

Disability Equality Impact Assessment Questionnaire

Policy/Service/Change being assessed: Closure of East Row Public Conveniences	Department: Services for Place
Person Responsible for Assessment: Sandra Innes	Date of assessment: 25 January 2012

Brief description of service and to whom provided/available: East Row Public Conveniences are based in the Town Centre and available to all the public to use, including those with a disability. The service is chargeable to all users except for those with a disability.

East Row Public Conveniences are based in the Town Centre and available to all the public to use, including those with a disability. The service is chargeable to all users except for those with a disability. The charge was introduced as the first option in April 2011 as a measure to help sustain the costs of this service and therefore enable them to remain open. The charge has not generated the required income and consideration has to now be given to closure.

The closure would impact on all current users including town centre shoppers; however there are other facilities in the town. Since introducing a charge for the use of East Row Toilets there has been some migration towards the Dolphin Centre and this has caused a number of issues in maintaining the ground floor toilets to the required standard. If the toilets were closed, it would include the disabled facility at East Row and this would have a further impact with a high probability that disabled clients would also start to use the Dolphin Centre. There is a radar key controlled toilet opposite the town hall at the end of Shopmobility.

There is a concern from the Market traders that they will lose business as footfall has lessened since a charge was introduced, and it is felt that if the toilets close then there would be an even greater loss of customers coming into that area of the town. The East Row toilets are used as a contingency by the markets staff if their toilets are out of order.

Since charging began in April 2011 to 15 January 2011 there have been 118,465 paying customers, an average of 2889 customers each week. It is not possible to identify the number of non paying customers as this detail is not logged – these would include disabled clients and children accompanied by a parent/carer.

There would be a reduction in disabled toilet facilities in the town centre should East Row Toilets close.

2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
net TBC, £38,000 gross potential for £10,000 decommissioning costs	£38,000	£38,000	£38,000

Increasing the charge is not considered to be a viable option – since charging was introduced the numbers accessing the facilities has dropped considerably. The charge would have to increase significantly to make an impact on the cost of running the toilets.

To support the impact assessment process, a designated data capture exercise was undertaken with a sample of users of the facility on the 23.01.12. Specific impacts identified through this process have been detailed on pages 6-8.

Further potential impacts specifically for Older People have been identified by Age UK these have been outlined on page 6-7.

Specific impacts identified from Disabled users of the facility 23.01. 12 have been detailed on Pg 5

Impacts received through consultation session with community partnerships 17.01.12 have been detailed on Pg 5

Impact Received from MTFP proposal consultation with carers – Carers of a learning disabled son 09.01.12. have been detailed on Pg 6

Introduction

This template should be used with the Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009. Completing this template without following the rest of the disability equality impact assessment process outlined in the Scheme does not comprise a disability equality impact assessment.

Q.1 Is your service/policy/change accessible to all disabled people?

This particular proposal relates to the closure of East Row Toilets, consequently the facility would no longer be available for use by any individual, however, there are other alternative facilities within the town centre.

Bear in mind any economic, social, environmental, physical, intellectual, cultural, linguistic, technological or other barriers.

Issue	Yes	No	If yes, what evidence do you have to demonstrate this?	If no, what do you plan to do to remove barriers to access?
Physical or mobility impairment				The East Row Toilet facilities will not be available however there are other facilities in the town centre including the Dolphin Centre
Sensory impairment				As above
Learning disability or mental impairment				As above
Other disabilities and health conditions covered by the Equality Act 2010 (eg. diabetes, HIV, multiple				As above

sclerosis, depression and cancer)				
Any other disability issue (e.g. frail/vulnerable people, people with mild impairments who do not perceive themselves as disabled, people with multiple impairment)				As above

Q.2 (a) For whatever reason, does your service treat any group of disabled people differently from its other service users?

Yes

X

No

If you have answered 'yes', please specify those individuals or groups affected and whether the impact has the potential to be adverse.

(b) What needs to be done to prevent any potentially adverse impact?

Specific impacts identified from Disabled users of the facility 23.01. 12

"I don't mind paying, they are essential to the town. I'm a trader from Barnard Castle, I think they're wonderful. I need to go regular and find it essential for my work. They are central and convenient. How will the elderly and disabled manage?".

