

Equality Impact and Needs Assessment Form



NB: Use the electronic MS Word template. Add additional rows and increase box size as required. Make sure your final document is suitable for publishing.

A) Description

Name of service, function, policy (or other) being assessed

The 'My Devon' Customer Service Centre

Directorate or organisation responsible (and service, if it is a policy)

Corporate Resources are responsible for service delivery.

Date of assessment (DD/MM/YY)

Date next assessment due (3 years)

Names and/or job titles of people carrying out the assessment

Judith Nevard – Team Manager

Accountable person (e.g. Head of Service)

Peter Shields

Date EINA Form approved by accountable person (e.g. Head of Service)

December 2010

1. What are the aims or main purpose of the service, function or policy? What does it provide and how does it provide it?

'My Devon' is the 'brand name' of the Customer Service Centre (CSC) and was launched in May 2006. The Customer Service Centre is a large multi-media contact centre which was originally set up in order to make it as easy as possible for customers to contact the council and have their enquiry resolved as quickly as possible. The majority of contacts are by phone but we can also deal with fax, email, SMS messaging (texts), web forms, Textbox, letter and on rare occasions we may make an arrangement for a personal visitor if appropriate. The range of contact numbers for council departments was drastically reduced from more than 400 to around 10 and these new frontline numbers were fielded by the CSC. This was done in order for the more simple queries to be dealt with at a first point of contact – the CSC aim to resolve 80% of calls on first point of contact. This in turn meant that the services themselves would have more time to deal with the more specialist work and as a result become more efficient. By having extended opening hours and also being open on weekends, plus having more staff available to take calls, customer access was improved. Within this remit the CSC was seen as an effective method of increasing and widening the accessibility of services offered by Devon County Council to all sections of the community, no matter what their language, culture, disability, gender, sexuality, age, religion, belief or any other factor. This

assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the CSC is doing everything it can to make its services available to all groups and consequently make sure that previously hard to reach groups are included and have access to the services they may need. We have recently started a programme of cross training advisers so that they are able to take calls from other teams within the CSC, e.g. we have advisers who predominantly take calls for Highways and many of these advisers are training to take calls from Care Direct or Registrars; conversely the Registrars and Care Direct Teams have advisers who are training to take Highways calls. This is seen as a positive way to spread the call volumes so that more advisers are available to take calls which is especially important during peak times without the need to recruit more staff.

2. Location or any other relevant information

The My Devon Customer Service Centre is located in Tiverton, Mid Devon. However it takes calls and other contacts on behalf of many services which are located throughout Devon County. In order to ensure that customers right across the county are made aware of the CSC, half-page adverts are placed in the Yellow Pages and Thomson Local directories in all of the areas that cover the county. In addition to this, the CSC also deals with general enquiries which can mean that people call us 'by mistake', for example, instead of their district council. We need to be able to deal with these calls and signpost people correctly with minimum inconvenience to the caller, so that they do not get passed around from one department or organisation to another.

3. List any key policies or procedures to be reviewed as part of this assessment.

No policies as such, instead we are looking at the way in which we can be contacted as a Customer Service Centre, and also how easy it is for people who wish to contact us to access the services they need. This means that we need to review our contact channels and also look at staff knowledge and training. The review has been undertaken to ensure that the advisers taking the calls, and those managing them are adequately trained and able to deal with any type of call that is presented to them and also that they are aware of the services available and how to ensure that the customer is able to access them.

4. Who is intended to benefit from the service, function or policy?

Service Users/Citizens, who have increased access to DCC services by the extended opening hours (8.00am – 8.00pm Monday–Friday and 9.00am-1.00pm Saturdays) and the large capacity of the CSC to take calls. Other beneficiaries are the services for whom we take calls as the CSC is able to deal with a large number of calls at first point of contact meaning that the services have more time and resources to deal with the more complex work. Due to the geography of Devon people can be quite isolated in rural areas so having one point of contact with different contact channels available means that people do not have to physically travel to offices in order to request a service. This would benefit anyone who had a disability and found it hard to travel, or on low incomes where the use of a car may not be available.

5. Who are the stakeholders? What is their interest?

Stakeholders are our citizens and the service teams for whom we answer calls. Our customers' interest is in receiving easily accessible accurate information and our

services teams are able to use resources more efficiently and appropriately and therefore give better value for money.

