

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty which states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

This document demonstrates how the Council is meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty by setting out the findings of an equality analysis that has been undertaken in relation to a proposed change to assess whether it has a disproportionate impact on people who share a protected characteristic, together with care leavers / care experienced adults, as the Council treats this group like a protected characteristic.

1. Background

Directorate	Economy, Environment and Infrastructure
Service area	Traffic & Transport
Title of the proposed change being assessed i.e. the policy, service or other development	Civil Parking, Social Care and Commercial Council Debt Enforcement Services Contract
Describe the purpose of the proposed change and the intended outcomes	
<p>The council has a requirement for enforcement agents to collect unpaid parking related debt. The debts including parking, bus lane and moving traffic contraventions.</p> <p>Should a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) not be paid within the statutory time period then the case is sent to the Traffic Enforcement Centre in Northampton to obtain a court warrant to chase the unpaid debt.</p> <p>The enforcement agents trace debtors using a variety of methods and tools, including DVLA data, Experion or other databases and by making enquiries about the whereabouts of an individual.</p> <p>A court order to chase the debt does not allow and enforcement agent to make entry to a property if this is refused by the debtor.</p>	

Social care and commercial debt recovery services are to be included in the new contract to provide alternative debt recovery options for the wider Council.

Who is affected by the proposals?	Service users <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wider community <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Workforce <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: <input type="text"/>
Decision to be taken and decision maker	To seek Cabinet Member approval to procure and award a four-year Civil Parking, Social Care and Commercial Council Debt Enforcement Services Contract to replace the current contract for such services when it expires at the end of April 2024.
Person(s) responsible for completing this assessment	Andrew Burford – Parking Procurement & Contract Manager
Date of this assessment	3 rd October 2023

2. Information and Data Collection

Summarise how you have collected the information and data required to assess the potential or actual impact of the proposed change on those who share the protected characteristics and care leavers / care experienced adults (e.g. survey of services users, community focus groups, analysing service usage data, engaging with the council's staff networks etc.). The actual information and data that has been collected and analysed should be set out in Appendix 1 (Service Users) and Appendix 2 (GCC staff).

If there are any gaps, include an action in section 4 to fill these. This doesn't mean that you can't complete the equality impact assessment, but you need to follow-up the action and revisit as part of the monitoring and review arrangements set out in section 5.

Stakeholders	Engagement and Consultation	Other Methods / Sources
Service Users / Wider Community	The council has made a number of attempts to engage with the Gloucester Citizen Advice Bureau and Step Change (a debt charity) to discuss social value elements within the contract and to better discuss the needs of debtors.	A review of enforcement agents data held by GCC has been undertaken.
Workforce		
Partners	Discussions with potential providers has taken place, including how the market	

	manages customer vulnerability and how those with disabilities are treated.	
Other		

3. Equality Assessment

Indicate the impact on each group and explain how you have reached your conclusions (i.e. through analysis of the information and data that was collected through the engagement, consultation and other methods / sources that were set out in section 2).

Service Users						
Groups		Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Not Sure	Summary of Impact
Pr ote cte	Age	X				<p>Enforcement of parking restrictions helps ensure that disabled bays are available for use by Blue Badge holders, this may include elderly customers.</p> <p>The council enables a number of different methods to pay for Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) and other council debt, including online, by telephone and via cheque.</p> <p>Only after internal legal processes have been exhausted would any social care or commercial debt be passed to enforcements agents. These internal reviews would identify any debtor vulnerability or those who may have protected characteristics.</p>

