

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Argyll and Bute Council has produced an Equality Impact Assessment toolkit that can be used by partner organisations. This report describes how the toolkit was developed, outlines the process for Equality Impact Assessment and sets out the process for rolling out the toolkit.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and as part of this need to carry out impact assessments in terms of race, disability and gender. All policies and functions should be impact assessed to ensure that they do not have a negative impact on people in the different equality target groups.
- 2.2 Equality Impact Assessments should help to develop more customer-led services by involving people in the assessment process. This also helps to encourage greater openness about policy-making.

3. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

- 3.1 The EqIA is a forward-looking planning tool that allows us to:
- Engage with communities
 - Assess the impact of our work on diverse groups of people within communities and take action where there are any negative impacts
 - Monitor the affects of our functions and policies over time, and take action where there are any negative impacts.
- 3.2 All new functions and policies need to be assessed and the Council also has a programme to review its current policies and functions. Equality Impact Assessments are carried out by policy makers, managers and lead officers in consultation with relevant groups, individuals and partners.
- 3.3 Equality Impact Assessments focus on people who are at risk of discrimination and social exclusion. Equality Target Groups are:
- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people
 - Disability
 - Gender
 - LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender)
 - Belief (religious or political)
 - Age (younger and older)

4. DEVELOPING THE TOOLKIT

- 4.1 The toolkit was developed by, firstly, reviewing equality impact assessment toolkits used by other public sector organisations and the guidance produced by the equality commissions. The Council's Policy and Strategy team worked with the Best Value Network to draft the Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit. Discussions were held with other councils about their approach and the user feedback that they had received. A development day was held to trial the draft toolkit and to provide an opportunity for input from users.
- 4.2 The result is a simple process that officers find easy to use and therefore it is more likely to be used.

5. ROLLING IT OUT

- 5.1 Within the Council, half-day workshops have been held to train officers who will carry out Equality Impact Assessments. The Improvement Service has promoted the toolkit via its website and has supported a workshop for other local authorities who had expressed interest in using the toolkit. Communities Scotland has also offered to support an equalities training event for community planning partners to include a workshop on the toolkit.
- 5.2 There is a requirement for service users, project partners, and officers with knowledge of the policy, function or project, to be involved in the impact assessment process. The Council's Policy and Strategy team can provide support for consultation and research and help officers to access relevant data.
- 5.3 The results of Equality Impact Assessments are reported to elected Members through the normal committee papers process. There is also a half-yearly report to the Strategic Management Team and a list of assessments carried out will be published on the Council's website.
- 5.4 Community Planning Partners are welcome to use the Equality Impact Assessment toolkit.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 In conclusion, the Council has developed an Equality Impact Assessment toolkit in order to improve services. The process of developing the toolkit involved the officers who were going to use it. The result has been a simple and easy to use Equality Impact Assessment process. The toolkit has been shared with other local authorities and with community planning partners in Argyll and Bute.