



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT INITIAL SCREENING

Name of policy / strategy / project (the “initiative”):

Project One Call

Provide a brief summary of the aims and main activities of the initiative: (bullet points)

Following various service reviews and survey findings during 2007/2008 (see Q 3 for further details) Group Management Team has approved the recommendation to merge the customer services and property services call centres into one. The purpose of this service is to resolve customer enquires at first point of contact in a friendly and professional manner.

The merger of the teams will mean that there are more resources to react appropriately to the variation in demand and volume of calls. By pooling the staff resource we can explore extending our opening hours.

Completed by: Jaz Bangerh, Group HR Manager

Manager / Team Leader:

Date: 30th December 2008

STAGE 1: SCREENING

This stage establishes whether a proposed initiative will have an impact from an equality perspective on any particular group of people or community – i.e. on the grounds of race, religion/faith/belief, gender (including transgender), sexual orientation, age, disability, or whether it is “equality neutral” (i.e. have no effect either positive or negative).

Q 1. Who will benefit from this initiative? Is there likely to be a positive impact on specific groups/communities (whether or not they are the intended beneficiaries), and if so, how? Or is it clear at this stage that it will be equality ‘neutral’ i.e. will have no particular effect on any group?
Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality

The aim is that the staff in the new Customer Contact Centre will have sufficient training and knowledge to deal with resident enquiries at this first point of contact. The wider effect of this will mean that Housing Administrators will provide more support to Housing Officers and therefore Housing Officers will be free from administrative duties and have more available time for face to face contact with our Customers. We envisage a positive impact on all groups/communities not only from an access point of view but also through an improvement in customer satisfaction in dealing with enquiries. By pooling the staff resource, we will be able to react to variation in demand and volume of calls.

The current structure has two telephone lines, one is charged at local national rate and the other is a free phone number. It is likely that the new

Centre will have just one contact number which will be less confusing for all residents (however, this is still currently under review.)

The existing call centres operate different opening hours. This will be standardised and we are exploring extending opening hours, including the possibility of Saturday opening. This will have a positive impact on residents who have day time commitments during standard hours.

It is envisaged that all automated features of the telephone service (i.e. press 1 for repairs and 2 for gas) will cease and calls will be dealt with by advisors.

Greater variation and job satisfaction for all Centre staff.

Q 2. Is there likely to be an adverse impact on one or more minority/under-represented or community group as a result of this initiative? If so, who may be affected and why: Or is it clear at this stage that it will be equality 'neutral'?
Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality

At the moment, there is no suggestion of an adverse impact on one or more minority or under-represented group. Further information included in Q 3 and Q 5 address actions that will help those customers who do not speak English as their first language, those who are hearing or voice impaired, or with a learning disability. Staff issues are also addressed below.

Q 3. Is there sufficient data on the target beneficiary groups/communities? Are any of these groups under or over represented? Do they have access to the same resources? What are your sources of data and are there any gaps?
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We have data from STATUS, Mystery Shopping and the Housing Services Review. Our STATUS survey 2007 reported that 93% of tenants contact is by telephone (based on a 55% response rate / 3,004 completed questionnaires.) This method of contact resulted in the highest satisfaction for ease of contact; staff being able to deal with the problem and being satisfied with the outcome. Results reflect that 11% of residents who contact us by telephone use a wheelchair. This is representative of all residents who responded. 51% of residents who contact us by telephone state that they have a long term illness, disability or health problem which limits their daily activities. This is proportionate to all residents who responded. 10% of the residents who contact us by telephone are B&ME. This is proportionate to all residents who responded. The age and gender profile of those contacting us by telephone also reflects the age of the principal tenant who completed the questionnaires. This evidence suggests that there is no under representation in terms of access to services by telephone based on disability, age, ethnicity and gender. Chevin will **continue to routinely collect information relating to religion and sexuality of residents in order that analysis based on these two aspects is more statistically relevant (via CENSUS 2009 and all other surveys / questionnaires).**

STATUS demonstrates that 34% of tenants would like the contact hours extending (42% of tenants said that they did not need extending). Part of the One Call project will be to further explore extending contact hours, including Saturday morning opening which will benefit customers with weekday commitments. STATUS also demonstrates that of the 3,004 responses received, only 31% of principal tenants are in full or part time employment / self-employed. **We will need to be mindful of this when deciding whether the new telephone contact number will be chargeable and at what rate. This will be an aspect that could potentially affect all service users.**

All complaints are monitored by diversity. Of the expressions of dissatisfaction (EOD) received since January 2008, only 5 of the 390 relate to not being able to get through to our offices, or a call not being returned when it should have been. None of the complaints received about staff attitude relate to not being able to contact us, and of these complaints there is no evidence to suggest that any one group is less satisfied than another.

