



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

Equality Impact Analysis

Title of policy, function or service	Watford 2020 Programme
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Person completing the EIA	Liam Hornsby, Watford 2020 Programme Manager
Type of policy, function or service:	Existing (reviewed) <input type="checkbox"/> New/Proposed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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1. Background

Watford 2020 is a two year programme with the ambition to transform the council into a customer-focused, digitally-enabled and commercially-minded organisation by 2020. A series of 'Service Innovations' were carried out across the council between July and December 2017 through tranche one of the programme. The Service Innovations sought to baseline the current operation of services, generate novel ideas for future service delivery and model any changes to identify potential opportunities. This work, which was undertaken in collaboration with services and alongside Leadership Team engagement, identified a significant number of indicative benefits, both financial and non-financial, to the council which will support the delivery of the programme vision as well as the £1million baseline revenue reduction necessary to maintain the on-going financial sustainability of the organisation.

Accompanying this document is a business case and implementation plan, providing the business justification for moving to the next tranche of the programme, which will include a detailed design, build and implementation phase for each service project within the organisation. The detailed design phase will provide the opportunity for services, alongside the Transformation Team, to review in granular detail the different processes, technology and information used and relied upon. As such, further Equality Impact Analyses will be conducted in relation to each of these specific projects to ensure that the impact of any changes is appropriately managed across all areas of the programme.

This document provides the Equality Impact Analysis based on the high level vision, design principles and Service Innovation work undertaken so far.

2. Focus of the Equality Impact Analysis

This EIA, therefore, considers the potential equality related impacts, both positive and negative of the Watford 2020 Programme on the people in the groups or with the characteristics protected in the Equalities Act 2010.

These are:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender Reassignment
4. Pregnancy and maternity
5. Race
6. Religion or belief
7. Sex (gender)
8. Sexual Orientation
9. Marriage and Civil Partnership.

3. Engagement and consultation

No direct engagement or consultation has been carried out with service users at the current time.

The nature of the programme means that any such consultation would be of limited use at the current time. As part of the detailed design phase, there will be an opportunity for new processes and online transactions to be tested by customers and any impact measured.

4. What we know about the Watford population

The vision of the Watford 2020 programme is for Watford Borough Council to be a customer-focused, digitally-enabled and commercially-minded organisation. The services provided by the council are intended to serve our local communities and placing our customers at the heart of everything we do is central to the programme and the change it was initiated to deliver.

Overall population

The population of Watford is 96,400 (mid-year estimate 2015). The population continues to grow and was anticipated to hit 100,000 during 2017. The current government projection for population shows Watford's population as 124,700 by 2037.

Age

The largest populations by age band in Watford are:

- 25-44 (31,700)
- 45-59 (18,100)

The numbers in each successive age-band fall progressively until there are estimated to be 6,000 who are 75+. We know that around 74,000 residents are of voting age in Watford and, with an average of age of 36, Watford has a relatively young population, compared with other towns in England and Wales. Residents of this age typically feel more comfortable transacting with organisations online and, for many, this is their preferred method of contact, with the 24/7 availability of services attractive to those with busy lifestyles.

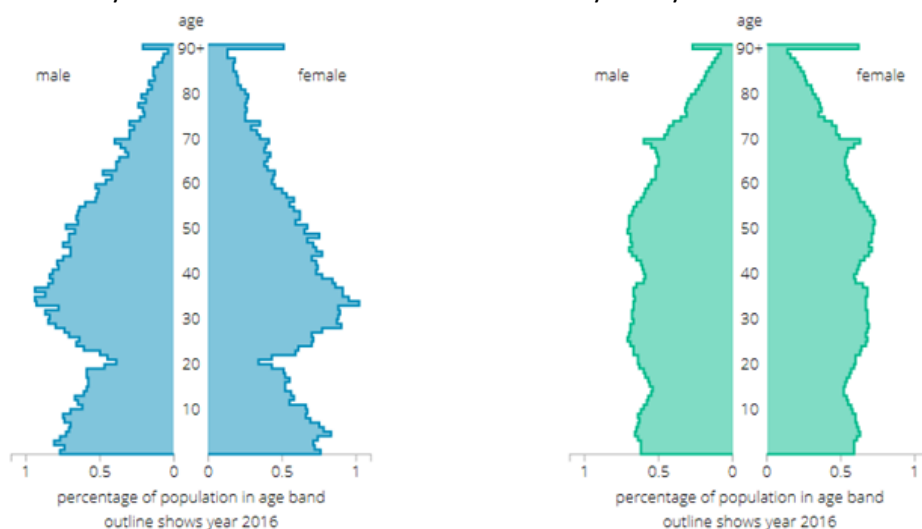


Diagram 1: Watford's population in age band (left) compared to the average in England and Wales (right)

Ethnicity

Watford has a very diverse population, more so than the rest of Hertfordshire.

