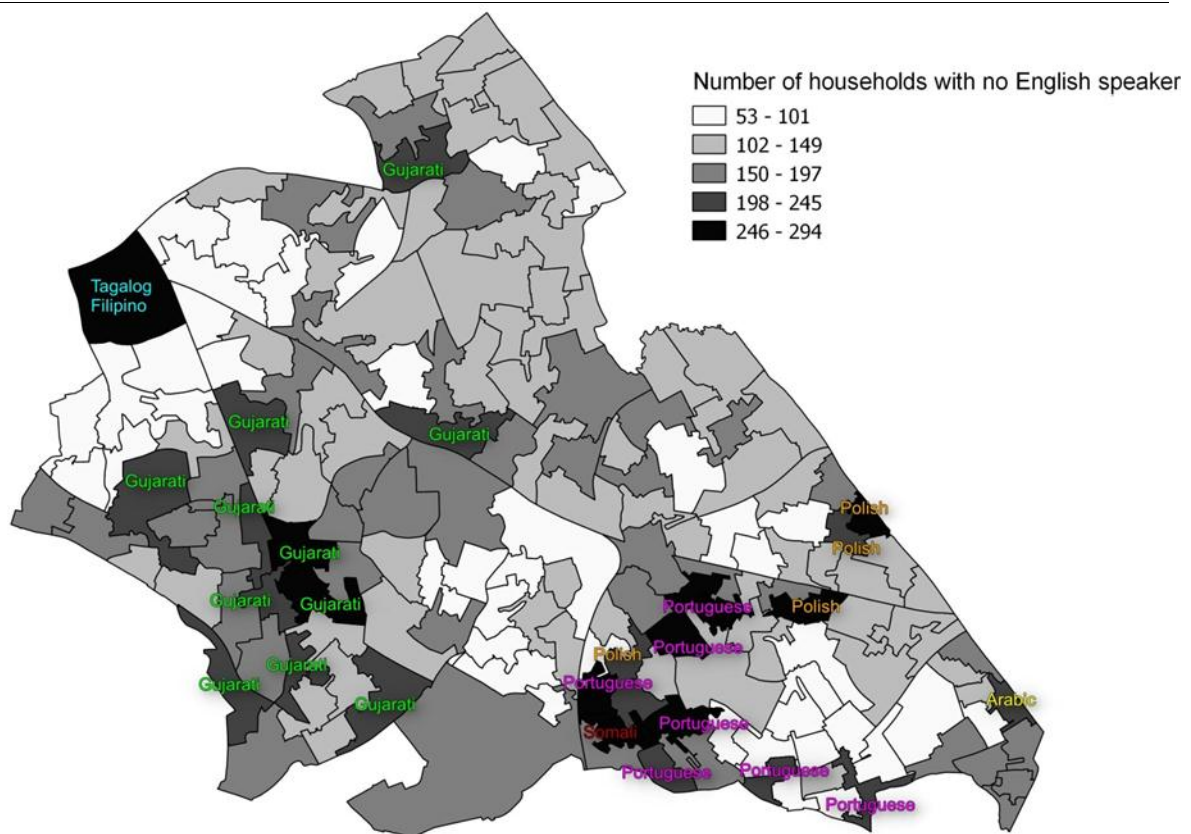
Language

The web currently has, and will continue to have a “translate” option so that everything on the website can be automatically translated into another language as listed by .

However, the 2011 census shows that In Brent there are 21,600 people aged 16 and over that cannot speak English well. This is 8.7% of the population. This reduces to 8.1% of the working age population (aged 16 to 64) and is 17,371. The map below shows the numbers of non-English speaking households by location - the darker the colour, the more households that do not speak English. The languages shown are the languages most spoken in that area after English.

The South of the Borough has a number of areas of non- English speaking households. The Library at Willesden Green will continue to provide face to face support as well as support for residents who wish to self serve. The Civic centre will offer assisted self service and face to face interviews for all residents. So face to face support will be available for communities who may face language barriers. For residents unable to travel to the Civic Centre a weekly face to face surgery will be provided as well as home visits for those who are very vulnerable of house bound.

Further, detailed customer research was undertaken at Harlesden during September 2014. Residents were asked if they would be able to use self service facilities if available. Most had access to the internet but a number of respondents indicated that they lacked confidence in using computers and would require assistance and support. This will be available at the Civic Centre through customer service staff and at Willesden through customer freephones.



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Residents **with hearing and visual needs** will benefit from the web as all computers/phones (standard operating systems and browsers) allow with extra large font/text (which will assist people with visual impairments) and come with with sound/audio buttons (which will benefit residents with hearing impairment).

The **carers** (including family and friends) of older frail residents and of children and young people will benefit from transacting and finding out about services online. Many carers try to balance caring with work and careers. They will be able to access the Council 24:7.

This will reduce the need for frail and vulnerable residents from having to travel for assessments and appointments.

Gender Re-assigned residents, and also **physically and/or psychologically disabled residents** may face mobility constraints and may find the web more accessible and private.

