

Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Impact Assessment



As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration. In all appropriate instances we will need to carry out an equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment.

This form:

- can be used to prompt discussion when carrying out your impact assessment
- should be completed either during the assessment process or following completion of the assessment
- should include a brief explanation where a section is not applicable

Directorate: Planning, Policy & Improvement	Service area: Customer Services
Lead person: Anthony Derbyshire	Contact number: (07891) 275279
Date of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment: 3rd February 2011	

1. Title: Interactive Voice Response – Revenues and Waste
Is this a:
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Function <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Is this:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New/ proposed <input type="checkbox"/> Already exists and is being reviewed <input type="checkbox"/> Is changing
(Please tick one of the above)

2. Members of the assessment team:

Name	Organisation	Role on assessment team e.g. service user, manager of service, specialist
Anthony Derbyshire	Business Transformation	Project Manager
Paul Broughton	Customer Services	Project Sponsor
Barry Ibbetson	Contact Centre	Project Executive
Nicola Grosvenor	Contact Centre	Senior User / service specialist

3. Summary of strategy, policy, service or function that was assessed:

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) is a telephony system that can provide customers with a 'self-service' route via the telephone into a variety of Council services without needing to speak to a Customer Services Officer. As IVR is fully automated, it can be made available to the customer 'around the clock', thereby allowing them to access services at a time to suit them.

IVR works by taking an input from a customer (by either pressing digits on the telephone, or speaking words or short phrases) and providing a response. A typical IVR solution has several menus of pre-recorded options that the caller can choose from. Commonly, the choices are as basic as asking the customer to choose a number relating to an option which the customer will enter into their telephone keypad. However, it is also possible for the customer to speak their choice from the options provided, or provide detailed information such as their name or address. The input from the customer is used by the IVR solution to access the appropriate information and respond to the customer.

The Councils Corporate Contact Centre (CCC) deals with telephone enquiries in relation to Revenues and waste management (missed bins, requests for bulky collections, etc.). A sizeable proportion of these calls have been identified as routine enquiries or requests for information that would lend themselves to an IVR application. A 'proof of concept' pilot was undertaken which saw Revenues telephone calls being routed through a hosted IVR service (i.e. an IVR system that is owned by a third party and rented to the Council). This pilot showed that IVR could handle up to 55% of all incoming Revenue calls.

Therefore, rather than continue with a rented solution, a project has been set up to create two IVR applications within the Councils own, existing IVR technology that will provide a self-service route through many common Revenues and waste enquiries.

It is not the intention to use IVR to over-complicate the call-handling process by introducing an unreasonable number of options, nor to try and automate a call enquiry type that would be better resolved by a Customer Services Officer. To the contrary, its purpose will be to;

- increase access to Council services – IVR will enable customers to interact with the Council outside of normal opening hours.
- handle high volume / low complexity enquiries without the need for customers to be held in a queue
- increase the call-handling capacity of the call centre
- release Customer Services Officers to focus on calls from customers with more complicated enquiries.

This document considers the impact of these two IVR developments.

4. Scope of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment
 (complete - 4a. if you are assessing a strategy, policy or plan and 4b. if you are assessing a service, function or event)

4a. Strategy, policy or plan (please tick the appropriate box below)	
The vision and themes, objectives or outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>
The vision and themes, objectives or outcomes and the supporting guidance	<input type="checkbox"/>
A specific section within the strategy, policy or plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please provide detail: <p style="text-align: center;">NOT APPLICABLE</p>	

4b. Service, function, event please tick the appropriate box below	
The whole service (including service provision and employment)	<input type="checkbox"/>
A specific part of the service (including service provision or employment or a specific section of the service)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Procuring of a service (by contract or grant) (please see equality assurance in procurement)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please provide detail: <p>This impact assessment will review the use of IVR in handling Revenues and waste-related enquiries in the Councils Corporate Contact Centre.</p>	

5. Fact finding – what do we already know

Make a note here of all information you will be using to carry out this assessment. This could include: previous consultation, involvement, research, results from perception surveys, equality monitoring and customer/ staff feedback.

(priority should be given to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration related information)

In 2008, the Corporate Contact Centre consulted with customers specifically about their preferred times for conducting their business with LCC. Although the traditional opening times were still popular, there was a significant proportion of customers who would prefer to contact the Council outside of those traditional times, particularly in the evening and weekends. IVR offers LCC the opportunity to offer a variety of services at these times.

As a result, the Council procured an IVR system in 2009. This project was subjected to a full Impact Assessment at the time which considered the general use of IVR technology as well as the first IVR application in respect of Choice Based Lettings (CBL).

As part of this project, a presentation on the introduction and utilisation of IVR was delivered to the Leeds Tenants Federation (LTF) Board. The LTF is a tenant-run organisation, created in 2004, that represents the views of Council Tenants and Private Tenants across the city. They aim to get involved in the decision making of policy and strategies that affect homes and neighbourhoods. They have over 1000 members, represented on the Board by 18 resident directors.

