

East Renfrewshire Council Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit

SCOPING THE ASSESSMENT

Policy name: Review of Customer First Opening Hours

Step 1 of 3

Question 1.

What are the aims of the policy?

Answer:

As part of the council's drive to encourage more of our customers to access our services online, a review has taken place of the opening hours of our Customer Service centres. This considered the level of footfall by members of the public accessing Council services via our two Customer Service Centres in HQ and Barrhead particularly at either end of the day when extended hours are available. Data showed that on average there are 2 customers before 08:45 and 6 customers after 16:45 across both centres and 26 calls before 08:45 and 13 calls after 16:45 each day. The reconfiguration of opening hours will result in a more standardised rota allowing for a reduction in headcount by 3 FTE, which equates to a saving of £57,000.

This will contribute to the Council's £22 million budget saving strategy.

Question 2.

Which aspects of the policy are particularly relevant to the duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.

Answer:

→ The change in opening hours will mean there is a reduction in the time the service is presently available and this could have an impact on service users. Both protected and non-protected groups would be impacted. It is recognised that certain service users, such as the elderly and our less able-bodied customers use face to face services rather than online services.

There is a move to transition more customers who could be accessing the Service online to undertake their transactions. This change would allow for more staffing availability/resource for those service users who require the support of face to face service interaction.

The proposed cessation of flexible working arrangements based on the current formation of compressed hours would presently impact 5 staff (3 women & 2 men). It is acknowledged that due to the profile of the staffing group (26 females compared to 8 males) there may be employees who would consider a move to flexible working in the future. Alternative flexible working arrangements have been discussed with the staff currently impacted. The Service will always consider flexible working applications, it is anticipated the Service may be unable to support future requests based on compressed hours; however other alternatives would be offered where these can be operationally supported.

Question 3.

Please tick the boxes which apply

→ **Answer** (*Place 'x' where appropriate*)

X	There is evidence to indicate that the policy may result in less favourable treatment for particular groups
	There is evidence to indicate that the policy may give rise to indirect discrimination

East Renfrewshire Council Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit

	There is evidence to indicate that the policy may give rise to unlawful harassment or victimisation
	There is evidence to indicate that the policy may lead to discrimination arising from disability
X	There is evidence to indicate that the policy may build in reasonable adjustments where these may be needed

Further Details

If there is evidence, please give details here:

- It is anticipated that certain protected groups; such as the elderly and disabled groups, will continue to require face to face service and there is a programme to educate and transition those customers who can undertake their interactions online doing so; freeing up resources to serve those customers who rely on face to face support. Cessation of flexible working arrangements based on compressed hours may have more of an impact on females due to the higher percentage of females within the team. Although compressed hours may not be able to be offered in the future – alternative arrangements such as job-share or reduction in contracted hours may be able to be supported.

Question 4.

Which aspects of the policy are particularly relevant to the duty to have due regard to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

Answer:

- The reduction in opening hours and introduction of new shift patterns.
- To support the reduced opening hours, there will be an education programme to move more customers online; allowing for more time/resource to be available for our vulnerable customer groups e.g. elderly and disabled customers. This education programme will be supported by a Communication campaign, gadget bars, social customer service and the introduction of appointments for more complex services.

To support our employee's work/life balance, flexible work requests will always be considered and approved when they can be operationally supported.

Question 5.

Please tick the boxes which apply
Add an action

- **Answer** (*Place 'x' where appropriate*)

	There is evidence to indicate the policy will remove or minimise disadvantage
x	There is evidence the policy will meet the needs of different groups
	There is evidence the policy will encourage increased participation of particular groups
X	There is evidence the policy will take account of disabled people's needs

East Renfrewshire Council Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit

Further Details

Please give further details:

→ Operational change to move more customers online; so more time available for vulnerable customer groups e.g. elderly and disabled customers. This will be supported by a Communication campaign, gadget bars, social customer service and the introduction of appointments for more complex services.

A soft launch Communications campaign will begin on 9 January 2017 which will be a rolling programme throughout the year to encourage residents to access available services online where they are able to do so. The Communications Team are working with Customer Services to determine priority areas for the campaign to ensure the customer journey access in these areas is the best it can be. Customer services will continue to promote what you can do online by sending out web address links and promoting through telephone messages.