Text Messages and Social Media

The Council will be able to target customers and send out information in the form of texts and also social media messages. This will particularly appeal to young people, as they communicate using these mediums. Texting for example will be used to remind people of appointments and may assist residents with memory challenges.

Social Media such as “Twitter” will be used along with text messages to target particular geographical areas for example, “X school will be closed today due to snow.”

Telephone

The Council will ensure that telephones are handled through a central Automated Call Distribution (ACD) system. Currently only 25% of incoming calls are on this system and mystery shopping has shown that for call handled outside the ACD up to 50% of calls are not answered or customers hang up. We do not yet have Management Information reports on non ACD calls but will have this when all incoming calls are routed through the ACD system. This will enable us to use the Management Information to continuously improve access and services.

The strategy does not reduce or change residents’ access to telephone contact channels to raise queries or access services. It aims to improve the current service and thus will be of benefit to all groups who chose to use this channel.

Face to Face (F2F)

Face to face services will be reconfigured to support the new access model , in particular providing much greater access to self service facilities and support to use these.

Computers for self-service and customer free phones will be available at both the Civic Centre and Willesden access points.

Face to face interviews for more complex enquiries and more vulnerable customers will be available at the Civic Centre from Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00 pm. Weekly surgeries will also be available at Willesden on an appointment basis for vulnerable customers who may find it difficult to travel to the Civic Centre. Home visits will be made to very vulnerable customers including those who are housebound.

Face to face arrangements are being reconfigured to ensure that a more personalised approach can be provided to those who are most vulnerable and have the most complex needs.

Please give details of the evidence you have used:

The benefits service launched a new online benefit applications available in August 2014. They did not publicise the new online option to enable a soft launch of this. However, within the first two weeks of the assessment form being available online, 50% of new claims were made online. Benefit claimants are economically disadvantaged, maybe vulnerable and some may not have English as their mother tongue.

Adult Social Care made clear during the CAS Workshops held on the 1st and 2nd September that many Carers choose to transact online and expect to have assessment forms and information about care and services online. This reflects the fact that caring responsibilities can make it more difficult to raise enquiries face to face or via the phone.

Recent analysis of Brent demographics (Mosaic Data 2014) reported that 76% of Brent's residents have access to smart phones and/or computers so are able to do things online. Further, the Mosaic data identified that 76% of Brent residents are independent and therefore are able to self-serve and prefer to do work online.

A focus group was held with BHP residents in June 2014 – these residents stated that what was most important to them was a responsive and prompt resolution of their enquiry. There was a receptiveness to use on line services where these were easy and intuitive to use but also a strong feeling that they wanted to be able to speak to a knowledgeable council officer who could resolve their enquiry, when it was not possible to do so on line.

4. Describe how the policy will impact on the Council's duty to have due regard to the need to:

(a) Eliminate discrimination (including indirect discrimination), harassment and victimisation;

Based on demographic analysis of Brent (Mosaic) 76% of our residents will be able to go online and do things for themselves. Self-service should reduce/eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

Residents who are unable to work online will have access to tailored Face to face service and will also be able to contact the Council via the telephone.

(b) Advance equality of opportunity;

Residents will gain access to more equality of opportunity by using the web. They will be able to do things for themselves and the system will advise them of opportunities. For example, they will be able to sign up for “e-alerts” and the Council’s proposed web-portal will send messages about other services and discounts that may be of interest.

(c) Foster good relations

Customer satisfaction increases when residents are well-informed by the Council. The web portal will be intuitive and easy to use so residents will be able to find the information that they are searching for and will be able to complete transactions digitally. Brent will also offer e-alerts and text messages which remind residents of appointments with us. The London Borough of Hammemersmith and Fulham for example, found that customer satisfaction increased hugely with the introduction of e-alerts.

5. What engagement activity did you carry out as part of your assessment?

Please refer to stage 3 of the guidance.

Residents of Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) were actively consulted and engaged by Capita during June and July 2014.

i. Who did you engage with?

BHP tenants

Survey of customers visiting Harlesden Customer Services Centre (Sept 2014)

ii. What methods did you use?

Face to face forums

Survey

iii. What did you find out?

We found out that customers:

- (i) find it difficult to contact us by telephone, as the current mixed telephony systems do not work well.
- (ii) Are required to have a separate login and password for each service accessed on the Council website and they would like to have just one

- log-in and one password.
- (iii) Find the current website “clunky” and difficult to use. Web searches were said to be difficult and pdf forms appear on the web site. Residents would prefer to transact digitally rather than have to print a pdf form.
 - (iv) Customers using on line services for the first time lack confidence in using these and would initially need support and assistance to do so

iv. How have you used the information gathered?

v. The information has been used to inform :

- (i) The Customer Access Strategy
- (ii) The specification of the proposed Web Portal
- (iii) The plan to ensure that all telephone calls from residents go via the ACD telephony system
- (iv) The proposed Face to Face offer at the Civic Centre and Willesden

vi. How has it affected your policy?

It has ensured that the Customer Access Strategy (the policy) has taken account of our diverse customers and communities.

6. Have you identified a negative impact on any protected group, or identified any unmet needs/requirements that affect specific protected groups? If so, explain what actions you have undertaken, including consideration of any alternative proposals, to lessen or mitigate against this impact.

