



Equality Relevance Assessment

1. Details of proposal	
Policy title	Modernising frontline services - rationalising staff and management structures
Lead officer	Steve Field – Head of Area Services
Date relevance considered	25/09/13
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? (Two Yes above = full assessment necessary)	
YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Decision rationale	
<p>The integration of front line services has a significant impact on accessibility to services for members of the community. As it is widely reported and already known to services, some groups in the community such as older people, people with disabilities and single parents often experience difficulty in accessing services for a variety of reasons. If carried out in full consultation with staff, customer and equality reps, customer options can be increased and their ease of access and overall experience of services can be significantly improved.</p> <p>Staff efficiencies are anticipated, therefore, this project has the potential to impact women disproportionately due to the workforce profile in the council.</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	22/12/14
2. Aims of the proposed change to council policy or resources	
<p>This project is part of the Delivering Better Outcomes programme to make significant savings across the council. The budget measure proposes to modernise frontline services through integration and resourcing of areas of the greatest need through rationalising staff and management structures. A reduction in operational hours is to take place where there is less demand and there will be a reduction in frontline staff where services are integrated, creating a flexible, generic workforce and minimizing duplication.</p> <p>The project also has identified 4 main areas it seeks to deliver on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Excellent Customer Service – All council services will ensure that customer requests and enquiries are delivered in a timely, efficient and professional way2. Improving Access – Our customers are able to access council services in the way most convenient to them3. Customer Involvement – Our customers are involved in designing, monitoring and evaluating our services4. Transforming Services – We will change the way we deliver services to ensure our customers' journey from start to finish is by the best route possible.	
3. What equality data, research or other evidence has been used to inform this assessment?	
Evidence was collected from local & national research including research from gender pay gap specialists Close the Gap.	
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)	

A number of components of this project could disproportionately impact individuals with protected characteristics. The reduction in the number of buildings the council utilises, although more efficient, could impact the accessibility of services. Reducing the number of more local services and replacing them with 'centralised' services has particular implications on those with disabilities and older adults. Although distances between 'old' services and 'new' services may be negligible, it could significantly impact the way in which these groups access the service. A balance should be struck between more efficient services, and ensuring areas of greatest need are resourced properly. The issue of access may be mitigated by ensuring that sufficient public transport can reach centralised services from areas of need.

Other accessibility issues may lie within the proposed reduction of operational hours of services. The reduction of hours could potentially isolate those already deemed 'hard to reach'. Those categorised as 'hard to reach' often also fall into protected groups, for example individuals with disabilities, those with caring responsibilities and certain ethnic groups. Individuals who have caring responsibilities may not be able to access services in 'peak' times, due to having no one available to look after their dependents. Again, this results in a disadvantage for this protected group. This is supported by research conducted by the *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*.

Due to the makeup of the workforce profile in West Lothian Council, there is a possible risk that female employees could be adversely impacted. The posts affected by the proposed project are predominately support posts - with a large number of female employees within the administration services holding support positions. Those who have caring responsibilities may also be adversely affected by the proposed plans. Primary carers of children are more likely to be female, and as a result there is a direct overlap between these protected groups. This group may be affected if there is a change to the geographical location of their workplace, or a change to their working hours. Females and those with caring responsibilities are more likely to work part-time hours, and therefore a change to work structures may impact on them in a negative way (*Close the Gap*, 2013). 41% of women in employment worked part-time in 2005, compared with 10% of men. This proportion of women is largely unchanged since 1984. The Office for National Statistics data for March 2011 – April 2012 show 48% of women employees in Scotland working part-time, compared to 16% of men (*Scottish Government*, 2013).

An aspect of this project is the potential use of community facilities to promote the use of technology to make contact with the council and other partners. Moving public services online could potentially isolate older adults who are not technologically minded, and disabled service users who are unable to access the internet independently. 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).

The relevance assessment considered the implications of this measure on service provision due to a concern over access to local services for people with disabilities, older people and single parents, who are more likely to have transport issues. However, it was concluded that the particular impact of this measure for those protected groups will be low to nil given that all services will continue to be available locally.

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

Any potential staffing efficiencies 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.

- **Equality impact assessment completed**