

**St Edmundsbury Borough Council  
Forest Heath District Council**

**West Suffolk Joint Equality Scheme  
2015 – 2020**

**Appendix A:  
Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) Guidance**

**Including:**

**EqIA Screening Form**

**EqIA Screening Guidance**

**EqIA Full Assessment Form**

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## 1. Introduction

The actions of public bodies can affect groups of people in different ways, which may result in unfair advantage or exclusion from opportunities to fully participate in society. Where this occurs is known as 'adverse impact' or 'negative impact' and in many cases is unlawful.

To avoid adverse or negative impacts, we must scrutinise our own policies, projects and proposals to assess whether they will unfairly disadvantage or exclude certain groups, and mitigate any areas of concern. This practice is formally known as 'Equality Impact Assessment' (EqIA).

This guidance has been produced to assist staff in their duty to carry out and provide effective EqIAs. These assessments can then be used by Members to provide appropriate and timely information within the decision making process.

## 2. Conducting Equality Impact Assessments

An EqIA is a systematic process to identify the impact, or likely impact, a project or programme proposal will have on different groups of people. An impact is defined as 'an intentional or unintentional lasting consequence or significant change to people's lives brought about by an action or series of actions'. The impact of an investment is likely to be one or more of the following:

- **Positive** – a positive impact will actively promote equality of opportunity for one or more groups, or improve equal opportunities/relations between groups.
- **Adverse or negative** – an adverse or negative impact causes disadvantage or exclusion. If such an impact is identified the EqIA process will ensure that as far as possible it is either justified, eliminated, minimised or counter balanced by other measures.
- **Neutral** – a neutral impact is where there are no notable consequences for any diversity group.

There is no statistical test to form these conclusions. Instead, professional judgement must be made based on factual information and evidence. A policy may have a positive impact on some groups, but an adverse or negative impact on other groups. The EqIA process is designed to help you identify these potential impacts and arrive at a balanced position.

It is important to explore the impact of proposals on different groups and explain why a given proposal has been developed in the way it has. It is important to ensure that when a solution to an adverse effect on one group is found, it does not in turn adversely impact on another group. If an adverse impact is unavoidable, then it must be clearly justified and recorded as such.

## The two levels of EqIA

There are two levels of EqIA that can be undertaken depending on the likely impact of the proposed policy or project. This allows for a reasonable, practical and manageable approach to the process. These levels are:

- i. Initial screening EqIA
- ii. Full EqIA

In broad terms, the purpose of a screening EqIA is to determine whether there is any possibility of differential impact, to prompt a process of mitigating adverse impact, and to address opportunities for tackling disadvantage and under-representation, all before a policy is endorsed and adopted. The **action plan** section of the impact assessment is critical in demonstrating how the project intends to mitigate risks and maximise opportunities. This action plan also forms a basis for monitoring.

The full EqIA is a natural progression from the screening stage if there remain **significant** uncertainties about the levels of impact on one or more of the identified diversity groups. It is also required if there is no agreement about the balance of differential impact between diversity groups and/or no obvious or acceptable way to mitigate adverse impact or address opportunities for positive impact. The process includes a more in-depth analysis supported by formal involvement and consultation of diversity groups, and fully evidenced research. Once a full EqIA is complete it should be possible to resolve the outstanding issues identified at the screening stage.

Every policy and project must undergo the initial Equality Impact Screening stage. This stage will determine whether or not a more in-depth analysis is required, and is based on what information is already available and known in relation to the policy, for example existing statistical information or earlier consultation results.

The principle outcomes from this stage should be either:

- i. Concluding that there will be no significant differential impact on any diversity group arising from the proposal.
- ii. That there is a potential for significant differential impact which may result in an adverse impact on one or more diversity groups – requiring review of the policy to mitigate this impact.
- iii. Identifying any areas where the policy may provide an opportunity to address disadvantage or under-representation for one or more diversity groups, and agree actions to address such opportunities.
- iv. Identify the need for a more in-depth analysis in the form of a full EqIA

A standard form has been provided to assist staff with the format of the screening stage.

### **What should be taken into account?**

The form and guidance highlight the protected characteristics as referenced in the Equality Scheme. However they also reference the additional characteristics we will take into account as part of our decision making processes including the implications for families and those with parenting or caring responsibilities.

The inclusion of the families' characteristic builds on our commitments in The Families and Communities Strategy and the government guidance on the Families Test. The objective of the Families Test is to introduce an explicit family perspective to the policy making process, and ensure that potential impacts on family relationships and functioning are made explicit and recognised in the process of developing new policy. Further information on the Families Test is available from the policy team.