Please refer to stage 2, 3 & 4 of the guidance.

We have identified a potential impact arising from the proposed changes to face to face access arrangements in Willesden. A more detailed impact assessment of these changes has been undertaken to evaluate the potential impact and identify mitigation to address this. Mitigation includes the provision of face to face surgeries at Willesden, home visits for very vulnerable customers, customer free phones located within the self service area and the provision of both assisted self service and face to face interviews at the larger Customer Services Centre at the Civic centre.

We have also identified potential benefits to meet unmet needs including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Approximately,50% of benefit claimants are in work and need to access services outside of their working hours and the web enables 24:7 access to services. (ii) Carers of frail older people and disabled people assist and/or lead on the assessments for care with agencies as they are the resident's main advocate. Adult Social Care have identified a trend which shows that carers prefer to transact online. Online assessments are not yet available in Brent. (iii) Residents complain of currently having too many log-ins and passwords when they use Brent's current on line services (iv) There is duplication across services as residents have to repeat information to each service that they interact with. The CAS will introduce a "Tell Us Once" approach and assessments will be streamlined. Further, verification processes will be streamlined. (v) Brent's website is not completely digital, for example pdf forms have to be printed. (vi) Language (vii) Age (viii) Disability
<p>Please give details of the evidence you have used:</p> <div style="height: 150px;"></div>

7. Analysis summary

Please tick boxes to summarise the findings of your analysis.

Appendix C1 provides a summary of the impact assessment for each protected group.

Protected Group	Positive impact	Adverse impact	Neutral
Age	x		
Disability	x		
Gender re-assignment	x		
Marriage and civil partnership	x		
Pregnancy and maternity	x		
Race	x		
Religion or belief	x		
Sex	x		
Sexual orientation	x		

8. The Findings of your Analysis

Please complete whichever of the following sections is appropriate (one only).
Please refer to stage 4 of the guidance.

No major change

The Customer Access Strategy (CAS) will enhance and improve access. The different access channels target protected groups.

All of our customers will be able to contact us by any of the three channels:

- (i) Web
- (iii) Telephone
- (v) Face to face

- (vi) Post and email

And we will be able to contact residents via telephone, text messages and social media

The Web

The web will offer new and therefore more opportunities for protected groups.

The web currently has, and will continue to have a “translate” option so that

everything on the website can be automatically translated into another language.

Customers with hearing and visual needs will benefit from the web as all computers/phones (standard operating systems and browsers) allow with extra large font/text (visual impairment) and with sound/audio (Visual impairment).

The carers (including family and friends) of older frail residents will benefit from transacting and finding out about services online. Many carers try to balance caring with work and careers. They will be able to access the Council 24:7.

This will reduce the need for frail and vulnerable residents from having to travel for assessments and appointments.

Pregnant residents and residents with dependents will find the web more accessible and available at times which suit them.

Text Messages and Social Media

The Council will be able to target customers and send out information in the form of texts and also social media messages. This will particularly appeal to young people, as they communicate using these mediums. Texting for example will be used to remind people of appointments and may assist residents with memory challenges.

Social Media such as "Twitter" will be used along with text messages to target particular geographical areas for example, "X school will be closed today due to snow."

Telephone

The Council will ensure that telephones are on the Automated Call Distribution (ACD) system. Currently 75% of incoming calls are not on this system and in some areas 60% of calls are not answered or customers hang up. We do not have Management Information reports on 75% of calls but will have this when all incoming calls are routed through the ACD system. This will enable us to use the MI to continuously improve access and services.

Face to Face (F2F)

Face to face services will be available at The Civic Centre and in Willesden.

There will be a focus upon assisted self service so that customers are supported and learn how to use the internet. Computers for self-service will be available at both F2F Centres. Appointments with staff will also be available

F2F will benefit residents with complex needs. We have identified unmet needs which will be met by the CAS including:

- (i) 80% of benefit claimants are in work and need to access services outside of

their working hours and the web enables 24:7 access to services.

(ii) Carers of frail older people and disabled people assist and/or lead on the assessments for care with agencies as they are the resident's main advocate. Adult Social Care have identified a trend which shows that carers prefer to transact online. Online assessments are not yet available in Brent.

(iii) Residents complain of currently having too many log-ins and passwords

(iv) There is duplication across services as residents have to repeat information to each service that they interact with. The CAS will introduce a "Tell Us Once" approach and assessments will be streamlined. Further, verification processes will be streamlined.

Brent's current website is not completely digital, for example pdf forms have to be printed.

We found out that customers:

- (i) find it difficult to contact us by telephone, as the current mixed telephony systems do not work well.
- (ii) Are required to have a separate login and password for each service accessed on the Council website and they would like to have just one log-in and one password.
- (v) Find the current website "clunky" and difficult to use. Web searches were said to be difficult and pdf forms appear on the web site. Residents would prefer to transact digitally rather than have to print a pdf form.

The CAS will address this.

Adjust the policy

This may involve making changes to the policy to remove barriers or to better advance equality. It can mean introducing measures to mitigate the potential adverse effect on a particular protected group(s).