For Watford overall, the Census 2011 shows the following breakdown in terms of ethnicity: White British (61.9%), White other (7.7%), Pakistani (6.7%), British Indian (5.5%) and British other Asian (4.4%).

Disability / Health

Around 85% of the population of Watford state that they have 'good health' and just under 14% record a disability. We do not have details as to what these disabilities are but they will include a wide range of physical and mental health disabilities or impairment. The 2016 NHS Health Profile's summary conclusion is that the health of people in Watford is 'varied' compared with the England average. About 14% (2,700) of children live in low income families. Life expectancy for both men and women is similar to the England average (which is an improvement on previous years when men's was lower).

Religion / belief

The religious breakdown in the Census 2011 of the main religions in Watford was: Christian (54.1%), Muslim (9.8%), Hindu (4.8%), with no religion stated at 21.4%.

Sexual orientation / Transgender

Watford has no specific data on the transgender community within the borough

Education and skills

A skilled workforce supports the economic development and employment aspirations for Watford. There has been a mostly increasing trend in Watford over the last few years; Watford's working age population has the third highest percentage (43.7%) in Hertfordshire of those with qualifications at NVQ 4 and above (St. Albans is the highest with 62% and East Herts second highest with 44.2%); this is also higher than both the 40.4% average in Hertfordshire and the England average of 34.2%. There are fewer people with no qualifications and significantly more people with Level 4/5 qualifications (degree level).

63.6% of Watford young people achieved 5 A*-C including English & Maths at the end of key stage 4. This is the better than the England average of 57.8%.

Homelessness

Whilst this is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, the council recognises that the particular circumstances of people without their own home might be a factor in their taking an active role in our community. We currently have 24 statutory homeless (December 2017) and 188 households in temporary accommodation (December 2017).

MOSAIC profile

Our MOSAIC profiling of the borough enhances our understanding of our population and provides valuable context for our decision-making as well as underpinning our communications and engagement.

MOSAIC GROUP	Group/Type Name	MOSAIC DESCRIPTION	Number of households in Watford	Watford Percentage	UK Percentage
1 J40	Career Builders	Singles and couples in their 20s and 30s progressing in their field of work from commutable properties	4508	11.69%	1.59%
2 J44	Flexible Workforce	Young renters ready to move to follow worthwhile incomes from service sector jobs	3123	8.10%	1.26%
3 D14	Cafés and Catchments	Affluent families with growing children living in upmarket housing in city environs	2837	7.35%	1.31%
4 I36	Cultural Comfort	Thriving families with good incomes in multi-cultural urban communities	2794	7.24%	1.37%
5 H35	Primary Ambitions	Forward-thinking younger families who sought affordable homes in good suburbs which they may now be out-growing	2391	6.20%	1.96%

Table 1: Watford's MOSAIC profile (2016)

5. **How the council will ensure equality is promoted through the Watford 2020 Programme**

Under the Equality Act 2010, three areas need to be considered when analysing the equality impact of the Watford 2020 Programme:

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

Part of the programme's vision to ensure all parts of the council are 'customer-focused' details the requirement for services to be 'accessible to all' and the management of changes across the organisation under one programme will mean that all projects are working towards this shared vision. The on-going alignment to this vision is critical to the programme's success and so will provide a minimum standard for services through the detailed design, build and implementation of changes.

The commitment, detailed in the outline business case and future operating model, that customers will not be forced to transact with the council digitally through closure of existing channels, provides assurance that no individual will be negatively impacted by the increase in digital capability of the organisation, which should be viewed as an enhancement of existing provision, rather than a change. Furthermore, the continuation of a duty function in our Customer Service Centre will ensure that the most vulnerable individuals, such as those accessing Housing Services or Benefits and who require specialist assistance, will receive this as quickly as possible from experienced and knowledgeable professionals. As a relatively small local authority, the council does not have the resources available to resource our Customer Service Centre with experts on every service area but this duty function ensures that customers are not adversely impacted as a result. The additional provision of Customer Service 'champions' means that the link between our front office staff and service delivery departments remains robust.

A. **Positive impacts**

- The Watford 2020 Programme aims to ensure that all processes are 'digital by design'. This does not mean that customers cannot still contact the council via the telephone or by coming into the Customer Service Centre. However, it means that those customers who are able and want to contact the council using the internet can do so 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The streamlining of processes as a result of this design principle will mean that queries and transactions from all customers are dealt with more efficiently meaning that the council is able to provide an enhanced service for all customers. What we know about the Watford population, including the average ages and MOSAIC profile, would indicate that effective online solutions would be beneficial to a significant number of our population.
- The anticipated shift of transactions online as a result of the enhanced digital capability will mean that Customer Service Centre staff are more available to help customers face to face or on the telephone. It is anticipated that this will reduce current waiting times for those customers seeking to access services via this channel resulting in a better service.

