

Stage 1: Equality Impact Assessment

1. What are the main aims purpose and outcomes of the Policy and how do these fit with the wider aims of the organization?

The purpose of the communications and engagement strategy is to ensure we communicate clearly, openly, accurately and regularly with our residents, with our partners, and throughout the council, to promote mutual understanding, and give a better service to the people of Maidstone Borough.

Our aims are:

- To articulate and communicate activities and services that support and deliver the strategic priorities in the council's strategic plan.
- To provide consistency in the delivery of key messages.
- To ensure that all our communications are open, honest, clear, concise, simple and accessible.
- To ensure that there are clear opportunities for residents and partners to have an influence on our services.

The strategy will support the council's core values such as Service for example understanding customer needs and expectations, Integrity, being honest and fair, Value, delivering cost effectiveness and Equality, valuing differences.

2. How do these aims affect our duty to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the act.**
- **Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**
- **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

The strategy will help advance equality of opportunity for all our residents and businesses by co-ordinating the council's approach to communications and engagement, and ensuring there are clear and accessible opportunities to have an influence on our services.

Our communications/engagement activity should identify a clearly defined audience or set of audiences and demonstrate how the objectives relate to each. Audience needs should be considered.

Each individual consultation and engagement activity has the potential to impact on people with protected characteristics, dependant on the questions being asked or the changes proposed, and therefore specific EQIAs will be undertaken for each consultation exercise.

There are no direct impacts on protected characteristics as a result of this strategy.

3. What aspects of the policy including how it is delivered or accessed could contribute to inequality?

There are no direct impacts on equalities. The strategy includes proposals to review our external communications channels including our resident's newsletter and social networking accounts. Protected characteristics will need to be considered as part of the review and any changes to our communication channels. This will be accessed for Equality Impacts as part of the review process.

The potential for inequality will also need to be considered as part of each consultation activity and such activities will require separate EQIAs.

4. Will the policy have an impact (positive or negative) upon the lives of people, including particular communities and groups who have protected characteristics? What evidence do you have for this?

It is expected that a successful strategy will establish and maintain clear and relevant two-way channels of communication for all stakeholders including those with protected characteristics. Including an inclusive and accessible approach to consultation that should have a positive impact for all of the communities we serve.

If the answer to the second question has identified potential impacts and you have answered yes to any of the remaining questions then you should carry out a full EQIA set out as stage 2 below.