

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Customer Contact Services – 1 Time Square

Section 1 – Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure.

Assessment Lead Officer, Email, Telephone Number	[REDACTED]
Directorate and Department	Corporate Services Finance and Customer Contact
Date of Assessment	October 2023
Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure.	<p>The council provides a wide range of public services and social care to Warrington residents. The initial point of contact for residents to make enquiries about public services is through the Council's customer contact function. Prior to the pandemic residents could make enquiries by visiting the contact centre in person without a prior appointment, by online form, by email, or by telephone. In addition to specific contact information there is a wide range of information on all council services and functions on the Council's website.</p> <p>The pandemic has changed the way many services operate and the way in which some customers and residents interact with the council. In September 2020 the Council's Senior Leadership Team approved a future for the Contact Centre which enabled the use of the ground floor and face to face services to be operated in a much more streamlined way to take account of these changes. The underlying aim is to improve the council's customer contact services to ensure that they are person centred, accessible and effective. The council will encourage a digital first approach to ensure face to face and telephony services are always available to those who need them most.</p>

	<p>The future customer contact function is as follows: -</p> <p><u>Self Service Options via Digital/Website/social media</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents will be able to access information and make enquiries about council services on their own devices 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via the Council's website and social media platforms. • Self-service PC's will be available in 1 Time Square during the opening hours of 8.45 am to 5.00 pm. • Self-service PC's will be available in community hubs, libraries and other community facilities. <p><u>Telephone assistance</u></p> <p>Assistance to residents will be available Monday to Friday 8.30 am to 5.00 pm. Assistance will either be offered immediately or via a call-back service. A telephone appointment service will also be introduced, customers will be offered a telephone appointment within 3 days of their enquiry. Telephone assistance will be available to those residents that have either none or very poor IT provision, some residents with none. The telephone assistance will also be provided to our most vulnerable residents supporting form filling, payments etc that they are unable to complete themselves.</p> <p><u>Face to Face Appointments</u></p> <p>A new appointment only service will be introduced for residents who prefer to speak in person to a customer service advisor. Non urgent appointments will be available Monday to Friday 8.45 am to 5.00 pm within 3 days of the initial enquiry. Appointments for urgent enquiries and/or vulnerable customers will be offered an appointment on the same day as their enquiry.</p> <p>The customer contact service will work with services over the longer term so that new or changing models of service delivery are reflected in the customer contact function.</p>
<p>Who is Affected?</p>	<p>All residents and businesses in Warrington Customer Contact employees</p>
<p>Links and impact on other services, strategies, functions or procedures.</p>	<p>This service is incorporated within the draft Customer Contact Strategy 2020-2024 and demonstrates the wider ambitions for customer contact in support of the Council's Corporate Strategy 2020-24. The service also links closely to two of the council's equality objectives "providing opportunities to improve life chances" and "working with partners and businesses to improve accessibility and tackle discrimination".</p>

<p>How does the service, service change, strategy, function or procedure help the Council meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty?</p>	<p>The customer contact service meets two of the aims of the public sector equality duty as follows: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not • Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
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Section 2 - Information – What do you know?

<p>What information (qualitative and quantitative) and/or research have you used to commission/change/decommission the service, strategy, function or procedure?</p>	
<p>Information Used</p>	<p>Information used to inform the new customer contact service included feedback and discussions from Senior Leadership Team, Directorate Management Teams, key stakeholders and performance management information which monitored the use of customer service interactions since March 2020</p>
<p>Gaps in Information</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>

3. What did people tell you?

<p>What consultation and engagement activities have you undertaken and what did people tell you? Is there any feedback from other local and/or external regional/national consultations that could be included in your assessment?</p>	
<p>Details and date of the consultation/s and/or engagement activities</p>	<p>Discussions with Senior Leadership Team and Directorate Management Teams were held in April / May 2021 and proposals presented to SLT and Members following these discussions.</p> <p>Contact staff were briefed on proposals in June 2021. Consultation with the Trade Unions took place in August 2021 when they are presented with the Ground Floor Risk Assessment. As part of the induction process new starters are briefed on the risk assessments.</p> <p>As part of the pilot of opening the ground floor we have seen positive comments from our residents in relation to speed of being seen via the new appointment system, with staff assisting those that need help accessing forms on the website using the self-service suite. The team also deal with ad hoc enquires in relation to Adult and Children’s Social Care with support from colleagues from those services. The service has also received compliments not just in relation to the service but also about the way their enquiry has been dealt with by a member of staff in a courteous, polite, profession and dignified way.</p> <p>We support residents that don’t have English as their first language by assisting them via Google Translate, a customer service team</p>

