Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1: Title and aims of the activity ("activity" is an umbrella term covering policies, procedures, guidance and decisions).	
Service	Corporate Services
Section	Customer Services
Title of the activity etc.	Customer Services Budget
	This EIA concerns the Customer Services budget within Customer, Communication and Improvement. The budget funds the delivery of the Customer Services Division. The primary role of the Customer Service Division is to make it easy for our customers to contact and interact with the Council, by introducing improvements to our services. Customer Services has four main strands: Development Team: This impartial team assist services by delivering process improvements which result in financial and time release savings. This can include developing scripting for processes to ensure the correct information is being sought from a customer at first point of contact, to producing reporting information for services and supplying process improvement ideas following completion of analysis work. Contact Centre: This multi-skilled team accept all first point of contact telephone calls, emails and texts for a variety of services. They deliver an improved service using the scripting and technology identified by the Development Team and are measured to ensure a high level of service is consistently delivered.

Aims of the activity	Service Points: This multi-skilled team replicate the work of the Contact Centre but from a face to face perspective. They also deliver an improved service for all face to face customers at first point of contact, using the scripting and technology identified by the Development Team and also are performance managed to ensure a high level of service. Service Point delivery is due to increase in the year 2013/2014. Feedback: This impartial team collate, analyse and assist services in the handling of all feedback (including complaints). This includes identifying areas of improvement through management reporting, compiling responses to customers to maintain consistency of service and dealing with customers directly to resolve complaints. Additionally the team negotiate with services to deliver the best resolution for the customer and the Council. Customer Services net revenue budget for 2013/14 is £848,000 the majority of which relates to staffing costs with subsequent costs allocated mainly towards supporting technology. Customer Services in Aberdeenshire has one of the lowest costs for volume of service calls provided via our Contact Centre against total staff in place, in comparison to other Scottish Councils.
Author(s) & Title(s)	Contact Centre Manager Customer Services Budget

Stage 2: List the evidence that has been used in this assessment.	
Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).	Residents Survey 2003: The survey asked a series of questions relating to ease of contacting the council. Research was requested to inform the council on the issues of; assisting the council develop a meaningful and effective multi-channel communications strategy. One outcome of the research would be a means of measuring the effectiveness of this strategy. Identifying the true level of customer complaints, the most common types of complaints and customer's satisfaction with the outcomes. Identifying resident's preferred means of accessing council services and the types of services they would wish to access.

This evidence and subsequent surveys supports the continued investment in customer services, as confirmed by the Residents Survey in 2010 where the executive summary confirmed that '*there is emerging evidence that both online and telephone delivery are the most commonly preferred methods of transacting a range of types of business with the Council: however, a significant number of people do suggest that a personal visit is their preferred approach to undertaking certain types of business that have an added level of complexity.*' This further substantiates the roll out of further Service Points through out the major towns within Aberdeenshire. |
| Internal consultation with staff and other services affected. | Consultation with services, service users and with senior management team. |
| External consultation (partner organisations, community groups, and councils. | Customer Service Division's work is undertaken in compliance with the Scottish Government Customer First Agenda.

As in previous years the Customer Service Plan and subsequent budget was developed in consultation with all Services and other major partners, primarily Police Scotland.

The Budget Simulator (online tool where members of the public can set the budget) will provide feedback on where they believe the local priorities are. |
| External data (census, available statistics). | Customer satisfaction levels are monitored as part of a monthly reputation tracker, including the level of customer satisfaction with the delivery of council services. |

Other (general information as appropriate).	Various service improvement projects are in our plan, including the transfer of multiple new services to the Contact Centre as a result of the iCE strategy, the upgrade of our telephony platform, the expansion of our Contact Centre and the introduction of more Service Points throughout Aberdeenshire. The output from all projects are agreed and reported to the appropriate senior officers plus, if and when required, an executive summary is presented to the appropriate Committees. The Customer Service budget funds the ability for the teams to develop these plans and provide modern, accessible and efficient public services to the residents of Aberdeenshire.

Stage 3: Evidence Gaps.	
Are there any gaps in the information you currently hold?	This is a strategic document that looks at the overall approach to Customer Services. The Customer Services budget covers this approach.

