



Service area	Customer Services
Date of assessment	
Name of policy/service to be assessed	Appointment Only Service – Pathfinder House
Is this a new or existing policy/service?	New
Name of manager responsible for new or amended policy/service	
Names of people conducting the assessment	
Step 1 – Description of new or amended policy/service	
Describe the aims; objectives and purpose of the new or amended policy/service (include how it fits into wider aims or strategic objectives).	The purpose of this service change is to move from a walk-in customer service model to an appointment-only service, enabling a more efficient, planned and customer-focused approach to delivering support. The key aims of the change are to: • Improve the customer experience by reducing waiting times and ensuring customers are seen by the most appropriate advisor for their enquiry. • Enable better planning and allocation of resources, allowing staff to prepare for appointments and provide more effective resolutions at the first point of contact. • Increase service efficiency and productivity by managing customer demand more effectively.



- Ensure customers receive a consistent and high-quality service in a confidential and suitable environment.
- Provide greater flexibility through a range of appointment booking options, including telephone and in-person at reception.

This change supports wider organisational objectives to deliver accessible, efficient and customer-centred services, make best use of available resources, and improve service performance while continuing to meet the needs of customers. Measures will be put in place to support customers who may face barriers to accessing an appointment-based service, ensuring that the service remains inclusive and accessible to all.

Customer feedback, complaints, service data and staff observations will be monitored throughout the trial period to identify and address any unintended barriers or disadvantages experienced by specific customer groups.

The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, the Council also needs to demonstrate its compliance with the Equality Duty. The Council therefore needs to understand how its decisions and activities impact on different people. An Equality Impact Assessment is the current method by which the Council can assess and keep a record of the impact of new or amended strategies, policies, functions or services.

The council retains these duties even when outsourcing services or providing shared services.

Definition of Adverse Impact - occurs when a decision, practice, or Policy has a disproportionately negative effect on a protected group. Adverse Impact may be unintentional.



Are there any (existing) equality objectives of the new/amended policy/service

The service change aims to ensure that all customers continue to have fair and equitable access to services regardless of their protected characteristics. Key equality objectives include:

- Maintaining access to services for customers who may face barriers to booking appointments, including older people, disabled people, and those with limited digital access or skills.
- Providing reasonable adjustments for customers with disabilities and additional support needs.
- Promoting equality by offering alternative methods of booking appointments, such as telephone and in-person booking options.
- Monitoring the impact of the change on different customer groups to identify and address any unintended disadvantages. This will be monitored through ongoing customer feedback, complaints, compliments and service performance data. Feedback received via reception, telephone contact and other customer channels will be reviewed to identify any barriers to support.
- Supporting vulnerable customers to ensure they can access services in a way that meets their individual needs.

As this is a six-month trial, the introduction of the appointment-based service has been implemented through a soft launch. The 'Visit Us' section of Huntingdonshire District Council's website has been updated to advise customers that appointments can now be pre-booked. Posters have been



	displayed in reception and the customer service centre to raise awareness of the new service and how appointments can be booked. During the trial period staff will continue to support customers who have made a special journey to visit us. Where appropriate, customers will be assisted with their enquiry and provided with information on how to contact the council and book an appointment for future visits. This gradual implementation is intended to help customers become familiar with the new process while also ensuring continued access to services.
Who is intended to benefit from the new/amended policy/service and in what way?	The appointment-only service is intended to benefit both customers and the organisation. Appointments can be booked either by telephone or in person at reception. Officers within Housing and Revenues and Benefits are also able to book appointments on behalf of customers where required. The appointment system has been designed to minimise barriers to access and provide flexibility for customers needing additional support. This ensures customers who may have communication difficulties, limited digital skills, language barriers, mobility issues, learning difficulties and other support needs are not disadvantaged by the introduction of the service.



Staff will continue to assess individual customer needs and make reasonable adjustments to make sure services remain accessible.

Customers will benefit by:

- Receiving a more personalised service, with appointments tailored to their specific enquiry.
- Experiencing reduced waiting times and avoiding unnecessary visits to the office.
- Having greater certainty about when they will be seen and who will be dealing with their enquiry.
- Receiving support from staff who can prepare in advance and have relevant information available at the appointment.
- Accessing alternative appointment methods, such as telephone appointments where appropriate.

The organisation will benefit by:

- Managing customer demand more effectively and efficiently.
- Making better use of staffing resources and office facilities.
- Improving service planning and reducing periods of unpredictable customer footfall.
- Increasing the likelihood of resolving enquiries at the first point of contact.



	Supporting the delivery of a consistent, high-quality customer experience. The service is intended to benefit all customers; however, particular consideration will be given to customers who may face barriers to accessing an appointment-based service to ensure appropriate support and reasonable adjustments are available. While appointments will be the primary method of accessing the service, exceptions will be made for customers with urgent needs, such as those presenting as homeless on the same day, or other vulnerable customers requiring immediate assistance. This will help ensure that the service remains accessible, inclusive and responsive to those in greatest need.
What are the intended outcomes of this new/amended policy/service?	The intended outcomes of moving to an appointment-only service are to: - Improve the overall customer experience by providing a more structured and personalised service. - Reduce customer waiting times and ensure customers are seen by the most appropriate advisor for their enquiry. - Enable staff to prepare in advance, leading to more effective and efficient appointments and increased first-contact resolution. - Improve the management of customer demand and make better use of staffing resources.



