

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT Part 1 & 2 – pro-forma

Directorate	Resources	Service Benefits	Assessment carried out by	Benefits Team Manager	
Area being assessed	Electronic Benefit Forms	Date of Assessment	October 2020	Is this a new or existing service/policy?	New Service

PART 1 – INITIAL ASSESSMENT	
1. What is the aim/ objective of the area being assessed?	To ensure the online forms for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction are accessible to all Rother residents who wish to make an application or report changes in their circumstances.
2. Who is intended to benefit from it and how?	The online form to be accessible to all Rother residents wishing to make an application for Housing Benefit and or Council Tax Reduction. By using the forms, it assists with claim accuracy and is directly loaded in to the Revenues and Benefits document management system where it is accessible within 24 hours. This removes the need to post forms, wait for postal times and prevents forms going missing.
3. If your service uses contractors, do you ensure that they comply with the Council’s equal opportunities policy and relevant legislation?	The Benefit service use a contractor to supply the online form. It is a requirement that any contractor complies with the authority’s equal opportunities policy and can make adaptations/changes to the form at the authorities request. The contractor also complies with accessibility regulations; The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 Equality Act 2010, also The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (known as WCAG 2.1)

4. Do you know who your service users are by age/ race/ disability/gender etc? (This could be obtained from results of recent consultation or surveys, equality monitoring data, demographic and other statistics).

The authority's equalities monitoring form is included in the Housing Benefit/CTR application form.

The latest Census data captured for the district is as follows;
Population of Rother: 96,080 (2019 mid-year estimate, ONS)

By Gender:

Female – 49,802 – 51.8%
Male – 46,278 – 48.2%

By Age Group:

0-15 – 15%
16-29 11.9%
30-44 – 12.8%
45-64 – 28.1%
65+ - 32.1
0-17 – 16.8% (below school leaving age)
18 – 65 – 51% (working age)
65+ - 32.1% (over retirement age)

By Ethnic Group: (2011 Census Based on 90,558 population.)

All White Groups – 97.1%
White British & Northern Irish – 94.1%
Irish - 0.7%
Gypsy Traveller – 0.1%
Other White – 2.1%
All mixed ethnicities – 1.1%
Asian or Asian British (includes Indian, Bangladeshi, Chinese & Other Asian) – 1.2%
All Black or Black British (includes African, Caribbean and other)– 0.3%
Other ethnic groups (includes Arab and other) – 0.2%

Language (2011 Census)

Households with all over 16s having English as main language – 97.7%
Households one but not all over 16s with English as main language – 1.4%
Households with no over 16s but at least one under 16 with English as main language – 0.1%
Households with no people with English as main language – 0.7%

4. Continued...

Religion (2011 Census)

Christian – 64.8%
Buddhist – 0.3%
Hindu – 0.2%
Jewish – 0.2%
Muslim – 0.5%
Sikh – zero
Other – 0.6%
None – 25.2%
Not stated – 8.2%

Marital Status (2011 Census)

Single – 24.7%
Married – 51.3%
Civil partnership – 0.3%
Separated – 2.6%
Divorced – 10.3%
Widowed – 10.8%

Sexual Orientation (ESCC Community Survey 2017)

Heterosexual – 93.2%
LGBT – 2.2%
Lesbian/gay woman – 0.6%
Gay man – 0.7%
Bisexual – 1%
None of these – 4.6%

<p>4. a) How are service users views gathered? (This could be through results of recent consultations or surveys, information from groups and agencies directly in touch with particular groups or analysis of complaints)</p> <p>b) How do you use this information?</p> <p>C) Do you publish the results, and where?</p>	<p>A) Consultations are carried out on specific strategies or service changes. The Authority's complaints process reports learning outcomes and trends to each department and Senior Management Team for review/investigation.</p> <p>B) Consultations determine which services, schemes and processes are implemented. Complaints can change the way in which services are delivered.</p> <p>C) Consultations are published on the authority's website. Residents and the authority's' citizen panel are written to advising of consultations. Changes as a result of formal complaints are fed back direct to the customer.</p>		
<p>5. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on racial groups?</p>	<p>Yes</p>		<p>The online forms are made accessible as much as possible to service users. If this is not accessible to service users, then the council can complete the form on the service user's behalf by contacting the council by phone or email</p> <p>The authority has access to a Translation and Interpreting service. The council's website does translate the benefit information in different languages and can read it to you in that language</p>
<p>6. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to their gender?</p>		<p>No</p>	<p>Our online forms do not have gender specific questions for applicants as the area being assessed is not gender relevant.</p>
<p>7. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to their disability?</p>	<p>Yes</p>		<p>Online forms are made accessible as much as possible to the service users. If this is not accessible to resident's then the council can complete the form on the service user's behalf. Alternative formats are also available on request based on the customer's individual need.</p> <p>The authority meets the accessibility requirements inline with the following regulations: The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 Equality Act 2010, also The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (known as WCAG 2.1)</p>

8. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to their sexual orientation?		No	The online forms will not impact service users due their sexual orientation. The area being assessed is not sexual orientation relevant and we have no evidence to proof this.
9. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to their age?	Yes		The online forms are made as accessible as possible to service users. The Council has the facility to complete the form on the customers behalf or alternative adjustments are available dependant on customers individual need.
10. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to their religious or other belief?		No	The online forms will not have an impact on service users due to their religious beliefs.
11. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to them having dependants/ caring responsibilities?	Yes		The online forms will not impact service users due to them having dependants/caring responsibilities, however alternative formats and adjustments can be made if the need arises.
12. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to them being transgendered or transsexual?		No	The online forms will not impact service users due to them being transgendered or transsexual.
13. Is there any evidence that people from different groups may have different expectations of the areas being assessed?		No	There is no evidence to support that people from different groups have different expectation, however alternative adjustments can be made if the need arises.
14. Is the policy likely to affect relations between certain groups, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular group or denying opportunities to another?		No	There is no evidence to support this.

