

Appendix 3

Equality Impact Analysis Template

Section 1: Introduction

Name of proposal
For the purpose of this document, 'proposal' refers to a policy, function, strategy or project Customer Experience Strategy
Service area and Directorate responsible
Resources
Name of completing officer
Tope Alegbeleye
Approved by (Corporate Director / Divisional Director/ Head of Service)
Yes
Date of approval
Click or tap to enter a date.

Where a proposal is being taken to a committee, please append the completed EIA(s) to the cover report.

Conclusion – To be completed at the end of the Equality Impact Analysis process.

This summary will provide an update on the findings of the EIA and what the outcome is. *For example, based on the findings of the EIA, the proposal was rejected as the negative impact on a particular group was disproportionate and the appropriate actions cannot be undertaken to mitigate risk. Or, based on the EIA, the proposal was amended, and alternative steps taken.*

The focus of this is to analyse the impacts of the proposal on residents, service users and the wider community that are likely to be affected by the proposal. If the proposed change also has an impact on staff, the committee covering report should provide an overview of the likely equality impact for staff, residents and service users and the range of mitigating measures proposed.

Conclusion	Current decision rating (See Appendix A)
<p>The Customer Experience Strategy will have an impact on all residents, visitors, students, business in the borough. The aspiration to provide all customers with a positive customer experience, regardless of the channel chosen to communicate with the council will positively impact the borough’s customers. The stated outcomes listed below is designed to improve the customer journey, improve accessibility, and create a more flexible approach for customers engaging with the council.</p> <p>An extensive review of available data has been conducted, to understand the impact on customers. We have used the data to mitigate against any negative impact on any particularly protected characteristic group.</p>	

The Equality Act 2010 places a ‘General Duty’ on all public bodies to have ‘due regard’ to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between those with ‘protected characteristics’ and those without them
- Foster good relations between those with ‘protected characteristics’ and those without them

This Equality Impact Analysis provides evidence for meeting the Council’s commitment to equality and the responsibilities outlined above. For more information about the Council’s commitment to equality, please visit the Council’s [website](#).

Section 2: General information about the proposal

Describe the proposal including the relevance of proposal to the general equality duties and protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010

The Customer Experience Strategy sets out the council's approach to ensuring that our customers receive an excellent customer experience.

The aim of the strategy is to deliver an excellent customer experience that meets the needs of our customer, providing an accessible and high-quality service irrespective of the method chosen to interact with the council. Allowing Customers to be more self-reliant, by improving the digital platform, while providing face to face channels, for those residents who chose to utilize this channel.

The strategy outlines the outcomes that it aims to deliver.

Outcome 1: Council services are easily accessible, and inclusive.

Outcome 2: Utilise feedback, data, technology and innovation to improve services.

Outcome 3: Embed a customer-focused culture to deliver an excellent customer experience.

Tower Hamlets has a diverse population with over 300,000 people living in the borough. The council offers a wide range of services, and it is envisaged that anyone who lives, works, visits, or has a business in the borough will need to interact with the council at some point.

Why do we need a strategy?

It has been identified that the council needs to improve customer service. The 2021 Mid Pandemic Resident Survey provides a snapshot of the resident's attitude towards the council.

66% of respondents agreed with the statement "My council is doing a good job".

When reviewing how respondents answered this question by ethnicity

- 72% of people from White backgrounds agree that the council is doing a good job compared to 61% of respondents from BAME backgrounds.
- 37% of Bangladeshi respondents disagreed with the statement compared to just 27% of white respondents.

Residents within the age bracket 35–59-year-old are more likely to agree with the statement that "my council is doing a good job".

When asked their views on the statement "My council does not do enough for me", 51% of participants agreed with this statement. When reviewing the feedback by

age, younger people were more likely to agree with the statement, compared to older aged groups.

There were also some differences when comparing feedback based on ethnicity; 46% of people from White backgrounds agree with the statement compared to 56% of BAME respondents and 58% of Bangladeshi respondents.

