

Guidance for officers completing a Community Impact Assessment

A Community Impact Assessment (CIA) is a process designed to ensure that a policy, project or service does not discriminate against any disadvantaged or vulnerable people or environment and promotes equality.

This guidance will support you when completing a CIA.

When do I have to complete a Community Impact Assessment?

- You must complete a CIA if you are considering a policy, project or changes to service delivery before a decision is made.
- Not all projects need a CIA, although major projects which will impact the community in a lasting way do require one to be completed.
- This is so the information can support the decision making process and enable a judgement to be made as to the likely impact on the community or environment.
- The CIA must accompany the officer's report which is being presented to a committee or individual Cabinet member (Portfolio Holder) for consideration.

What is the purpose of a Community Impact Assessment?

- Fulfil statutory requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty in Equality Act 2010
- Understand how a change will affect the community as a whole
- Consider the specific needs of different groups and the locality
- Reduce environmental impact where possible
- Support a project initiation document (PID) or other committee report

What are positive, neutral or negative impacts of a policy, project or service?

- **Positive impacts** benefit the whole community or specific parts of the community e.g. opening a new play area in a deprived area. Positive environmental impacts might include improvements such as reduced energy / fuel usage or increased wildlife habitats.
- **Neutral impacts** are where there is no clear benefit or disadvantage for the community e.g. a service or policy development is focused in a specific location or for the benefit of a specific group and therefore has no impact on the wider community.
- **Negative impacts** are where a specific group(s) within a community are disadvantaged, discriminated or excluded e.g. providing a service online with no alternative arrangements for face-to-face or telephone access may impact on older people or people with visual impairment. Negative environmental impacts might be an increase in air pollution or natural resource use.

In most cases the general impact for the community should be positive and delivering Council priorities or you would not be doing it. However, this is not always straightforward e.g. you may need to reduce a service to make savings which will ultimately benefit residents in terms of keeping Council Tax levels low, but the loss of the service itself could have a significant impact on residents. In this case you may consider that overall the impact is negative and therefore will need to consider how to reduce or eliminate this impact e.g. by promoting alternatives to the service.

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Additional tips for officers to aid completion:

- Make relative not absolute judgements e.g. a new energy efficient service may be positive even if it consumes more energy than if no service were provided.
- Be aware that small positive changes could be outweighed by negative ones e.g. the traffic generated by a new development may outweigh the benefits of a new bus stop next to it.
- Concentrate on the most key significant issues - it only needs an overview at this stage.
- Judge a proposal over its whole lifespan, some impacts may change over different timescales.
- To support the CIA form, Appendix A contains a series of prompt questions that may help you to consider the social, environmental and economic impacts. Please note that you are not required to answer these questions: they are included purely for guidance.

What kind of actions might minimise or eliminate negative impacts or enhance benefits?

For societal this could include measures such as adding disabled access to a building or making language interpretation services available. These should be reasonable alternatives to the service offered to the wider community and may be constrained by budget.

Identifying barriers to accessing a service and the actions that might help to minimise or eliminate a negative impact is an important part of the consultation process.

For environmental this could include measures such as replacing any lost habitat as a result of development; if installing new equipment that uses energy, ensuring that this equipment is as efficient as possible; or finding alternatives to landfill for new sources of waste. These should be reasonable measures and will be constrained by budget, but identifying them at an early stage may make it cost effective to incorporate mitigating measures into the project rather than trying to eliminate the negative impacts later on.

What measurements should be taken to establish a baseline of positive/negative impacts?

A baseline is the starting measurement against which you can assess what has been achieved. This will depend on the project, but it is important for all projects to be able to demonstrate measurable outcomes so that we can evaluate their success and learn for future projects e.g. the number of people from a particular section of the community accessing the service or could be the energy reduction achieved as a result of the project.

What do you mean by 'the community in general'?

This is the broad range of the Borough's population and the environment within which it sits. You need to consider not only our residents, but businesses, organisations and the environment.

What do you mean by 'the council as an organisation'?

When developing a project it is also important to consider the impact for our staff and our estates e.g. changes to internal policies or how a service is delivered.