Gadget bars go live in HQ and Barrhead on 21 November 2016. These will allow Customer Service Officers (CSOs) to demonstrate to customers how to access services online encouraging channel shift. A floor walking model will be used and Customer First will continually review the approach based on customer feedback.

Currently Live Chat is used by CSOs to support customers who are accessing online services. This service has received very positive feedback and allows customers to link directly through the online system with a CSO who can respond to any queries they have and assist them with the online experience. In future CSOs will take on a wider social customer service role responding to all customer service related questions through our social media channels. This will take e-communication to the next level and build on the successes of the online live chat service and email responses.

An appointment system has already been introduced for registration and Council House sign ups which makes better use of staff face to face time. The plan is to roll this out to other complex face to face customer interactions, for example taxi licensing and benefits.

Step 2 of 3

Question 6.

Which aspects of the policy are particularly relevant to the duty to have due regard to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

→ **Answer:**

This is not relevant to this policy.

Question 7.

(Place 'x' where appropriate)

→ **Answer**

There is evidence the policy will help you to tackle prejudice

There is evidence the policy will promote understanding between different groups

Further Details

→ **Please give further details:**

No further details at this time.

Question 8.

What evidence is already available about the needs of relevant groups, and where are the gaps in evidence?

East Renfrewshire Council Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit

→ **Answer:**

- Usage/interactions statistics (however these are not categorised by protected groups)
- ERC census information
- Information from the employee consultations

Question 9.

What data will be required in the future to ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of this policy?

→ **Answer:**

- Usage/interactions statistics
- Attainment of service standards
- Complaints received that demonstrate any service issues and if these relate to a particular protected group.
- Compliments received.
- Staff feedback through PRD's
- HR related statistics such as turnover, absence and Employee Relations statistics.

OUTCOME OF THE ASSESSMENT

Question 10.

Having considered the potential or actual impacts of the policy, what should be done?

Question

Option 1 : No major change

Add an action

Answer

(delete as appropriate)

→ Yes / No

Question 11.

Option 2 : Adjust the policy

Answer

(delete as appropriate)

→ Yes / No

Further Details

If you answered "yes" to option 2, please outline your plans to: - remove or change the aspect(s) of the policy that create(s) any negative or unwanted impact identified; - remove barriers, to better advance equality or to foster good relations and; - to introduce additional measures to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impact.

Answer

→

Question 12.

Option 3 : continue the policy despite the potential for adverse impact

Add an action

Answer

→ Yes

East Renfrewshire Council Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit

Further Details

If you answered "yes" to option 3, please give the reasons why and how you believe that decision is compatible with your obligations under the duty.

Answer

Although some protected groups may be disadvantaged by the change, through the education/transition of more customers' online, more customers will start to utilise self-service allowing more time and staffing resource to be available for face to face discussions with vulnerable customers.

Alternatives to the current practice of flexible working arrangements based on compressed hours can be offered; including job-share and reduction in working hours. Alternatives have been discussed with the employees currently impacted and would also be available for consideration of any future applications to allow for the best possible option for the employee to be put in place while still meeting service standards.

Question 13.

Option 4 : Stop and remove the policy

Add an action

Answer

(delete as appropriate)

→ Yes / No

Further Details

If you answered "yes" to option 4 please give your reasons

→

ORGANISATIONAL SIGNOFF

Policy name **Review of Customer Service Opening Hours**

Step 1 of 3

Question 1.Aim of the policy?

Answer

As part of the council's drive to encourage more of our customers to access our services online, a review has taken place of the opening hours of Customer Service centres. This considered the level of footfall by members of the public accessing Council services via our two Customer Service Centres in HQ and Barrhead particularly at either end of the day when extended hours are available. Data showed that on average there are 2 customers before 08:45 and 6 customers after 16:45 across both centres and 26 calls before 08:45 and 13 calls after 16.45 each day. The reconfiguration of opening hours will result in a more standardised rota allowing for a reduction in headcount by 3 FTE, which equates to a saving of £57,000.