### **Who is responsible for carrying out an EqIA?**

Staff responsible for the development and oversight of the policy or project is responsible for the completion of the EqIA. It is advised that officers may wish to consult with diversity groups to establish any impacts, and with the policy team for guidance regarding the mechanics of the EqIA.

## Equality Screening Form

Question	Response
Q1) Name of the strategy, policy, programme or project being assessed.	
Q2) In no more than five lines and using Plain English, summarise the purpose of the policy or proposal, and its desired outcomes.	
Q3) Who should benefit from the proposal and in what way?	
Q4) Is there any evidence or reason to believe that in relation to this proposal, there may be a difference in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levels of participation</li> <li>• Uptake by different groups</li> <li>• Needs or experiences of different groups</li> <li>• Priorities</li> <li>• Other areas?</li> </ul>	
Q5) Using the evidence listed above, fill in the table below to highlight the groups you think this policy or proposal has the potential to impact upon: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Is there any potential for negative impact? Yes or No</li> <li>(ii) Are there opportunities for positive impact or to promote equality of opportunity?</li> </ul>	
Q6) Considering your answers to questions 1-5, do you believe a Full Equality Impact Assessment is needed?	
Q7) Considering our duty to proactively tackle disadvantage and promote equality of opportunity, list the actions required.	

Impacts Table				
	Is there potential for negative impact? YES or NO	Are there opportunities for positive impact? YES or NO	If YES, please provide details of the impact below	
			Positive Impact	Negative Impact
<b>All groups or society generally</b>				
<b>Age</b> - Older or younger people				
<b>Disability</b> - People with a disability				
<b>Sex</b> - Women or men				
<b>Pregnancy or maternity</b> - including expectant or new parents i.e. pregnancy and maternity				
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b> – including same sex couples				
<b>Race</b> - People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME)				
<b>Religion</b> - People with a religion or belief (or who choose not to have a religion or belief)				
<b>Sexual Orientation</b> - People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) or in a Civil Partnership				
<b>Gender Reassignment</b> - People who are transitioning from one gender to another				
<i>Families and those with parenting or caring responsibilities (The Families Test)</i>				
<i>Individuals on low income</i>				
<i>Those suffering rural isolation</i>				
<i>Those who do not have English as a first language</i>				

<b>Action Plan</b>				
<b>Equality group/ characteristic</b>	<b>Action/milestone</b>	<b>Responsibility</b> (Project manager or partner organisation)	<b>Achievement date</b>	<b>Monitoring arrangements</b>

**Sign off section**

This Screening Level EqIA was completed by:

**Name**

**Job Title**

**Signature**

**Date**

**On completion, please submit this document with the policy or proposal. Guidance and advice on draft and final versions can be obtained from:**

**Tanya Sturman, Corporate Policy Team**  
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## Equality Screening – Guidance

Question	Guidance
<b>Q1) Name of the strategy, policy, programme or project being assessed.</b>	Fill in as required.
<b>Q2) In no more than five lines and using Plain English, , summarise the purpose of the policy or proposal, and its desired outcomes.</b>	Summarise the main aims clearly, trying to avoid jargon and acronyms. This provides someone unfamiliar with the details of the project a transparent overview of the proposal.
<b>Q3) Who should benefit from the proposal and in what way?</b>	List as required, for example people within a specific location, women, young people, older people, people from an ethnic minority community, SMEs etc. The question is designed to assist officers in their duty to consider any positive impact that may arise from the policy or proposal, as well as anyone who may be excluded from benefiting from the proposal and the justification for this.
<b>Q4 Is there any evidence or reason to believe that in relation to this proposal, there may be a difference in:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levels of participation</li> <li>• Uptake by different groups</li> <li>• Needs or experiences of different groups</li> <li>• Priorities</li> <li>• Other areas?</li> </ul>	<p><b>If yes, please list</b></p> <p>Evidence can be both formal and informal, and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data/analysis from the Suffolk Observatory <a href="http://www.suffolkobservatory.info">www.suffolkobservatory.info</a></li> <li>• Local demographic data relevant to the policy or proposal</li> <li>• Research into specific sectors</li> <li>• Reports about issues particular communities have in accessing certain services</li> <li>• Feasibility studies</li> <li>• Feedback from meetings with diversity groups</li> <li>• Information from other staff (i.e. Locality Officers)</li> </ul> <p>List the main sources, and quote selectively where appropriate. If there are significant gaps in the evidence base which make it difficult to reach a decision about adverse impacts then it is important that further consultation/research is undertaken as appropriate. Policy or project leads will need to make a judgement about what is reasonable and justifiable in this context.</p>