Remember that it is lawful under the Equality Act to treat people differently in some circumstances, where there is a need for it. It is both lawful and a requirement of the public sector equality duty to consider if there is a need to treat disabled people differently, including more favourable treatment where necessary.

If you have identified mitigating measures that would remove a negative impact, please detail those measures below.

Please document below the reasons for your conclusion, the information that you used to make this decision and how you plan to adjust the policy.

Continue the policy

This means adopting your proposals, despite any adverse effect or missed opportunities to advance equality, provided you have satisfied yourself that it does not amount to unlawfully discrimination, either direct or indirect discrimination.

In cases where you believe discrimination is not unlawful because it is objectively justified, it is particularly important that you record what the objective justification is for continuing the policy, and how you reached this decision.

Explain the countervailing factors that outweigh any adverse effects on equality as set out above:

Please document below the reasons for your conclusion and the information that you used to make this decision:

Stop and remove the policy

If there are adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated, and if the policy is not justified by countervailing factors, you should consider stopping the policy altogether. If a policy shows unlawful discrimination it must be removed or changed.

Please document below the reasons for your conclusion and the information that you used to make this decision.

9. Monitoring and review

Please provide details of how you intend to monitor the policy in the future.
Please refer to stage 7 of the guidance.

There will be regular engagement with residents including forums;

Continuous customer feedback surveys for the web, telephone and F2F access points.

10. Action plan and outcomes

At Brent, we want to make sure that our equality monitoring and analysis results in positive outcomes for our colleagues and customers.

Use the table below to record any actions we plan to take to address inequality, barriers or opportunities identified in this analysis.

Action	By when	Lead officer	Desired outcome	Date completed	Actual outcome
		Amit Joshi	Portal available, single log-in	Dec 2014-June 2016	
		Phil Porter	Rationalised Online Assessments		
		Amit Joshi	AA web accessibility compliance	Dec 2014-June 2016	
		David Oates	Protected groups are not adversely	September 2015	

			impacted by changes to face to face access arrangements		
		Paula Buckley	Residents can easily access services and information on line and assistance is available to support them to use this where needed	At each phase of the implementation of the web portal	

Please forward to the Corporate Diversity Team for auditing.

Introduction

The aim of this guidance is to support the Equality Analysis (EA) process and to ensure that Brent Council meets its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Before undertaking the analysis there are three key things to remember:

- It is very important to keep detailed records of every aspect of the process. In particular you must be able to show a clear link between all of your decisions and recommendations and the evidence you have gathered.
- There are other people in the council and in your own department who have done this before and can offer help and support.
- The Diversity and Consultation teams are there to advise you.

The Equality Act 2010

As a Public Authority, Brent Council is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) contained in the Equality Act 2010. These duties require Brent Council to have 'due regard' to the need to

- Eliminate discrimination, be it direct or indirect discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and others who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it

The equality duty covers:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership (direct discrimination only)
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex (formally known as gender)
- Sexual orientation

What is equality analysis?

Equality Analysis is core to policy development and decision making and is an essential tool in providing good services. Its purpose is to allow the decision maker to answer two main questions.

- Could the policy have a negative impact on one or more protected groups and therefore create or increase existing inequalities?
- Could the policy have a positive impact on one or more protected groups by reducing or eliminating existing or anticipated inequalities?

What should be analysed?

Due consideration of the need for an Equality Analysis should be addressed in relation to all policies, practices, projects, activities and decisions, existing and new. There will be some which have no equalities considerations, but many will. Where an EA is undertaken, some policies are considered a higher risk than others and will require more time and resources because of their significance. This would include:

- Policies affecting a vulnerable group such as young people, the elderly and people with a disability
- Policies related to elective services such as Sports Centres or Libraries
- High profile services
- Policies involving the withdrawal of services
- Policies involving significant reductions in funding or services
- Policies that affect large groups of people
- Policies that relate to politically sensitive issues

It can sometimes be difficult to identify which policies are more sensitive. If you are in doubt seek advice from a more senior officer or the Diversity Team.

When should equality analysis be done?