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What do you mean by the ‘protected characteristics’?

Under the Equality Act 2010, we have a duty to not discriminate by the following characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage & civic partnership
- Pregnancy & maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

For more information on the Equality Act 2010 see <https://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance>

What do you mean by ‘the specific community / location’?

If your project, service or policy focuses on a particular community group or is delivered in certain areas then consider any specific issues you need to address, or communities to engage with, as part of the change. It could be this is not applicable as the project, policy or service is Dacorum wide.

What’s the best way to consult the target community or specific groups?

There are lots of different tools available including online consultation, focus groups and consultation with representative groups. Communications Team will be able to advise on the most appropriate and cost effective approach, how best to involve representative groups and the best timing to avoid duplication or to save cost by joining with another consultation.

It may even be possible that a new consultation may not be necessary as feedback may already have been received from a consultation on a related issue carried out by another department or organisation. Consultation may be appropriate for different stages of a project from developing project ideas to trialing a new service or policy.

Why is the Equality & Diversity CIH Charter Housing Framework relevant?



This framework has been signed up to and shows a public commitment to deliver a fair and accessible housing service which is focused on outcomes for staff, tenants and communities.

Housing will be sharing good practice which in the near future will be rolled out across all of the council. For more information see www.cih.org/equalityanddiversitycharter

How will you review once implemented:

It is also important that you consider how you will review the impact once the project, policy or service has been implemented and identify what actions need to be taken to do this, who is responsible for carrying these out and by when. These actions should be picked up in team / departmental service plans.

Once completed, please review and gain sign off from the relevant Group Manager. Email the signed off copy to Isobel Benton-Slim to be published on the council website.

If you have any further questions about how to complete this form, please contact Isobel Benton-Slim x2936

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Appendix A

Prompt questions to assist in completing the assessment

Social Considerations

- Does your project have any implications for local health and social services provision?
- Does your project have any implications for local education and training provision?
- Is there evidence that this service matches local need?
- Is appropriate training provided?
- Does this provide new opportunities for people?
- Is the service accessible and affordable to all?
- Does your project consider the impact it has on individuals in the immediate area?
- Does your project consider the impact and views of other communities?
- Does your project consider the impact it will have on future generations?
- Have implications beyond Dacorum been considered?
- Have you engaged with all sections of the local community?
- Consider how your project contributes to the social, cultural, sporting opportunities in the area?
- Does it create a sense of community identity and belonging? Does it increase social inclusion?
- Does it create tolerance, respect and engagement of people from different cultures, background and beliefs?
- Does it tackle crime and anti-social behaviour?
- Has your project considered its long term information and communication technology needs?
- Has a communication strategy been developed? Will it reach all sections of the community?

Environmental considerations

- Consider efficient use of natural resources (water, energy, materials) whilst minimising waste?
- Could resources be minimised, reused or recycled?
- Has the whole life cost of purchasing been considered?
- Will it have any long term impacts on the environment?
- Will the service help to mitigate the impacts of climate change (reduce energy and fuel use)?
- Will biodiversity be protected? Does it cause pollution (to water, air, land)?
- Consider how it can make best use of walking, cycling and public transport travel options?
- Consider how it can reduce the need for journeys? Are these as fuel efficient as possible?
- Consider how it can contribute to a sense of place? Has the local character been considered?
- Are buildings well designed and well built, meeting present and future needs for all?
- Consider how your project can contribute to safe and high quality public realm?
- How will it be maintained long-term?

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- Is it appropriate in size, scale, density, design and layout and is it durable, flexible and adaptable?

Economic considerations

- Consider how your project relates to local or regional economic strategy?
- Consider how your project will contribute to the future economic sustainability of the area?
- Will jobs and training opportunities be created or maintained?
- Can links with the business community and wider economy be made?
- Can it be supported financially long term?
- Are there alternative methods of funding?
- Will it provide value for money?
- Can you work with community and voluntary organisations?
- Does it support a diverse range of shops / other services that are available to residents?
- Could the service be shared across immediate geographical and interest boundaries?