



Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments

How can an organisation carry out its vision of being fair towards everyone and meet all the requirements set out by the law on equality?

Questions that need to be asked and answered include what sort of information is already available? What evidence can support this information and how can the organisation make sure it is fair to everyone.

The following sections ask questions about the way services are delivered. They also look at how policies and practices can make things harder for some groups to get the help they need.



General Information

1. What sort of barriers can make it difficult or impossible for certain groups and communities to:
 - a) Use the service – does the staff team represent local communities?
 - b) Get a job or progress in the service?
 - c) Benefit from policies or decisions – do people have a say in decision-making?
 - d) Find out what the organisation does – is information accessible to all communities?
 - e) Get their opinions heard?



Where you are based?

2. Buildings might not be easy for everyone to use, visit or work in. Some questions you could ask are:
 - a) How accessible is the building for all communities?
 - b) How accessible is the building for all disabled communities?
 - c) Has there been an access audit of the building?
 - d) Are all public areas accessible?
 - e) Is appropriate equipment available?

3. Some places are easier to get to or are more welcoming than others. It might be difficult to change where the service is based, but if you are planning events or services from new or different buildings, you need to ask:



- a) Are some communities particularly well or badly served at this place?
- b) Should you be close to other services?
- c) Is it possible to provide the service at another place?
- d) How close is public transport?



Information and communication

4. Communication should be accessible to as many people as possible. This includes written, face to face, telephone and electronic communication. Questions to think about are :

- a) Do you always use plain English?
- b) Can you provide information in alternative ways if needed (eg translated, CD, taped)?
- c) Do you offer interpreters for community languages or British Sign Language?
- d) How do you know the information you provide is useful to people from different communities and groups?



Customer care and staff training

5. Staff members are the most important part of the service. The treatment an individual gets can make the difference between a positive or negative experience. Staff should treat each other well, take account of diversity and support individuals in a sensitive way. Questions to think about are:

- a) Are managers aware of their legal responsibilities?
- b) Do staff have the right levels of skills and knowledge to carry out their duties well?
- c) Do members of staff know how to use equipment like telephone text, Language line, minicom, etc?
- d) Are staff aware of harassment procedures and do they know how to record incidents?

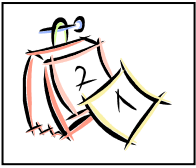


Stereotyping and assumptions

6. The way services are developed or have been designed, can exclude people over period of time. This could be because of assumptions that others have about the way some people live their lives or the values they believe in. Questions to think about are:

- a) Are services based around thinking about families in a particular way – for example, mother, father and two children?

- b) Does this exclude certain groups, such as single parent families, parents with a learning disability or families with more than a certain number of children?
- c) are people expected to behave or think in a particular way? For example, if people do not go to the pub to meet their friends would they be missed out by the service or the people they work with?
- d) Are people expected to be able to read before they can access the service?



Timing

7. Some opening times or working hours may not suit everyone. Questions to think about are:

- a) Is the service available at different times of the week?
- b) Have you checked for any clashes with religious or cultural festivals?
- c) Can people drop in if they choose to?



Cost

8. If people have to pay for a service, or if the service offers benefits, is this fair on everyone? Questions to think about are:

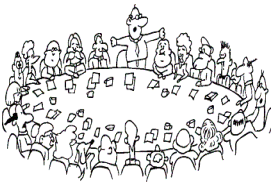
- a) If some people get help with costs, is this decided in a fair way?
- b) How are extra costs paid for –does this affect some communities more than others?
- c) How do people find out about applying for help with costs?

Consultation

9. When you consult with people who use the service, make sure that you involve different groups and communities. Think about different ways to consult, making sure they are accessible.

Questions to think about are:

- a) Do you hold public meetings, focus groups or consultation meetings?
- b) Do you carry out customer satisfaction surveys and think about how to act on the results?
- c) Do consultations miss any communities out?





Barriers

Think about the issues that might affect one part of the service but not others. For example:

- a) Can people with limited English use the service without support?
- b) If you provide food, does the catering cover different diets and cultural backgrounds?
- c) Are events organised accessible to all concerned?
- d) Do you have any conditions on who can get involved? Are these conditions fair?



When you are doing a Race Equality Impact Assessment of your policies it is a good idea to set up a working group to ask these questions and monitor the work within your organisation. This group should involve people from local minority ethnic communities as well as Race Equality professionals from the local authority, PCT and voluntary sector groups who could support you. The group should have decision making powers and include senior managers who can take the actions forward.