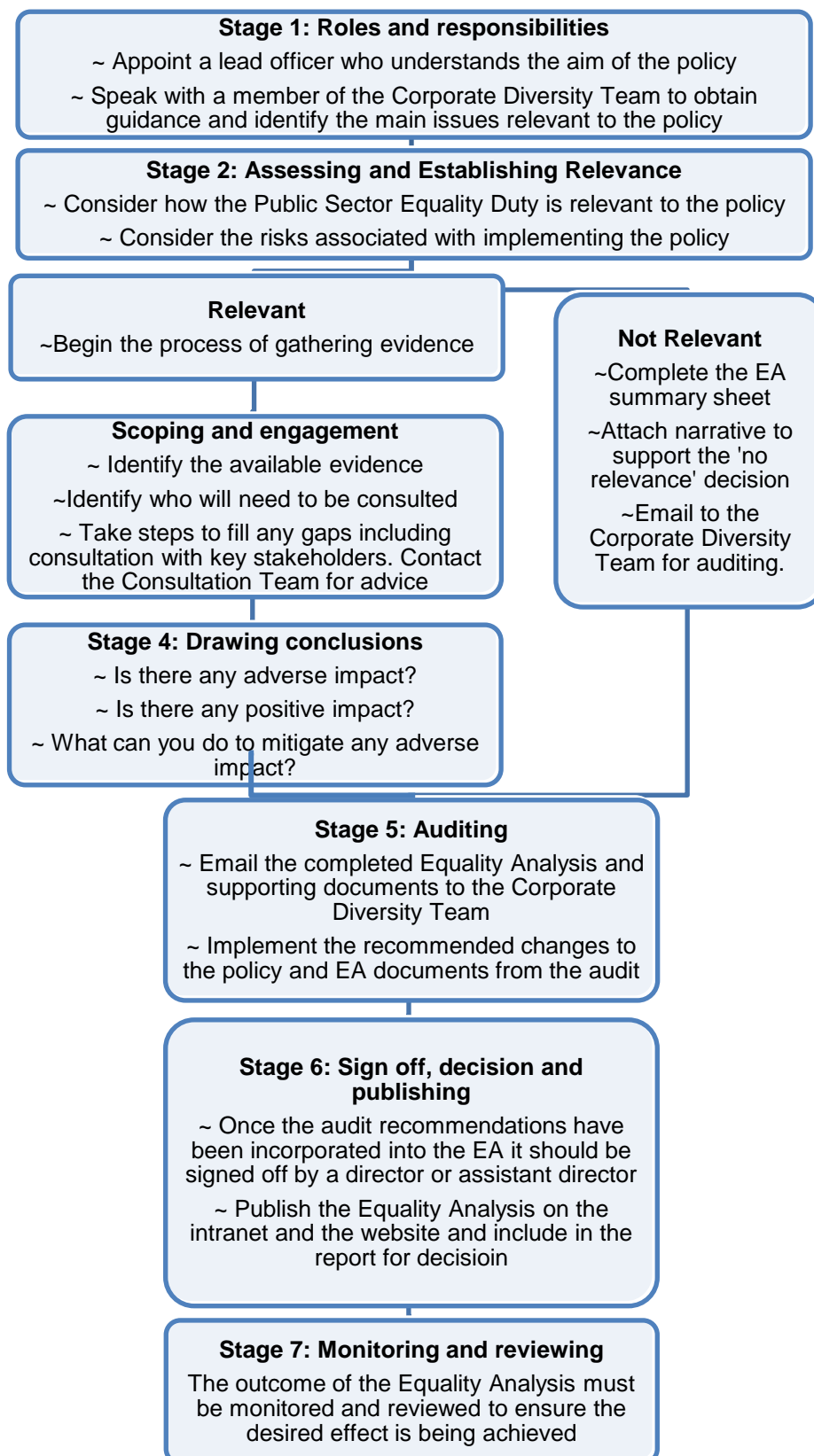
The EA must be completed before the policy is sent to the decision maker but should be carried out at the earliest possible stage. The advantage of starting early is that the equalities data informs and shapes the policy as it develops and progresses and this allows more time to address issues of inequality. You should also bear in mind that several changes may be happening at the same time. This would mean ensuring that there is sufficient relevant information to understand the cumulative effect of all of these decisions.

Positive action

Not all policies can be expected to benefit all groups equally, particularly if they are targeted at addressing particular problems affecting one protected group. (An example would be a policy to improve the access of learning disabled women to cancer screening services.) Policies like this, that are specifically designed to advance equality, will, however, also need to be analysed for their effect on equality across all the protected groups.

Brent Council's Equality Analysis Process

This flow chart sets out the process for carrying out an EA. Details on each stage of the process follow. Please note that it may be necessary to consult the Corporate Diversity team at each stage and that Legal may also need to be involved. This should be factored in to the time scale.



Stage 1: Roles and Responsibilities

The first stage in the process is to allocate the following roles.

Role	Responsibilities and tasks
Decision maker - the person or group making the policy decision (e.g. CMT/Executive/Chief Officer).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that the analysis has been carried out thoroughly: • Read and be familiar with the EA and any issues arising from it and know, understand and apply the PSED. (The evidence on which recommendations are based must be available to this person.) • Take account of any countervailing factors e.g. budgetary and practical constraints
The officer undertaking the EA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the Corporate Diversity and Consultation teams for support and advice • Develop an action plan for the analysis • Carry out research, consultation and engagement if required • Develop recommendations based on the analysis • Submit the EA form to the Diversity team for audit with the evidence and any other relevant documents including the report the EA will be attached to • Incorporate the recommendations of the audit • Include the Equalities Analysis in papers for decision-makers
The Corporate Diversity Team. Usually an individual officer will be assigned at the start of the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support and advice to the responsible officer • Carry out the audit of the EA to monitor quality standards and ensure it is sufficiently rigorous to meet the general and public sector duties. • Return the analysis to the responsible officer for further work if it fails to meet the necessary standard • Consult Legal if necessary (this stage of the process will take at least 5 days)
The council officer responsible for signing off the EA. Usually a senior manager within the relevant directorate	<p>Ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the EA form is completed • That any issues raised as part of the auditing process have been fully dealt with • That the EA, the evidence used and any issues arising from the analysis are brought to the attention of the decision maker • Ensure that the findings are used to inform service planning and wider policy development.