- Increase service consistency, ensuring all customers receive a high-quality service.
- Provide a more suitable and confidential environment for discussing sensitive or complex issues.
- Support organisational efficiency and service performance by reducing unpredictable customer footfall.
- Maintain accessibility for customers through a range of appointment booking methods and by making reasonable adjustments where required.
- Ensure customers with urgent or exceptional needs, such as same-day homeless presentations, continue to receive timely support through agreed walk-in arrangements.

Overall, the change aims to deliver a more efficient, accessible and customer-focused service while ensuring vulnerable and high-priority customers can still access support when it is needed most.

Customers can arrange appointments either by telephone or in person at reception. Officers within Housing and Revenues & Benefits are also able to book appointments on behalf of customers.

The appointment system has been designed to provide access and flexibility for customers who may require additional support.



	Customers who may have communication difficulties, limited digital skills, language barriers, mobility issues, learning disabilities, or other support needs will not be disadvantaged by the introduction of an appointment-only service. Staff will continue to assess individual customer needs and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate to ensure services remain accessible to all.
Step 2 – Data	
What baseline quantitative data (statistics) do you have about the function relating to equalities groups (e.g. monitoring data on proportions of service users compared to proportions in the population), relevant to this new/amended policy/service? Huntingdonshire Statistics	Demographic monitoring data is not routinely collected by Customer Services. Therefore, baseline data of the proportion of service users within specific protected characteristic groups is not available. Consideration has been given to the wider demographic profile of Huntingdonshire and the potential impact on those who may likely to experience barriers to accessing appointment-based services, including older people, people with a disability, those with learning difficulties, limited digital skills and those where English is not their first language. The impact of the service change will be monitored throughout the six-month trial period through customer feedback, complaints, appointment data and advisor feedback.



What qualitative data (opinions etc) do you have on different groups (e.g. comments from previous consumer satisfaction surveys/consultation, feedback exercises, or evidence from other authorities undertaking similar work), relevant to this new/amended policy/service?	Customer feedback has been gathered through feedback forms available at Reception, enabling customers to provide comments on their experience and suggest improvements. To date, the feedback received regarding the introduction of an appointment-only service has been positive and supportive. Customers have highlighted benefits such as reduced waiting times, avoiding queues, and having a dedicated appointment slot, which allows their enquiry to be dealt with more efficiently. Feedback received so far indicates that customers understand the reasons for the change and appreciate the improved certainty and convenience that an appointment system provides. Feedback will continue to be monitored to identify any issues or barriers for specific customer groups and to ensure the service remains accessible and effective for all users.
Age – this refers to the protected characteristic of age. A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32-year olds) or range of ages (for example 18 to 30-year olds). Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic? Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic? For some services this should include consideration of impact in terms of safeguarding young people.	There are no concerns that this policy would have a differential impact on these individuals.

What evidence do you have for your answer?	
Disability – this refers the protected characteristic of disability. A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic. Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic? What evidence do you have for your answer?	There are no concerns that this policy would have a differential impact on these individuals.
Gender reassignment – gender reassignment discrimination occurs when a person is treated differently because they are trans*. Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic. Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic? What evidence do you have for your answer? *although the term gender reassignment and transsexual is in the Equality Act 2010, it is accepted that the preferred term is trans.	There are no concerns that this policy would have a differential impact on these individuals.
Marriage and civil partnership in the workplace; this refers the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership which is a	There are no concerns that this policy would have a differential impact on these individuals.

union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple. Civil partnership is between partners of the same sex. Discrimination is when a person is treated differently at work because a person is married or in a civil partnership. Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic. Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic? What evidence do you have for your answer?	
Are there concerns that the function could have a differential impact in terms of pregnancy and maternity in the workplace (e.g. pregnant or breast-feeding women). Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding. Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic. Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic? What evidence do you have for your answer?	There are no concerns that this policy would have a differential impact on these individuals.



Race – this refers to the protected characteristic of race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. Gypsy/Travellers are distinct group within this category Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic. Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic? What evidence do you have for your answer?	There are no concerns that this policy would have a differential impact on these individuals.
Religion and Belief in the workplace - refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic. Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic? What evidence do you have for your answer?	There are no concerns that this policy would have a differential impact on these individuals.
Sex - this refers to the protected characteristic of sex which can mean either male or female, or a group of people like men or boys, or women or girls. Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.	There are no concerns that this policy would have a differential impact on these individuals.

Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)



Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic? What evidence do you have for your answer?	
Sexual orientation – this relates to whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes. Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic. Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic? What evidence do you have for your answer?	There are no concerns that this policy would have a differential impact on these individuals.
Are there concerns that the function could have a differential impact on part time/full time employees? What evidence do you have for your answer?	There are no concerns that this policy would have a differential impact on these individuals.
Are there concerns that the function could have a differential impact in terms of specific characteristics of Huntingdonshire e.g. Rural isolation	There are no concerns that this policy would have a differential impact on these individuals.

Findings

The appointment-only service will be implemented on a 6-month trial basis. During this period, the service will be regularly monitored and reviewed to assess its effectiveness, accessibility, customer satisfaction, and impact on different customer groups.

Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)



Data and feedback will be collected throughout the trial from customers, staff, and service performance measures. Particular attention will be given to identifying any barriers to access and ensuring appropriate support is available for vulnerable customers and those requiring urgent assistance.

At the end of the 6-month trial period, the findings will be evaluated and used to inform recommendations on whether the service should be adopted permanently, amended, or discontinued. This ongoing review process will help ensure the service continues to meet customer needs and organisational objectives.

Recommendations

To be confirmed.