6. Are there any concerns at this stage which indicate the possibility of inequalities/negative impacts? For example: complaints, comments, research, outcomes of a scrutiny review. Please describe:

Nothing in addition to the issues outlined in section D

B) Relevance – Note: if not relevant, do not complete this form

Select **all** that apply:

Scale of relevance

7.	Service or function that people use.	Yes	Section C and D apply
8.	Discretion is exercised, or potential for people to experience different outcomes or level of satisfaction.	Yes	Section C and D apply
9.	Employment policy – where discretion is not exercised.	No	
10.	Employment policy – where discretion is exercised (e.g. recruitment or disciplinary process).	No	
11.	Concerns at a local, regional or national level of discrimination/inequalities.	No	
12.	Major change such as the closure, removal or transfer of a service/provision.	No	
13.	Community and regeneration strategies, local area agreements and organisational or directorate/partnership strategies/plans.	No	

Other:

How relevant (high, medium or low?):

Mark 'X' to confirm which strands are relevant to the review:

Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gender (men and women)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Race/ethnicity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Trans-gender	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Religion/belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sexual orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (state below)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Any other (such as Human Rights, people on low incomes and specific sub-strands requiring particular focus such as Travellers and Gypsies, Deaf people):

Gypsy and Traveller Groups, people with a sensory impairment, learning disabilities, mental health, and people on low incomes those whose first language is not English.

C) Information

14 What information (monitoring or consultation data) have you got and what is it telling

you? *Required where relevance is Medium or High.*

We carry out 'Govmetric' consultation where callers can be put through to a telephone feedback service. At present this is only available on the phone but will eventually be rolled out to include the DCC website. The feedback from Govmetric is showing 97% of customers as stating they have received a 'good service', 2% stating they had received an 'average service' and 1% stating they had received a 'poor service'. These stats are based on 10 months of calls from March 2010 when the scheme started to the end of 2010. Customers who are not able to use the phone can give feedback via email, fax, letter, Texbox, SMS messenger, and on the Corporate Feedback leaflet ('Tell Us What You Think: Compliments, Suggestions, Complaints') which is available in Libraries and other public buildings as well as on request from us.

Also we have consulted with different groups such as Hard of Hearing and Deaf groups and Sensory Team. As a result of this consultation it was decided that there would not be an 'IVR' telephony system used by some other call centres (where the caller is asked to 'press 1 for this service, press 2 for that' etc), as this could be confusing to a visually or hearing impaired person. Also it was decided that there should not be any 'on hold' music where the adviser was speaking to another department on behalf of the customer. Lastly we consulted with these groups to ensure that our telephone greeting message was not overly long and complicated, but still met legal requirements.

We have also hosted students from the Exeter School for the Blind who have come to the CSC to be trained to take calls as a work experience initiative. This has involved consultation with the School and individuals themselves, adaptations to the work stations and also appropriate training and support to ensure the student was fully able to deal with all calls. As a result of these placements and the feedback from the students we are able to show that we can employ visually impaired people on the phones and have the equipment and technology to do so. This also ensures that we appreciate and understand some of the issues faced by a visually impaired person when contacting us.

Also the CSC Team Managers attend regular update meetings with the services themselves in order to keep up to date with changes. The CSC Managers and Knowledge Experts (advisers who are experts in a particular service and conduct training and liaison with the service) within each team frequently communicate with services and feed back information on a daily basis. This is critical at the moment due to the current budgetary restraints and restructuring which is going on in many DCC services.

The CSC is providing multi-channel access to services. More advisers and longer opening hours mean that we are available to the optimum number of people who can choose what time they wish to contact us. The CSC is doing all it can to give equal access to anyone who needs to contact us and areas where we could do better there are training sessions and changes to procedure planned to take place as soon as possible. We listen to feedback such as Govmetric and 'Tell Us What You Think' feedback forms, and if appropriate make adjustments to procedures

accordingly.

