



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Template

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Customer Strategy

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

New policy

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

Both internal and external

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

The customer strategy aims to achieve a modern responsive customer focused organisation that reflects the changing behaviours of our customers in the way they would like to engage with us and the way we deliver services to respond to those changes.

3. Please provide the background to this proposal?

The strategy intent has come from the Dorset Council's Plan, with a long-term vision and transformation plan of putting our customers at the centre of all we do. It focuses on:

- Working together to design and deliver modern, accessible services to our customers.
- Becoming a more responsive, customer focused council - listening and learning from customer experiences.
- Making improvements with an emphasis on innovation and working with customers in a collaborative approach.
- Modernising the way we operate to ensure we are efficient, accessible for residents and achieve the best value for money.
- Simplify and join up the way we work, using data to help us make decisions.
- Ensuring customers can access information they need quickly and easily, using new technology to provide a better online experience.

In addition, there is the Becoming a more responsive, customer focused council delivery plan which focuses on:

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- Reducing the number of ‘front doors’ and bringing more high-volume customer management and assessment into our professional customer services, Dorset Direct.
- Providing easy to access, responsive services
- Providing value for money
- Increasing our reach through accessible and inclusive services
- Using data, intelligence technology and customer insight innovatively
- Provision of information and advice in our communities or signpost to the right resources and support.

Other initiatives and organisational changes influencing the strategy

- [Our Future Council Outline Business Case and Draft Transformation Plan](#)
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#)
- [Dorset Council Digital Vision](#)
- [Data and Business Intelligence Strategy](#)
- [People Strategy](#)
- [Library Strategy](#)
- [Family Hubs](#)
- [Health & Wellbeing Strategy](#)
- [Voluntary Community Sector Principles for Working Together](#)
- [Our design principles](#)

Summary of context

The customer strategy aims to achieve a modern responsive customer focused organisation that reflects the changing behaviours of our customers in the way they would like to engage with us and the way we deliver services to respond to those changes.

Evidence gathering and engagement

5. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

The following data has been used to inform this assessment:

- interpreting insight and data that we have been collecting for many years through Customer Services including telephony system data, after interaction enquiry analysis data, failure demand statistics
- engagement as part of development of the Customer Promise,
- review of compliments and complaints,
- Customer Promise satisfaction results
- customer insights (Feedback pattern) data
- satisfaction responses received through our website,
- feedback themes identified from the resident’s survey,

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- GDS standards* (Government Digital Service) educating our understanding in customer needs,
- The [Future Councils pilot](#), that we were part of, to address systemic barriers in becoming a modern and resilient organisation,
- listening to what residents have been telling councillors during the local elections,
- and most recently the Big Conversation engagement events that have helped shape the new Council Plan.
- Key facts (2021 census)
- Library Strategy Consultation

6. What did this tell you?

- Customers recognised that the Council and its employees care about providing them with the services they need.
- Customers are satisfied with the extended range of services that they receive within our libraries which have a customer reception point.
- Since the County Council and District Council merger in 2019 to form 'Dorset Council', customers can begin to see more joined up working within departments.
- Customers valued the services they can access via the website but would like a broader range of services available for them to self-serve.
- When customers need the Council, they see lots of different services and departments rather than one organisation.
- Customers often need to repeat what they have already told us as information doesn't appear to be shared across Council departments.
- Although the Council offers many telephone services, customers often find it difficult to contact us.
- To resolve customer enquiries, they often needed to make contact on more than one occasion. Customers would like their needs met first time.
- Customers would like to be able to help themselves, accessing information and advice in their communities or signposted to the resources or support they need.

The Dorset Council's Customer Promise emphasises several key equality themes:

1. **Fairness and Respect:** The council is committed to treating all residents with fairness, respect, and consideration. [This includes being helpful, polite, and considerate in all interactions.](#)
2. **Accessibility:** Ensuring services are accessible to everyone is a core theme. [The council aims to make its services available online and in formats that suit different needs, ensuring no one is left out.](#)
3. **Transparency and Accountability:** The council promises to be honest and fair, explaining decisions clearly and keeping residents informed about the progress of their requests. [This transparency helps build trust and ensures accountability.](#)

4. **Responsiveness:** The council is dedicated to resolving requests promptly and effectively, aiming to address issues the first time they are raised. [This responsiveness ensures that all residents receive timely and efficient service.](#)
5. **Data Privacy:** Protecting personal data and handling enquiries sensitively and confidentially is a key theme. [This commitment ensures that all residents feel secure and respected when interacting with the council.](#)

The Dorset Council Residents' Survey 2023-2024 highlights several key themes related to equality:

- **Representation and Inclusivity:** [The survey aimed to ensure a representative sample by weighting responses by age, geography, sex, ethnicity, and socio-economic background.](#) This approach helps to capture diverse perspectives and ensure that the views of all community segments are considered.
- **Satisfaction and Trust:** The survey results show varying levels of satisfaction and trust among different demographic groups. [For example, 85% of respondents are satisfied with their neighbourhood, while 54% trust the council.](#) Understanding these differences can help the council address specific concerns of underrepresented or less satisfied groups.
- **Value for Money:** [Only 34% of respondents believe the council provides value for money, with 39% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.](#) This indicates a need for the council to communicate more effectively about how resources are allocated and the benefits provided to different community groups.
- **Service Delivery:** [The survey data is used to improve service delivery, particularly for protected characteristics under the Equality Act.](#) This includes analysing how different groups respond to ensure services are equitable and meet the needs of all residents.

The Census 2021 for Dorset Council highlights several key equality themes:

1. **Diverse Demographics:** The census data provides detailed insights into the diverse demographics of Dorset, including age, ethnicity, gender, and disability status. [This information helps the council understand the composition of its population and plan services accordingly.](#)
2. **Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation:** For the first time, the census included questions about gender identity and sexual orientation. [This data is crucial for understanding and addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ residents.](#)
3. **Economic Disparities:** The census reveals economic disparities within the community, such as differences in employment status, income levels, and housing conditions. [This information is vital for targeting support to economically disadvantaged groups.](#)
4. **Health and Wellbeing:** Data on health conditions and disabilities helps the council identify and support residents with specific health needs. [This includes planning for healthcare services and accessibility improvements.](#)

5. **Cultural and Linguistic Diversity:** The census captures information on residents' cultural backgrounds and languages spoken at home. [This helps the council provide culturally sensitive services and support community cohesion.](#)

The Dorset Council Library Strategy 2023-2033 emphasises several key equality themes:

1. **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** The strategy aims to create accessible and inclusive spaces for all community members. [This includes ensuring that library services are available to people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.](#)
2. **Digital Inclusion:** A significant focus is on supporting digital literacy and removing digital barriers. [This helps ensure that everyone, regardless of their socio-economic status, has access to digital resources and the skills needed to use them.](#)
3. **Community Engagement:** The strategy highlights the importance of connecting with diverse communities and meeting their specific needs. [This involves outreach programs and partnerships with local organizations to better serve underrepresented groups.](#)
4. **Lifelong Learning and Literacy:** Promoting literacy and lifelong learning for all is a core theme. [The strategy supports language development, reading for pleasure, and educational opportunities for everyone, from young children to older adults.](#)
5. **Cultural Enrichment:** The strategy includes hosting and delivering cultural events and activities that reflect the diversity of the community. [This helps to inspire cultural connections and provide new experiences for all residents.](#)

These equality themes have been considered when completing this EqlA for the Customer Strategy.

7. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

Our customers – the residents of the Dorset Council area.

The EDI Reference Group

Internal key stakeholders

8. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

We have engaged with internal employees to further inform the Strategy. Engagement activity has taken place with:

- key stakeholders at PwC cross cutting workshops
- Councillors at Corporate Services event
- SLT and CLT leads for the Customer Experience Programme
- Heads of Service with comments from all Directorate

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- Business Managers in key areas of the business
- Youth Voice Lead
- Digital Business Partners
- Service Design
- Website Manager
- Communications
- Continued engagement with Portfolio Holder Councillor Ryan Hope

Is an EQIA required?

Not every proposal will need an EqIA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqIA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqIA, please answer the following question:

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require an EqIA because (provide details):

Not applicable

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.
- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different [protected characteristics](#).

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Neutral/positive	Whilst there will be developments for digital and new technology solutions, there will still be traditional contact

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		<p>methods such as telephone and face-to-face where customers prefer to access services in that way.</p> <p>Needs of different age groups will be considered.</p> <p>Services and contact methods will be designed with customers in mind.</p> <p>Where there is a decreasing level in digital skills, for whatever reason, customers will still be able to access services in ways that suit their circumstances.</p> <p>The Digital Doorway scheme is available to provide assistance in supporting those in this group.</p> <p>The council's Digital Inclusion Programme looks to put in place mitigating actions to address exclusion.</p>
Disability	Neutral/unclear	<p>The strategy aims to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all customers, particularly those with disabilities, by ensuring equitable access, improving service accessibility, providing personalized support, and promoting empowerment and independence.</p> <p>Services and contact methods will be designed with customers in mind.</p> <p>Whilst still offering more traditional contact methods, there will be developments for digital and new technology solutions, which will increase availability and flexibility in</p>

