

## **West Suffolk Equality Scheme 2021**

### **Appendix A: Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Guidance**

#### **Including:**

#### **EqIA Screening Flowchart and Guidance**

#### **EqIA Full Assessment Form**

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February 2021

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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 an 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 councillors 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 and 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 counterbalanced 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.

### 2.1 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:

1. Initial screening EqIA
2. 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 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 principal outcomes from this stage should either:

- conclude that there will be no significant differential impact on any diversity group arising from the proposal
- conclude 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
- identify 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
- identify the need for a more in-depth analysis in the form of a full EqIA.

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

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

The form and guidance highlight the protected characteristics as referenced in the Equality Scheme 2021. Best practice guidance is available from a range of organisations, explaining the types of things that should be taken into account.

For example, a Dementia Friendly Physical Environments Checklist is available from Dementia Action Alliance to support the process of ensuring built environments are as accessible as possible for those living with dementia. This is available from the [Dementia Action Alliance website](#)

The form also references 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.

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

Staff responsible for the development and oversight of the policy or project are 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.

## 3. Equality screening form

A quick-reference, editable version of this table is available on the West Suffolk Council intranet for use by officers in preparing EqIAs.

<p><b>Step 1: The changes being proposed</b>          What changes are being proposed? For example, in policy, service, charging, location.</p>	
<p><b>Step 1a. Who will the changes have an impact on in general?</b> (For example, taxi drivers, customers, staff, owners of businesses)  <b>List the groups:</b></p>	<p><b>Step 1b. What changes will each of the groups listed experience?</b>  <b>Impacts on specific groups:</b></p>

Add more rows as needed.

<b>Step 2: Impacts on specific groups</b>	
<p><b>Step 2a.</b> Within any of the groups you listed in Step 1, is there a <b>higher proportion of people with a protected or other characteristic</b> listed on page 7 than the populations of West Suffolk as a whole? (For example, users of Shopmobility are more likely to have a disability than the West Suffolk population)</p> <p><b>Describe how representation within the group affected differs from the West Suffolk population (use data if possible)</b></p>	<p><b>Step 2b.</b> Are there any elements of the decision or changes that will <b>impact differently</b> on people with a protected or other characteristic listed on page 7? (For example, people in rural areas with poor broadband may find it harder to access services if moved online.)</p> <p><b>Describe how the change will impact differently on different groups, positively and negatively.</b></p>

Add more rows as needed.

<b>Step 3: Adjustments to the proposals</b>	
<p><b>Step 3a.</b> What are the views of the changes from those who are affected by them and what (if any) amendments would they like to see? Please note this engagement should precede formal consultation. For example, what do charities think of proposed changes to business rates relief?</p> <p><b>Record any feedback on the proposals that has been gathered</b></p>	<p><b>Step 3b.</b> Based on the feedback from 3a, can we alter the proposed changes so that the negative impacts are removed or reduced and the positive impacts maximised? For example, adjust eligibility criteria to exclude small charities from changes.</p> <p><b>What changes could be made to the proposals? If none, say why not.</b></p> <p><b>How can we ensure the proposals are communicated effectively to those affected?</b></p>

Add more rows as needed.

**West Suffolk Council is committed to assessing the impact of our proposals on:**

- those with a protected characteristic (that is age, disability, sex, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, race, religion, sexual orientation and gender re-assignment)
- families and those with caring responsibilities
- people on low income
- people suffering rural isolation
- those for whom English is not their first language

## **4. Full Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)**

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 or engagement with representatives from the diversity groups with a legitimate interest, or who 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.

Question		Response	
<b>Summary</b>			
1. Name of the strategy, policy, programme or project being assessed.			
2. 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>			
3. What does the current evidence tell us about possible inequalities in relation to this proposal?	<b>Equality group or characteristic</b>	<b>Issue(s)</b>	
<b>Consultation</b>			
4. How do you plan to seek the views of the groups outlined above?	<b>Method</b>	<b>Complete?</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)		

Question		Response	
<b>Consultation results</b>			
5. 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, for example: secondary research or anecdotal experiences of individuals from specific groups.

<b>Decision – final outcome</b>	
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 or characteristic</b>	<b>Action or milestone</b>	<b>Responsibility</b> (Project manager or partner organisation)	<b>Achievement date</b>	<b>Monitoring arrangements</b>

<b>Sign off section</b>	
<p>This EqIA was completed by:</p> <p><b>Name</b></p> <p><b>Job title</b></p> <p><b>Signature</b></p> <p><b>Date</b></p>	<p><b>On completion, please submit this document with the policy or proposal. Guidance and advice on draft and final versions can be obtained from:</b></p> <p><b>Liz Barnard, Corporate Policy Team</b></p> <p><b>01638 719454</b>  <a href="mailto:Liz.Barnard@westsuffolk.gov.uk">Liz.Barnard@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a></p>