This should be achieved by minimising the impact on disadvantaged groups. In fact it is anticipated that the move to on-line services will provide more not less access to face to face discussions with disadvantaged customers that can currently be achieved.

This will contribute to the Council's £22 million budget saving strategy.

Question 2.Priority

(Place 'x' where appropriate)

→ **Answer**

	High
	Medium
X	Low

East Renfrewshire Council Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit

Question 3. Tick areas of equality relevance

→ **Answer**

(Place 'x' where appropriate)

X	Age
X	Disability
X	Gender
	Gender reassignment
	Pregnancy and maternity
	Race
	Religion or belief
	Sexual orientation
	Marriage and civil partnership (with regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment)

Question 4. Risk of adverse impact

→ **Answer**

Low

Question 5. Data used (including assessment of reliability and validity)

Add an action

→ **Answer**

- Usage/interaction statistics
- ERC census info
- Workforce information – gender/age etc.
- Information from conversations with the public.
- Information from TU and employee consultations

Question 6. Assessment of adverse impact

→ **Answer**

It is acknowledged the policy may have an impact on protected groups, however there are plans for an education/channel shift programme to enable customers to utilise more online services to allow for more resource to deal with vulnerable clients. The access channel volumes will be monitored with appropriate actions taken.

Question 7. Consultation carried out (methods, target groups consulted, etc)

→ **Answer**

- Staff – 1:1 consultations
- Internal customers – discussion at meetings.
- External customers – conversations with a sample of customers accessing the service.
- Union consultation.

East Renfrewshire Council Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit

Question 8. Proposed method to reduce or eliminate Adverse Impact (including reasons chosen)

→ **Answer**

Operational change to move more customers online; so more time available for vulnerable customer groups e.g. elderly and disabled customers. This will be supported by a Communication campaign, gadget bars, social customer service and the introduction of appointments for more complex services.

A soft launch Communications campaign will begin on 9 January 2017 which will be a rolling programme throughout the year to encourage residents to access available services online where they are able to do so. The Communications Team are working with Customer Services to determine priority areas for the campaign to ensure the customer journey access in these areas is the best it can be. Customer services will continue to promote what you can do online by sending out web address links and promoting through telephone messages.

Gadget bars go live in HQ and Barrhead on 21 November 2016. These will allow Customer Service Officers (CSOs) to demonstrate to customers how to access services online encouraging channel shift. A floor walking model will be used and Customer First will continually review the approach based on customer feedback.

Currently Live Chat is used by CSOs to support customers who are accessing online services. This service has received very positive feedback and allows customers to link directly through the online system with a CSO who can respond to any queries they have and assist them with the online experience. In future CSOs will take on a wider social customer service role responding to all customer service related questions through our social media channels. This will take e-communication to the next level and build on the successes of the online live chat service and email responses.

An appointment system has already been introduced for registration and Council House sign ups which makes better use of staff face to face time. The plan is to roll this out to other complex face to face customer interactions, for example taxi licensing and benefits.

While current practices of compressed working is no longer an option due to the proposed new opening hours, other flexible options are available and individual discussions will be held to allow the best possible option for the employee to be put in place while still meeting service requirements.)

Question 9. Conclusions and recommendations for amendments to the policy. Please state who/which group or committee considered the options and took the decision on what action would be taken. If a number of options were considered, summarise these and the reason for selecting one option over any others. If no further action is required as a result of the EQIA, please explain.

→ **Answer**

This decision was made by Cabinet. There were 3 options considered and option 1 was put forward as a proposal as it had the least impact on customers and employees.

Question 10. Timescale for implementation

→ **Answer**

New operating hours will be introduced on 1 April 2017.

East Renfrewshire Council Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit

Question 11. Methods of publication

→ **Answer**

Communication plan to publicise the changes on ERC website and through other channels.

Question 12. Monitoring arrangements

→ **Answer**

- Usage/interaction statistics
- Service standards
- Staff feedback with management
- Customer feedback
- Level of compliments and complaints

→ **Comments**

Policy change will be continued to be monitored post implementation date.

→ **Next Review Date**

Chief Officer's Signature:

Sharon Beattie
Head of HR, Customer and Communications