In addition, the main channel used by residents to contact the council is the telephone. The 2019 Annual Resident Survey results show that 75% of respondents used the telephone to contact the council, followed by e-mail at 24%. Results from the 2020 Residents Mid pandemic survey showed that 59% of participants found it difficult to get through to the council by phone. People from BAME groups find it more difficult to contact the council by phone. Feedback from the External Customer survey in 2022 showed that some of the respondents experienced long waits for the telephone to be answered (50% of the respondents 8 min+ and emails 60%, 5 days+).

In the digital age customers expect to be able to access more services on-line, having the flexibility to access services at a time that suits them. 95% of council residents have access to the internet. When looking at the equality breakdown results from the Pandemic resident survey, 97% of people from BAME backgrounds have access to the internet at home compared to 90% of White respondents.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, 91% of people aged 18-34 use smartphones compared to 48% of over 60s. 90% of Bangladeshi respondents reported that they use smartphones compared to 77% of White respondents. Compared to other age groups, older people are less likely to use online services like banking, shopping and other transactional activities.

To support the strategies development, engagement with staff, senior management and external customers has been conducted extensively. In particular, a draft strategy was consulted by residents, businesses and the council staff.

Customer Experience Strategy Steering Group

A steering group consisting of managers and officers from a wide range of services across the council directorates, has been established. The role of the group is to comment and oversee the development of the strategy.

National Customer Service Week - Customer Service POD Session

During the National Customer Service week, two Customer Service Pod sessions were held in October. Over seventy staff members attended the events across the

two sessions. The participants provided feedback on key aspects of the strategy's content, including the vision, objectives and customer promise.

Customer Service – Council Staff Survey (by the institute of Customer Service)

In October 2022, over 330 council staff from a wide range of council services responded to the internal staff survey. The survey was designed to assess staff's view on how the council strategy, organisation, culture, and processes enable them to deliver excellent customer service.

November – December 2022- Customer Service- External Service Users Survey

The external service users survey received only 30 responses, although more people viewed the actual survey, but chose not to respond. The key messages were as follows.

- Top three most contacted services: Parking, Council tax and Waste service
- Some experienced long waiting for phone calls (50% of the respondents, 8 min+) and emails (60%, 5 days+) to be answered.

Public Engagement

The draft Strategy was consulted by residents, businesses and the council staff in the period between 5 June and 7 July 2023.

To ensure that a cross section of the community was able to engage in the consultation the following engagement methods has been used.

- Resident survey (face to face and telephone, commissioned): 1,100 resident samples. The samples largely correspond with the demographic make-up of the borough as identified by the 2021 census.
- Business survey (face to face and telephone, commissioned): 50 business samples.
- Let's talk Tower Hamlets online survey: for residents and businesses: 18 people responded.
- Council staff survey (online, 21 June-7 July): 145 responded.

Equalities data of the Resident survey participants were collected.

Resident surveyed by age	%
16-24	16
25-34	28
35-44	23
45-54	16
55-64	11
65+	7

Residents' ethnicity	%
White	50
Asian	37
Black	8
Mixed	3
Other	1

The draft Customer Experience Strategy was overwhelmingly supported by the respondents.

Strategy's Vision

94% of respondents agreed with the strategy's vision.

Strategy's Outcomes

95% of respondents agreed with the strategy's three outcomes.

- Agreement levels tended to be higher amongst those aged 16-24, 25-34, 75+, males and White respondents.
- Agreement levels tended to be lower amongst those aged 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, females, those with a disability or from an ethnic minority background.

Preferred method in contacting the council.

87% of respondents stated that their preferred method of contacting the council is by telephone.

- Overall, older residents, those with a disability and ethnic minority groups more inclined prefer telephone contact.

Of those who preferred not to contact the council online

- Older residents and those with a disability were more likely to say they do not have access to the internet.
- Those from an ethnic minority background and aged between 25 and 44 were more likely to say they prefer not to use online services.