	<p>member who is fluent in Spanish and Italian has helped customers engage with our services. In the event of language being a barrier, we liaise with the communication team to access the Council's translation service provider. A member of the team has been trained in the use of British Sign Language (BSL) and is able to assist customers who have a hearing impairment. This training is going to be rolled out, to other advisors in the near future. In addition, a hearing loop facility is installed in all areas of the ground floor.</p> <p>All Contact Warrington staff undergo bespoke tailored communication skills training. This training has also been delivered by the team to the following other teams; Registrars, One Front Door, ICT helpdesk, First Response and Carecall.</p> <p>Quarterly team meetings are held with customer service staff along with staff from Registrars and the Premise Management Team.</p> <p>New starters also undertake the online Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training will all customer service staff annually completing online EDI courses, Dementia Awareness and basic autism awareness. Staff are also advised on how to access the interpretation service.</p> <p>All staff support one another by using Microsoft Teams chat, to get help and advice not just from peers but from their supervisors, Team Leaders and Managers.</p> <p>It is envisaged in the next 12 months that all the customer service team will have completed the Mental Health First Aid training, and all have completed the Happy, Ok, Sad mental health training.</p> <p>Current ground floor risk assessments are being reviewed, with engagement with the property services team. After the risk assessment has been signed off it is shared with the Growth and Corporate Health & Safety Committees.</p> <p>All the services provided by the team are accessible for all.</p>
<p>Gaps in consultation and engagement feedback</p>	<p>Ongoing consultation will take place with stakeholders and the Senior Leadership Team via quarterly reviews. These will include the views of services and customer feedback in order to enhance the customer services offer.</p>

4. Review of information, consultation feedback and equality analysis

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of information used to inform the proposal	What did people tell you? Summary of customer and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from the information and feedback (actual and potential). These can be either positive, negative or have no impact.
Age	<p>Warrington's population and household estimates based on Office for National Statistics Census 2021 data:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of people living in Warrington is approximately 210,900 • 16-64 population is 135,000 (62.8% of the total population) • 65 and over population is 40,100 (19% of the total population compared to 18.4% in England) • Persons aged 50 to 54 years of age (16,100) make up the largest age group accounting for 7.6% of the total population. 	<p>Feedback from resident who use customer contact services have provided some very positive feedback.</p> <p>I just wanted to thank you for my blue badge, you cannot believe what a difference this will make to my life.</p> <p>Would like to thank the lady on the front desk today for going above and beyond to help me with my wife's application to renew her blue badge.</p> <p>Query about concessionary bus pass was handled superbly, she is a credit to WBC. Please pass on my thanks.</p> <p>Could I thank the lady who helped me with my Blue Badge renewal over the phone late this afternoon. She was helpful, informative and very patient. Excellent service. She also mentioned it was her first Blue Badge renewals. She was excellent in all regards.</p>	<p>There is a positive impact for all residents who use customer contact services because: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers will be able to access digital services and information about council services at their own convenience without having to visit the contact centre at 1 Time Square. • Customers who don't have access to the internet from their own devices will be able to access digital services in their local community through community hubs, libraries and other community facilities. • A triage appointment only service will mean that waiting times for people visiting the Contact centre will be reduced. Customers will be able to make an appointment at a time to suit them without having to wait for a customer services advisor. Enquiries from vulnerable customers and/or urgent matters will be dealt with on the same day.

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Disability - Adults	<p>The 2021 Census shows that: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17.8% of residents are disabled which is the same as England (17.8%) but lower than the North West at 19.8% • 7.7% of residents identified are disabled with their day-to-day activities limited a lot under the Equality Act 2010 • 10.1% of residents are disabled with their day-to-day activities limited a little under the Equality Act 2010 • 82.2% of the population are not disabled under the Equality Act 2010 <p>In 2021/22 the council provided long term support for 1396 men (41.5%) and 1969 women (58.5%), a total of 3365 people. 65.7% (2212) were aged 65 and over and 34.3% (1153) were aged between 18-64. Long term support provided comprised of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Support 1899 (56.4%) • Learning Disability 514 (15.3%) • Mental Health 464 (13.8%) • Sensory Support 105 (3.1%) • Memory & Cognition 320 (9.5%) • Other 63 (1.9%) <p><u>Personal Independence Payments</u> - In October 2022 10,389 people were registered</p>	<p>I would like to pass on my compliments to the lady who was so helpful when dealing with a chase up of the disabled band reduction. Her help and kind words were most appreciated during a difficult and frustrating time.</p> <p>I made a call yesterday and was helped so much and kept me updated on my query even ringing me back. The team are amazing. Please pass on how amazing you do your job and helped a single mum able to feed her family. Thank you.</p>	<p>There is a positive impact for disabled residents because: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The building has been designed to create an inclusive and highly accessible environment that meets Building Regulations Part M, British Standard 8300. The offices have audio induction loops and disabled toilets are available for visitors to the building on the ground floor. Disabled parking is available adjacent to the building. • The council's website is fully accessible, functions include the ability to navigate most of the website using speech recognition software and listen to most of the website using a screen reader. The accessibility statement and further details can be found here. • Vulnerable customers and disabled people with an urgent enquiry will be given priority access to customer services and will be offered an appointment on the same day. • A text relay service for people who are D/deaf, hearing impaired or have a

