

## Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

<b>Service area</b>	Community Services
<b>Date of assessment</b>	24/06/22
<b>Name of policy/service to be assessed</b>	Residents Advice and Information Service (RAI)
<b>Is this a new or existing policy/service?</b>	New
<b>Name of manager responsible for new or amended policy/service</b>	Claudia Deeth
<b>Names of people conducting the assessment</b>	Liz Smith
<b>Step 1 – Description of new or amended policy/service</b>	
Describe the aims; objectives and purpose of the new or amended policy/service (include how it fits in to wider aims or strategic objectives).	<p>The Residents Advice and Information (RAI) service has been in operation since COVID began and was borne out of the district's proactivity to contact Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents. As a result, it was recognised that providing vulnerable residents with proactive additional support to help manage their finances and household bills was making a positive impact therefore staff were funded for a further 2 years. The current team (1 x team Leader and 2 x Advisors) will be in post until March 2023.</p> <p>A retrospective review is needed of their current practices to ensure they are equality compliant as the team has organically grown and was only expected to be a short-term provision. Given the level of support offered by the team to all vulnerable residents in the district, it is imperative practices are updated now to ensure compliance in the long term.</p>
<p>The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, the Council also needs to demonstrate its compliance with the Equality Duty. The Council therefore needs to understand how its decisions and activities impact on different people. An Equality Impact Assessment is the current method by which the Council can assess and keep a record of the impact of new or amended strategies, policies, functions or services.</p> <p>The council retains these duties even when outsourcing services or providing shared services.</p> <p><i>Definition of Adverse Impact - occurs when a decision, practice, or Policy has a disproportionately negative effect on a protected group. Adverse Impact may be unintentional.</i></p>	

## Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Are there any (existing) equality objectives of the new/amended policy/service	To ensure all vulnerable residents are aware and have access to the support available from the RAI team.
Who is intended to benefit from the new/amended policy/service and in what way?	All residents
What are the intended outcomes of this new/amended policy/service?	Residents are supported to prevent them from getting into crisis thereby reducing the cost and demand on expensive council services but most importantly ensuring outcomes for our residents are good and they are helped at the earliest stage.
<b>Step 2 – Data</b>	
<p>What baseline <b>quantitative data (statistics)</b> do you have about the function relating to equalities groups (e.g., monitoring data on proportions of service users compared to proportions in the population), relevant to this new/amended policy/service? <a href="#">Huntingdonshire Statistics</a></p>	<p><b>From Cambridgeshire Insights:</b> Key Findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Huntingdonshire is ranked as the 3rd most deprived of the five districts across Cambridgeshire for overall Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD Score)</li> <li>• The Barrier to Housing and Services is domain ranks the lowest (most deprived) out of the domains in Huntingdonshire when ranked against all other local authorities nationally (117/317).</li> <li>• The Income domain is ranked as the highest (least deprived) in the Local Authority rankings (250/317), closely followed by the Employment (245/317) and Health &amp; Disability domain (242/317).</li> <li>• Huntingdonshire has 2 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the 20% most relatively deprived nationally (H 008A in Huntingdon West and H 008B in Huntingdon North). These were the same two areas that were also in the 20% most relatively deprived nationally in 2015</li> <li>• There is very little difference between the deprivation domain scores when comparing the urban and rural classified LSOAs in Huntingdonshire.</li> <li>• Within Huntingdonshire, income deprivation affecting older people (IDAOP) is more prevalent than that with income deprivation affecting children (IDACI), but only by one decile rank (IDAOP =8, IDACI = 7 where 1 is the most deprived).</li> <li>• 25 LSOAs have become more relatively deprived by 1 decile since 2015, whilst 9 LSOAs in Huntingdonshire have become less relatively deprived by 1 decile nationally.</li> </ul>

## Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

What **qualitative data (opinions etc)** do you have on different groups (e.g., comments from previous consumer satisfaction surveys/consultation, feedback exercises, or evidence from other authorities undertaking similar work), relevant to this new/amended policy/service?

The need to initially support vulnerable residents was identified nationally. Public health issued guidance on shielding and protecting people who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) from COVID-19.

At the beginning of the first COVID lockdown there were over 11,000 households with at least resident aged 70+, over 4,500 households with a known disability based on benefits claim data, over 1,650 households signed up for our assisted bin collection service and nearly 23,000 households receiving Single Person Discount for Council Tax. Re-deployed One Leisure staff made a total of 8,796 successful outbound calls to potentially vulnerable households between 27 March and 30 June 2020. 920 households required some form of support, with 707 signposted to ROs for support and 111 directly referred to them. The initial support on offer centred on immediate needs, with 7.7% of those contacted in the first month needing food parcels delivered.

The impacts of the end of the furlough scheme and on moratoriums on evictions and debt collection were among our next concerns. Analysis using customer segmentation data showed the 'Financially Stretched' were most likely to need food parcels, so we began targeting households more likely to be at risk from financial pressures, although most of those contacted over summer/autumn 2021 had no concerns. However, we remained concerned that should unemployment continue to rise, many of those previously contacted might need support that is not currently required.

From July 2020 to August 2021, HDC's Covid-19 resident advice team made nearly 5,000 further successful calls to over 3,600 households. Around a sixth of these had previously been contacted between March and June 2020 but the majority were contacted for the first time. Of all those contacted, 624 households (17% of those contacted) were provided with any type of support. Over 30% of those previously contacted were given support compared to just 14% of those contacted for the first time from July 2020 onwards, suggesting a combination of both long-term and short-term needs. 90 households (2.5%) requested help with food (5% among those previously contacted, 2% among those contacted for the first time).