Most contacted council services.

Of those respondents who had contacted council services, housing benefits, council tax and waste were the most contacted services.

- Residents from an Ethnic Minority Background more likely to have contacted the council regarding both Housing and Council Tax or Housing Benefit compared to White respondents.

Section 3: Evidence (consideration of data and information)

What evidence do we have which may help us think about the impacts or likely impacts on residents, service users and wider community?

The Strategy used a wide range of service, local and national data and information, to help inform the strategy. The Customer Experience Evidence base details the key pieces of evidence, this includes.

Borough Profile

Borough Profile Data from the 2021 census- The borough profile brings together the key facts and figures about the borough population.

London Borough of Tower Hamlets Annual Resident Survey- the resident survey provides a snapshot of the views of the respondents on a wide range of issue including satisfaction on council services, access to internet, method used to contact the council.

Service Monitoring data and Customer Satisfaction Results

Children and family centre feedback

Idea store and Libraries Customer Survey results

Parking and mobility annual monitoring results

Information Governance Complaints and Members Enquiry Data

Personal Social Services Adult Social Care Survey 2021-2022

Data on access and usage of Council Services

Data on visits to the council websites, access to online forms and social media request

- The council website had over 1million visits in July-Sept 2022.
- The number of people who registered to use online forms steadily increased every quarter from January till September 2022. 95% of bulky waste requests were made online in July-Sept 2022.
- The council received over 9,000 social media requests at every quarter between January and September 2022.

Access to Services

In person visit to the Resident Hub

Between March and December 2022 6777 people visited the resident Hub (equality data not collected)

Strategies and Policies

The Customer Experience Strategy has been designed to align with other Council strategies and policies.

Digital Inclusion Strategy 2021-2024

Persistent and vexation Service Users Policy 2016

London Borough of Tower Hamlets Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026

London Data

London cost of living data.

Institute of Customer Service

UK Customer Satisfaction Index, Jan 2023 (data collection 5 Sept-3 Oct 2022)

The Residents survey of the draft strategy also indicates:

65% of the respondents contacted the council in the past 12 months.

- Males more likely than females to have contacted the council.
- Those aged 35-44 and 75+ more likely to have contacted the council, those aged 55-64 and 65-74 less likely.
- Residents with a disability and ethnic minority respondents less inclined to have contacted the council.
- Residents from an Ethnic Minority Background more likely to have contacted the council regarding both Housing and Council Tax or Housing Benefit compared to White respondents.

64% of the respondents feel council services are easily accessible and inclusive.

- Around 94% of the respondents agree that outcomes. However, agreement with each outcome recede by around a third when asked if the council currently meet them.
- Agreement levels tended to be higher amongst those aged 16-24, 25-34, 75+, males and White respondents.
- Agreement levels tended to be lower amongst those aged 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, females, those with a disability or from an ethnic minority background.

Section 4: Assessing the impacts on different groups and service delivery.

Groups	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Considering the above information and evidence, describe the impact this proposal will have on the following groups?
Protected				
Age (All age groups)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Customer Experience Strategy, aims to improve the experience that customers receive when, engaging with services. The aspiration of the council is to provide a consistent service regardless of the channel chosen to communicate with the council, improving the digital platform, so that customers can access services at a time that suits them. Data shows that older residents age 65+ are less likely to have access to the internet, the provision of the Resident Hub enables residents to receive face to face support, on key service areas, such as housing, council tax, and welfare benefits.</p> <p>In addition, data showed that 44% of older people live in income deprived houses, therefore this group of people may require more access to council services.</p>