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Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		<p>contacting and accessing services at times and in ways that may be more convenient for those within this protected characteristic group.</p>
<p>Gender reassignment and Gender Identity</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>We will design services and contact methods that ensures that individuals have the right to be identified and treated according to their gender identity. We will not capture this information unless there is requirement to do so.</p> <p>Training will be provided to ensure staff are competent, informed and sensitive to the needs of customers.</p>
<p>Marriage or civil partnership</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Services and contact methods will be designed with customers in mind. We will not capture this information unless there is a requirement to do so.</p>
<p>Pregnancy and maternity</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>There will be developments for digital and new technology solutions, which will increase availability and flexibility in contacting and accessing services at times and in ways that may be more convenient for those within this protected characteristic group.</p>
<p>Race and Ethnicity</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>We will look to use new technology solutions to eliminate language and interpretation barriers, making it easier to access services.</p> <p>We will collaborate with existing programmes of work that are looking to deliver changes to facilitate this protected characteristic group.</p>

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Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		<p>Training requirements will be identified and delivered to ensure staff are competent, informed and sensitive to the needs of customers.</p>
Religion and belief	Positive	<p>Services and contact methods will be designed with customers in mind. We will not capture this information unless there is requirement to do so.</p> <p>Training requirements will be identified and delivered to ensure staff are competent, informed and sensitive to the needs of customers.</p>
Sex (consider men and women)	Positive	<p>Services and contact methods will be designed with all customers in mind. We will not capture this information unless there is requirement to do so.</p> <p>Training requirements will be identified and delivered to ensure staff are competent, informed and sensitive to the needs of customers.</p>
Sexual orientation	Positive	<p>Services and contact methods will be designed with customers in mind. We will not capture this information unless there is requirement to do so.</p> <p>Training requirements will be identified and delivered to ensure staff are competent, informed and sensitive to the needs of customers.</p>
People with caring responsibilities	Positive	<p>There will be developments for digital and new technology solutions, which will increase availability and flexibility in contacting and accessing services at times and in ways that may be more convenient for</p>

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		those within this protected characteristic group.
Rural isolation	Neutral	<p>There will be developments for digital and new technology solutions, which will increase availability and flexibility in contacting and accessing services at times and in ways that may be more convenient for those within this protected characteristic group.</p> <p>For those with limited or no access to the internet, we will continue to offer support over the telephone and at our Library locations.</p> <p>The Digital Doorway scheme is available to provide assistance in supporting those in this group.</p> <p>The council's Digital Inclusion Programme looks to put in place mitigating actions to address exclusion.</p>
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive	<p>The strategy will not be reducing the number of contact channels for our customers. We will still offer varying contact channels to meet the needs of our customers.</p> <p>We will be looking to improve the capabilities of existing contact channels making contacting us easier.</p> <p>Customers can access a range of resources and support at Libraries.</p> <p>We will also work closely with our Cost of Living working group to ensure we are fully informed and abreast of any emerging</p>

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		<p>themes or requirements for this protected group.</p> <p>The Digital Doorway scheme is available to provide assistance in supporting those in this group.</p> <p>The council's Digital Inclusion Programme looks to put in place mitigating actions to address exclusion.</p>
Single parents	Positive	<p>There will be developments for digital and new technology solutions, which will increase availability and flexibility in contacting and accessing services at times and in ways that may be more convenient for those within this protected characteristic group.</p>
Armed forces communities	Neutral	<p>We do not envisage any impact on this protected group with any changes being made.</p>

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

The strategy outlined focuses on embracing technological advancements while maintaining traditional service access methods for our customers. It aims to enhance service accessibility for customers with disabilities and ensure respect for gender identity, without unnecessary data collection. The approach includes provisions for overcoming language barriers and increasing service availability for protected characteristic groups. Cultural competence and sensitivity training for staff will be emphasized to cater to the diverse needs of customers from various racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. The goal is to facilitate easier and more effective service access for all customers, leveraging new technology solutions without compromising on accessibility or cultural considerations.

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Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Workforce engagement.	Review the requirement for engagement with the workforce once PwC work has been completed.	Anthony Palumbo	Complete
EDI engagement.	Engagement with EDI Reference Group once clearer steer re workforce engagement.	Kelly Polley	Complete
Survey data	Review the detailed EDI data from the residents' survey by protected characteristics to identify any appropriate points that need to be included in the new customer strategy for Dorset Council.	Anthony Palumbo	End of February 2025
On-going issue	As the Customer Strategy is a living/adaptive document, this action plan will be updated as outcomes are enabled through the Our Future Council Transformation Customer Experience and Strategic & Enabling programmes of work.	Anthony Palumbo	On-going

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Anthony Palumbo

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Kelly Polley, Molly Pallister, Gemma Haydock

Date of completion: July 2024

Version Number: 0.7

EqIA review date: February 2025

Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palfreman-Kay