



Shropshire Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)

Customer Service Points

Shropshire Council Part 1 ESIIA: initial screening and assessment

Please note: prompt questions and guidance within boxes are in italics. You are welcome to type over them when completing this form. Please extend the boxes if you need more space for your commentary.

Name of service change

Customer Services Face to Face provision through Community Hubs– review of opening hours and staffed service.

Aims of the service change and description

The redesign of our Customer Service Points seeks to concentrate our provision in community hubs located in Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Market Drayton, Whitchurch, Ludlow and Bridgnorth where there is a mixture of population density and customer need and where our customer numbers are highest. These 6 offices chosen for our main hubs contain wards most at risk of being affected by forthcoming changes to the provision of welfare benefits and particularly the introduction and digitisation of the Universal Credit from early 2017 which will affect working and non-working alike. These changes are likely to place demand upon the service.

Customers visit their Council offices for a number of different reasons primary of which is to carry out a range of business with Shropshire Council.

The Hub concept is about making sure that our telephone and online services continue to be accessible to all customers especially those who may not have facilities to access help from their own home and that our direct support remains available to customers in genuine need of help.

Conducting business face to face is expensive. The Society of Information Technology Management's (SOCITM) latest estimate of costs quote the estimated average cost of delivering face to face services as £8.62 per transaction. This compares to £5 by telephone, £0.20 by automated voice recognition and £0.15 by online transaction.

Our hubs are therefore designed around encouraging and educating customers to access a range of more transactional services by themselves to avoid unnecessary contact. This is supported by the Customer Services business ethos of simplifying processes wherever we can.

By encouraging those customers who can to self-serve these Council Services and by providing learning and assistance for those needing a little support we will be able to provide a face to face service for those customers who are genuinely unable to manage either the use of self-service facilities or who have multiple or complex life issues with which they need help.

Of some significance are the continual changes to the system of welfare benefits which affect single people and families both in and out of work. Our 6 main hubs see the largest customer numbers for the Housing Benefit services as well as issues around financial need (accessing the Local Support and Prevention Fund and Discretionary housing Payments) and homelessness.

Working with Jobcentre Plus, we have developed a triage and support structure that will identify need and the potential risks for Shropshire citizens with the introduction of the Universal Credit which is scheduled in larger numbers from early 2017. Our hubs add to the digital infrastructure that will be needed to support customers claiming this benefit and staff have been trained to help the more vulnerable to make claims and report changes online.

We have already seen a significant reduction in the numbers of customers accessing our face to face services however it is our intention that we continue this service in our 6 main market towns so that Shropshire citizens can access services locally

The redesign of our service is taking place against a background of spending reductions and efficiency savings meaning that we would be required to deliver services across widespread sites in Shropshire with a much smaller workforce. In order to help our future sustainability and in the light of already significant reductions in customer numbers we intend to carry out a review of our service opening hours for each of our larger offices so that they are more appropriately matched to both current and future customer demand.

The intention across the 9 remaining customer service points at Albrighton, Broseley, Bishop's Castle, Church Stretton, Craven Arms, Cleobury Mortimer, Ellesmere, Shifnal and Wem where customer numbers are generally very low, is to find partners with whom we can work in order to continue these local services and to work from community venues that are easily and equally accessible to all. In these sites we will place an increasing emphasis on the use of free to use telephones linked to our Customer Service Centre and online access through free to use public computers but help will still be on hand from our business partners for those customers that need it.

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change

- Local citizens.
- Community groups.
- Local members.
- Revenues and Benefits staff whose customers account for the majority of footfall at our larger customer facing sites will also need to evolve new working practices that mitigate any potentially adverse impact on the protected characteristic groups.

Evidence that will be used for screening of the service change

On a site by site basis we will use demographic information on the surrounding population age structure and diversity, health, long-term illness or disability, unemployment and labour market and car ownership and ease of travel to help determine appropriate service. Additionally, the following information around digital ability and exclusion will help to shape this review and the adequacy of the supporting structure left in place:

Use of digital services

Digital inclusion isn't having physical access to the internet, but also having the necessary skills, confidence and capabilities to use the internet (effective access).

There are a number of factors that make it more likely that someone will be digitally excluded:

- Being over the age of 55 (69% of the off-line population)
- Living in a rural area (64% of the off-line population)
- Earning a low income or unemployed (44% of the off-line population)
- Living in social housing (37% of the off-line population)
- Having a registered disability (33% of the off-line population)

Those who are digitally excluded match socially excluded groups, and include:

- people without basic literacy skills
- individuals and families on low incomes
- people who are unemployed
- social housing and private rented tenants
- people who are homeless
- those with disabilities
- those over the age of 50

Research suggests that in Shropshire:

- 9.2% of the population have never used the internet (approximately 22% of the population)
- 13,111 people aged 16-64 are never likely to use the internet
- 12,908 people with basic literacy skills may have internet use but be unlikely to be able to use it effectively
- those on low earnings are more at risk of digital exclusion.