The presentation focused on the intended use of IVR which, at the time, was for CBL bidding and requesting a bulky waste collection. It also included a sound clip of a mock CBL IVR application. The Board were particularly familiar with the CBL process and, therefore, able to pass an informed judgement on this proposal.

The presentation was very well received with the vast majority of the Board members strongly in favour of utilising IVR as an additional access route to Council services.

A similar presentation was delivered at the Customer Services Focus Group. This group comprises of customers who have used a One Stop Centre and would like to help inform the Council on ways it can improve the service it delivers. Again the presentation was well received with customers very much in favour of the introduction of IVR.

In addition to the above, customer feedback has been obtained from the Revenues IVR pilot exercise. By far, the most dominant issues arising from this were in relation to the length of the scripts and the difficulties in getting an answer to their enquiries. This feedback has already resulted in a review of the scripts currently in use by the pilot IVR and will also be a key driver in how the new IVR is structured, so as to make it as streamlined and effective as possible – see also 'Impact #1' in '8b' below.

Are there any gaps in equality and diversity information

Please provide detail: N/A

Action required: N/A

6. Wider involvement – have you involved groups of people who are most likely to be affected or interested

Yes No

Please provide detail:

See part 5

Action required:

None

7. Who may be affected by this activity?
 please tick all relevant and significant equality characteristics, stakeholders and barriers that apply to your strategy, policy, service or function

Equality characteristics

Age Carers Disability

Gender reassignment Race Religion or Belief

Sex (male or female) Sexual orientation

Other

Please specify: Telephone enquiries relating to Revenues and waste can, potentially, be made by any of the 330,000 households in the Leeds area. It is reasonable to assume that all equality characteristics will be present within this group.

Stakeholders

Services users Employees Trade Unions

Partners Members Suppliers

Other please specify

Potential barriers.

Built environment

Location of premises and services

Information and communication

Customer care

Timing

Stereotypes and assumptions

Cost

Consultation and involvement

specific barriers to the strategy, policy, services or function

8. Positive and negative impact

Think about what you are assessing (scope), the fact finding information, the potential positive and negative impact on equality characteristics, stakeholders and the effect of the barriers.

8a. Positive impact:

Impact #1

The Contact Centre currently takes calls between the hours of 8.00a.m and 6.00p.m, Monday to Friday. These opening hours will remain unchanged and the IVR will still allow customers, the option of speaking to a Customer Services Officer during these hours. However, the IVR also enables to Council to provide an alternative, '24/7' service that will be accessed via the same, existing, telephone number, thereby offering the customer a further choice of how to access information and services, at a time to suit them.

From a Council perspective, this enables the Contact Centre to increase its overall call handling capacity as well as allowing the Customer Services Officer to concentrate on handling the more complex enquiries.

Action required:

Publicity will be required to raise awareness, and encourage the use, of the new IVR applications. In addition, the IVR must be of a high quality and user-friendly so as to encourage its take-up and on-going usage (see Impact #1 in '8b' below). This will be undertaken as part of the project.

8b. Negative impact:

Impact #1 – Quality of IVR / length and cost of call

IVR will only be successful if it offers a realistic, quality alternative to mediated access. Poorly structured IVR applications will result in customers not using it, lengthen the time it takes for the customer to get an answer to their enquiry and, potentially, lead to complaints.

It is imperative that the applications are designed intelligently to ensure the customer is routed to the information they require as soon as possible so that both the length and cost of the call are kept to a minimum. This issue has been particularly prevalent in the customer feedback obtained during the Revenues pilot exercise and so must be addressed by this project. It is particularly important to customers on a low income and/or use 'pay as you go' mobile phones. Indeed, a well-designed IVR can help shorten call times as it can remove the need for customers to be put on hold pending a Customer Services Officer becoming available.

Action required:

The scripts and structure of the IVR will be designed through consultation with the back-office businesses. Guidance will also be provided by a specialist, professional, IVR supplier. Lessons learned from the pilot Revenues exercise will also be incorporated into the new scripts and structure. In addition, the project manager has previous IVR experience and will be able to offer advice in this area. Finally, the wording used in the IVR scripts will be checked from a 'Plain English' aspect by a specialist communications officer.

As part of project delivery, there will be an IVR skills transfer to nominated staff within the Contact Centre. This will allow them, post-project, to make alterations to the IVR menus and the scripts used therein. In addition, management information will be available that will allow calls into the IVR to be monitored. This will allow the Council to see where calls are flowing to and, importantly, where they are terminating. This can be useful in highlighting any specific flows, menus or messages that are not performing as well as intended and, therefore, need changing.

Finally, calls which have been self-served within the IVR will be routed into the Contact Centres existing customer satisfaction IVR – this will also be able to capture feedback around the IVRs performance and identify any further possible areas of improvement.

Impact #2 – IVR not appropriate / technology averse

It is recognised that some enquiries are not suitable for IVR. In addition, some customers will not want to use an IVR and will always opt to talk to a Customer Services Officer.

Action required:

The IVR will be designed to identify callers with the most common enquiries quickly and route them appropriately. This, in turn, means the remaining calls, i.e. the more complex calls, are quickly routed to a Customer Services Officer. There will also be the option to speak to a CSO at various stages through the various IVR menus. This design helps ensure that, where necessary, customers are put through to a Customer Services Officer (during daytime hours) at the earliest opportunity, rather than having to navigate an excessive number of menus.