"If you have children they are more convenient and roomy. We lost the toilets in Aycliffe, it was a big impact, if you're elderly or pregnant you need the toilets. These are on one level and central to the town."

"I'd be devastated as I have bladder problems, I need to go regular. With them being central I'm now able to get to them. The Cornmill is far out".

"It would have a drastic impact I'm a diabetic when you need to go you have to go. There's not a lot of places you can go I travel from Barton".

Impacts received through consultation session with community partnerships 17.01.12

Impacts received through consultation sessions

"The elderly need to use the toilets more often, the Dolphin Centre may not be an option on a Bank Holiday in the future – Cornmill has restrictive opening hours, toilets do not open to 10 am and are closed by 3 pm, especially weekends. The Council should not rely on Commercial Businesses to provide toilets".

Impacts received from Age UK Darlington on the 27.01.12, relating to this specific proposal.

Age UK Darlington would like to stress that it is absolutely vital that the council understand the important role that public toilets play in enabling many older people to get out and about in their neighbourhood. A 2006 Help the Aged study found that 52 per cent of respondents agreed that the lack of public toilets in their area stopped them from going out as often as they would like. This evidence suggests that lack of public toilets is a significant factor in the isolation of some older people.

Town centres routinely lose out on valuable business because they ignore the needs of older people. As people age, they are more likely to suffer from incontinence or take medication that means that they need to go to the toilet more frequently. There are more than 2.5 million people in the UK who suffer from urinary incontinence.

The British Toilet Association (BTA) estimates that in excess of 40 per cent of public toilets in the UK have been closed in the past ten years.

A survey carried out by Help the Aged in 2006 found that 82 per cent of respondents felt that public toilet provision in their areas did not meet their needs. A report produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government under the previous government highlighted a number of reasons for this decline, but did little to change the situation. This situation is set to become even worse. The BTA estimates that more than 1,000 public toilets could face closure in the next 12 months. There is no statutory requirement on local authorities to provide public toilets. In the current climate of local authority budget cuts, many local authorities are reviewing their public toilet facilities with the intention of making savings. Community toilet schemes (where local businesses offer their facilities in return for a financial incentive) can be a workable alternative, provided that they meet the needs of older people. See the Age UK 'Pride of Place' Report for further information on the link below: - http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/Pride%20of%20Place_How%20councillors%20can%20improve%20neighbourhoods%20for%20older%20people.pdf?dtrk=true

Impact Received from MTFP proposal consultation with carers – Carers of a learning disabled son 09.01.12.

“The impact related to the fact that they haven't had access problems when using East Row in Terms of the provisions being in use by another individual when they have needed to access them fairly swiftly. Therefore, there was a concern that as there would be more limited provision there would therefore be a greater chance that facilities would not be as readily accessible as demand for the accessible toilets would increase”.

The closure of the toilets will have a negative impact on disabled people coming into the town centre.

There is the option to use the Dolphin Centre or the radar accessible toilet opposite the Town Hall adjacent to Shopmobility, this could however have an impact on the quality of those facilities due to increased usage. Risk; There is a proposal that the Dolphin Centre may close on some Public Holidays which would mean there would be even less facilities available.

Private facilities (Cornmill shopping centre) within the town centre are not always open, which could lead to further problems

Q.3 (a) Do you promote disability equality within your service? (e.g. through departmental equalities group, innovative marketing or community engagement techniques)

Yes

X

No

If you have answered 'yes', please give examples of how equality is promoted.

In addition to the Council commitment to promote equality of opportunity in all services and policies, this is a key function of the team Disability Equality is promoted in all areas of service delivery.

(b) Do you promote positive attitudes towards disabled people? (e.g. through customer care training, cultural issues awareness training, the use of images of disabled people in your publicity material)

Yes

x

No

If you have answered 'yes', please give examples.

All staff working within the section have Customer Care training. The Council as a whole promotes a positive attitude to disabled people in both the recruitment, employment and providing services to disabled members of the community.

Employees are made aware of disability issues including access to services, buildings and information. The Council is committed to ensuring that information available to the public is in an easy read format and accessible in various methods and in multiple locations

4 Are there any plans in place within your Service to promote disability equality more effectively?

Yes

x

No

If yes, please outline what you intend to do (including details, if known, of timescales and areas to be covered, etc.)

Not in relation to this specific service area, as if the proposal is accepted there will not be a facility.