Stage 2: Assessing and Establishing Relevance

We need to ensure that all of our policies and key decisions, both current and proposed, have given appropriate consideration to equality. Consideration of the need for an EA needs to be given to all new policies, all revised policies, all key decisions and changes to service delivery need an EA. Those that are more relevant will require more resources and data.

The following questions can help you to determine the degree of relevance, but this is not an exhaustive list:

Key Questions:

- Does the policy have a significant effect in terms of equality on service users, employees or the wider community? Remember that relevance of a policy will depend not only on the number of those affected but also by the significance of the effect on them.
- Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered in terms of equality?
- Will it have a significant effect on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?
- Does the policy relate to functions that previous engagement has identified as being important to particular protected groups?
- Does or could the policy affect different protected groups differently?
- Does it relate to an area with known inequalities (for example, access to public transport for disabled people, racist/homophobic bullying in schools)?
- Does it relate to an area where equality objectives have been set by Brent Council?

If the answer to any of the above is “yes”, you will need to carry out an Equalities Analysis.

“Not relevant”

If you decide that a policy does not impact on any of the equality needs contained in the public sector equality duty, you will need to:

- Document your decision, including the reasons and the information that you used to reach this conclusion. **A simple statement of no relevance to equality without any supporting information is not sufficient, nor is a statement that no information is available.** This could leave you vulnerable to legal challenge so obtaining early advice from the Corporate Diversity team would be helpful.
- Complete the EA Form and send it to the Corporate Diversity Team for auditing. If the Corporate Diversity Team advises that policy is relevant then you will need to continue the EA process (See flowchart). If the Corporate Diversity Team advises that the policy is not relevant then you will need to have it signed off, publish it and put in place monitoring arrangements for the policy.

Stage 3: Scoping

Scoping establishes the focus for the EA and involves carrying out the following steps:

- Identify how the aims of the policy relate to equality and which aspects have particular importance to equality.
- Identify which protected groups and which parts of the general equality duty the policy will, or is likely to, affect.
- Identify what evidence is available for the analysis, what the information gaps are, and establish which stakeholders can usefully be engaged to support the analysis.

Think about:

- The purpose of the policy, and any changes from any existing policy
- The reason for the policy
- The context
- The beneficiaries
- The intended results

At this early stage you should start to think about potential effects on protected groups. This could mean that you decide to change your overall policy aims or particular aspects of the policy in order to take better account of equality considerations. It is often easier to do this at an earlier stage rather than having to reconsider later on in the process.

Sources of information

It is important to have as much up-to-date and reliable information as possible about the different groups likely to be affected by the existing or proposed policy. The information needed will depend on the nature of the existing or proposed policy, but it will probably include many of the items listed below:

- The Brent Borough profile for demographic data and other statistics
- Census findings; the 2011 census data will be available during 2012
- Equality monitoring data for staff and/or service users
- Reports and recommendations from inspections or audits conducted on service areas
- Previous reports that have been produced either on a similar topic or relating to the same service user group
- Responses to public enquiries on similar topics e.g. Freedom of Information requests
- Comparisons with similar policies in other departments or authorities to help you identify relevant equality issues.
- Analysis of enquiries or complaints from the public to help you understand the needs or experiences of different groups.
- Recent research from a range of national, regional and local sources to help you identify relevant equality issues.
- Results of engagement activities or surveys to help you understand the needs or experiences of different groups.

- Local press and other media. This will tell you whether there is public concern about possible equalities implications and help you to highlight issues for engagement

Many of these sources will be consulted as a matter of course when reviewing or developing a policy. Equalities considerations are one part of the policy process, not an extra.

Service user information

The type of information you need will depend on the nature of the policy. However, information relating to service users is usually essential. Consider:

- The full range of information that you already have about the user group e.g. information contained within service reviews, audit reports, performance reviews, consultation reports
- Who actually uses the service?
- When do they use it?
- How do they use it and what are their experiences?
- Are there alternative sources of provision that could be accessed?
- Who will be using the service in the future?
- Information from groups or agencies who deliver similar services to your target group e.g. survey results from voluntary and community organisations.

Identify your information gaps

If you do not have equality information relating to a particular policy or about some protected groups, you will need to take steps to fill in your information gaps. This could mean doing further research, undertaking a short study, conducting a one off survey or consultation exercise, holding a focus group etc.

Engagement

The Consultation team are available to advise on all aspects of engagement. You may wish to carry out engagement, which can help you to:

- Gather the views, experiences and ideas of those who are, or will be, affected by your decisions.
- Base your policy on evidence rather than on assumptions
- Check out your ideas
- Find solutions to problems and develop ways to overcome barriers faced by particular groups.
- Design more appropriate services,
- Monitor and evaluate the success of your policies and understand where improvements may be necessary.
- Avoid the costs of remedying and adapting services after their implementation
- Pre-empt complaints, which can be costly and time-consuming.