Act 20 101					<p>The tender specification will contain detailed requirements in relation to managing debt collection from individuals who are identified as vulnerable. Several quality questions will focus on vulnerability, protected characteristics, compliance, policy and procedures to ensure that those identified as having vulnerability or protected characteristics, compliance, policy and procedures to ensure that those identified as having vulnerability or protected characteristics are managed in an appropriate way to avoid any disproportionate impact.</p> <p>The enforcement agents will be required to have a policy or procedure in place for dealing with a situation that involves a vulnerable individual.</p> <p>Contract management and analysis of complaints and any other data available will be used to review, on an on going basis, any disproportionate impact caused to vulnerable debtors by enforcements agents.</p> <p>The council has a Penalty Charge Notice Discretionary Policy where officers can take into account mitigating circumstances on a case by case basis.</p>
	Disability	X			<p>Enforcement of parking restrictions helps ensure that disabled bays are available for use by Blue Badge holders.</p> <p>The council enables a number of different methods to pay for Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) and other council debt, including online, by telephone and via cheque.</p>

						<p>Only after internal legal processes have been exhausted would any social care or commercial debt be passed to enforcements agents. These internal reviews would identify any debtor vulnerability or those who may have protected characteristics.</p> <p>The tender specification will contain detailed requirements in relation to managing debt collection from individuals who are identified as vulnerable. Several quality questions will focus on vulnerability, protected characteristics, compliance, policy and procedures to ensure that those identified as having vulnerability or protected characteristics, compliance, policy and procedures to ensure that those identified as having vulnerability or protected characteristics are managed in an appropriate way to avoid any disproportionate impact.</p> <p>The enforcement agents will be required to have a policy or procedure in place for dealing with a situation that involves a vulnerable individual.</p> <p>Contract management and analysis of complaints and any other data available will be used to review, on an on going basis, any disproportionate impact caused to vulnerable debtors by enforcements agents.</p> <p>The council has a Penalty Charge Notice Discretionary Policy where officers can take into account mitigating circumstances on a case by case basis.</p>
	Sex		X			

	Race		X			No impact on this characteristic
	Gender reassignment		X			
	Marriage & civil partnership		X			
	Pregnancy & maternity		X			
	Religion and/or belief		X			
	Sexual orientation		X			
Additional Groups	Care leavers / care experienced adults		X			
Groups		Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Not Sure	Summary of Impact

Gloucestershire County Council Staff						
Groups		Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Not Sure	Summary of Impact
P r	Age		X			No impact on this characteristic

ote cte	Disability		X			
	Sex		X			
	Race		X			
	Gender reassignment		X			
	Marriage & civil partnership		X			
	Pregnancy & maternity		X			
	Religion and/or belief		X			
	Sexual orientation		X			
Additional Groups	Care leavers / care experienced adults		X			
Groups		Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Not Sure	Summary of Impact

4. Action Plan

Set out the key actions that will be undertaken, following the equality assessment in section 3, to further maximise the positive impact or mitigate the negative impact of the proposal on those who share the protected characteristics and care leavers / care experienced adults (any negative consequences should be eliminated, minimised or counter-balanced by other measures):

Identified Potential or Actual Impact	Recommended Action(s)	Owner	Target Completion Date
Amend tender specification following feedback following engagement with debt support charities	Amend specification as appropriate.	Andrew Burford	October 2023
Debt recovery against an individual who has been identified as being vulnerable	<p>The enforcement agents will be required to have a policy or procedure in place for dealing with a situation that involves a vulnerable individual.</p> <p>Social care or commercial debt will only be passed to an enforcement agent following internal council review with checks in place to identify any potential vulnerabilities.</p>	Andrew Burford	April 2024
Review EQiA	Ensure that the EQiA is up to date and reflecting current operating methods	Andrew Burford	September 2024

5. Monitoring and Review


Public bodies must have regard to the aims of the duty not only when a policy, service or development is being created and decided upon, but also when it is implemented and at regular intervals afterwards. The Equality Duty is a continuing duty.