Stage 4: Measures to fill the evidence gaps.		
What measures will be taken to fill the information gaps before the activity is implemented? These should be included in the action plan at the back of this form.	Measures:	Timescale:
	N/A	

Stage 5: Are there potential impacts on protected groups? Please complete for each protected group by inserting "yes" in the applicable box/boxes below.				
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Age – Younger			Yes	
Age – Older			Yes	
Disability	Yes			
Race – (includes Gypsy Travellers)	Yes			
Religion or Belief			Yes	
Gender – male/female			Yes	
Pregnancy and maternity			Yes	

Sexual orientation – (includes Lesbian/ Gay/Bisexual)			Yes	
Gender reassignment – (includes Transgender)			Yes	
Marriage and Civil Partnership			Yes	

Stage 6: What are the positive and negative impacts?		
Impacts.	Positive (describe the impact for each of the protected characteristics affected)	Negative (describe the impact for each of the protected characteristics affected)
Please detail the potential positive and/or negative impacts on those with protected characteristics you have highlighted above. Detail the impacts and describe those affected.	All Service Points are fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010, therefore making the service more accessible to wheelchair users.	
	For all our customers whose first language is not English we use interpreters through our Language Line for face to face or telephone contacts.	

Stage 7: Have any of the affected groups been consulted?	
If yes, please give details of how this was done and what the results were. If no, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating steps?	Not required as it is a legal requirement to have public offices suitable for wheelchair users.

Stage 8: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce negative impacts?		
These should be included in any action plan at the back of this form.	**Mitigating Steps**	**Timescale**
	None identified	

Stage 9: What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups?	
These should be included in the action plan.	The Customer First agenda highlights the need for Aberdeenshire to commit to numerous Scottish Government improvement projects which could have a major impact on various service delivery channels within the council. National projects include the Citizen Account, Tell Us Once initiative, Public Information Notices initiative and the National Infrastructure project. The agenda also has a major focus on the delivery of Shared Services, with expectations high on the delivery of joint customer service projects with partners.

We need to be proactive and pragmatic in exploring new ways of working which will make the Council more efficient whilst maintaining an appropriate level of control over its resources. To achieve these aims, we will require to escalate the volume of services delivered interactively on the web, but still maintaining those other channels available to customers especially in areas where there exists a current demand. |

Stage 10: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?
The budget will support the Customer Services Division in the development of project-based communications plans designed to increase awareness and opportunities among affected groups.

Stage 11: What equality monitoring arrangements will be put in place?	
These should be included in any action plan (for example customer satisfaction questionnaires).	The overall budget will not change, but equality considerations will be considered as part of the development of project-based communications plans with services. The monitoring that would be carried out for Customer Services support to service changes will be built into the plans.

Stage 12: What is the outcome of the Assessment?		
Please complete the appropriate box/boxes	1	No negative impacts have been identified – please explain.
	We are committed to serving the people of Aberdeenshire by providing a range of services to our customers in the most economic, efficient and effective ways….. (and) transforming the way the Council works, by using our skills, resources and technology. As the remit of the division is so broad, it is more appropriate to consider any negative or positive impacts as and when the division develops communications plans and budgets for individual, services-led projects.	
	2	Negative Impacts have been identified, these can be mitigated - please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen.
	3	The activity will have negative impacts which cannot be mitigated fully – please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen

* Stage 13: Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.

Stage 14: Sign off and authorisation.					

Sign off and authorisation.	1) Service and Team	Corporate Services, Customer Communication and Improvement, Customer Services.			
	2) Title of Policy/Activity	Customer Services Budget			
	3) **Authors:** I/We have completed the equality impact assessment for this policy/ activity.	Name: [redacted] Position: Contact Centre Manager Date: 18/11/2013 Signature:		Name: Position: Date: Signature:	
		Name: Position: Date: Signature:		Name: Position: Date: Signature:	
	4) Consultation with Service Manager	Name: Head of Customer Communication and Improvement [redacted] Date:			
	5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	Name: [redacted] Position: Director of Corporate Services Date:		Name: Position: Date:	
	6) If the EIA relates to a matter that has to go before a Committee, Committee report author sends the Committee Report and this form, and any supporting assessment documents, to the Officers responsible for monitoring and the Committee Officer of the relevant Committee. e.g. Social Work and Housing Committee.			Date:	
	7) EIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: eia@abdnshire			Date:	
(Equalities team to complete) Has the completed form been published on the website? YES/NO				Date:	

Action Plan

Action	Start	Complete	Lead Officer	Expected Outcome	Resource Implications
We need to be proactive and pragmatic in exploring new ways of working which will make the Council more efficient whilst maintaining an appropriate level of control over its resources	November 2013	ongoing		Increased volume of services delivered interactively on the web, but still maintaining those other channels available to customers especially in areas where there exists a current demand	Officer support developing online/self serve options for customers