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change

Local consultation will be carried out via the Council's online portal and via the existing customer service Point and other local publicity. Engagement with disability and under-represented groups. All delivery partners are required to promote Shropshire Council's "Comments, Compliments and Complaints" procedure so that members of the public can raise any ongoing issues that may arise from any transfer of service.

Potential impact on Protected Characteristic groups and on social inclusion

High Negative	Significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place or no evidence available: urgent need for consultation with customers, general public, workforce
Medium Negative	Some potential impact, some mitigating measures in place but no evidence available how effective they are: would be beneficial to consult with customers, general public, workforce
Low Negative	Almost bordering on non-relevance to the ESIA process (heavily legislation led, very little discretion can be exercised, limited public facing aspect, national policy)

affecting degree of local impact possible)

Initial assessment for each group

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have on a group, through inserting a tick in the relevant column.

Protected Characteristic groups and other groups in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Part Two ESIIA required</i>	High positive impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	Medium positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	Low positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>
Age (please include children, young people, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group eg young person with disability)			✓	
Disability (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV)			✓	
Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				No evidence to suggest either positive or negative impact
Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				No evidence to suggest either positive or negative impact
Pregnancy & Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)			✓	
Race (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, gypsy, traveller)				No evidence to suggest either positive or negative impact
Religion and belief (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)				No evidence to suggest either positive or negative impact
Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				No evidence to suggest either positive or negative impact
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				No evidence to suggest either positive or negative impact

Other: Social Inclusion (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people you consider to be vulnerable)			✓	

Decision, review and monitoring

Decision	Yes	No
Part One ESIIA Only?	✓	
Proceed to Part Two Full Report?		✓

If Part One, please now use the boxes below and sign off at the foot of the page. If Part Two, please move on to the full report stage.

Actions to mitigate negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change

We are working with benefits service colleagues to identify alternative ways for customers to have important documents handled and safely returned and for their enquiries to be answered in real time. Ongoing support will be provided for partner providers and public invited to give feedback on service

Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change

Comments, compliments and complaints process will be monitored, regular service reviews scheduled

Scrutiny at Part One screening stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
Lead officer carrying out the screening	<i>Chris Westwood</i>	9 February 2016
Any internal support	Mrs Lois Dale, Principal Rural Policy Officer; ext 5684	
Any external support		
Head of service		

Sign off at Part One screening stage

Name	Signatures	Date
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Appendix B

<i>Lead officer's name</i>		
<i>Head of service's name</i>		

Shropshire Council Part 2 ESIIA: full report

Guidance notes on how to carry out the full report

The decision that you are seeking to make, as a result of carrying out this full report, will take one of four routes:

1. To make changes to satisfy any concerns raised through the specific consultation and engagement process and through your further analysis of the evidence to hand;
2. To make changes that will remove or reduce the potential of the service change to adversely affect any of the Protected Characteristic groups and those who may be at risk of social exclusion;
3. To adopt the service change as it stands, with evidence to justify your decision even though it could adversely affect some groups;
4. To find alternative means to achieve the aims of the service change.

The Part Two Full Report therefore starts with a forensic scrutiny of the evidence and consultation results considered during Part One Screening, and identification of gaps in data for people in any of the nine Protected Characteristic groups and people who may be at risk of social exclusion, eg rural communities. There may also be gaps identified to you independently of this process, from sources including the intended audiences and target groups themselves.

The forensic scrutiny stage enables you to assess:

- **Which gaps need to be filled right now, to help you to make a decision about the likely impact of the proposed service change?**

This could involve methods such as: one off service area focus groups; use of customer records; examination of data held elsewhere in the organisation, such as corporate customer complaints; and reference to data held by similar authorities or at national level from which reliable comparisons might be drawn, including via the Rural Services Network. Quantitative evidence could include data from NHS Foundation Trusts, community and voluntary sector bodies, and partnerships including the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Health and Well Being Board. Qualitative evidence could include commentary from stakeholders.

- **Which gaps could be filled within a timeframe that will enable you to monitor potential barriers and any positive or negative impacts on groups and individuals further along into the process?**

This could potentially be as part of wider corporate and partnership efforts to strengthen the evidence base on equalities. Examples would be: joint information sharing protocols about victims of hate crime incidents; the collection of data that will fill gaps across a number of service areas, eg needs of young people with learning disabilities as they progress through into independent living; and publicity awareness campaigns that encourage open feedback and suggestions from a variety of audiences.