D) Assessment

15 Describe any NEGATIVE impacts (actual or potential):

Strand/community	Impact (<i>how</i> they may be affected). Include assessment of risk (likelihood and severity).
English as second language/Non English speakers who need help or advice.	As there are very few calls from these groups it could mean that members of this community are less aware of the services we provide, or that advisers are not clear on procedures in place for dealing with these calls. The latter could mean that the members of these groups would not feel confident that their query would be dealt with appropriately so causing a situation that self-perpetuates. Both possibilities could cause problems and even be a risk if there was a potential emergency or urgent issue such as child protection or mental health.
Gypsy/Traveller Communities	The Roads Team occasionally field calls from customers either from within the Gypsy/Traveller community or from customers calling about issues regarding these groups. The team are aware that there are dedicated Gypsy and Traveller workers and refer all queries to that officer for advice before proceeding, however as most calls received by the team are complaints about these groups it is imperative that the advisers have adequate training in order to promote community cohesion and up to date information to feed back to customers. Also as Devon residents themselves, the advisers need to understand the needs of these communities and be unbiased and impartial when taking any complaints from customers, as this can be a very emotive and misunderstood issue. This issue has been addressed by training by the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer. Staff can report incidents of abuse on a web form and also have training in how to deal with offensive calls. There is also an 'Unacceptable Customer Behaviour' Policy where staff can log incidents
Deaf/Hard of Hearing People	Currently there is only one advertised text number for customers to contact the Customer Service Centre. This means that texts are often received where it is not clear which service the text refers to. This can mean that a text has to be sent back by us to find out more details which can mean a delay in the person getting the correct service. It is not always

	appropriate to call the person who sent the text, as they may be texting due to them not being able to use a telephone.
People on Low Incomes	Call costs vary from one mobile provider to another, and Pay As You Go (PAYG) contracts tend to charge a premium for calling 0845 numbers. This could negatively impact those on low incomes who are most likely to have PAYG mobiles.
Religion/Belief/Ethnicity	Reduced diversity in Devon as a County may mean that Advisers are not accustomed to the requirements or expectations of customers from different cultures.

16 Describe any POSITIVE impacts:

People with physical and sensory disabilities	<p>By offering different ways of contacting us we are able to deal with requests for information and services from all sections of the community. We offer Textbox, SMS text, email, fax, and telephone contact, as well as correspondence via letter. All teams within the CSC have advisers trained on Textbox, and the SMS mailbox, fax and email boxes are constantly checked throughout our service hours meaning that people using these methods have no difference in response times and are dealt with promptly using the same method.</p> <p>Care Direct can offer customers the use of the Devon Advocacy Service if they need additional help with filling in forms etc. We can put people in touch with 'Time for Life' service which is part of Age Concern who can do home visits and assist in this way.</p> <p>Also there is a service provided by the WRVS who can do home visits for customers unable to visit their library; they will deliver and return books to the library on behalf of the customer. Although this service is arranged by the library themselves, calls come through the CSC initially and we provide information on this service if the customer is unaware and we identify a need.</p>
Older People	Care Direct in particular offer services for those citizens over 50 and their families. Those requiring help and advice can call the CSC Care Direct Team without the perceived stigma of calling 'Social Services' Also, Care Direct offer a 'holistic service' meaning that a customer may be able to access other services by calling us, as the adviser will make an assessment on their situation. Also, for Benefits

	<p>claims, if a person is not able to fill out forms sent out by Care Direct, they can arrange for a representative from Age Concern to visit the person in their home and assist.</p>
<p>People on low incomes</p>	<p>There is generally no perceived difference in dealing with these calls as adviser would not be aware of caller's financial position. Also the CSC uses 0845 numbers which are charged at a local rate instead of the old regional numbers which were used in the past. Also some telephone service providers do not charge for these calls at all, meaning that those on low incomes can benefit from this low or no cost call when they wish to contact us. Older people on low incomes would be encouraged to call Care Direct without the perceived stigma of calling 'Social Services' and would be able to have a 'benefits health check' to ensure that they are claiming the right amount of benefits. We have recently tested the use of an 0345 number which is a lo-cost call tariff for one of our short term projects. It is hoped that we will eventually move to having more of these numbers as it is recognised that these may be cheaper for our customers to use than the traditional 0845 numbers when calling from a mobile.</p>
<p>People with physical disabilities</p>	<p>Applications for Disabled Blue Badges are conducted over the phone as this is seen as an efficient and timesaving way of delivering the service and is seen as an example of good practice by other councils. The 'traditional' method of filling in a form did not take into account any special needs and was also seen as a slow and overly complicated procedure. This was especially evident if the applicant did not complete the form giving the correct amount of information in the right level of detail, meaning it would have to be returned to them, causing a delay in obtaining the badge. By having a telephone application the adviser can ensure that the correct information is obtained and by asking further probing questions, the adviser can get an accurate picture of the person's disability. Any cases that are deemed as 'borderline' where the adviser is unable to make a decision based on the information given, the application is passed to an independent DCC Occupational Therapist who reviews the form and makes a decision. The OT can look at applications electronically, meaning this can be done off site and more regularly, further speeding up the process, and they will also call the applicant if appropriate in order to gather more information or</p>

