

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

Appendix B

The characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 are:

Disability	Age	Sex (gender)
Gender reassignment	Marriage/civil partnership	Pregnancy/maternity
Race	Sexual orientation	Religion/belief

By law the council must have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

In effect, this means that the council needs to ensure that our policies and services are fair, equitable and proportionate and where possible mitigate against any adverse impacts on people from the different protected characteristics.

In addition to the above protected characteristics, the council should consider the impact of living in a **rural area** as part of this assessment. Where people live is not a characteristic protected by law, but for an organisation such as Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils it is good practice to consider carefully how location may affect people's experience of a policy or service.

The Rural-Urban definition defines the rurality of very small census-based geographies. Census Output Areas forming settlements with populations of over 10,000 (which are urban), while the remainder are defined as one of three rural types: *town and fringe, village or hamlet and dispersed*.

Details	
Service or policy title	Law and Governance
Lead officer	Patrick Richardson-Todd
Officers carrying out the EQIA	Patrick Richardson-Todd
Is this new or a revision?)	Revision
Is this the first time this policy or function has been assessed?	no
Date of completing this EQIA	January 10 th 2024

Description
<p>What exactly is proposed?</p> <p>Review of Polling Places and Polling Districts</p>
<p>Why?</p> <p>Every four years local authorities are required to review its UK parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The proposed changes to the polling districts and polling places have also taken into account the changes to Babergh and Mid Suffolk's District Council's ward boundaries made by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.</p>
<p>What will the effect of the changes be?</p> <p>To ensure that all polling stations, polling places and polling districts are suitable for all types of elections in the future and that they comply with the requirements of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.</p>

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

Appendix B

<p>How will it be implemented?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start of Review 6th October 2023 • Formal Notice of Review published • Notification sent to all interested parties • Acting Returning officer representations published • General Consultation ends 30th November 2023 • Report to Councils 23rd and 25th January 2024 • New boundaries, polling places and polling districts implemented on register 1st February 2024
<p>When is it due to start?</p> <p>Changes to take effect 2nd May 2024</p>

<p>Data about the population</p> <p>What is the demographic profile or make up of the community you are serving? https://www.suffolkobservatory.info/</p> <p>What is the profile or make up of your service users by protected characteristics?</p> <p>Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils face a number of challenges relating to electoral engagement. The largest of these is the far lower propensity of some (largely urban) wards to turn out to vote during elections. These wards tend to contain higher proportions of people disadvantaged by class, unemployment, high levels of rental accommodation, lack of qualifications and general relative socio-economic deprivation. They also tend to contain a large proportion of young people and homemovers, ethnic minorities, residents with countries of birth outside of the U.K., those with low levels of English language proficiency and disabled people. This is probably related to the very low representation of all of these groups, as well as of women, as elected public officials (whether Councillors or MPs) in the Babergh and Mid Suffolk area.</p> <p>All wards have a significant number of their population between the ages of 16-19, who will soon be eligible to vote and who must be targeted in order to ensure that they are registered to vote in any elections that occur when they are of voting age. The Council should continue to gather data on wards with low levels of voting rates, in order to determine whether the designated polling stations are causing any challenges to these groups of people or whether the underlying social factors (such as remoteness, poor Wi-Fi coverage combined with high levels of younger people) that are driving this.</p>

<p>Implications for communities and workforce</p>	
<p>Disability</p>	
<p>What is the impact on people with a disability (including children with additional needs) and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i></p>	<p>Accessible polling stations.</p> <p>Correspondence from Suffolk Sight CIO has been received requesting that large print access be available for postal voters. The Elections Team will look into the inclusion of this provision/ clear signposting to access this provision, mirroring the provisions at polling places.</p>
<p>How does it have a positive or negative impact?</p>	<p>positive</p>

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

Appendix B

What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	<p>Polling stations are chosen where possible that are fully DDA compliant.</p> <p>Disability forums are consulted when considering polling district and polling places reviews.</p> <p>Alternative voting arrangements are available- postal and proxy votes. Waivers can also be applied to this process where a consistent signature can no longer be provided.</p> <p>Additional assistance provided in polling stations if required – Large print ballot papers, magnifiers, tactile devices, procedure for PO or companions to assist voters</p>
Age	
What is the impact on people of different ages and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	<p>Only persons aged 18 years and over are legally entitled to vote. However, 16/17-year-olds can register so that they will appear on the register and automatically be entitled to vote from their 18th birthday.</p> <p>Elderly people may have mobility issues.</p>
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	No known impact
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	<p>Social media campaigns should be run to promote voting options.</p> <p>Alternative voting arrangements are available- postal and proxy votes. Waivers can also be applied to this process where a consistent signature can no longer be provided.</p> <p>Additional assistance can be provided at the polling station if required.</p>
Sex (gender)	
What is the impact on people of different genders and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	No known impact
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	No known impact
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	n/a
Gender reassignment	
What is the impact on people who have undergone gender reassignment (i.e. transgender people) and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	No known impact
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	No known impact
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	n/a
Marriage/civil partnership	
What is the impact on people who are married or in a civil partnership and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	No known impact
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	No known impact
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	n/a

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

Appendix B

Pregnancy/maternity	
What is the impact on people who are pregnant women or those with a young child and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	Risk assessment undertaken with pregnant polling station staff to mitigate risks
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	No known Impact
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	Postal Voting is a proffered service
Race	
What is the impact on people from different races or ethnic groups and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	No known impact
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	No known impact
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	n/a
Sexual orientation	
What is the impact on people according to their sexual orientation and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	No known impact
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	No known impact
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	n/a
Religion/belief	
What is the impact on people according to their religion or belief and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	Choice of venue (i.e. Church Halls) may deter members of certain communities from attending polling stations.
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	Negative
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	The use of religious buildings is limited and only used when there is no other alternative accommodation. This is reviewed regularly, and alternative provision sought where practicable. Alternative voting arrangements are available- postal and proxy votes
Rurality	
Where people live is not a characteristic protected by law: but for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils it is good practice to consider carefully how location may affect people's experience of a policy or service.	
What is the impact on people according to whether they live in an urban or rural environment and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	Rural isolation is an issue in some areas. The Elections team ensure that the availability of polling stations are in as close proximity as possible.
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	yes

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Appendix B

What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	Alternative voting arrangements available – Postal/Proxy.
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Making Decisions	
Having completed this equality impact assessment indicate which decision is recommended to be taken.	
Should the policy or service be implemented as the correct course of action?	That the recommendations in the report are implemented
Should the policy or service be amended as suggested by the report so that mitigating actions are taken to address an adverse or negative impact on any characteristic?	Mitigations have already been put in place
Should the policy or service be reviewed and revised more significantly to take into account its impact on different groups?	The Policy is reviewed regularly
Should the policy or service not be actioned as there are too many negative impacts?	no

Monitoring Impact	
Assessing the impact on equality is an ongoing process that does not end once a policy or service had been agreed or implemented.	
How frequently will the policy or service be reviewed?	Legislative requirement every 5 years.
Who will be involved?	Members, district, town and parish councils. Acting returning officers, MP's, members of the public and disability groups
Will there need to be an action plan completed for any amendments?	No
What further evidence or consultation will be needed to check that the policy or service is working well?	The next review will be undertaken in 2028

Completion	
Authors signature	<i>Patrick Richardson-Todd</i>
Date of completion	10/01/2024

Additional sources of data:

<http://www.suffolkobservatory.info/Default.aspx>

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/>

<http://suffolkcf.org.uk/publications/hidden-needs-2016/>

<https://www.nao.org.uk/>