

Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in decision-making.

When to assess

An EIA should be carried out when you are changing, removing or introducing a new service, policy or function. The assessment should be proportionate; a major financial decision will need to be assessed more closely than a minor policy change.

Public sector equality duty

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- 1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- 2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- 3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics that apply to the equality duty:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership*
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

We also ask you to consider other socially excluded groups, which could include people who are geographically isolated from services, with low literacy skills or living in poverty or low incomes; this may impact on aspirations, health or other areas of their life which are not protected by the Equality Act, but should be considered when delivering services.

Due regard

To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances and in particular on the relevance of the aims in the general equality duty to the decision or function in question. The greater the relevance and potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. The three aims of the duty may be more relevant to some functions than others; or they may be more relevant to some protected characteristics than others.

Collecting and using equality information

[The Equalities and Human Rights Commission](#) (EHRC) states that 'Having due regard to the aims of the general equality duty requires public authorities to have an adequate evidence base for their decision making'. We need to make sure that we understand the potential impact of decisions on people with different protected characteristics. This will help us to reduce or remove unhelpful impacts. We need to consider this information before and as decisions are being made.

There are a number of publications and websites that may be useful in understanding the profile of users of a service, or those who may be affected.

- The Office for National Statistics Neighbourhoods website [https://www.ons.gov.uk/](https://www.ons.gov.uk)
- Kent County Council Facts and Figures about Kent <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/Facts-and-figures-about-Kent>
- Public health and social care data http://www.kpho.org.uk/search?mode=results&queries_exclude_query=no&queries_excludefromsearch_query=yes&queries_keyword_query=Swale

At this stage you may find that you need further information and will need to undertake engagement or consultation. Identify the gaps in your knowledge and take steps to fill these.

Case law principles

A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:

- Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty
- Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The person completing the EIA should have knowledge and understanding of the service, policy, strategy, practice, plan.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- A public authority is responsible for ensuring that any contracted organisations which provide services on their behalf can comply with the duty, are required in contracts to comply with it, and do comply in practice.
- The duty is a continuing one. It applies when a service, policy, strategy, practice or plan is developed or agreed, and when it is implemented or reviewed.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- The general equality duty is not a duty to achieve a result, it is a duty to have due regard to the need to achieve the aims of the duty.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

Lead officer:	Sarah-Jane Radley
Decision maker:	Communities Committee
People involved:	Community Services Manager
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy, project, service, contract	New contract with voluntary and community sector to improve resilience and build a stronger sector for the future.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review, change, new, stop 	
<p>Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.</p>	<p>Decision will be made a Communities Committee – 6 September 2023</p>
<p>Summary of the decision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims and objectives Key actions Expected outcomes Who will be affected and how? How many people will be affected? 	<p>Aim</p> <p>Enable and empower the existing voluntary and community sector in Swale to develop, strengthen, grow, and improve sustainability for the future.</p> <p>Outcomes (delivery themes)</p> <p>As a result of the consultation work carried out, we have developed 4 key themes for delivery. We are looking for creativity to deliver on the themes listed to fulfil the outcomes of the program.</p> <p>This development opportunity supports the following four delivery themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Creating impactful partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creating opportunities for all by generating partnerships that organisations can trust in and that are working towards the same aims and objectives for the benefit of the community ➤ Improved networking and communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased communication within the sector to enable better understanding of service delivery, enable more collaborative opportunities and a shared resource. ➤ Closing the gap <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assess the needs of the sector to understand where the gaps are in knowledge, expertise, and skills to develop a response. ➤ Planning for the future <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creating a strong footing to enable the sector to strengthen, grow and become more resilient. <p>The delivery of direct services to residents are not included within the scope of this project. Delivery is to develop existing and collaborative approaches to the development and sustainability of Swale’s voluntary and community sector.</p> <p>The voluntary, community and social enterprise sector will be affected by the contract. This could be 100+ agencies across Swale.</p>
<p>Information and research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. Include sources and key findings. Include information on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics. 	<p>The contract is specifically designed through consultation with the voluntary and community sector which is outlined in the procurement specification documentation.</p>
<p>Consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has there been specific consultation on this decision? 	<p>We recruited an external agency, Smarter Digital Services to deliver two large workshops which had 40+ attendees at each session and</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the results of the consultation? • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? • Can any conclusions be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<p>1-2-1 interviews with a number of organisations from across the voluntary and community sector.</p> <p>The result of the consultation work allowed us to create the specification for the procurement contract. As we will be working with organisations to develop their sustainability and collaborative working models, we do not feel this will have an impact to people with different protected characteristics.</p>
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<p>Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty? Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's PSED Technical Guidance - https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-technical-guidance</p>	
Aim	Yes/No
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	No
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	No
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	No

<p>Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics. When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.</p>		
Characteristic	Relevance to decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of decision Positive/Negative/Neutral
Age	Low	Neutral
Disability	Low	Neutral
Gender reassignment	Low	Neutral
Marriage and civil partnership	Low	Neutral
Pregnancy and maternity	Low	Neutral
Ethnicity	Low	Neutral
Religion or belief	Low	Neutral
Sex	Low	Neutral
Sexual orientation	Low	Neutral
Other socially excluded groups ¹	Low	Neutral

<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. • There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision. <p>Advise on the overall equality implications that should be taken into account in the final decision, considering relevance and impact.</p>	<p>Summarise this conclusion in the body of your report</p> <p>In conclusion, we do not feel that the community development contract will have unlawful discrimination pertaining to the delivery of the contract.</p>
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¹ Other socially excluded groups could include those with literacy issues, people living in poverty or on low incomes or people who are geographically isolated from services

Timing

- Having 'due regard' is a state of mind. It should be considered at the inception of any decision.
- Due regard should be considered throughout the development of the decision. Notes should be taken on how due regard to the equality duty has been considered through research, meetings, project teams, committees and consultations.
- The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising the due regard shown to the equality duty throughout the development of the decision. The completed EIA must inform the final decision-making process. The decision-maker must be aware of the duty and the completed EIA.

Full technical guidance on the public sector equality duty can be found at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-technical-guidance>

Please send the EIA in draft to Janet Dart in the Comms and Policy Team (janetdart@swale.gov.uk) who will review it with colleagues and let you have any comments or suggested changes.

This Equality Impact Assessment should form an appendix to any EMT/SMT or committee report relating to the decision, and a summary should be included in the 'Equality and Diversity' section of the standard committee report template under 'Section 6 – Implications'.