	<p>obtain more details about a client's condition. We can also take a telephone application from a third party if the applicant gives consent, meaning that someone with a language issue, hearing problem or other disability which prevents them using the phone can still access the application procedure, with no loss in quality or speed of service. On rare occasions customers request a paper form of the application and we do retain a template for this is asked for.</p>
Religion/Belief	<p>Same day burials which are customary in certain religions and beliefs; people needing this service are able to contact us more efficiently as we have extended opening hours and also have different contact channels available. If someone calls to request a same day burial the Customer Service Centre can put them in touch with an on-call Registrar who will be able to make the necessary arrangements. This is an efficient service meaning that the Registrar's emergency number is not in the public domain meaning that they are only called under these types of circumstances. Death bed marriages which require a religious officiator can be arranged in a similar way at short notice.</p>

17 Provide any information about NEUTRAL impacts that have been identified (there is neither a positive or negative impact):

Strand/community	
Gender	<p>No perceived impact as all services same for men and women. There is a gender balance within all teams so that if a customer has a sensitive issue and wishes to speak to an adviser of a particular sex, this is possible.</p>
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Trans People	<p>No perceived impact as services are the same for these groups – for instance have checked with the Registrars service and there are no occasions where customers needing birth certificates would have to state that they have had gender reassignment. If gay or lesbian couples are calling to arrange civil partnerships this would be treated in the same way as any other ceremony, in that the same non religious venues are available by law to same sex partnership ceremonies. However, the CSC only usually takes bookings for non-religious establishments, so if a caller requested a civil partnership ceremony in a religious establishment this would be passed to the Registrars themselves. This is not due to any CSC procedures, but is a more complex issue that is dealt with by the service. All staff are recruited in the same</p>

	<p>way and part of the interview process involves an equalities question. Also at every supervision session with their manager the advisers go through their Personal Development Folders (PDPs) which include sections on 'Organisational Competencies'. Staff provide examples of the 4 Competencies, one of which is 'Valuing Everybody' and involves discussion and examples of demonstrating an understanding of equalities. Lastly, the CSC Knowledge Base (which is a system where information, procedures and policies are held for central reference) has sections on legislation surrounding same sex partnerships and also the law regarding registering births and marriages for same sex couples so all advisers can be sure they are treating all callers fairly, no matter what their background.</p>
Religion/Belief	<p>No perceived difference in services offered. However, advisers have been requested not to ask for customers' 'Christian' names after it was identified from a customer complaint 2 years ago that a small number of advisers were doing this.</p>

E) Consultation

18 Did you carry out any consultations? *Required where relevance is High.*

Yes.

19 Who was consulted? Include your findings in 15, 16 and 17 above.

Wide customer and employee consultation was undertaken prior to the launch of the Customer Service Centre, including feedback from Hard of Hearing groups, feedback from Sensory Team officers, customer surveys of their experience when calling the Council.

20 Describe other research, studies or information used to assist with the assessment and include your findings above:

We have arranged for a Language Line representative to come to the Customer Service Centre to train selected advisers on the use of this service. These advisers will then cascade the training to the rest of the CSC to ensure all are aware of how to use this facility. Following on from this we are planning to carry out some Language Line Testing using a community group which has members from different cultures and countries; so that we can say that we are fully trained and tested on this service and listen to feedback and suggestions from those that may need to use Language Line to contact us. UPDATE: This testing was carried out in October 2010 and involved approximately 15 members of Hikmat who spoke more than 10 languages. They had a tour of the CSC and then were set up to make calls to advisers so that we could test the Language Line service. Advisers were told that the exercise was happening but were not told which languages to expect, the subject matter of the calls and also the calls were random so not everyone received a call, but some others received more than one call. We would like to arrange a

follow up event this year to ensure that any issues discovered at the first event have been satisfactorily dealt with.

