

## **Equality Analysis Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form 'Knowing your customer's needs'**

### **Background**

An Equality Analysis is a way of making sure that equality considerations are embedded into our decision-making processes and that equality is considered when we are developing key policy & services etc.

One tool to help you do this is an Equality Impact Assessment or EIA. It will assist you in ensuring that “due regard” has been given to identify any potential or actual impact (Positive or Negative) that our policies/services/functions\*etc., have on differing groups of people.

EIAs also provide a systematic approach to identifying and recording gaps and actions in relation to ensuring equal access when providing functions.

#### **The purpose of the Equality Analysis is to:**

- make us focus on the needs, experiences and circumstances of everyone who will be affected by the decisions the Council makes
- direct us to seek alternative ways of achieving our aims and avoiding inequality
- enhance our creditability with our service users to have greater confidence in our performance
- improve our policy making procedures and services

\* Note: For simplicity we have sometimes referred to the following (listed below) as 'Functions.' This includes: Services, Employment Practices, Projects, Strategy, Processes, Systems, Practices, Procedures, Protocols and Guidelines

## Legislation - Equality duty

As a local authority that provides services to the public, Melton has a legal responsibility to ensure that we can demonstrate having paid due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance Equality of Opportunity
- Foster good relations

For the following protected characteristics:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership
5. Pregnancy and maternity
6. Race
7. Religion and belief
8. Sex
9. Sexual orientation

When completing the Equality Impact Assessment, you are encouraged to consider other disadvantaged or socially excluded communities or groups e.g. carers, the homeless, rural communities, priority neighbourhoods, ex-forces personnel etc., who are likely to be affected by the proposal. The evidence also needs recording to demonstrate that consideration has been given.

**Please complete sections 1 to 8.**

### 1. Overview of policy/function being assessed

<b>Title of the policy</b>	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy
<b>Is it new or existing?</b>	Revised policy (updated)
<b>Date</b>	January 2023
<b>Officer undertaking EIA</b>	Sarah Dibble / Michelle Howard
<b>Who else is involved in undertaking this assessment?</b>	<a href="mailto:checkandchallenge@melton.gov.uk">checkandchallenge@melton.gov.uk</a>

**A. Outline: What is the purpose of this policy? (Specify the aims and objectives.) Please also state why the policy has been introduced or changed.**

Local Authorities are required to have a Corporate Complaints Policy to explain, clarify and publish Melton Borough Council's (MBC) position regarding making complaints about the services provided by MBC. The guidance explains how MBC will investigate

the complaints it receives from individuals who are unhappy with the service they receive and what actions MBC will take to resolve those concerns.

The Policy explains in detail who can make a complaint, how long it may take to investigate and what will and will not be investigated. It is expected that by providing this information to MBC's residents, it will assist individuals in locating the information and advice they will require in order to make a complaint and helpful links to assist them.

By encouraging resolution of complaints, as close to the point of service delivery as possible, many customers will have their concerns resolved locally, quickly and effectively, thereby reducing the potential for escalation of the complaint to the next stage of the process.

It will deliver real operational benefits for MBC as well as improving public perception and relationships with service users.

The Policy ensures a consistent approach to complaints throughout the Authority providing a clear and concise methodology to both customers wishing to complain, and to officers managing the complaints process. Each escalation stage is clearly defined and clarifies the notification process of the responsible management level providing the response. The policy has been amended to ensure it reflects the latest guidance and requirements from the Housing Ombudsman and incorporates the unreasonably persistent customers policy.

## **B. Who are the people/groups affected and what is the intended change or outcome for them?**

Members of the public including council tenants.  
Council staff  
Stakeholders

It strengthens engagement with members of the public at the initial stage of their complaint, thereby giving an opportunity of resolving any issues as quickly and effectively as possible. It should improve the service provided to members of the public and streamline the process to make this easier for both staff and those making a complaint. It responds directly to the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman in relation to complaints handling for housing tenants and is supported by a self-assessment (in line with the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling) which will also be published to the council's website. The policy incorporates the unreasonable and persistent customer policy and removes language such as 'vexatious.' It is clear that housing tenants may approach the Housing Ombudsman at any stage of their complaint.

### C. Equality implications/obligations.

**Will this proposal/policy/service etc., meet the Equality Act requirement to have ‘due regard’ to the need to meet any of the following duties?**

**(In this question, consider both the new/current service and the proposed changes).**

Equality Duty.	Is the equality duty listed in the left-hand column relevant to your policy/service etc?		Comments on how it meets the duty or why is not relevant
	Yes	No	
<b>(1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation – please complete section 4 of the template.</b>	Yes		The process will be applied equally to ensure that each complaint is looked at in its own merit, notwithstanding any previous contact from the member of the public lodging the complaint.
<b>(2) Advance equality of opportunity between different groups</b> How does the proposal/policy/service etc ensure that the intended outcomes promote equality of opportunity for users who have protected characteristics?  This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removing or minimising disadvantages for protected groups of people</li> <li>• Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people</li> <li>• Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low e.g. are stakeholders engaged in the process and are there any barriers?</li> </ul>	Yes		The Policy includes a clear statement to adhere to the Equality Act 2010.  The process will be applied equally to ensure that the council meets the needs of the diverse range of people who use its services.  The policy will ensure that the procedures are followed, and decisions made are carried out in a consistent and transparent manner.

