



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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| Stage 1: Title and aims of the activity (“activity” is an umbrella term covering policies, procedures, guidance and decisions). |  |
| Service   | Business Services  |
| Section   | Finance  |
| Title of the activity etc.  | Finance  |
| Aims of the activity  | <p><u>Transforming external service delivery.</u></p> <p>Delivery of proposed Revenue Budget savings within the Benefits Home Visiting Team.<br/>The proposal is to re-focus the work of the Home Visiting team into a co-ordinated and corporate approach across a number of services within the Council. The Benefits section currently provides a home Visit service which offers advice to certain client groups and also collects important information from one visit. This service has been discussed and agreed by Committee. The team carry out approximately 5,500 visits per year and rather than stopping this service, a refocussing of how the service is delivered is key to this proposal.</p> <p>Service will undertake only essential visits e.g. where the customer is housebound or where it is necessary to make a visual inspection of a property to establish liability or entitlement to discount, exemption or relief and will seek to use existing staff in other Council Services.</p> <p><u>Streamlining Internal Service Delivery</u></p> <p>Finance will review the service it provides and the associated staffing levels to reflect the changing shape of the organisation.<br/>A review of all ‘held open’ vacant posts will be undertaken, with consideration given to deleting those posts which do not impact on service delivery. This review will be complemented by a review and redesign of systems, processes and practices and use of information technology to support the proposed future years savings.</p> |
| Author(s) & Title(s)  | Alan Wood  |

Stage 2: List the evidence that has been used in this assessment.

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| <p>Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).</p> | <p>The Finance service uses a range of performance measures to monitor performance. Benefit Customer satisfaction levels are monitored on a regular basis, including the level of satisfaction with the delivery of the benefit service.</p>  |
| <p>Internal consultation with staff and other services affected.</p>                                 | <p>Consultation with members of the finance staff, members of the Benefits Policy Board, Finance Management Team (FMT), Business Services Leadership Team (BSLT) and consultation with Senior Leadership Team (SLT)</p>   |
| <p>External consultation (partner organisations, community groups, and councils).</p>                | <p>The benefits budget supports the work of the service as it continues to deliver a range of financial assistance schemes to financially vulnerable residents. Community Engagement events with Area Managers have taken place and these are further opportunities to explore views in regard to the general views of budgets.</p> <p>The Finance service supports other Service areas of the council therefore consultation on the streamlining of this Service was limited to internal consultation.</p> |
| <p>External data (census, available statistics).</p>   | <p>The Department of Work and Pensions publishes caseload and speed of processing data in relation to housing benefit. The Scottish Government publishes similar data in relation to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.</p>  |
| <p>Other (general information as appropriate).</p>   | <p>The Benefits Team Plan was developed to take account of work priorities and the timetable for the UK Government's welfare reform programme. It is reviewed on an annual basis.</p>   |

| Stage 3: Evidence Gaps.                                   |   |
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| Are there any gaps in the information you currently hold? | <p>This is a strategic document that looks at the approach to benefits service delivery in terms of the work of the Home visit team. The support ensures that frontline services are delivered. The benefits budget as a whole covers this approach.</p> <p>We are aware that engaging with financially vulnerable residents can be challenging, particularly when advising them of future changes that will affect their benefit entitlement. It also considers how Finance provides support to other Services within the Council, this support ensures that frontline services are delivered.</p> |

| 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: |
|  | The Finance Service will work with the Corporate Communications Team to monitor the impact of communications and identify where improvements can be made. | Ongoing    |
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|  |   |            |
|  |   |            |

| 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 –<br>(includes Lesbian/<br>Gay/Bisexual) |  |  | Yes |  |
| Gender reassignment –<br>(includes Transgender)             |  |  | Yes |  |
| Marriage and Civil<br>Partnership                           |  |  | Yes |  |

**Stage 6: What are the positive and negative impacts?**

| Impacts.   | Positive<br>(describe the impact for each of<br>the protected characteristics<br>affected) | Negative<br>(describe the impact for each of<br>the protected characteristics<br>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. |  | Age, Disability and Gender - The saving arising from the Benefits Home Visiting saving could be seen as removing a service from vulnerable and housebound households in rural communities |
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**Stage 7: Have any of the affected groups been consulted?**

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| 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? | The client group will be consulted ahead of the introduction of a change in the working practices of the Home Visit team. The change is planned to be implemented in financial year 2017-18. |
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**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 | Mitigating Steps  | Timescale  |
|---|---|------------|
|   | Visits can be carried out by officers within other Services provided training is given to those staff involved and other forms of contact with the client group can be introduced and expanded. | April 2017 |

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| Stage 9: What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups? |              |
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| These should be included in the action plan.                                       | See stage 7. |

Stage 10: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?

The budget will continue to support the Benefits Team in the development of systems and processes that will improve the assistance offered to financially vulnerable households and will promote a holistic approach to service delivery.

The Finance service will continue to support the other Council services to provide frontline service delivery that continues to create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity.

Stage 11: What equality monitoring arrangements will be put in place?

These should be included in any action plan (for example customer satisfaction questionnaires).

Equality considerations are considered as part of the development of the Finance service plans. However where the action points within the plans relate to UK or Scottish Government legislation or policy changes it is the responsibility of those bodies to carry out an EIA.

Stage 12: What is the outcome of the Assessment?

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| Please complete the appropriate box/boxes | 1  | No negative impacts have been identified –please explain.   |
|   | Streamlining Internal Service Delivery - Where possible any reduction in headcount will be managed to ensure that there is no impact on the ability of the other Council Services to deliver front line services.                |   |
|   | 2  | Negative Impacts have been identified, these can be mitigated - please explain.<br>* Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen.          |
|   | Transforming External Delivery - Visits can be carried out by officers within other Services provided training is given to those staff involved and other forms of contact with the client group can be introduced and expanded. |   |
|   | 3  | The activity will have negative impacts which cannot be mitigated fully – please explain.<br>* 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.

The Service can still be provided to the client group but the delivery will be refocused.

Stage 14: Sign off and authorisation.

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| Sign off and authorisation.   | 1) Service and Team   | Business Services, Finance.   |   |  |
|   | 2) Title of Policy/Activity   | Finance   |   |  |
|   | 3) <b>Authors:</b><br>I/We have completed the equality impact assessment for this policy/activity.  | Name: Susan Donald<br>Position: Service Manager<br>Date: 13/01/17<br>Signature:   | Name:<br>Position:<br>Date:<br>Signature: |  |
|   |   | Name: Mary Beattie<br>Position: Corporate Fin Mgr<br>Date: 13/01/17<br>Signature: | Name:<br>Position:<br>Date:<br>Signature: |  |
|   | 4) Consultation with Service Manager  | Name:<br>Date:  |   |  |
|   | 5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service   | Name: Alan Wood<br>Position: Head of Finance<br>Date: 13/01/17                    | Name:<br>Position:<br>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)<br>Has the completed form been published on the website? YES/NO |   |   | Date:                                     |  |

