

Equality Assessment

Title:	Electoral Services	
Version:	1	
Owner:	Hayley Brailsford	
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VERSION	DATE	REVISION DESCRIPTION	APPROVAL DATE / REASON FOR REJECTION (<i>to be completed by Equalities Officer</i>)
2.0	30 December 2015	Reviewed 2015/16	21 January 2016
2.1	21 July 2016	Review following feedback from elections held in 2016	21 July 2016 – in discussion with Electoral Services Manager

Section 1: Getting Started

Name of Policy, Procedure, Practice, Strategy or Service: Electoral Services

Service, Group, Team: Electoral Services

Equality Assessment Lead Officer: Hayley Brailsford

Head of Service: Brendan Morris

Date: 30 December 2015

Section 2: What is being assessed?

What are the broad objective(s) of the policy, procedure, practice, strategy or Service to be assessed?

What are you assessing and what is being affected

What needs is the policy/service designed to meet?

What are the current priorities and the intended outcomes?

You could also refer to your current Service Plans and how the policy/service fits into EBC's strategic objective

How does the policy, procedure, practice, strategy or service align with Corporate Priorities

Electoral Services is a statutory government function regulated by national legislation and guidance and affects:

- Residents – current and future
- Political parties
- Members
- Prospective Candidates
- Staff
- Returning Officer

and is implemented:

- To ensure eligible persons who have applied to be registered as an elector – whether at the annual canvass, a special declaration or the rolling registration process, are included on the electoral register and can exercise their right to vote.
- To ensure that eligible persons who have applied for an absent vote and their personal information is processed and kept securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

- To ensure that the electoral register is published and provided to eligible persons/organisations.
- To ensure that the election process is carried out in accordance with electoral law and reduce any possibility of an election petition.
- To ensure all those who wish to stand (and are eligible) are able to do so.
- To ensure that Polling Places are reviewed in accordance with legislation.
- To ensure that Community Governance reviews are conducted in accordance with legislation.

Electoral Services are responsible for:

- Preparation and maintenance of the Register(s) of Electors, including the Annual Canvass, Final Register/Rolling updates, etc.
- Responsibility for arrangements in connection with European, Parliamentary, County, District and Town/Parish Elections and referenda.

The right to vote is not restricted by race, sex, belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, wealth, social status, marital status, pregnancy or maternity or paternity status or disability. However, this document has been used to provide information on the barriers that could be experienced by members of the community with their ability to enrol on the Electoral Register and cast their vote during an election.

Section 3: Gathering Information

What equality monitoring information do you gather and how is this information used to develop services, functions and policies at the current time. *You could look at the take up of services, customer satisfaction (complaints and compliments) and enforcement action.*

What does available data and the results of any consultations show about the take up of services? What is the impact on different groups? (qualitative and quantitative). *You could look at:*

- *previous community consultation exercises,*
- *customer service reviews and analysis.*
- *Census data*
- *the experiences and views of front-line staff in relation to the provision of the service?*
- *location of facilities.*

Remember: by law you are required to be able to demonstrate, through data analysis and evidence, that you have considered the impact of your service on **ALL** of the relevant protected groups. This document is just a short summary of this process and a tool to help you to check that you have taken the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's equality objectives into consideration.

Equality monitoring information is not directly sought but during an election the Presiding Officers at Polling Stations are asked to complete a

questionnaire requesting information about the physical status of the Polling Station venue which includes access availability.

Consultation and feedback is sought from canvassing staff following the canvass to address any issues which have come to light during the course of the canvass exercise, including those relating to equality and diversity. Feedback is also sought from candidates and agents.

Information is gathered during elections on voters who require assistance with voting, through a physical or mental impairment that may require the Presiding Officer to assist with marking the voting paper. There is a prescribed form and procedure set out by the Electoral Commission to collate this data. This does not however assist us in providing a better service but ensures that the voting is followed fairly and equally for those residents that are unable to physically cast their vote onto the ballot paper themselves.

Statistics are recorded to ensure that future elections are provided for in the appropriate manner and with the relevant resource to ensure all voters are provided with access to vote (i.e. turn out at specific polling stations may be greater than previously experienced and resource should be available to ensure that **all** electors can vote within the regulated timescales of the poll. Whilst it is impossible to anticipate a large attendance at a station before close of poll, contingency measures can be worked into the Election Plan to allow as many voters as possible to cast their vote before 22:00 hours.

Community Governance and Polling Station reviews incorporate public consultation and feedback is taken into consideration.