Equality Duty.	Is the equality duty listed in the left-hand column relevant to your policy/service etc?		Comments on how it meets the duty or why is not relevant
	Yes	No	
<p><b>(3) Foster good relations between different groups (tackling prejudice and promoting understanding).</b> Does the service contribute to good relations or to broader community cohesion objectives? How does it achieve this aim?</p> <p>This could include: (<i>The following are examples and so you do not need to answer all the bullet points below.</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building services around people and communities and involving them</li> <li>• Considering if there are strong and positive relationships between groups/communities affected by this policy. Does the policy/service bring together groups of people not used to interacting with each other? If so, will it raise any issues that need to be addressed?</li> <li>• Tackling myths and misinformation. If the service is seen as unfair by certain groups, how do you tackle the myths and communicate this?</li> </ul>	Yes		<p>The Policy is designed to give a clear expectation of how a complaint will be dealt with.</p> <p>The Policy has been written to manage complainants' expectations and sets out clear time scales for their complaint to be investigated and acted upon,</p> <p>The Policy provides for the Council to learn from each complaint received and continuously improve the levels of service it provides to its customers.</p>

#### **D. Which groups have been consulted as part of the creation or review of the policy? Did they identify any barriers?**

The updated policy responds to requirements from the Housing Ombudsman and self-assessment in line with the complaints handling code. IT has been discussed with the Senior Leadership Team, Housing Leadership Team and Cabinet Members (via a briefing).

Upon approval, implementation of the revised policy will be discussed with tenants and will be presented to the Assistant Directors group and Managers Network to aid successful implementation.

## **2. What we already know and where there are gaps**

### **A. What existing information/data do you have/monitor about different diverse groups in relation to this policy?**

**This could consist of previous EIA's, reports, consultation, surveys, demographic profiles etc.**

We do not currently hold this information.

This policy seeks to ensure fair, robust and transparent investigation and resolution of complaints for everybody. It is clear that complaints can be received in a range of formats and can also be submitted by a third party or advocate.

### **B. What does this information/data tell you about diverse groups?**

**If you do not hold or have access to any data/information on certain/all diverse groups, what do you need to begin collating/monitoring? (please list)**

Monitoring of complaints is undertaken, and trends reported to SLT. Additional consideration will be given to collating and monitoring information relating to diverse groups.

## **3. Do we need to seek the views of others and if so, who?**

### **A. In light of the answers you have given in question 1D & 2 do you need to consult with specific groups? If not, please explain why.**

No – The new policy will facilitate the ongoing collation of information from each complaint received and will allow the Council to monitor the feedback on the delivery and to make improvements to its services on an ongoing basis to address any trends or issues raised by complaints.

## **4. Assessing the impacts**

In light of any data/consultation/information and your own knowledge and awareness, please identify whether the policy has an actual or potential positive or negative impact on

the groups specified and whether there is evidence of discrimination. Please read the guidance that accompanies this template.

If you have identified actual or potential negative impact or discrimination that is illegal, you are required to take action to remedy this immediately.

If you have identified negative impact or discrimination that is justifiable or legitimate, please give your reasons. You will need to consider what can be done to mitigate its effect on those groups of people.

Provide an explanation for your decisions.

<b>Diversity Groups</b>	<b>Positive impacts</b>  (Actual or Potential)	<b>Negative impacts</b> (Including any barriers)  (Actual or Potential)	<b>Is there evidence of direct/indirect discrimination?</b> (Is it illegal or legitimate/justifiable?)	<b>Mitigation</b>  Where there are potential barriers, negative impacts identified and/or the barriers or impacts are unknown, please outline how you propose to minimise or remove all negative impact or discrimination.
<b>Age</b>		Digital exclusion	It is possible that a higher percentage of residents over 65 years may not have proficient ICT skills so may have difficulty locating online assistance.	We have mitigated this by providing telephone numbers so that residents can ring the office and lodge their complaint. They have also been given a postal address should they wish to write into the office. Complaints can be received in a range of formats and via a third party or advocate. Awareness of the policy will form a key part of the implementation plan.
<b>Disability</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Physical</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Visual</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Hearing</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>learning disabilities</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>mental health</b>	The process will be applied equally to ensure that we meet the needs of the diverse range of people who meet the criteria regardless of their disability.			