It was discovered through feedback from officers within the Registrars who conduct Citizenship Ceremonies, that some groups whose language is not English may not be aware of services they can access via the CSC, and one outcome from this feedback was to put the My Devon 'Services at Your Fingertips' card with our phone numbers on into the Citizenship Packs which are given to all those completing the Citizenship Ceremony so that they can contact us when they need help or advice.

Another outcome was that representatives from the CSC attended a Polish Cultural Event in April to publicise the CSC. Leaflets detailing the services we provide were translated into Polish and handed out at the event. As a result of this we were able to make a better judgement about what types of literature would be useful and which would not for use in future events.

Following a training session with the Racial Equality Council on Gypsy and Traveller groups in Devon which included a talk by a member of that community, packs of My Devon 'Services at Your Fingertips' cards have been given to the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer so that they can be passed to these groups to promote our services.

F) Conclusions

Action/objective/target OR Justification	Resources required	Timescale	I/R/S/O
a) To ensure that ALL CSC staff are trained using the Devon County Council's Equalities and Diversity Training module.	This will take some time as we need to ensure that there is adequate phone cover meaning that we are only able to send few advisers at a time and also due to limited training places available. However, this is scheduled to take place before the end of the year. Staff have a discussion in supervisions about how they have adhered to and understood	As soon as possible. Only small numbers of advisers able to go at a time due to need for phone cover and limited availability of the course.	S

	the 'Valuing Everyone' Competency.		
b)	To ensure that our technology is able to deal with different methods of communication such as SMS text	SMS messages are picked up immediately as they come through to a dedicated mailbox which is monitored throughout the day. This way we can ensure that any text messages are swiftly dealt with and responded to through the same mailbox.	Ongoing I
c)	To ensure all staff are aware of sensory issues and how to deal with calls	To arrange some training from Sensory Team for advisers from teams who need it (Care Direct have already received this training). Contact has been made with Sensory Trainer in order to arrange some interactive group training sessions	As soon as possible S
d)	Following training sessions from Language Line, it was deemed useful to the 'Services At Your Fingertips' cards translated into several non English languages, based on the top 3 languages spoken in Devon by people with English as a second language.	The different languages have been identified but consultation with the services needs to take place in order to decide what should be translated and to secure funding for this.	As soon as possible R
e)	Awareness sessions have been conducted by the Gypsy and Traveller	No extra resources as this	As soon as possible I

	Liaison Officer to volunteer members from each of the teams. The information from these sessions will now be disseminated to the rest of the CSC via small briefings at team meetings.	will be done by existing members of the CSC to their colleagues during regular team meetings		
f)	All Staff have been through Data Protection Training and Freedom of Information Training as part of their induction. The CSC ensure that all new staff have the same training and also all new and existing staff are kept up to date with legislation.	Can be done remotely at desks by e-learning course.	Currently up to date but is also an ongoing requirement	I

(I) Taking immediate effect.

(R) Recommended to Council/Directors through a Committee or other Report*.

(S) Added to the Service Plan.

(O) Added to the Fair for All Programme (as an organisational improvement)**

- DELETE THESE NOTES FROM YOUR FINAL DOCUMENT -

Conclusion notes:

*Summarise your findings in the report. Make the full assessment available for further information.

**The Corporate Equality Officer will extract any cross-cutting organisational improvements.

Use the table to:

- Explain what and how negative impacts have been reduced or removed and positive impacts improved or included. Mark these as having taken immediate effect (I) if this is the case.
- State final decisions or recommendations which may include making immediate changes, justifying a decision, stopping or proceeding with a new policy or adding objectives/targets to the service plan (long term changes). Provide timescales or dates and 'resources required' where appropriate.
- State what ongoing monitoring systems will be set up.

Don't forget to add actions to your service plan, where relevant.

Send your form to the person responsible for equality in your directorate for publishing on the website at: www.devon.gov.uk/equality_impact_needs_assess.