

**Equality Impact Assessment**  
**THE CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE**

**Level 2**

## **Published Equality Impact Assessment**

Equality is about recognising that people are diverse and therefore have different needs and should be treated accordingly and taken into account in service delivery and employment practices.

Equality Impact Assessments will enable services to identify these needs and adapt their services and functions primarily through drawing on existing research, information/data and consultation. The overall purpose of Equality Impact Assessments is:

- To assess and identify the impact of policies or procedures, strategies, functions and services on different members of the local community and key stakeholders
- To establish objectives and targets for action to mitigate impacts and improve services where appropriate
- To promote and work towards equality of opportunity and reduce discrimination and enhance relations between different groups in society.

An impact assessment must be completed before the formal implementation of a policy, strategy, procedure or function can take place. In general the sooner an impact assessment is completed the better.

# Equality Impact Assessment Template

**Name of function being assessed**

**Customer Service Centre which is part of E-government and Business Systems Unit, Headed by Henry Lewis**

**Who is completing the assessment?**

Angela Gee, Customer Service Manager

Donna Smith, Customer Service Operational Manager

Marilyn Saunders, Customer Service Development Manager

Advice input gained for Advocacy Office

## Stage 1: AIMS of FUNCTION

What are the main aims and objectives or purpose of the service/policy/procedure/strategy?

The Customer Service Centre provides the customer with a simple seamless experience in dealing with Council and Stevenage Homes services. The Centre provides information and assistance for both SBC and SHL customers on general enquiries about the Council, housing enquiries, including tenancy and homeless and front line benefits advice including verification of documents.

What outcomes do you want to achieve and for whom?

Ensuring that our Service meets the needs of all our customers and that we provided the service in a way that is appropriate and accessible to everyone. We will recognise that people's service needs differ and aim to make our service relevant to those different needs.

Corporate:

Achievement of mission and value statements and ambitions and priorities

Accreditation through new Corporate Customer Service Excellence standards.

We have a well established performance management framework which monitors the Service and achieve our service targets:

External Customers:

Telephony Targets: Telephone answered within 30 seconds. Resolve 85% of enquiries first point of contact.

Walk-In: Waiting times less than 20 minutes

Complaints target: Less than 10 per annum

Customer surveys: Gov Metric survey 10% of total customers served

Internal Customers:

Adherence, monitoring and review of SHL and SBC Service Level Agreements.

Who is affected by this function and by the way it is carried out? i.e. the internal and external customers, groups, communities or any other stakeholders?

CSC provides a service to residents of Stevenage and visitors to the Town. Housing Stock is managed by Stevenage Homes Ltd and the CSC is the first point of contact their customers. There are service level agreements in place to ensure monitoring of the quality of service delivered to SBC and SHL customers

Who implements, carries out or delivers the function? Please state where more than one person, team, department or body?

Head of E-government and Business Systems : Overall Head of Service and Policy maker  
Customer Service Manager: Overall CSC Manager to ensure delivery of Service Plan and key projects/initiatives  
Customer Service Development Manager: Responsible for development of key initiatives  
Customer Service Operational Manager: Responsible for resource, meeting SLA's, and performance information which is produced daily, weekly and monthly.  
3.75 fte Team Leaders with specific responsibilities for different services and functions: Telephony and front of house  
Resource Co-ordinator: Real time monitoring of customer contact, production of performance information and forecasting.  
22 fte Advisers: Service specific telephony and front of house  
Customer Service Advocacy Worker: Specialist adviser to support disabled and disadvantaged customers

Is the policy, practice, service or function affected by external drivers for change? e.g. new legislation, national policy, external inspections etc.

Corporate ambitions/SHL mission and values  
New Legislation  
Inspections  
Best practice, in particular Cabinet Office Service Excellence standards and accreditation  
East of England Customer service network and steering groups

East of England Contact Council

How are people (internal & external incl. staff) informed about the service or function? How is information publicised or explained to those affected either directly or indirectly?

**External Customers:**

Leaflets, internet, Chronicle, Housing publications, Tenants Handbook, Information films by SHL and SBC, Website, Link,.  
Direct contact with CSC staff.

**Internal staff:**

Team meetings, one to ones, PDM annual and 6 monthly reviews  
Staff update briefing notes and encouraging people to be involved in new projects and initiatives  
Quality performance monitoring and feedback  
Training

Who will be responsible for the service or function? How will it be implemented? What monitoring and reviewing arrangements are in place?

