

Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening



As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provides a record of both the **process** and **decision**. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.
- whether or not equality, diversity, cohesion and integration is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an impact assessment.

Directorate: Corporate Governance	Service area: Registrars
Lead person: Steve Coupe	Contact number: 2476686

1. Title: Taking advance payments for Marriage and Civil Partnership Notice appointments

Is this a:

Strategy / Policy

Service / Function

Other

If other, please specify

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

Between 9 May and 30 June 12% of customers with an appointment to give a notice of marriage or civil partnership did not turn up resulting in wasted resources and a wasted appointment opportunity for other customers. Consequently the waiting time for appointments now far exceeds the national statutory target (within 1 week).

The need to try and provide additional appointments to compensate the missed appointments is having a detrimental effect on other areas of our service.

We therefore propose to collect notice fees at the time that customers make their appointment for giving notice to encourage them to attend at the allotted time. (The fee is normally collected on completion of the notice).

3. Relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

All the council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – city wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and any other relevant characteristics (for example socio-economic status, social class, income, unemployment, residential location or family background and education or skills levels).

Questions	Yes	No
Is there an existing or likely differential impact for the different equality characteristics?	x	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns about the policy or proposal?		x
Could the proposal affect how our services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		x
Could the proposal affect our workforce or employment practices?		x
Does the proposal involve or will it have an impact on <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment• Advancing equality of opportunity• Fostering good relations		X X x

If you have answered **no** to the questions above please complete **sections 6 and 7**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above and;

- Believe you have already considered the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 4**.
- Are not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 5**.

4. Considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

If you can demonstrate you have considered how your proposals impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you have carried out an impact assessment.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below (use the prompts for guidance).

- **How have you considered equality, diversity, cohesion and integration?** (think about the scope of the proposal, who is likely to be affected, equality related information, gaps in information and plans to address, consultation and engagement activities (taken place or planned) with those likely to be affected)

Customers who have a genuine need for a notice appointment are being delayed due to other customers not taking up their appointment.

Between 9 May and 30 June we had 86 notice appointments where the customer failed to turn up (12% of total appointments) resulting in wasted resource and a wasted appointment opportunity for other customers. It is difficult to be certain why customers fail to turn up although reasons could include cancellation of ceremony, unforeseen unavailability on the day or simply that the customer has forgotten about the appointment. The removal of the Certificate of Approval scheme in May 2011 has increased the number of foreign nationals who are making arrangements for marriage/civil partnership. Despite a ratio of 2 standard notices to each foreign national notice, over 50% of no show appointments are for foreign nationals, who are not subject to the same limitations as to where they can give notice. There is anecdotal evidence nationally that in some cases foreign national customers are contacting several districts to find the quickest appointment and then not turning up for any other appointment they may have booked. The UKBA has also identified a similar trend where they suspect appointments are being made for sham marriages.

We do not anticipate that the proposed change will impact significantly on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration although asking customers to pay in advance when booking their appointment by phone would disadvantage those who do not have a credit or debit card. These customers would be able to attend in person at the Town Hall to book and pay for their appointment.

We already charge customers in advance for the Nationality and Settlement Checking service appointments. This has been in place since 2009 and was introduced following a period when we experienced similar problems of customers not turning up. This has since proved very successful and we now have very few no-shows.

Alongside the advance payments we will be introducing a text reminder service to remind customers of their forthcoming appointment and asking them to re-arrange the appointment, if necessary.

Where the customer wishes to cancel their notice appointment, a refund will be given provided that the appointment is cancelled up to 48 hours before the time of their appointment.

- **Key findings**

(think about any potential positive and negative impact on different equality characteristics, potential to promote strong and positive relationships between groups, potential to bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other, perception that the proposal could benefit one group at the expense of another)

We expect there may be customers who are not happy to call in person to pay the fee in advance. Any adverse comments will be considered and reviewed following implementation.

However we anticipate that this measure will reduce the number of “no shows” as paying the £33.50 notice fee will commit the customer to attending their appointment. We also expect that customers who are looking around for the quickest appointment will be deterred from booking in Leeds due to the need to pay up front.

We expect that this will free up appointments to other customers and reduce current waiting times. It will also help us make better use of our resources.

- **Actions**

(think about how you will promote positive impact and remove/ reduce negative impact)

Introduce the change from 1 August 2011

Publicise the need to pay in advance

Ensure contact centre advise customers at first point of contact

Ensure staff available to deal with face to face customers wanting to pay in advance

Investigate potential for One Stop Centres to take face to face payments

Introduce e-payments enabling customers to pay and make appointment on-line

Review number of missed appointments.

Monitor and seek feedback from customers. This would include equality monitoring to establish whether any equality group is experiencing either a negative or positive impact of the service change.

5. If you are **not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you **will need to carry out an impact assessment.****

Date to scope and plan your impact assessment:	
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Date to complete your impact assessment	
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Lead person for your impact assessment (Include name and job title)	
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6. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening

Name	Job title	Date
Steve Coupe	Superintendent Registrar	5 July 2011

7. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If you are not carrying out an independent impact assessment the screening document will need to be published.

Please send a copy to the Equality Team for publishing

Date screening completed	5 July 2011
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Date sent to Equality Team	15 August 2011
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Date published	16 th August 2011
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