

Stage 1: Equality Impact Assessment

1. What are the main aims, purpose and outcomes of the Policy, Service or Function and how do these fit with the wider aims of the organization?

The Maidstone Gateway opened in January 2009 and is a partnership between Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) and Kent County Council (KCC). The Gateway provides customers with easy access via a face-to-face channel to all Council services. It operates on the principle that services follow customer need and offers customers multiple transactions in a single journey. A range of services are offered on a regular basis which not only include MBC and KCC services but also includes organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Age UK, Hi-Kent, CXK plus other voluntary organisations.

One of MBCs key priorities is Corporate and Customer Excellence with outcomes of having customer focused services that residents are satisfied with and effective, cost efficient services delivered across the borough.

2. How do these aims affect our duty to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the act.**
- **Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**
- **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

The Maidstone Gateway treats all customers in a fair and transparent way and all services, regardless of these being offered by MBC, KCC or other organisations, are available to every customer. The Gateway is fully DDA compliant.

3. What aspects of the policy including how it is delivered or accessed could contribute to inequality?

Alternative forms of information need to be made available whenever required for example in different languages.

4. Will the policy have an impact (positive or negative) upon the lives of people, including particular communities and groups who have protected characteristics ? What evidence do you have for this?

The Gateway concept seeks to provide face to face access to information and services for everyone within the borough regardless of any protected characteristics.

If the answer to the second question has identified potential impacts and you have answered yes to any of the remaining questions then you should carry out a full EQIA set out as stage 2 below.

Stage 2: Equality Impact Assessment

Name of Policy/Service/Function
The Maidstone Gateway
Purpose
What are you trying to achieve with the policy / service / function?
The Gateway provides customers with easy access via a face-to-face channel to all Council services. It operates on the principle that services follow customer need and offers customers multiple transactions in a single journey. A range of services are offered on a regular basis which not only include MBC and KCC services but also includes organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Age UK, Hi-Kent, CXK plus other voluntary organisations.
Who defines and manages it?
Sandra Marchant, Customer Services Manager Laura Mason, Gateway Team Manager
Who do you intend to benefit from it and how?
Anyone who comes into contact with the Council including people who live in, work in or visit the borough, staff, members and partners.

What could prevent people from getting the most out of the policy / service / function?

Customers unable to get into Maidstone Town Centre and so unable to visit the Gateway to access the services they need face to face.

Customers unable to access all the services they need as provided by other partners for example KCC or other voluntary organisations due to lack of availability of partners in the Gateway.

How will you get your customers involved in the analysis and how will you tell people about it?

Customers have the opportunity to provide feedback after every visit by using the GovMetric customer survey electronic system. Where appropriate comments made are taken on board and the service improved as a result.

Evidence

How will you know if the policy delivers its intended outcome / benefits?

Customer visits continue and the number of enquiries remain high.

How satisfied are your customers and how do you know?

On-going customer satisfaction surveys are undertaken using the GovMetric feedback system. This system has been in place for 11 months and the results show 67% for Good, 13% for Average and 20% for bad with a n overall rating of average.

What existing data do you have on the people that use the service and the wider population?

Customer name, address and post code information is recorded on the QMatic queuing system and this has been used in Mosaic data analysis to see the profile

of our customers and where they come from. Customer numbers and enquiry types are also recorded on QMatic so we know how many customers are visiting us and what transactions they are coming in for.

What other information would it be useful to have? How could you get this?

Are you breaking down data by equality groups where relevant (such as by gender, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity)?

No any data maintained is not broken down by different equality groups.

Are you using partners, stakeholders, and councillors to get information and feedback?

The Gateway is a partnership between MBC and KCC and different partners are involved in providing a providing a service from the Gateway. Partners include the CAB, Hi-Kent, Age UK, CXK, Victim Support and Kent Community Health Checks and Trainers. Customer referrals are done between all partners and data on the number of referrals is maintained.

Impact

Are some people benefiting more – or less - than others? If so, why might this be?

The needs of all customer groups have been taken into account in the design of the Gateway to ensure it is accessible to all. No-one should be benefiting more or less than others with the Gateway concept.

Actions

If the evidence suggests that the policy / service / function benefits a particular group – or disadvantages another - is there a justifiable reason for this and if so, what is it?

The Gateway is designed around the principle of fairness and providing a service to all who visit.

Is it discriminatory in any way?

The Gateway is not discriminatory as it provides a service to all.

Is there a possible impact in relationships or perceptions between different parts of the community?

Some customers may have to wait longer to see an Advisor that can deal with their enquiry or even to see one of the Partners than other customers may have to wait to be seen for other enquiries and this could generate irate customers due to longer wait times.

What measures can you put in place to reduce disadvantages?

Queue management is important to us and we always aim to see customers within the minimum amount of wait time as possible. Staff resources and those staff fully trained to handle all enquiries have an impact on this but training is constantly undertaken to alleviate this as much as possible.

Do you need to consult further?

No

Have you identified any potential improvements to customer service?

Various changes have been identified as part of the customer service improvement programme and a lot relate to channel shift and providing services in a more efficient way and giving customers more choice in how they can access services that is more likely to meet their needs.

Who should you tell about the outcomes of this analysis?

This is a corporate project so Corporate Leadership Team are fully aware of and support the changes identified in the programme.

Have you built the actions into your Service Plan or Policy Implementation Plan with a clear timescale?

Any changes in the Corporate Improvement Programme that affect the Gateway have been built into the Customer Services Service Plan as appropriate.

When will this assessment need to be repeated?

Whenever required.