



Equality Relevance Assessment

1. Details of proposal	
Policy title	Introducing automated payment facilities and maintaining staffed facilities at Bathgate and Livingston
Lead officer	Steve Field – Head of Area Services
Date relevance considered	18 th November 2013
2. Does the council have control over how this policy will be implemented?	
YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do you have evidence or reason to believe that this policy will, or may potentially:	
General Duties	Impact on equality (Yes or No)
Reduce or increase discrimination, victimisation or harassment against people covered by the equality protected characteristics?	Yes
Reduce or increase equality of opportunity between people who share an equality protected characteristic and those who do not?	Yes
Provide opportunity to improve good relations between those who share an equality protected characteristic and those who do not?	No
4. Equality impact assessment required? (Yes to any of above = full assessment recommended)	
YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Decision rationale	
<p>In an effort to streamline services and create efficiencies as part of the Delivering Better Outcomes project, it is proposed that automated payment facilities be introduced in some areas.</p> <p>This measure may have an impact on older people and people with disabilities following implementation, and potentially some single parents. Older people and people with disabilities in particular may struggle with new technology and as a result feel isolated from the service.</p> <p>A full impact assessment is required.</p>	

- **No assessment required – process ends**
- **Assessment required – continue to next section**

Equality Impact Assessment

1. Details of proposal	
Details of others involved	Steve Field – Head of Area Services Kenny Selbie – Equality Officer Hannah Gardner – Equalities Analyst
Date assessment conducted	18 th December 2014
2. Aims of the proposed change to council policy or resources	
In an effort to streamline services and create efficiencies as part of the Delivering Better Outcomes project, it is proposed that automated payment facilities be introduced in some areas, reducing the need for maintaining staffed facilities.	
3. What equality data, research or other evidence has been used to inform this assessment?	
Evidence was collected from local & national research including research conducted by the <i>Improvement Service</i> and <i>Experian</i> in the Scottish Borders Council.	
4. Details of consultation and involvement	
The assessment has been subject to scrutiny by representatives of the equality community forums through a specific focus on Delivering Better Outcomes projects as agreed by the council's Corporate Working Group on Equality.	
5. Issues identified and 'protected characteristics' impact (Covering: age; disability; gender; gender identity; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief and sexual orientation equality)	

The shift from old to new technologies is a key theme of Delivering Better Outcomes. It is a simple way to streamline services and create efficiencies. However, the increased use of technology, the shift to e-government, and the move away from face-to-face services impacts both staff and services users with protected characteristics.

The use of technology to make contact with the Council and other partners, and moving public services online could potentially isolate older adults who are not technologically up to date. Further, the proposed changes will impact disabled service users who are unable to access the internet independently and those who have physical difficulties using technologies. As a result, these groups may miss out on services they require. The *Centre for Ageing Research & Development* in Ireland indicate that those 55-years and over are less likely to have ITC skills, and access to the internet. Individuals who have disabilities could potentially face difficulties in obtaining access to e-government websites for many reasons. These include the cost, the nature of their impairments making computer use difficult – possibly requiring the use of special equipment or adaptations – and (for many) their general unfamiliarity with computers. There is also the possibility that provision of information and services through the Internet might actually narrow rather than widen choices, because it might lead to the phasing out of traditional ways of providing services preferred by some disabled people (*Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2004*).

Research conducted by the *Improvement Service* and *Experian* explored the potential for Channel Shift in the Scottish Borders Council. Results indicate that older people's preference to receive information from the council was from face to face meetings in 'branch' or via local / national newspapers. Older people were less likely to engage with information from the council if it was on the internet, or received via phone or text message. With regard to service provision, similar results were found: older people preferred their services to be delivered in a face-to-face manner, but not by internet, phone, text message or by post.

This measure also has specific consequences on those working within face-to-face customer roles that may be. Due to the workforce profile within the council, there is potential for female employees to be impacted more significantly than men.

6. What measures are in place to monitor the actual impact following implementation?

The Delivering Better Outcomes projects are being monitored by the Modernisation Board during implementation and equality impact assessment is identified as a key enabler for projects.

7. Recommendation

- Implement proposal with no amendments
- Implement proposal taking account of mitigating actions (as outlined below)
- Reject proposal due to disproportionate impact on equality

8. Mitigating actions and additional outputs

Changes will be implemented in areas where alternative cash payment methods are available in close proximity (for example nearby a Post Office or Pay Point). In addition automated payment facilities will be introduced as a substitute and customers will be supported to use this technology. A range of payment options for all customers will remain available, negating any impact on protected groups.

Any reduction in staff will be mitigated by the council's position of no compulsory redundancy. While an individual's current post and working practices may be impacted upon by a number of budget proposals, the potential impact of compulsory redundancy is mitigated regardless of a protected characteristic. The workforce management policy enables staff that may be displaced to be offered alternative posts elsewhere in the service or organisation. Significant opportunities for flexible transition, including training and development, are supported. Skills matching and the consultation process ensure that the particular needs and issues of each individual employee are taken into account during the implementation of the policy. Work is being undertaken to profile the council's workforce. This will assist to pro-actively identify services or teams that have capacity to accept employees via the redeployment process. This work assists in advance to identify required skills, training and other development which may be necessary to transition from one role into another. The council's policies on flexible working, reduced hours working, voluntary severance and early retirement provide further options to manage and mitigate the impact of the measure.

- **Equality impact assessment completed**