

Food Safety Service Equality Impact Assessment - Decision not to proceed with the assessment.

This service was identified as a high priority by the pre-screening group that identified and prioritised the EIA programme. However, following a briefing on the EIA process and a full discussion with relevant officers, it is now apparent that the decision of the pre-screening group was incorrect in this instance, for the following reasons:

1. Whilst the service does have a significant number of customers – i.e. food businesses – that are owned or managed by people from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups this number is not as high as the pre-screening group assumed.
2. The way in which the service operates is largely determined by legislation and the standards and practices set by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), which also controls training and provides much of the information given to customers – including explanatory documents in other languages. In the past the FSA did not provide training materials or other information in other languages, but it now does and therefore the service is able to provide these locally or in partnership with other Hampshire Authorities.
3. Most of the services BME customers are now British and second or third generation and so speak and read English to the same level as the rest of the population, but where language difficulties do exist officers will provide assistance, translate documents or accept key documents in another language.
4. Lastly, as a regulatory function of the Council the service's primary task is to ensure that food premises and the food they produce are safe for those who eat and work there and must apply the legislation to all food businesses. There is no evidence that food businesses owned or operated by people from BME groups are discriminated against (i.e. treated differently *and* unfairly) to those owned or operated by white British people or that they are disadvantaged in any way which cannot be objectively justified by the need to enforce the legislation to protect the public and workers. Officers are, however, aware of the need for cultural sensitivity and the need to provide additional help to customers for whom English is not their first language.

The service is able and willing to consult its customers and hopes to use the emerging local BME Forum as an additional channel of communications in the future. Once a corporate approach to equality monitoring has been established, the service will implement this as appropriate to its particular circumstances.

This note has been produced by Ian Barrett, Equality & Diversity Consultant and agreed by Kevin Gosling, Commercial Team Manager. The decision not to proceed with the EIA has been approved by the Corporate Equality Group.