Once you have identified your evidence gaps, and decided on the actions you will take right now and further into the process, please record your activity in the following boxes. Please extend the boxes as needed.

Evidence used for assessment of the service change: activity record

How did you carry out further research into the nine Protected Characteristic groups and those who may be at risk of social exclusion, about their current needs and aspirations and about the likely impacts and barriers that they face in day to day living?

And what did it tell you?

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change: activity record

How did you carry out further specific consultation and engagement activity with the intended audiences and with other stakeholders who may be affected by the service change?

And what did it tell you?

Further and ongoing research and consultation with intended audiences and target groups for the service change: activity record

What further research, consultation and engagement activity do you think is required to help fill gaps in our understanding about the potential or known affect that this proposed service change may have on any of the ten groupings and on the intended audiences and target groups? This could be by your service area and/or at corporate and partnership level.

Full report assessment for each group

Please rate the impact as you now perceive it, by inserting a tick. Please give brief comments for each group, to give context to your decision, including what barriers these groups or individual may face.

Protected Characteristic groups and other groups in Shropshire	High negative impact	High positive impact	Medium positive or negative impact	Low positive or negative impact
Age (please include children, young people, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group eg young person with disability)				
Disability (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV)				
Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				
Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				
Pregnancy & Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				
Race (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, gypsy, traveller)				
Religion and belief (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)				
Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				
Other: Social Inclusion (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people you consider to be vulnerable)				

ESIIA Full Report decision, review and monitoring

Summary of findings and analysis - ESIIA decision

You should now be in a position to record your decision. Please highlight in bold the route that you have decided to take.

1. To make changes to satisfy any concerns raised through the specific consultation and engagement process and through your further analysis of the evidence to hand;
2. To make changes that will remove or reduce the potential of the service change to adversely affect any of the Protected Characteristic groups and those who may be at risk of social exclusion;
3. To adopt the service change as it stands, with evidence to justify your decision even though it could adversely affect some groups;
4. To find alternative means to achieve the aims of the service change.

Please add any brief overall comments to explain your choice.

You will then need to create an action plan and attach it to this report, to set out what further activity is taking place or is programmed that will:

- *mitigate negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change,*
AND
- *review and monitor the impact of the service change*

Please try to ensure that:

- *Your decision is based on the aims of the service change, the evidence collected, consultation and engagement results, relative merits of alternative approaches and compliance with legislation, and that records are kept;*
- *The action plan shows clear links to corporate actions the Council is taking to meet the general equality duty placed on us by the Equality Act 2010, to have due regard to the three equality aims in our decision making processes.*

Scrutiny at Part Two full report stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
<i>Lead officer</i>		
<i>Any internal support</i>		
<i>Any external support</i>		
<i>Head of service</i>		

Sign off at Part Two full report stage

Signature (Lead Officer)	Signature (Head of Service)
Date:	Date:

Appendix: ESIIA Part Two Full Report: Guidance Notes on Action Plan

Please base your action plan on the evidence you find to support your decisions, and the challenges and opportunities you have identified. It could include arrangements for:

- continuing engagement and involvement with intended audiences, target groups and stakeholders;
- monitoring and evaluating the service change for its impact on different groups throughout the process and as the service change is carried out;
- ensuring that any pilot projects are evaluated and take account of issues described in the assessment, and that they are assessed to make sure they are having intended impact;
- ensuring that relevant colleagues are made aware of the assessment;
- disseminating information about the assessment to all relevant stakeholders who will be implementing the service change;
- strengthening the evidence base on equalities.

Please also consider:

- resource implications for in-house and external delivery of the service;
- arrangements for ensuring that external providers of the service are monitored for compliance with the Council's commitments to equality, diversity and social inclusion, and legal requirements including duties under the Equality Act 2010.

And finally, please also ensure that the action plan shows clear links to corporate actions the Council is taking to meet the general equality duty placed on us by the Equality Act 2010, to have due regard to the three equality aims in our decision making processes.

These are:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations

Note for 2014 refresh of our corporate equality impact assessment approach: Shropshire Council has referred to good practice elsewhere in refreshing the EINA material and replacing it with this ESIIA material. The Council is grateful in particular to Leicestershire County Council, for graciously allowing use to be made of their Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EHRIAs) material and associated documentation.

For further information on the use of ESIIAs: please contact your head of service or contact Mrs Lois Dale, Principal Rural Policy Officer and internal policy support on equality, via telephone 01743 255667, or email lois.dale@shropshire.gov.uk.