

Elections and electoral registration

Evidence based equality analysis

Main aims, purpose and outcomes and how does it fit in with the wider aims of the organisation:

The purpose of the analysis is to increase participation and inclusion, to change the culture of public decision-making and to place a more proactive approach to the promotion of equality and fairness at the heart of public policy.

Lead officers: Mandy Ramsden

Stakeholders: Democratic services team and elected members

Equality analysis is a valuable tool to help embed equality into everything we do

While process is important, equality analysis is essentially about outcomes.

Lack of evidence of discrimination is not evidence of a lack of discrimination.

It is not acceptable to say that a policy is applied uniformly to all groups and is therefore fair and equal. Applying a policy or procedure consistently may result in differential outcomes for different groups.

For each of the areas overleaf, an assessment needs to be made on whether the policy has a **positive, negative or neutral impact**, and brief details of why this decision was made and notes of any mitigation should be included. Where the impact is negative, this needs to be given a **high, medium or low assessment**. It is important to rate the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact – some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

Target group / area	Neutral	Positive	Negative
Race and ethnicity (including Gypsy and Travellers; migrant workers, asylum seekers etc.)	Electoral registration governed by legislation	We can provide most forms and information in different languages. During the canvass period, telephone and internet registration offered in different languages. Attendance at Citizenship ceremonies.	
Disability (as defined by the Equality Act - a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities)		Ongoing access audit, but statutory full review every 4 years. Option of postal or proxy vote if unable to attend polling station. Polling station staff trained and given comprehensive guidance on accessibility.	Accessibility of polling stations - some not ideal Accessibility for blind/partially sighted voters
Gender/gender reassignment	There is no requirement in legislation for us to record gender, but there is a facility for us record if a specific request if made.		
Religion and belief			Some polling stations located in religious premises such as church halls, but mitigated by alternative ways to vote.
Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual)			

<p>Age (children and young people aged 0 – 24, adults aged 25 – 50, younger older people aged 51 – 75/80; older older people 81+. The age categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs).</p>		<p>Details of those attaining voting age in the run up to publication of the register recorded in Eros database. Direct contact with Chester University for student registration.</p>	
<p>Rural communities</p>	<p>Accessibility of polling stations (normally within walking distance of elector's home)</p>	<p>Option of postal vote if unable to attend polling station.</p>	
<p>Areas of deprivation</p>		<p>As part of the annual canvass we are now required to carry out a door to door canvass where returns have not been received. This can highlight areas of deprivation around the borough and electors can be assisted to complete their forms personally by canvassers. Personal canvass carried out in areas of poor return.</p>	<p>Under-registration in socially deprived areas</p>
<p>Human Rights</p>	<p>Subject to legislation - Human Rights Act 1998</p>		

Evidence:

Polling stations

- Ongoing polling station access (disability and location) audit. Statutory full review every four years.
- Feedback from Presiding Officers and Polling Station Inspectors after every election.

Annual canvass

- Canvass / electoral registration – use of text / freephone / online confirmation of registration (instructions in English, Welsh and Polish language – other translation available upon request).
- Promotion of use of postal voting (absent votes) and proxies.
- Door to door canvass is undertaken to households where declarations have not been received (this can highlight areas of deprivation around the borough - also electors can be assisted to complete their forms personally by canvassers). Low response areas, mainly areas of deprivation – targeted personal canvass, reviewed each year.
- Registration - attainers (i.e. 16-17 year olds – those attaining voting age during the life of the most recent published register) recorded on canvass and also rolling registration applications.
- Specific targeted canvass of student areas, staff attendance at freshers week, direct liaison with University to gather information and register students.
- Staff training – includes advice on hard to reach groups / foreign language.
- Multi language forms / guidance.
- Access to translation service.
- The annual canvass form available in large print for electors with impaired sight if required. Forms can also be produced in Braille via the Electoral Commission website

Elections

- Voters provided option of postal and proxy vote if unable to attend polling station. Polling station staff trained and given comprehensive guidance on accessibility.
- Blind selector device is available at each polling station (subject to the size of the ballot paper). Instructions are provided along with the training of presiding officers to enable a blind person to receive help when casting their vote from a companion or the Presiding Officer. Wheelchair ramps arranged for appropriate polling stations.
- Information available at polling station in large print for electors with impaired sight if required.

Action plan:

Actions required / key activity	Priority	Outcomes required	Officer responsible	Review date
Polling Stations - ensure that all polling stations are accessible to everyone – audit of stations and equipment, purchase of access ramps.	Medium	Good access	Gina Jones / Denise Philipson	February 2015
Annual canvass / electoral registration - encourage under-represented groups to participate in public life and democratic process – promoting electoral process using varied communication methods / door to door canvassing, utilising Council staff and temporary employees.	Medium	Improving registration numbers Increased numbers of electors utilising postal votes	Gina Jones / Denise Philipson	February 2015
Individual elector registration – preparation for, and general promotion of, the electoral process via web, e-mail / briefing notes, steering group and utilisation of Council staff in electoral duties – provision of training (includes equality and diversity elements).	Medium	Maintain or increase numbers of those entitled to vote	Mandy Ramsden / Patrick Sebastian / Gina Jones	February 2015

Sign off	
Lead Officer:	Mandy Ramsden
Approved by Head of Service:	Simon Goacher on 14 January 2013
Moderation and/or Scrutiny	
Date:	Moderated at directorate equality group 23 July 2013
Date analysis to be reviewed based on rating (high impact – review in one year, medium impact - review in two years, low impact in three years)	