<p><b>Q5) Using the evidence listed above, fill in the table below to highlight the groups you think this policy or proposal has the potential to impact upon: Is there any potential for negative impact? Yes or No</b></p>	<p>It is important to consider this question in consultation with other people, as a variety of people will bring different thoughts to the process. Also consider involving or consulting organisations which represent the different diversity groups. You can use the information you have gathered and analysed to decide whether the policy or proposal may affect diversity groups differently, and whether any of these differences constitute disadvantage or unlawful discrimination.</p>
<p><b>Are there opportunities for positive impact or to promote equality of opportunity?</b></p>	<p>As previously, use information you have already gathered or is available to highlight opportunities where the project can make a positive impact and promote equality of opportunity. As a prompt, consider obligations contained in the equality duty, as detailed in the main body of the equalities scheme.</p>
<p><b>Q6) Considering your answers to questions 1-5, do you believe a Full Equality Impact Assessment is needed?</b></p>	<p>If you are confident, on the basis of the information available, that there will not be an adverse impact, or that any adverse impact can be mitigated with a few amendments, you may not need to proceed to a full impact assessment. However, if you need to undertake further significant consultation and research to resolve issues then a full EqIA will be required.</p>
<p><b>Q7) Considering our duty to proactively tackle disadvantage and promote equality of opportunity, list the actions required.</b></p>	<p>If you have identified an adverse impact you will need to detail the clear and measurable actions or changes that will be made to the proposal or policy in order to mitigate this. If you cannot find a way to resolve an adverse impact at the screening stage, for example because of a lack of information, or because more than one diversity group is affected, you should progress to a full EqIA. For further advice, contact West Suffolk's Equality and Diversity Officer. You should list any actions which will be taken to address opportunities to promote equality of opportunity. These will then be followed up through monitoring and evaluation, should the policy or proposal be endorsed or adopted.</p>

### **Full Equality Impact Assessment**

The full EqIA is a natural progression from the screening stage if there remain concerns about the proposal or policy in terms of adverse impact on one or more of the identified diversity groups. This is often the case if there are gaps in the evidence used during the screening stage.

The full EqIA is not different in nature from the screening stage of the process but should be undertaken in a structured, systematic way. This may include primary research, consultation, and/or engagement with representatives from the diversity groups with a legitimate interest, or that potentially face an adverse impact as a result of the policy or proposal. It should be timely, open and inclusive, and conducted in accordance with the principles detailed in our gender, disability and race equality schemes.

The aim of this stage is to conclude with clear recommendations on changes and amendments based on adequate and objective information. Clear evidence of the consideration of the impact of alternatives and the changes that have been made as a result of the review must be presented.

**Full Equality Impact Assessment**

<b>Question</b>		<b>Response</b>	
<b>Summary</b>			
Q1)	Name of the strategy, policy, programme or project being assessed.		
Q2)	In no more than five lines and using Plain English, summarise the purpose of the policy or proposal, and its desired outcomes.		
<b>Evidence</b>			
Q3)	What does the current evidence tell us about possible inequalities in relation to this proposal?	<b>Equality group/characteristic</b>	<b>Issue(s)</b>
<b>Consultation</b>			
Q4	How do you plan to seek the views of the groups outlined above?	<b>Method</b>	
		General consultation event (open to all)	
		Use regional Equality Networks	
		Specific and targeted consultation workshop	
		Seek specialist advice from relevant organisations	
		Commission research	
		Other (please detail)	

**Consultation Results**

Q5) Using the table below, summarise the results of the consultation exercise (attach full records of consultation carried out).

<b>Consultation Results</b>	<b>Please outline each impact (positive or negative) identified through the consultation process</b>	<b>Impact</b> Negative, positive or neutral?	<b>Evidence</b> The process should have highlighted new information e.g. secondary research or anecdotal experiences of individuals from specific groups
<b>1.</b>			
<b>2.</b>			
<b>3.</b>			
<b>4.</b>			
<b>5.</b>			
<b>6.</b>			
<b>7.</b>			

**Decision – Final Outcome**

Q6) Based on the results of this full EqIA, please select how this policy or proposal will be taken forward:

Implement policy or proposal without making any changes

Implement policy or proposal but take action (listed below) to address impacts identified

Implement policy or proposal as a pilot and monitor for impact

Abandon policy or proposal and redesign with involvement of specific groups from the outset

<b>Action Plan</b>				
<b>Equality group/ characteristic</b>	<b>Action/milestone</b>	<b>Responsibility</b> (Project manager or partner organisation)	<b>Achievement date</b>	<b>Monitoring arrangements</b>

**Sign off section**

This Screening Level EqIA was completed by:

**Name**

**Job Title**

**Signature**

**Date**

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