

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

22 MARCH 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS - ANNUAL REVIEW 2017/18

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an annual update on the council's requirement to undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), an overview of the council's approach to EIAs and an outline of EIAs undertaken in BCBC service areas in 2017/18.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priorities

2.1 The Equality Act 2010 sets out both general and specific duties for local authorities in Wales - one of which relates to assessing the impact of policies and practices.

2.2 Undertaking EIAs also supports the council's following corporate priorities:

- Priority 2: Helping people to be more self-reliant;
- Priority 3: Smarter use of resources.

3. Background

3.1 The Equality Act 2010 sets out a general duty that as a public body in Wales, Bridgend County Borough Council is required to have due regard in its decision making processes (including financial decisions) to three factors:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- To advance equality of opportunity and;
- To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3.2 Reports on assessments must set out in particular:

- the purpose of the policy or practice that is being assessed;
- a summary of the steps taken to carry out the assessment, including consultation and engagement;
- a summary of the information used in the assessment;
- results, and any decisions taken in relation to those results.

3.3 In addition, when assessing the impact on protected characteristic groups, listed authorities must:

- comply with the engagement provisions;
- have due regard to any relevant information held.

4. Current situation

EIAs – an overview

- 4.1 The EIA is a tool to assess whether new (or changes to existing) policies/services/functions, or the removal of services, could impact on different sectors of society in different ways.

EIAs help the council make better decisions, identify how services can be more accessible or improved and consider the nine protected characteristics as well as the impact on the Welsh language.

- 4.2 Assessing the impact of proposed changes to policies and strategies is not just something the law requires, it is an opportunity to ensure decisions are based on robust evidence and that they:

- include a consideration of actions that would help to avoid or mitigate any impact on individuals or groups;
- are based on evidence;
- are transparent;
- record the equality considerations that have been taken into account.

- 4.3 The Welsh Language Standards require us to consider:

- whether a policy-related decision could have a positive or negative impact on opportunities for people to use Welsh;
- treating Welsh and English equally;
- ways to demonstrate how positive effects could be increased;
- how any identified adverse effects could be decreased.

We added questions related to this into the EIA toolkit as an existing assessment tool rather than create an additional impact assessment.

- 4.4 It is important to recognise that our duty to eliminate discrimination is a continuing one. It cannot be exercised once and for all, but must be continually revisited and borne in mind, therefore the EIA should be revisited as policies change and are reviewed.

- 4.5 The lead person drafting or reviewing a policy or strategy within the service area is responsible for conducting the EIA. EIA screenings should be retained by the service area, referenced and summarised in the equalities section of the relevant cabinet report. Where a full EIA is needed this should be included as an appendix to the report.

- 4.6 The EIA toolkit was revised and updated in February 2018, including the EIA screening and full assessment forms. The update involved simplifying wording and consolidating information to make the toolkit easier to use in preparation for face to face training.

- 4.7 The ongoing administration of the EIA processes will be reviewed in 2018 by the Equalities team in order to support service areas in their management of the process.

EIA training

- 4.8 An e-learning module continues to be available for employees which provides an overview of EIAs, their role in improving services and a guide to conducting them. At the end of the module, staff have an opportunity to complete an EIA and compare this against an already completed version to assess how the module has assisted in terms of knowledge and understanding.

During the period January 2017 to February 2018, 102 council employees completed the e-learning module as per the following table:

Directorate	No. identified as requiring training	No. Completions	% Completion
SS & WB	25	23	92%
Communities	37	35	95%
Education and Family Support	23	19	83%
OAPS	21	21	100%
Finance	5	4	80%
Total	111	102	92%

To date 191 council employees have completed the EIA e-learning module.

- 4.9 In response to requests for additional face to face training on EIAs, CMB agreed a training programme which has been developed and will be delivered by external trainers Red Shiny Apple. 74 staff have been identified for training during February and March 2018. Two training sessions have taken place to date with 17 attendees and feedback so far has been positive.

Training Objectives

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Explain what an EIA is;
- Define the Public Sector Equality Duty and how it relates to undertaking EIAs;
- Identify who is protected against discrimination;
- Recognise the steps that are required to undertake an EIA;
- Identify mechanisms for collecting relevant data;
- Explain the importance of engagement and consultation in undertaking an impact assessment;
- Explain the role of Elected Members and specifically Cabinet Members in decision making;
- Undertake an impact assessments using a relevant case study;
- Develop an action plan to undertake effective EIAs.

EIAs undertaken in 2017/18

- 4.10 Between February 2017 and January 2018, four full EIAs were undertaken and accompanied Cabinet reports and these are listed in appendix 1.
- 4.11 42 EIA screenings were undertaken during this period and these are listed in appendix 2. These screenings were referenced in the relevant Cabinet report/s and indicated that the policy/ies being assessed could either be “screened out” or would require a full EIA to be undertaken. Where full EIAs are needed the following timeframes apply:
- Within six months or before approval of policy (high priority);
 - Within one year of screening (medium priority);
 - Within three years of screening (low priority).

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 As this is an information report, there are no proposed changes to the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The report provides the committee with information which will positively assist in the delivery of the authority’s equality duties.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications identified as this is an information/update report.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Equalities Committee notes the progress made in the council during 2017/18 with the completion of Equality Impact Assessments, review of the toolkit and forms, and progress made with training (e-learning and development of face to face training).

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Date: 22 March 2018

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Background papers: None.