As the second national lockdown began in early November, it was agreed that Huntingdonshire District Council would take responsibility for supporting CEV residents. While there was no requirement for CEV residents to shield again as they had been asked to in lockdown 1, our focus shifted to focus on this group and others who might be affected by new

## Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

	<p>lockdown restrictions. The numbers of residents who were classed as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable increased significantly after we took responsibility, going up to over 10,000 during the third lockdown in early 2021 from less than 4,200 on the list when they were supported by the County Council. From the second lockdown onwards, we did identify increased needs for financial support or for food due to affordability issues rather than access issues. Around this time, we also provided support to the county council who needed help contacting those enquiring about their Winter Support Grant vouchers (later the Covid Local Support Grant), so more calls were being made to financially vulnerable residents. Overall, during the period from March 2020 to April 2021, 29,400 phone calls were made by the covid resident advice team. 14,500 of these were successful (with many messages left in addition to this where we were unable to speak to residents) and we successfully spoke with residents from over 12,000 households – more than one in seven households across the district.</p>
<p>The <a href="#">Consultation and Engagement Strategy Accessibility Guidance</a> may be helpful when thinking about the potential impact of a policy/service on people with different protected characteristics.</p>	
<p><b>Disability</b> – this refers the protected characteristic of disability. A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Where people are unable to access the help we offer, via the website or internet, we offer where we can paper copies of forms and we help people fill them out over the phone. We direct them to places such as community groups or libraires where they can access internet if applicable.</p> <p>We use the network of community and voluntary groups (the 14 recognised organisations across Huntingdonshire). We signpost to them direct or refer the person to their services, so they are offer face to face support in their local areas.</p>

## Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

	Research <sup>1</sup> indicates that disabled people are still digitally excluded; people with disabilities tend to have lower income and the cost of a device and connectivity services can be restrictive.
<p><b>Gender reassignment</b> – gender reassignment discrimination occurs when a person is treated differently because they are trans*.</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p>	No

<p><b>Age</b> – this refers to the protected characteristic of age. A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32-year-olds) or range of ages (for example 18- to 30-year-olds).</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>For some services this should include consideration of impact in terms of safeguarding young people.</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Where people are unable to access the help we offer, via the website or internet, we offer where we can paper copies of forms and we help people fill them out over the phone. We direct them to places such as community groups or libraires where they can access internet if applicable.</p> <p>We use the network of community and voluntary groups (the 14 recognised organisations across Huntingdonshire). We signpost to them direct or refer the person to their services, so they are offer face to face support in their local areas.</p> <p>Research<sup>1</sup> indicates that <i>'despite increasing numbers of older adults accessing the Internet, and many recent retirees having used computers during their careers, the digital divide between older adults and younger people still exists. Older adults use significantly fewer digital applications and spend less time online than younger adults'</i>.</p>
--	---

<sup>1</sup> [Disability, equality and digital inclusion - Good Things Foundation](#)

**Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

<p>What evidence do you have for your answer? *although the term gender reassignment and transsexual is in the Equality Act 2010, it is accepted that the preferred term is trans.</p>	
<p><b>Marriage and civil partnership</b> in the workplace; this refers the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership which is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple. Civil partnership is between partners of the same sex. Discrimination is when a person is treated differently at work because a person is married or in a civil partnership.</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the function could have a differential impact in terms of <b>pregnancy and maternity</b> in the workplace (e.g., pregnant or breast-feeding women). Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.</p>	<p>No</p>

## Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

<p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	
<p><b>Race</b> – this refers to the protected characteristic of race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. Gypsy/Travellers are distinct group within this category</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Where people are unable to access the help we offer, via the website or internet, we offer where we can paper copies of forms and we help people fill them out over the phone. We direct them to places such as community groups or libraires where they can access internet if applicable.</p> <p>We use the network of community and voluntary groups (the 14 recognised organisations across Huntingdonshire). We signpost to them direct or refer the person to their services, so they are offer face to face support in their local areas.</p> <p>ONS<sup>2</sup> - How does internet usage vary for different ethnic groups? In 2011, there were wide disparities in recent internet use among the different ethnic groups, however, in 2018, this gap had narrowed. The ethnicity gap in internet usage has narrowed over time as the proportion of internet non-users has declined</p>
<p><b>Religion and Belief</b> in the workplace - refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>We have had to work with specific groups during the work we have been doing to make sure we can provide the service to all and meet their needs. For example, working with local mosques to provide hot meals for those that needed them in the correct form during covid.</p>

<sup>2</sup> [How does internet usage vary for different ethnic groups?](#)

**Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

<p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	
<p><b>Sex</b> - this refers to the protected characteristic of sex which can mean either male or female, or a group of people like men or boys, or women or girls.</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	No
<p><b>Sexual orientation</b> – this relates to whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p>	No



## Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

What evidence do you have for your answer?	
Are there concerns that the function could have a differential impact on <b>part time/full time</b> employees? What evidence do you have for your answer?	No
Are there concerns that the function could have a differential impact in terms of specific characteristics of Huntingdonshire e.g., <b>Rural isolation</b>	<p>Yes</p> <p>We use the network of community and voluntary groups (the 14 recognised organisations across Huntingdonshire). We signpost to them direct or refer the person to their services, so they are able to support them in their local areas.</p> <p>Research <sup>3</sup> indicates that people living in rural areas may face very specific barriers to getting online and gaining basic digital skills.</p>

### Findings

Where potential for adverse impact has been identified (age, disability, race, religion & belief, rural isolation), additional support has been put in place to address these potential impacts, to reduce any barriers to accessing the resident advice service e.g., working with partners, information available in different formats, and access to face-to-face support.

### Recommendations

- Continue to work with partners to review access to the service, identify and address any barriers to using the service.
- Consider how best to collect equality monitoring data from service users.

<sup>3</sup> [Digital Inclusion: the Rural Handbook - Good Things Foundation](#)