

## MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Equality Impact Assessment

**Title of Policy/Service/Contract:** Provision of a new combined reception at Oaklands, Haywards Heath

**Division:** Communications and Customer Services

**Lead Officer:** Diane Talbot

**Date Assessment completed:** January 2014

#### 1. SCOPING

##### 1.1 What are the aims of the policy, service/service change or contract?

The aim of the Help Point/Reception is to provide an excellent customer service to all customers visiting the Council Offices and to resolve as many enquiries as possible at first point of contact, or to successfully signpost customers to the correct service both within and external to Council services. The Reception area has been recently updated and allows easier access including to self service areas.

This impact assessment relates to the provision of a new combined reception in the Oaklands main building, following the closure of the former dedicated planning reception in the Planning building. The new combined reception opened on 25 November 2013.

##### 1.2 Who does the service/policy/contract affect? Who are the main customers (internal or external)?

Affects all internal and external customers as it is the first point of contact for any visitor to the Council. The main customers are visitors to the Council's offices. Surgeries are held for Mid Sussex District Council services such as Housing Needs and Benefits

External organisations such as West Sussex County Council and the Inland Revenue also have surgeries and hot desks that operate from the reception or close to it and the reception acts as a first point of call for these visitors.

##### 1.3 What equality information is available, including any evidence from engagement and analysis of use of services?

There are several examples of engaging customers across the whole of the Customer Services Business Unit. However, this concentrates more on the customer's satisfaction with the service received and does not ask specific equality questions.

Business Unit Leaders were consulted on their customer service needs.

Consultation has also been carried out with Thumbs Up Group about the way we communicate with those with learning disabilities generally. Advice was sought from Action for Deafness in Haywards Heath on the issue of playing background music in

the reception area. Previous impact assessments have identified accessibility issues with the existing Planning and Oaklands receptions.

**1.4 What does this information tell us about the equality issues associated with the service and implications for the protected groups?**

There are some aspects of the new reception that provide an enhanced customer service generally. These include additional monitors, more spacious areas and better seating arrangements and improved privacy. Also there are customer services benefits of all enquiries being dealt with in one place.

The main equality issues identified with the previous separate main and Planning receptions were:

- a lack of accessible public toilet facilities in the main Oaklands reception
- no hearing loop provision in the Planning Reception building
- accessibility issues with the Planning Reception building
- space issues and lack of seating facilities
- need for better information and customer queuing system

The new reception addresses all these issues.

**1.5 Are contractors or partnerships used to deliver the service? No**

If No go to section 2.

If yes, please refer to the guidance notes, particularly Appendix One of the MSDC Guidance "Integrating Equality and Diversity into Procurement", and complete the next three questions.

**Identify the contractors/partnerships used to deliver the service.**

**What is their contribution to equality in service delivery and the promotion of equality?**

**How are equality issues addressed through contractual arrangements and service level agreements?**

## 2. Assessment of Impact; Analysis and Action Planning

Any gaps in information or provision, opportunities to promote equalities and good relations identified above need to be translated into SMART actions and recorded here. These actions need to be delivered and monitored through the service planning process.

Opportunity to promote equality, good relations and/or address barriers to service/differential impact	Current action taken to address these	Further actions required and timescales	Lead Officer	How will impact be measured
The needs of different ethnic groups including white minorities, but also established white communities				
All signs and the majority of information posters are in English	Staff on reception will to assist with any specific service requests in respect of community specific information, language or disabilities. Improved signage introduced.	None identified. Monitor via feedback from users/customers	Diane Talbot	
The needs of men and women. Including taking account of pregnancy and maternity.				
There is no public access toilet or baby changing facility in the Oaklands main reception area.	New public conveniences provided in the new reception include baby changing facilities.	Feedback to be gathered on public satisfaction with the new facilities.	Diane Talbot	
The needs of disabled people				
Limited access to reception and public meeting rooms. No hearing loop provided to assist those with hearing difficulties in the Oaklands reception.	New combined reception provides an improved hearing loop and disabled access public conveniences. Better display and queuing facilities	Feedback to be gathered from disabled users regarding their satisfaction with the new reception's accessibility.	Diane Talbot	
The needs of people with a religion or belief				
None identified.				
The needs of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and heterosexual people				
None identified.				
Issues from marriage and civil partnership				
None identified.				
The needs of transgender communities				
None identified.				

Opportunity to promote equality and/or barriers to service/differential impact	Current action taken to address these	Further actions required and timescales	Lead Officer	How will impact be measured
The needs of different age groups, for example older and younger people				
Reception provision for parents with young children	<p>New combined reception area offers improved seating arrangements for those customers that are waiting to be seen by other services. Play table and facilities are also made available.</p> <p>The numbers of public use computers has been increased and rotas changed so that there are nearly always two receptionists on duty so that one can assist those that need help with finding information or transacting online</p>	Monitoring of customer satisfaction	Diane Talbot	
The needs of people who are disadvantaged by socio-economic factors such as low incomes, skill or living in a deprived area				
Reception facilities tailored to meet the needs of those with low incomes and for example with no private access to the internet.	<p>Housing Needs, HM Revenues and Customs and Housing Benefits all hold surgeries within the reception.</p> <p>Rooms are also provided for external services when requested and there is contact with the Citizens Advice Bureau offers services such as debt advice and is also based at the Mid Sussex District Council campus.</p> <p>Monitors are provided in the reception for access to Council services and bidding for social housing under Choice-Based Letting.</p> <p>The numbers of public use computers has been increased and rotas changed so that there are nearly always two</p>	Monitoring of use and satisfaction with the new reception facilities.	Diane Talbot	

	receptionists on duty so that one can assist those that need help with finding information or transacting online			
The needs of people who live in a rural area				
People in rural areas may have difficulty in travelling to visit the Oaklands reception.	Reception and Customer Contact Centre staff make customers aware of surgeries held by other services in alternative locations e.g. all Help Point locations, Parish and Town Council Offices and the availability of home visits. Council services are provided on-line and there are more on-line transactions available.	None identified.		

### 3. Mid Sussex District Council Equality Impact Assessment Summary

Key Findings	Future Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council has provided a new combined reception area bringing together the former reception with the Planning Reception, formerly provided in a separate building on the Oaklands Campus.</li> <li>• The new combined reception provided improves the services provided for the protected groups in the following areas:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disabilities- improved accessibility through disabled access public conveniences provided, improved seating areas, ramps to entrance ways. New public toilet provided in the reception offers disabled access and baby change facility. Use of TV display equipment allows for queuing messaging and other information. New queuing system software which is beneficial to people with visual impairments.</li> <li>- Older people- better seating areas , accessible toilet</li> <li>- Younger people and parents with young children- improved play areas and play equipment. Parents provided with baby changing facilities in the new public convenience.</li> <li>- Income and skills issues- provision of extra monitors to assist people access services on-line who do not have their own internet access,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring of public satisfaction with the new combined reception.</li> <li>• Mystery shopping exercise may be undertaken following re-launch of customer care standards</li> <li>• Explore introduction of further facilities and other agencies able to hold surgeries.</li> </ul>

### 4. Signing off this assessment and action plan

Signature ..... *Dore Zayst.* .....  
 Person undertaking the assessment

Date ...5 February 2014.....

Signature ..... *J M Holmes* .....  
 2014.....  
 Head of Service

Date .....5 February

Please send your completed impact assessment to Neal Barton for publication on the website.