But remember you don't always have to consult or embark upon engagement if you already have enough information to assess the likely impact of the policy change on the equality needs, and if there is no other legal duty to consult. This engagement

can form part of the broader consultation being carried out around service changes. You can also use recent engagement and research activities as a starting point, for example on a related policy or strategy and you can use documentation resulting from other equality analysis that Brent Council (or others) have undertaken.

For your engagement to be effective you will need to:

- Think carefully about who you should engage with. You will need to prioritise those who are most likely to be affected by the policy and those who will experience the greatest impact in terms of equality and good relations.
- In regard to people with a disability, as good practice it is recommended that they should be actively involved in engagement activity which directly affects them or the services that they receive.
- Make sure that the level of engagement is appropriate to the significance of the policy and its impact on equality
- Consider what questions you will need to ask, in order to understand the effect of the policy on equality. If you find it difficult to frame suitable questions you may take advice from the Corporate Diversity and Consultation teams
- Link into existing forums or community groups or to speak with representatives to help you reach less visible groups or those you have not engaged with before.
- Create opportunities for people to participate in supportive and safe environments where they feel their privacy will be protected, or via technology such as the internet
- Think of strategies that address barriers to engagement. Other people in the council have experience of this and can advise, as can the Corporate Diversity team and the Consultation team.

Stage 4: Drawing conclusions

You will need to review all of the information you have gathered in order to make a judgement about what the likely effect of the policy will be on equality, and whether you need to make any changes to the policy.

You may find it useful to ask yourself “What does the evidence (data, consultation outcomes etc.) tell me about the following questions”:

- Could the policy outcomes differ between protected groups? If so, is that consistent with the policy aims?
- Is there different take-up of services by different groups?
- Could the policy affect different groups disproportionately?
- Does the policy miss opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations, including, for example, participation in public life?
- Could the policy disadvantage people from a particular group?
- Could any part of the policy discriminate unlawfully?
- Are there other policies that need to change to support the effectiveness of the policy under consideration?

If the answer to any of the above is "yes", you should consider what you can do to mitigate any harmful effects. Advice from the Diversity team will be particularly helpful at this stage.

You will also want to identify positive aspects of the policy by asking yourself:

- Does the policy deliver practical benefits for protected groups?
- Does the policy enable positive action to take place?
- Does the policy help to foster good relations between groups

Having considered the potential or actual effect of your policy on equality, you should be in a position to make an informed judgement about what should be done with your policy.

There are four main steps that you can take:

- **No major change**
- **Adjust the policy**
- **Continue the policy**
- **Stop and remove the policy**

(please see EA form for detailed descriptions of each decision)

Decisions may involve careful balancing between different interests, based on your evidence and engagement. For example, if the analysis suggests the needs of two groups are in conflict, you will need to find an appropriate balance for these groups and for the policy in question. The key point is to make sure the conclusions you reach can be explained and justified. Speak to the Diversity team if you are unsure. As a result of your analysis you may need to develop new equality objectives and targets. These should be documented on the EA form.

Stage 5: Auditing

Once you have completed the EA you will need to complete the EA Form and send it to the Corporate Diversity Team for auditing. It is important to ensure that the EA Form is completed as fully as possible. Documenting all of your analysis is important to ensure that you can show how the general and specific duties are being met. This aspect of the analysis has been subject to legal challenge so you need to be able to show how you reached your conclusions. The audit process involves the Corporate Diversity Team reviewing the completed form, the information and evidence. Sometimes this may require advice from Legal. You need to bear in mind that this will take at least five days. The team will send you back a feedback form with comments and recommendations which you will need to action prior to the sign off of the form.

Stage 6: Sign Off, Decision and Publishing

Once the EA Form is completed, the document must be signed off and the completed document must be sent to the Corporate Diversity Team to be published on the council website.

Decision-making

In order to have due regard to the aims of the public sector equality duty, decision-making must be based on a clear understanding of the effects on equality. This means that Directors, CMT and others who ultimately decide on the policy are fully aware of the findings of the EA and have due regard to them in making decisions. They are also entitled to take into account countervailing factors such as budgetary and practical constraints.

Stage 7: Monitoring and Reviewing

Your EA, and any engagement associated with it, will have helped you to anticipate and address the policy's likely effects on different groups. However, the actual effect of the policy will only be known once it has been introduced. You may find that you need to revise the policy if, for instance:

- Negative effects do occur
- Area demographics change, leading to different needs,
- Alternative provision becomes available
- New options to reduce an adverse effect become apparent

You will need to identify a date when the policy will be reviewed to check whether or not it is having its intended effects. This does not mean repeating the EA, but using the experience gained through implementation to check the findings and to make any necessary adjustments. Consider:

- How you will measure the effects of the policy?
- When the policy will be reviewed (usually after a year) and what could trigger an early revision (see above)?
- Who will be responsible for monitoring and review?
- What type of information is needed for monitoring and how often it will be analysed?
- How to engage stakeholders in implementation, monitoring and review?

Section 3: Glossary

Civil partnership: Legal recognition of a same-sex couple's relationship. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a range of legal matters.