**Responsible for Service:**

Head of E.-Government and Business Systems, Henry Lewis  
Customer Service Manager, Angela Gee

**Monitoring and Review arrangements:**

CSC Service Plan  
Performance monitoring framework and policy  
Corporate Business Plan  
SHL Business Plan  
Service Level Agreements  
Benchmarking with other authorities  
Customer Service Excellence Standards,  
Gov Metric – customer feedback

Mystery Shopping

What steps have you taken to ensure that your procurement procedures address equality issues, if the policy, practice, function or service is provided by another organisation or agency on behalf of the Council?

Adherence to Corporate procurement policy and guidance

What are the key performance indicators? These may be national, local or service designed?

KPI as above and these are regularly reviewed and monitored daily  
Benchmarking with other agencies

What links are there between this service/policy/procedure/strategy and other corporate objectives?

Corporate Business Plan  
Corporate customer access strategy (currently in planning stage)  
Corporate Customer Service Excellence Standards (linked to Access Strategy)  
SHL Corporate customer service strategy

## Stage 2: DATA COLLECTION

**Evidence: Consultation, data, research:** Knowing your customers and the community

This section is about obtaining information and evidence to inform decisions and judgements made about the impacts/barriers different people may face in accessing a service or function.

Answers must be made using correct, quantifiable and qualitative information. An impact assessment cannot be carried out unless this information is available, where not a reasonable explanation must be given or further consultation undertaken.

What is the profile of the people affected/service users? How does this compare to the local profile? What is the difference? (if you don't know then include monitoring arrangements as an action in your action plan to enable you to start to build a profile of your service users)

### **Local Profile:**

Total population of Stevenage: 79,500

Ages of people 0 – 15: 16,800

Working Age: 49,600

Retirement Age: 13,100

### **Ethnicity:**

White – all: 73,500 / 92.5% of total population

Asian – all: 2,800 / 3.5% of total

Black – all: 1,300 / 1.6% of total

Other: 500 / 0.6% of total

**CSC Service Profile:**

SBC has developed its strategic approach through its customer profiling project.  
At this point the CSC cannot demonstrate that it is providing services fairly and equitably.

Indicate all available information, including data, consultation that will support the development of the impact assessment?

This is currently a weak area for the CSC. However, CRM development and CRM integration with Northgate will address this weakness.

Consultation will be part of the Corporate Customer Access Strategy.

Who was involved in the consultation? (National duties indicate that interest groups related to the six strands and those with a disability should be consulted)

As above

Have any complaints been made on the basis of discrimination? What are these?

No complaints on this basis for this Service

Where gaps in information have been identified, further research and consultation will need to be undertaken before the assessment can be carried out to identify impacts. If this is not possible, it must be stated in the action plan.

Does the data, information, consultation etc. suggest any impacts on the users of this function? What are these impacts?

## **Stage 3: ASSESSMENT of IMPACT**

The assessment should cover the all six strands of diversity  
For more information on diversity in Stevenage, please see  
**intranet/ staff info:**

- **E - Equality and diversity internal information/ Knowing our communities and customers**
- **S - Stevenage Profile Information**

**1. What is the aim and what do you want to achieve?**

**Aims:**

We want to have a good understanding of the diversity needs of our customers.

We want to share and development best practice around equality and diversity.

We want to develop our current policies and procedures that take account of equality and diversity.

We want to improve our performance monitoring methods to identify equality and diversity training needs.

We want to achieve a more inclusive service delivery so that SBC/SHL services and information are accessible to all our customer and meet current and future needs in the most cost effective way.

**3. What is actually happening in real life that prevents aims and outcomes being achieved and people from accessing the function/policy?  
(data, consultation and staff knowledge and observations)**

The Customer Service Centre is a 'front line' service but we need to work with back office services to bring about a consistent approach to our customers.

The Customer Service Centre needs more Corporate responsibility to report on poor practice they observe when dealing with customers or when a customer has reported something as discriminatory.