Call advisors in the new Customer Contact Centre will continue to use Language Line interpretation facilities to assist our customers who do not speak English as their first language. Due to issues highlighted in past Mystery Shopping exercises, all front line staff have received training on how to use Language Line. **However, evidence still suggests that we are not keeping comprehensive records of who has used this service and we need to make sure that we are doing this.** At the moment, evidence suggests that customers who do not speak English as their first language are asking friends and relatives to ring Chevin on their behalf, particularly to report repairs. There is some anecdotal evidence that some older B&ME customers might be happier with this approach, however, **more needs to be done to advertise the availability of Language Line interpretation as an alternative.** A recent comparison of the number of repairs reported between two schemes with similar attributes suggests that one scheme with a larger proportion of B&ME residents reported more repairs than White British / Irish residents from another comparable scheme. This suggests that our B&ME customers who do not speak English as their first language are reporting repairs via the telephone. However, other **evidence from a survey of our B&ME customers in 2007 suggests that some of our B&ME customers prefer face to face contact. This is an area that needs to be explored further as part of increasing our methods of customer contact generally.**

Call advisors in the new Customer Contact Centre will also continue to use Typetalk facilities for those customers who are hearing / voice impaired or who have a learning disability. We are planning to routinely **ask customers about their preferred method of contact in all surveys / questionnaires** and will **continue to offer alternative methods of communication such as e-mail and texting for those customers who prefer other forms of contact.**

The Housing Services Review suggests that staff will be better placed to manage calls according to demand and that there are no proposals for redundancies. Comprehensive training will be given to staff, and greater variation in tasks will lead to higher job satisfaction. There is no evidence to suggest that staff will be negatively affected, regardless of age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion or disability. **The location of the new team is still under review, and we will make sure that the location of the Centre is fully accessible to all advisors. Likewise, we will do our best to ensure that staff working patterns takes into account parenting / caring responsibilities.**

Q 4. Outsourced services – if the initiative is partly or wholly provided by external organisations / agencies, please list any arrangements you plan to ensure that they promote equality and diversity.

Please consider all aspects of Diversity including as a minimum: Age, Disability, Gender/Transgender, Race/Ethnicity, Religion/Faith/Belief, Sexuality

Not applicable.

Q 5. Is the impact of the initiative (whether positive or negative) significant enough to warrant a full impact assessment – see guidance? If not, will there be monitoring and review to assess the level of impact over a period of time?

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Residents have had an opportunity to comment on the proposals. We will be discussing the proposal further with resident panel members at an event planned in December.

We do not intend to undertake a full impact assessment based on the comprehensive evidence to date, but will continue to monitor and review the impact of the new Centre on customers and staff during the second half of 2009 once up and running. We will also action the recommendations highlighted in Q 3 above.

Q 6. To be completed at six monthly review Detail actions taken to assess the level of impact over a period of time, or to address any gaps in data.
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Guidelines: Things to consider

- Where a negative (i.e. adverse) impact is identified, it may be appropriate to make a full EIA (see Stage 2), or, as important, take early action to redress this – e.g. by abandoning or modifying the initiative. **NB If the initiative contravenes equality legislation, it must be abandoned or modified.**
- Where an initiative has a positive impact on groups/community relations, the EIA should make this explicit, to enable the outcomes to be monitored over its lifespan.
- Where there is a positive impact on particular groups, does this mean there could be an adverse impact on others, and if so can this be justified? - e.g. Are there other existing or planned initiatives which redress this?
- It may not be possible to provide detailed answers to some of these questions at the start of the initiative. The EIA may identify a lack of relevant data, and that data-gathering is a specific action required to inform the initiative as it develops, and also to form part of a continuing evaluation and review process.
- It is envisaged that it will be rare for full impact assessments to be required. Usually, where there are particular problems identified in the screening stage, it is envisaged that changing the approach at this stage, and/or setting up a monitoring/evaluation system to review a policy's impact over time will tackle the problem.