Direct discrimination: This refers to less favourable treatment of one individual, if, because of that person's protected characteristic, that person is treated less favourably than another. Direct discrimination cannot be justified unless it is discrimination on the grounds of age.

Disability: A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Equality information: The information that you have (or that you will collect) about people with protected characteristics that will help you to show compliance with the equality duty. This may include the findings of engagement with protected groups and others and evidence about the effect of your policies on protected groups. It includes both qualitative and quantitative information, as well as evidence of analysis you have undertaken.

Gender reassignment: This is the process of transitioning from one sex to another. See also trans, transgender, transsexual.

Harassment: Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It may also involve unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or be related to gender reassignment or sex.

Indirect discrimination: This is when a neutral provision, criterion or practice is applied to everyone, but which is applied in a way that creates disproportionate disadvantage for persons with a protected characteristic as compared to those who do not share that characteristic, and cannot be shown as being a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Mitigation: This is when measures are put in place that lessen the negative effects of a policy or policies on protected groups.

Objective justification: Your provision may indirectly discriminate against a particular group if:

- It is a proportionate means to achieve a legitimate end
- The discrimination is significantly outweighed by the benefits
- There is no reasonable alternative to achieve the legitimate end

For example, some employers have policies that link pay and benefits to an employee's length of service, such as additional holiday entitlement for long-serving employees. This may indirectly discriminate against younger people who are less likely to have been employed for that length of time, but in most circumstances it is seen as being a proportionate way of encouraging staff loyalty.

Direct discrimination on the grounds of age can also be objectively justified (no other direct discrimination can be).

Positive action: Lawful actions that seeks to overcome or minimise disadvantages that people who share a protected characteristic have experienced, or to meet their different needs (for example, providing mentoring to encourage staff from under-represented groups to apply for promotion).

Pregnancy and Maternity: Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant. Maternity is the period after giving birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, including as a result of breastfeeding.

Proportionality: The weight given to equality should be proportionate to its relevance to a particular function. This may mean giving greater consideration and resources to functions or policies that have the most effect on the public or on employees.

Race: This refers to a group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.

Reasonable adjustment: Public authorities making adjustments to the way in which they carry out their functions so that disabled people are not disadvantaged by the way in which those functions are carried out. This is with regard to policies, practices or procedures, premises, and the provision of auxiliary aids or services.

Relevance: How far a function or policy affects people, as members of the public, and as employees of the authority. Some functions may be more relevant to some protected groups than to others, and to one or more of the three elements of the general equality duty. The function or policy may still be relevant if the numbers affected by it are very small.

Religion or belief: Religion means any religion, including a reference to a lack of religion. Belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (for example, Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included.

Sexual orientation: This is whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Trans: The terms 'trans people' and 'transgender people' are both often used as umbrella terms for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their birth sex, including transsexual people (those who propose to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process of gender reassignment to live permanently in their acquired gender), transvestite/cross-dressing people (those who wear clothing traditionally associated with the other gender either occasionally or more regularly), androgyne/polygender people (those who have non-binary gender identities and do not identify as male or female), and others who define as gender variant.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their birth sex. They may or may not seek to undergo gender reassignment hormonal treatment/surgery. Often used interchangeably with trans.

Transsexual: A person who intends to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment (which may or may not involve hormone therapy or surgery). Transsexual people feel the deep conviction to present themselves in the appearance of the opposite sex. They may change their name and identity to live in the preferred gender. Some take hormones and have cosmetic treatments to alter their appearance and physical characteristics. Some undergo surgery to change their bodies to approximate more closely to their preferred gender. Transsexual people have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment under the Equality Act 2010. Under the Act, gender reassignment is a personal process rather than a medical one and it does not require someone to undergo medical treatment in order to be protected.

Victimisation: Subjecting a person to a detriment because they have made a complaint of discrimination, or are thought to have done so; or because they have supported someone else who has made a complaint of discrimination. Victimisation is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

A Summary of the Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 replaces the existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The legislation covers:

- Employment and work
- Goods and services
- The exercise of public functions
- Premises
- Associations
- Transport
- Education

The act prohibits:

- Direct discrimination
- Indirect discrimination
- Discrimination by association
- Discrimination by perception
- Discrimination arising from disability
- Victimisation
- Harassment

The new legislation no longer refers to 'diversity strands' instead it introduces the concept of 'protected characteristics or groups, the protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

The Public Sector Equality Duty

The public sector equality duty requires that the council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation 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.

These are generally referred to as the three arms of the duty. In relation to 'fostering' there is a duty to have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

Equality of opportunity is expanded by placing a duty on the Council to have due regard to the need to:

- Remove or minimize disadvantages connected to a characteristic of a protected group.
- Take steps to meet the needs of protected groups.
- Encourage participation of protected groups in public life where participation is proportionately low.

There is also a specific requirement that councils must take steps to take account of a person's disability and there is a duty to make reasonable adjustments to remove barriers for disabled people. The duty is 'anticipatory'. For example, Brent Council cannot wait until a disabled person wants to use its services, but must think in advance (and on an ongoing basis) about what people with a range of impairments might reasonably need.