Section 4: Impact Assessment

Here you need to analyse the needs of different groups and the possible impacts the service may have on them. List below any groups you need with to assess need or impact and methods used: (you may need to add extra rows)

*How is the policy or decision likely to affect the **promotion of equality** and the **elimination of discrimination** in each of the groups?*

Stake Holder Group	Specific Needs/Requirements in relation to the service	Possible Impact (positive and negative) of service
Age (older people, young people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only those who will become 18 during the life of the register being produced are eligible to register. • Alternative methods of registering to vote that is preferable to residents of different ages, e.g. web, telephone, letter, email, canvass 	<p>Positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We offer the options to register via return of the annual canvass form by post or acceptance of current details by telephone or the web. <p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do not offer the facility to receive voter information via social media or text –

	<p>forms, text, social media.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voters, regardless of age (18 and above) can require assistance with casting their vote at a polling station during an election. Younger residents in particular request assistance as the voting process is a new experience to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting is not available through any other mechanism in the UK other than in person at a polling station or by postal/proxy voting. This is governed by legislation. The main problems would be maintaining the integrity of votes and authenticating the eligible voter as well as the technology required to accomplish this.
<p>People with Disabilities (Both physical and mental impairments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist voters with disabilities, each polling station has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A large print version of the ballot paper(s) for the election(s) taking place. ○ A wider and lower polling booth for voters to resolve potential access issues. ○ A selecting device for voters with visual impairments to assist them when marking their ballot paper. • Any voter with any disability can ask for assistance in marking their vote. This assistance can come from the presiding officer or a companion of the voter, anyone assisting the voter must maintain the secrecy of that vote. 	<p>Positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All polling stations are legally required to be wheelchair-accessible. • Every effort is made to ensure that those who request assistance and guidance on any area of the electoral process are given it, whether disabled or not. • Disabled voters can request the Presiding Officer in the polling station or bring along a family member to mark their ballot papers for them if they wish. If a voter is unable to enter the polling station because of a disability, the Presiding Officer can take the ballot paper to him/her. • Postal votes are encouraged wherever possible for voters, whether disabled or not. • Waivers are issued to those voters that are unable to provide a signature. • Presiding Officers are provided with guidance to assist voters that are unable to cast their vote personally through disability, i.e. by reading out the information to the voter, providing magnifying and Braille aids, • A disabled polling booth is provided at all Polling Stations for wheelchair users. • Disabled access is always clearly signposted outside the Polling Station and ramps positioned

		<p>or doors opened to gain suitable access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every effort is made to signpost information in plain English. • A large print version of the ballot paper(s) for the election(s) taking place. • A wider and lower polling booth for voters with disabilities. • A selecting device for voters with visual impairments to assist them when marking their ballot paper.
Gender (Women, Men, Transgender, Transsexuals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender and transgender has not been identified as a factor that affects the Electoral process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender and transgender would have a neutral impact on the provision of Electoral Services.
Race (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic groups. Include people whose first language is not English)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where practicable information should be in the voters preferred languages. • Canvassers should have information in alternative languages to help with the registration of voters 	<p>Positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The electoral commission provides election information translated into 12 different languages and is available on their website: http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/languages.aspx • All documents provided by the electoral commission include the alternative languages statement which highlights our translation services <p>Negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of the requirement for alternative languages for canvassers and at elections
Sexual Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual Orientation has not been identified as a factor that affects the Electoral process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual Orientation would have a neutral impact on the provision of Electoral Services.
Religion and belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion and belief has not been identified as a factor that affects the Electoral process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion and belief would have a neutral impact on the provision of Electoral Services.
Dignity, Human Rights and Socio-economic disadvantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dignity, Human Rights and Socio-Economic disadvantage has not been identified as a factor affecting the Electoral process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dignity, Human Rights and Socio-Economic disadvantage has not been identified as a factor affecting the Electoral process.

Marriage and Civil Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage and Civil Partnership has not been identified as a factor that affects the Electoral process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This protected characteristic would have a neutral impact on the provision of Electoral Services.
Pregnancy and maternity/paternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnancy, maternity and paternity has not been identified as a factor that affects the Electoral process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This protected characteristic would have a neutral impact on the provision of Electoral Services.

Section 5: Actions

How will you mitigate the possible negative impacts of the policy, procedure, practice, strategy or service

Negative impact	Action required to mitigate any potential negative impact	Lead Officer	Deadline
Younger persons are statistically less likely to vote	EBCs work with local schools by delivering democratic and civic presentations which help to raise awareness levels of the under 18's to encourage voting when they are at an age to do so.	Sue Dunkley	ongoing
Accessibility of service	Canvasser and Polling Station Inspectors questionnaires will be used to collect data about any difficulties in language or mobility barriers	Hayley Brailsford	Each Election – Following 2016 elections polling staff identified some access issues which the Electoral Services Manager will take account of in future elections, when identifying suitable buildings for polling stations to be placed