- Disabled customers, including those with visual or hearing impairments, who may find it difficult to attend the Town Hall in person will also benefit from the enhanced digital capability proposed by the Watford 2020 programme. The ability to undertake transactions online from home avoids the need for those customers who find making journeys difficult to travel unnecessarily.
- The closer working relationship between Customer Services and other departments will mean that customer-facing professionals will be responsible for reviewing all bulk external communications. This is to ensure that all correspondence is clear and avoid any technical language which may not be understood by customers. It is anticipated that this will improve customer's experience; receiving communications which have been specifically reviewed from their perspective. This may be particularly beneficial for residents who do not have English as their first language.
- The retention of the duty officer function, as outlined in the attached operating model diagram, means that the most disadvantaged residents in the town will still be able to access professional officers face-to-face so that the necessary personal service, and understanding of individual circumstances, can be maintained.

B. Negative impacts

If the programme, and its constituent projects, resulted in a 'one size fits all' solution there would be a risk of negative impacts, with some parts of communities more negatively impacted than others. This would clearly include people without access to digital technology. However, as this has already been identified as a risk and the intention of the programme is not to withdraw existing access changes, the 'one size fits all' approach has been rejected and so any negative impact avoided.

However, as outlined above, this will continue to be reviewed through additional Equality Impact Assessments, attached to each Watford 2020 project, throughout the life of the programme. This will allow continuing review of the council's equality obligations as the detailed changes in each service is known.

6. Overall conclusion

Having completed an Equality Impact Assessment, it is concluded that the Watford 2020 programme will have a positive impact on local residents, businesses and customers of the council. In all instances, the intention is to enhance service delivery, providing additional and more efficient access channels for customers, whilst retaining those currently in use for those customers who are not comfortable using, or who do not wish to use, the internet. The drive towards digital will also mean that our Customer Service Centre staff will be available to help customers attending the Town Hall or using the telephone to contact the council. None of the proposed changes outlined in the Watford 2020 business case are anticipated to disproportionately impact upon people who share a protected characteristic but the provision of additional Equality Impact Assessments for each of the projects within the programme will ensure that this is maintained and considered throughout the life of Watford 2020.

Summary of potential positive impacts and ways in which they can be ensured

Positive Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to ensure the positive impact
<p>The 'digital by design' principle within the programme means that the council can provide an enhanced service to all customers</p>	<p>All</p>	<p>Noting that not all residents have access to computers or are comfortable using digital solutions, no current access channels will be withdrawn as a result of the programme. Customers will still be able to call the council directly and to visit in person in the Customer Service Centre. The only exception to this is e-mail, which as an unstructured form of communication can lead to significant failure demand and service inefficiency. Those customers who currently use e-mail will be able to complete online forms via their customer account if they wish to transact with the council online. The procurement of a new Customer Management System means that these online transactions will be much simpler than currently but customer engagement will be maintained as processes are moved to the new system as part of individual service projects. Furthermore, the anticipated channel shift as a result of an improved online offer, will free up Customer Service Centre staff to provide supported self-serve, for those customers who want to self serve via the telephone or in the Town Hall, but who require some guidance, and mediated service for those who prefer to transact over the telephone or face-to-face. All customers will be able to transact with the council 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, as a result of the improvement in online provision</p>

Positive Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to ensure the positive impact
Review of bulk communications by Customer Services will avoid confusion amongst customers	All (potentially)	This is to ensure that all correspondence is clear and avoid any technical language which may not be understood by customers. It is anticipated that this will improve customer's experience; receiving communications which have been specifically reviewed from their perspective. This may be particularly beneficial for residents who do not have English as their first language.
Access to specialist officers and professionals when required	All	The on-going provision of the duty function, particularly for Housing and Benefits customers, means that the most disadvantaged residents in the town will still be able to access professional officers face-to-face so that the necessary personal service, and understanding of individual circumstances, can be maintained.

Summary of potential negative impacts and ways in which they can be removed or mitigated

Negative Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to mitigate the negative impact
Withdrawal of existing access channels and an insistence that services can only be accessed online would disadvantage customers who do not have access to a computer or who do not feel comfortable transacting in this way. Customers who require face-to-face support, particularly those who are vulnerable, would also be disadvantaged.	All	Existing access channels will not be withdrawn as a result of the programme. The only exception to this is e-mail, which as an unstructured form of communication can lead to significant failure demand and service inefficiency. Those customers who currently use e-mail will be able to complete online forms via their customer account if they wish to transact with the council online.

This EIA has been approved by:

Kathryn Robson, Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications

Date – 19 April 2018