<b>Diversity Groups</b>	<b>Positive impacts</b>  (Actual or Potential)	<b>Negative impacts</b> (Including any barriers)  (Actual or Potential)	<b>Is there evidence of direct/indirect discrimination?</b> (Is it illegal or legitimate/justifiable?)	<b>Mitigation</b>  Where there are potential barriers, negative impacts identified and/or the barriers or impacts are unknown, please outline how you propose to minimise or remove all negative impact or discrimination.
<b>Gender / Sex</b>	The Policy will ensure that procedures followed, and decisions made are carried out in a consistent and transparent manner and applied with equity irrespective of a person's status with regard to their gender / sex.			
<b>Religious Belief</b>	The Policy will ensure that procedures followed, and decisions made are carried out in a consistent and transparent manner and applied with equity irrespective of a person's status with regard to their religious beliefs.			
<b>Racial Group</b>	The Policy will ensure that procedures followed, and decisions made are carried out in a consistent and transparent manner and applied with equity irrespective of a person's status with regard to their racial group.			



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<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	The Policy will ensure that procedures followed, and decisions made are carried out in a consistent and transparent manner and applied with equity irrespective of a person's status with regard to their sexual orientation.			
<b>Gender reassignment/ Transgender</b>	The Policy will ensure that procedures followed, and decisions made are carried out in a consistent and transparent manner and applied with equity irrespective of a person's status with regard to gender reassignment / transgender.			

<b>Diversity Groups</b>	<b>Positive impacts</b>  (Actual or Potential)	<b>Negative impacts</b> (Including any barriers)  (Actual or Potential)	<b>Is there evidence of direct/indirect discrimination?</b> (Is it illegal or legitimate/justifiable?)	<b>Mitigation</b> Where there are potential barriers, negative impacts identified and/or the barriers or impacts are unknown, please outline how you propose to minimise or remove all negative impact or discrimination.
<b>Other protected groups</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy & maternity <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage & civil partnership	The Policy will ensure that procedures followed, and decisions made are carried out in a consistent and transparent manner and applied with equity irrespective of a person's pregnancy or maternity status or a person's marriage or civil partnership status.			

<b>Diversity Groups</b>	<b>Positive impacts</b>  (Actual or Potential)	<b>Negative impacts</b> (Including any barriers)  (Actual or Potential)	<b>Is there evidence of direct/indirect discrimination?</b> (Is it illegal or legitimate/justifiable?)	<b>Mitigation</b>  Where there are potential barriers, negative impacts identified and/or the barriers or impacts are unknown, please outline how you propose to minimise or remove all negative impact or discrimination.
<b>Other socially excluded groups</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Carers <input type="checkbox"/> Low literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Priority neighbourhoods <input type="checkbox"/> Health inequalities <input type="checkbox"/> Rural isolation <input type="checkbox"/> Asylum seeker and refugee communities <input type="checkbox"/> Current and ex-armed HM forces personnel (Veterans)	The Policy will ensure that procedures followed, and decisions made are carried out in a consistent and transparent manner and applied with equity and will not be discriminated against owing to their status as a Carer, having low literacy, living in a priority neighbourhood, health inequalities, rural isolation, whether they are an asylum seeker or come from a refugee community and are either current or ex-armed HM forces personnel.			

## 5. Action Plan

**Please include any identified concerns/actions/issues in this action plan:**

The issues identified should inform your 'One Council Delivery Plan' and, if appropriate, your Consultation Plan.

Action Number	Action	Responsible Officer	Target Date
1	Ensure that the Policy is made available in a range of formats and media to make it accessible for all residents.	Senior Leadership Team  Housing Leadership Team	Feb 2023
2	Discuss complaints monitoring with corporate services team to establish what data collection is possible. Appointment of Customer Insight Officer will further strengthen this.	Corporate Policy and Communications Manager	March 2023

## 6. Who needs to know about the outcomes of this assessment and how they will they be informed

	Who needs to know? (Please tick)	How they will be informed? (We have a legal duty to publish EIA's)
<b>Internally (employees &amp; Check &amp; Challenge group)</b>	EIA will be circulated to the group	EIA will be published
<b>Externally (service users, stakeholders, private sector householders, landlords etc)</b>		EIA will be published Include in tenancy sign up packs Include as agenda item for tenant group Include in tenant newsletters
<b>Others</b>		EIA will be published Implementation briefing to managers Update to elected members Update to Housing Ombudsman

## 7. Internal Scrutiny

To be completed and signed by a **member of the check and challenge group**.

**Please delete as appropriate.**

I agree with this assessment/action plan

**If disagree**, state action/s required

 Signed (Check and challenge):

Date: 08/02/2023

## 8. Conclusion

To be completed and signed by the **Service Director**

**Please delete as appropriate.**

I agree with this assessment/action plan

**Signed (Service Director):** Michelle Howard

Date: 8/2/23

**Once approved by Head of Service please arrange to publish on the  
Council's website**