15. Is the policy likely to damage relations between any particular groups and the Council?		No	There is no reason why the use of online forms only should damage relations.
16. Could the differential impact identified in 5-12 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact in this strategy/policy/service/procedure ?	Yes		There should be no adverse impact to the authority's benefit strategies or policy with online forms however procedure and service delivery will have to be reviewed for points 5,7 and 9.
17. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Or any other reason?			Not applicable
18. Do your staff know who the contact is for equalities issues within your directorate?	Yes		Revenues and Benefits staff are aware who to contact to report equalities issues. Changes in staff roles and additional duties are communicated electronically throughout the authority or within department meetings/service liaison.
19. Have all your staff attended an equality awareness training session?	Yes		All staff have completed equalities awareness training. It is mandatory training for all new employees.
20. Have you set any equality performance indicators or objectives for your service?	Yes		The Authority has corporate equalities objectives; https://www.rother.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Rothers-Corporate-Equality-Objectives-2018-2022.pdf

21. Actions arising from Part 1 of the Initial Assessment

Letters, RDC website and emails do not advise the customer what to do if they require assistance?
Customer correspondence and the RDC website has been updated to advise the customer to contact us if they are experiencing difficulties or require assistance with the online process. At present the readspeaker does not read or change the online form in to a different language. So, the transformation team and Equalities Officer are looking at commissioning a new audio reader the website called 'Recite Me' is due to be implemented very soon, which will address these access issues.

Can copies of documents be taken to the town hall?

Customers can take documents to town hall. If they require copying, documents can be copied how they have to be quarantined so cannot be returned to the customer until 48 hours later. We can return documents recorded delivery, or the customer can collect them.

What happens if the customer has no internet or computer access?

Customers can contact us by phone, and we will provide one to one telephone service where we complete the form on their behalf. Customers can post evidence or take it to the town hall. If telephone assistance is not suitable a paper form can be issued. If the customer uses a third party, they can complete this process via the third party if the appropriate customer permission is in place.

If an applicant does not enter an email address, are they shown a copy of their completed form once it is submitted?

When a form is submitted, an onscreen submission message shows for all applicants, to confirm the form has been submitted. The form is then still available onscreen for applicants until the browser window or tab is closed. If applicants want to keep a copy of their submitted form, they can use the 'PDF & Print' button in the form controls to generate a PDF of their form which they can save or print for their records. If an applicant includes their email address, a submission confirmation email is sent with relevant information as to next steps the applicant needs to take.

Does the form timeout, can it be saved?

Yes, log in passwords are set up at the start of the form to allow the form to be saved throughout.

22. Should this Initial Assessment proceed to Part 2?	YES (please go to question 25)			
23a. As a result of Part 1, is a Full Assessment necessary?	YES	NO (please sign below)	23b. If Yes, on what evidence should this assessment proceed to a Full Assessment?	
24a. Date on which Full Assessment to be started by			24b. Date on which Full Assessment to be completed by	

Signed (Completing Officer): Rebecca Algar

Signed (Lead Officer):

Date: 19.10.2020

PART 2 - INITIAL CONSULTATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT					
25. In what areas are there concerns that the strategy/policy/procedure could have a differential impact?	Race n/a	Gender n/a	Disability Yes – customers with reading difficulties.	Sexual Orientation n/a	Age n/a
	Religion or Belief n/a	Dependants/ caring responsibility n/a	Transgendered or Transsexual n/a		
26. What concerns are there that the area being assessed could have a differential impact on relevant groups? Please explain (continue on a separate sheet if necessary).	The 'read speak' option is currently not available for online forms however the authority can assist the customer with a one to one telephone service until a new form reader is implemented. See section 21.				
27. What are the risks associated with the area being assessed in relation to differential impact?	None				
28. Are there any experts/relevant groups who you can approach to explore their views on the issues?	YES		29. Please list the relevant groups/ experts	Debbie Peters RDC Equalities Officer	

30. How will the views of these groups be obtained?	One to one consultation		35. Date on which each group/expert was contacted	21.09.2020 13.10.2020		
31. Please explain in detail the views of the relevant groups/experts on the issues involved (continue on a separate sheet if necessary).	Please refer to section 21.					
32. Taking into account the views of the groups/experts and/or the available evidence, please clearly state the risks associated with the strategy/policy/procedure weighed against its benefits (continue on a separate sheet if necessary).	There is minimal risk however some actions are yet to be implemented. Where this does occur, reasonable adjustments have been put in place.					
33. Actions arising from Part 2 of the Initial Assessment	Please refer to section 21					
34. As a result of Part 2, is a Full Assessment necessary?		NO (please sign below)	34a. Date on which Full Assessment to be started		34b. Date on which Full Assessment to be completed	

Signed (Completing Officer): Rebecca Algar

Signed (Lead Officer):

Date:19.10.2020