Impact #3 – Language difficulties

There will be some customers for whom English is not their first, or preferred, language and, therefore, would have difficulty in navigating an IVR.

Action required:

Analysis undertaken as part of the Revenues pilot showed that less than 1% of all calls to the Revenues and Benefits telephone line required an interpreter. Therefore, it is not practical, nor necessary, to provide a multi-linguistic IVR. However, it is recognised that, irrespective of volumes, these calls can only be handled by a Customer Services Officer. Therefore, a process will be built in to the IVR so that, if a customer doesn't respond to specific IVR prompts, their call is automatically directed to a Customer Services Officer.

Impact #4 – Hearing difficulties / impairment

Customers with hearing difficulties / impairment will not be able to use IVR.

Action required:

The Contact Centre already publicises a separate telephone number for customers with minicomms. This number will continue to be offered as their main contact for any enquiries.

9. Will this activity promote strong and positive relationships between the groups/communities identified?

Yes

No

Please provide detail:

Action required: None**10. Does this activity bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other (e.g. in schools, neighbourhood, workplace)?**

Yes

No

Please provide detail:

Action required: None**11. Could this activity be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another?**

Yes

No

Please provide detail

Action required: None

12. Equality, diversity, cohesion and integration action plan

(insert all your actions from your assessment here, set timescales, measures and identify a lead person for each action)

Action	Timescale	Measure	Lead person
Publicity will be required to raise awareness, and encourage the use, of the new IVR applications. This will be undertaken as part of the project.	April 2011	Public communication to be undertaken as part of project delivery.	Anthony Derbyshire (Project Manager)
The scripts and structure of the IVR will be designed through consultation with the back-office businesses. Guidance will also be provided by a specialist, professional, IVR supplier. Lessons learned from the pilot Revenues exercise will also be incorporated into the new scripts and structure. In addition, the project manager has previous IVR experience and will be able to offer advice in this area. Finally, the wording used in the IVR scripts will be checked from a 'Plain English' aspect by a specialist communications officer.	January/February 2011	Workshops to be held with appropriate officers to agree the structure and scripts of the two applications. The agreed scripts will then be fine-tuned by a specialist communications officer.	Anthony Derbyshire (Project Manager)

Action	Timescale	Measure	Lead person
<p>There will be an IVR skills transfer to nominated staff within the Contact Centre. This will allow them, post-project, to make alterations to the IVR menus and the scripts used therein. In addition, management information will be available that will allow calls into the IVR to be monitored. This will allow the Council to see where calls are flowing to and, importantly, where they are terminating. This can be useful in highlighting any specific flows, menus or messages that are not performing as well as intended and, therefore, need changing.</p>	<p>March 2011</p>	<p>Training session to take place for Operational Support staff.</p> <p>Ownership of IVR MIS and amendments post-project.</p>	<p>Anthony Derbyshire (Project Manager)</p> <p>Mally O'Brien (Operational Support Team Leader)</p>
<p>Calls which have been self-served within the IVR will be routed into the Contact Centres existing customer satisfaction IVR – this will also be able to capture feedback around the IVRs performance and identify any further possible areas of improvement.</p>	<p>February 2011</p>	<p>Call flows into customer satisfaction IVR to be built into application design.</p> <p>Analysis of feedback obtained via Inform 360 post-project.</p>	<p>Anthony Derbyshire (Project Manager)</p> <p>Adam Quesne (Head of Customer Service Development)</p>

Action	Timescale	Measure	Lead person
<p>The IVR will be designed to identify callers with the most common enquiries quickly and route them appropriately. This, in turn, means the remaining calls, i.e. the more complex calls, are quickly routed to a Customer Services Officer. There will also be the option to speak to CSO at various stages through the various IVR menus. This design helps ensure that, where necessary, customers are put through to a Customer Services Officer (during daytime hours) at the earliest opportunity, rather than having to navigate an excessive number of menus.</p>	<p>February 2011</p>	<p>To be undertaken as part of product design.</p>	<p>Anthony Derbyshire (Project Manager)</p>
<p>A process will be built in to the IVR so that, if a customer doesn't respond to specific IVR prompts (due to language difficulties or lack of understanding of the IVR process), their call is automatically directed to a Customer Services Officer.</p>	<p>February 2011</p>	<p>To be undertaken as part of product design.</p>	<p>Anthony Derbyshire (Project Manager)</p>

13. Governance, ownership and approval

State here who has approved the actions and outcomes from the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment

Name	Job Title	Date
Barry Ibbetson	Interim Head of the Contact Centre	22 nd March 2011.

14. Monitoring progress for equality, diversity, cohesion and integration actions (please tick)

As part of Service Planning performance monitoring

As part of Project monitoring

Update report will be agreed and provided to the appropriate board
Please specify which board

Other (please specify)

15. Publishing

Date sent to Equality Team	22 nd March 2011
Date published	23 rd March 2011