Lead officer(s):	Andrew Burford
Frequency of the monitoring and review:	Annually
How the impact of the policy, service or development will be measured, including the data and information that will be used:	Complaints against the EAs shall be monitored to ensure that they are operating within the legislation with any concerns documented and raised with the supplier.
Stakeholders who will be involved:	Debt support charities, GCC team members

6. Approval

Signature of Senior Officer	
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Name of Senior Officer	Colin Chick: Executive Director – Economy, Environment and Infrastructure
Date	06.11.2023

Signature of Decision Maker	
Name of Decision Maker	Clr Dom Morris
Date	08.11.2023

Appendix 1 – Service User Data and Information

Details of service users affected by the proposed activity:

Groups	Service User Data and Information
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Age	<p>The council does not maintain data on the age profile of cases that are sent to enforcement agents for debt recovery. In 2022/23 76 cases were returned by enforcement agents due to customer vulnerability.</p> <p>In 2020 the government introduced the debt respite scheme (known as Breathing Space) that enables debtors, via a debt support agent, to obtain a moratorium on debt payments for a period of time. The council fully complies with this is scheme and in 2022/23 54 cases were put</p>
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	<p>on hold by the council after receiving a Breathing Space application. So far in 2023, up to the end of September 51 cases have been put on hold.</p>
Disability	<p>The council does not maintain data on cases that are sent to enforcement agents for debt recovery relate to people with a disability. In 2022/23 76 cases were returned by enforcement agents due to customer vulnerability.</p> <p>In 2020 the government introduced the debt respite scheme (known as Breathing Space) that enables debtors, via a debt support agent, to obtain a moratorium on debt payments for a period of time. The council fully complies with this is scheme and in 2022/23 54 cases were put on hold by the council after receiving a Breathing Space application. So far in 2023, up to the end of September 51 cases have been put on hold.</p>
Sex	<p>The council does not maintain data on the sex profile of cases that are sent to enforcement agents for debt recovery. In 2022/23 76 cases were returned by enforcement agents due to customer vulnerability.</p> <p>In 2020 the government introduced the debt respite scheme (known as Breathing Space) that enables debtors, via a debt support agent, to obtain a moratorium on debt payments for a period of time. The council fully complies with this is scheme and in 2022/23 54 cases were put on hold by the council after receiving a Breathing Space application. So far in 2023, up to the end of September 51 cases have been put on hold.</p>
Race	<p>The council does not maintain data on the race profile of cases that are sent to enforcement agents for debt recovery. In 2022/23 76 cases were returned by enforcement agents due to customer vulnerability.</p>

Gender reassignment	The council does not maintain data on the gender reassignment status of cases that are sent to enforcement agents for debt recovery. In 2022/23 76 cases were returned by enforcement agents due to customer vulnerability.
Marriage & civil partnership	The council does not maintain data on the marriage or civil partnership status of cases that are sent to enforcement agents for debt recovery. In 2022/23 76 cases were returned by enforcement agents due to customer vulnerability.
Pregnancy & maternity	<p>The council does not maintain data on the number cases that are sent to enforcement agents for debt recovery where the individual maybe pregnant or have maternity status. In 2022/23 76 cases were returned by enforcement agents due to customer vulnerability.</p> <p>The council has a Penalty Charge Notice Discretionary Policy where officers can take into account mitigating circumstances on a case by case basis.</p>
Religion and/or belief	The council does not maintain data on the religious status of debtors that are sent to enforcement agents for debt recovery. In 2022/23 76 cases were returned by enforcement agents due to customer vulnerability.
Sexual orientation	The council does not maintain data on the sexual orientation of debtors for cases that are sent to enforcement agents for debt recovery. In 2022/23 76 cases were returned by enforcement agents due to customer vulnerability.

Care leavers / care experienced adults	The council does not maintain data on the care leaving status of debtors that are sent to enforcement agents for debt recovery. In 2022/23 76 cases were returned by enforcement agents due to customer vulnerability.
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Appendix 2 – Gloucestershire County Council Staff Data and Information

Details of Gloucestershire County Council staff affected by the proposed activity:

Groups	GCC Workforce Data and Information
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Age	None of these protected groups are affected by this proposal
Disability	
Sex	
Race	
Gender reassignment	
Marriage & civil partnership	
Pregnancy & maternity	
Religion and/or belief	
Sexual orientation	
Care leavers / care experienced adults	