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	to receive personal independence payments, 46.0% were men and 54% were women.		<p>speech impediment is provided for telephone enquiries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter can be arranged for face-to-face appointments • Applicants for Blue Badges and Disabled Bus Passes are given support (if required) to help them process their application in a timely manner. • Extra support is also provided (if required) to those residents completing Blue Badge applications where they are receiving domiciliary care from McMillan Nurses. • We help residents understand the process and procedures and qualifying benefits in relation to Council Tax such as Severe Mentally Impaired, Disabled Band Reductions, Local Support, Council Tax Support and Care Home application forms.
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95.13% of residents gender identity is the same as their sex registered at birth which is higher than England (93.5%) and the North West (94.19%) • 0.16% of resident's gender identity is 		The new contact centre is fully inclusive for transgender customers and those who identify as non- binary. A gender-neutral public toilet is provided on the ground floor.

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	<p>different to that assigned at birth but no specific identity is given.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller numbers of the population identified as transwomen, transmen, non-binary and other gender identities. 		
Pregnancy and maternity	In 2021 Office for National Statistics show that the birth rate in Warrington was 1.48% which is lower than England and Wales (1.55%) and the North West (1.59%).		The new contact centre is fully accessible for parents with pushchairs and prams. Baby changing facilities are provided in the public toilets.
Race/ethnicity	<p>3.3% of people identified their ethnic group within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" category, up from 2.4% in 2011. This is lower than the North West (8.4%) and England (9.6%). 0.7% of people identified their ethnic group as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African</p> <p>1.6% identified their ethnic group as Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups.</p> <p>93.5% of people identified their ethnic group within the "White" category (compared with 95.9% in 2011)</p> <p>0.9% of people identified in another ethnic group.</p> <p>In Warrington 105 different languages are spoken. The most commonly spoken languages are: - English (94.6%), Polish</p>		<p>There is a positive impact for Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority customers because: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council website and digital services can be translated into a wide range of languages. Interpretation services can be arranged for face-to-face appointments and telephone enquiries.

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	<p>(1.5%), Romanian (0.7%) and South Asian (0.6%).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Traveller caravan count showed that there were 37 traveller caravans in Warrington. 		
Religion or belief	<p>Religions identified in the 2021 Census are: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No religion - 73,042 (34.6% of the population). This is similar to England (36.7%) and the North West (32.6%) Christian - 119,650 (56.7% of the population) Buddhist - 605 (0.3% of the population) Hindu - 1,495 (0.7% of the population) Jewish - 190 (0.1% of the population) Muslim - 3,686 (1.7% of the population) Sikh - 478 (0.2% of the population) <p>Other religions – 794 (0.4 of the population)</p>		The new contact centre and customer service model will be provided regardless of religion or belief therefore there is no impact on this equality group
Sex/Gender	Office for National Statistics show that 49.5% (104,445) of the population are men and 50.5% (106,529) of the population are female is the same as England and Wales at 49% and 51% respectively		The new contact centre and customer service model will be provided regardless of gender status therefore there is no impact on this equality group
Sexual orientation	Sexual orientations identified in the 2021 Census are: -		The new contact centre and customer service model will be provided regardless of sexual orientation therefore there is no impact on this equality group

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	91.8% of the population are Straight or Heterosexual which is higher than England at 89.37% and the North West 90.12% 1.3% of the population are Gay or Lesbian 1.0% of the population are Bisexual. Smaller numbers of the population are Pansexual, Asexual, Queer or identified with another sexual orientation.		

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Carers (Unpaid Care)	<p>4.9% of the population provide 19 hours or less per week of unpaid care this is higher than the North West at 4.5% and England at 4.4%.</p> <p>1.9% of the population provide 20 to 49 hours per week of unpaid care.</p> <p>2.7% of the population provide 50 or more hours per week of unpaid care.</p> <p>During 2021/22 the total number of carers receiving direct support from the Council was 3226. 877 either through a commissioned service or direct payment for the support they needed.</p>		<p>Staff have received awareness sessions & training in support available for carers, in terms of relevant disregards and discounts available for local taxation and benefits.</p> <p>Staff are aware of links for carers& through ASC and information held on WBC website. Contact centre staff support anyone who needs digital assistance accessing services within 1 Time square reception.</p>

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Marriage and civil partnership	Census data 2021 shows that: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 34.9% of residents have never married and never registered a civil partnership ● 46.8% are married. ● 0.1 % are in a registered civil partnership. ● 2.0% are separated, but still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership. ● 9.6% are divorced or a civil partnership has been dissolved. ● 6.6% are widowed or surviving a civil partnership partner. 		The new contact centre and customer service model will be provided regardless of marital or partnership status therefore there is no impact on this equality group

7. Sign Off

When you have completed your EIA, it must be signed off by a Head of Service/Senior Manager or Director within your Department (Head of Service or above). **Please forward a copy of the EIA to the Business Intelligence Team at equalities@warrington.gov.uk**

Name	Signature	Date
[Redacted Name]	[Redacted Signature]	16.10.23
[Redacted Name]		16.10.23
[Redacted Name]		16.10.23