				<p>Increased, collaboration between the council and voluntary organisations that support customers, improving signposting and the aspiration to resolve issues at the first point of contact, will provide positive outcomes for customers.</p>
<p>Disability (Physical, learning difficulties, mental health and medical conditions)</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Customer Experience Strategy, aims to improve the experience that customers receive when, engaging with services. The aspiration of the council is to provide a consistent service regardless of the channel chosen to communicate with the council, improving the digital platform, so that customers can access services at a time that suits them. the provision of the Resident Hub enables vulnerable residents to receive face to face support, on key service areas, such as housing, council tax, and welfare benefits.</p> <p>In addition, the aspiration to provide jointed up service between council departments, increased collaboration with voluntary and external organisations will provide positive outcome to this group.</p> <p>The Residents survey shows respondents with a disability are less inclined to have contacted the council. Making the council service accessible and inclusive may encourage this group to contact the council more.</p>

Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The aspirations of the Customer Experience Strategy should provide a positive outcome for this group.
Gender reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The aspirations of the Customer Experience Strategy should provide a positive outcome for this group.
Marriage and civil partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The aspirations of the Customer Experience Strategy should provide a positive outcome for this group.
Religion or philosophical belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The aspirations of the Customer Experience Strategy should provide a positive outcome for this group.
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feedback from the 2021 Pandemic resident Survey showed that residents from the BAME community experienced more difficulty reaching the council by telephone than other groups. The aspiration of the strategy is to improve the experience that customers receive regardless of the chosen channel of communication. The commitment to embed customer-focused culture to deliver excellent customer experience, should provide a positive outcome for customers.

				<p>Residents with a disability and ethnic minority respondents less inclined to have contacted the council.</p> <p>The Residents survey shows ethnic minority respondents are less inclined to have contacted the council. Making the council service accessible and inclusive may encourage this group to contact the council more.</p>
Sexual orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The aspirations of the Customer Experience Strategy should provide a positive outcome for this group.
Pregnancy and maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The aspirations of the Customer Experience Strategy should provide a positive outcome for this group
Other				
Socio-economic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data shows that low-income families are less likely to have internet at home, the ability to communicate with council through a range of channel, i.e., telephone and face to face, allows flexibility and access to council services for this group.
Parents/Carers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The aspirations of the Customer Experience Strategy should provide a positive outcome for this group

<p>People with different Gender Identities e.g., Gender fluid, non-Binary etc</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The aspirations of the Customer Experience Strategy should provide a positive outcome for this group</p>
<p>Any other groups</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The aspirations of the Customer Experience Strategy should provide a positive outcome for this group.</p>

Section 5: Impact analysis and action plan

Recommendation	Key activity	Progress milestones including target dates for either completion or progress	Officer responsible	Update on progress

Section 6: Monitoring

What monitoring processes have been put in place to check the delivery of the above action plan and impact on equality groups?

The draft Strategy is due to go to consultation in June, any equality considerations that are highlighted following the engagement process will be reviewed and the equality analysis updated.

The Strategy will be accompanied by an action plan, with the delivery monitored by the new Efficiency Board, ensuring that the stated outcomes and objectives are met.

Appendix A

EIA decision rating

Decision	Action	Risk
<p>As a result of performing the EIA, it is evident that a disproportionately negative impact (direct, indirect, unintentional or otherwise) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a Protected Characteristic under the Equality Act and appropriate mitigations cannot be put in place to mitigate against negative impact. It is recommended that this proposal be suspended until further work is undertaken.</p>	<p>Suspend – Further Work Required</p>	<p>Red</p> 
<p>As a result of performing the EIA, it is evident that there is a risk that a disproportionately negative impact (direct, indirect, unintentional or otherwise) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is a genuine determining reason that could legitimise or justify the use of this policy.</p>	<p>Further (specialist) advice should be taken</p>	<p>Red Amber</p> 
<p>As a result of performing the EIA, it is evident that there is a risk that a disproportionately negatively impact (as described above) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, this risk may be removed or reduced by implementing the actions detailed within the <i>Impact analysis and action plan</i> section of this document.</p>	<p>Proceed pending agreement of mitigating action</p>	<p>Amber</p> 