**2. Think about the impact on the different people**

Age	Disability	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Religion/ Belief	Other	Other

**Groups under each diversity strand**

**Race**

Asian or Asian British  
 Black or Black British  
 Chinese  
 Mixed race  
 White  
 Gypsies and Travellers

**Gender**

Women  
 Men  
 Transgender

**Disability**

physical or mobility impairments  
 sensory impairments (hearing, visual and speech)

learning disabilities  
non-visible condition such as epilepsy or diabetes

**Age**

- 0- 9
- 10-15
- 16-19
- 20-29
- 30-44
- 45-59
- 60-64
- 65-74
- 75 or over

**Faith or belief**

- Christian
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Other
- No religion or belief

**Sexuality**

- Bisexual
- Gay
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian

## Overall Impact

Diversity Strand	Impact - Positive and Negative or neutral - High, Medium, Low, none	Reason
Race	<b>Neutral for: Asian, black British, Chinese, Mixed race</b>	<b>We are able to provide language line/translations for customers who first language is not English. We monitor Advisers on their cultural awareness and ensure staff and adequately trained in diversity issues.</b>
Race	<b>Negative for Gypsies and Travellers</b>	<b>Not enough information or contact with this group.</b>
Gender - Woman	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Authentication process discriminates against women because, in some cases, there is a failure in IT software. For example, Council tax system, some joint accounts have been reduced to single name accounts which precludes access to account information.</b>
Gender - Men	<b>Negative</b>	<b>The above could apply to</b>

		<p><b>same sex male partnerships but only in the case of old joint applications</b></p>
<b>Age</b>	<p><b>Neutral – 0-9</b></p> <p><b>Neutral – 10-15</b></p> <p><b>Neutral – 16-19</b></p> <p><b>Neutral – 20-29/30-34/45-59/60-64</b></p> <p><b>Neutral – 65-74</b></p> <p><b>Negative 75 and over</b></p>	<p><b>Toy activity and nappy changing provision</b></p> <p><b>Customer profiling and web service</b></p> <p><b>Out of hours messages and contact info.</b> <b>Web and Text services</b> <b>Appointment system</b></p> <p><b>Centre located in Town which has a good bus/rail service. This age group is also eligible for free bus travel across the Country. Advocacy service is available</b></p> <p><b>Too much documentation/information from too many sources that are difficult to understand.</b> <b>All back office services need to address this.</b></p>

<b>Sexuality</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Not enough information</b>
<b>Faith</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Not enough information but our staff are trained to have awareness of different faiths.</b>
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Positive for people with physical or mobility impairments</b>	<b>Compliance to DDA throughout the Centre. Disabled toilet facilities Well trained staff to assist. Advocacy service available for home visits/special assistance.</b>
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Positive for people with sensory impairments (hearing, visual and speech)</b>	<b>Provision of specialist equipment within the Centre i.e. text phone and magnifying imagery. Customer profiling and customer data hub projects will improve our ability to pre-empt customer needs by sharing information with other services/partners. Advocacy service available for special assistance.</b>

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Positive for people with learning disabilities</b>	<b>Advocacy service available to offer assistance and help to access service and information. All Advisers are trained to recognise and help people who are having difficulties with access</b>
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Where a negative impact does occur, is this appropriate/can be supported to promote equality of opportunity?

Yes

## Stage 4: ACTION PLANNING

<b>Objective/outcome</b>	<b>Responsible Person</b>	<b>Date for Completion</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>
Consult/improve dialogue with community and minority groups.	CSC management team	By end of 2009	Work with Policy to improve engagement		Staff time and budget

Implement authentication	CSC management team and Revs and Bens Manager	Unknown project aims	Establish opportunity to improve with relevant Heads of service.		Staff time and budget to invest
Implement Customer Access Strategy	Corporate	2012 for completion	Project Plan		Corporate
Benchmark best practice with other authorities	CSC management team	Ongoing	Networking with Customer Service groups and Contact Council		Staff time

**How and where will these actions be monitored?**

Corporate Business Plan  
Project Plans  
Service Plan monitoring  
Performance Management

**When will this service or function be reviewed?**

**Annual – April 2009/10**

## Impact Assessment Summary

<b>Name of function assessed</b>	
<b>Date completed</b>	
<b>Next review date</b>	
<b>Author</b>	
<b>Outline of Assessment</b>	
<b>Assessment Team</b>	
<b>Data, information and Consultation used</b> ( <i>sources, who &amp; How</i> )	
<b>Impact, Outcomes and actions identified</b>	

Date completed

Signed by Head of Service