

1. Introduction

This report gives a summary of the process undertaken in carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment of the Joint Waste contract and of the findings.

The assessment was carried out by a team of 6 officers from Winchester City Council and East Hampshire District Council. The group was facilitated by Ian Barrett, WCC's Equality & Inclusion Consultant.

The EqIA was undertaken following an Integrated Impact Assessment using WCC's new IIA screening process, which identified a few equality issues that, given the importance of this contract, required further exploration. Both the IIA and the EqIA were undertaken after the PQO had been issued, but prior to the finalisation of the specification and tendering process.

The Joint Waste Contract (JWC) covers joint provision of waste & recycling, grounds maintenance and street cleansing services across Winchester and East Hampshire Districts. The contract will last for 16 years + 1 year if needed, with a break point at year 8. It encompasses the following services:

- Domestic waste collection including recyclables & clinical waste
- Local Bring Sites for recyclables.
- Trade waste collection.
- Grounds maintenance including verges, sports fields, parks and other public open spaces.
- Cemetery services.
- Street cleansing – including emptying of litter bins, leaf clearance, etc.

2. Process.

The assessment looked at all the key elements of the above services and explored their impacts on customers having one or more of the 'protected characteristics' defined in the new Equality Act 2010 – this will come into force before the contract begins in October 2011.

Using Template 1 from WCC's EqIA Guidance Manual, the group went on to consider each group in turn and judge whether they are impacted by the services, and if so, whether in a positive or negative way.

When considering whether a customer group might be susceptible to disadvantage the group used relied on the professional judgement and experience of the assessment team in relation to current services, EqIAs on similar services carried out by other authorities – some involving members of the assessment team. Neither authority has historic equality monitoring data on these services.

3. Findings

The assessment team concluded that the proposed contract would benefit almost all sections of the community and that appropriate variations in the way the service was provided to groups with specific needs, e.g. disabled people, had been built into the specifications.

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The team were confident that, because all communications with customers were undertaken by the client and not the contractor, that all equality and accessibility issues in terms of finding out about and influencing the services would be properly addressed. Since WCC has undertaken an EqlA on communications, implemented a series of improvements to its systems and procedures and provided equality training to its Comms Team, the assessment team recommends that WCC's Comms Team oversees or vets all JWC communications until such time as EHDC's comms team have done their own EqlA and received appropriate equality training.

In summary, the key findings of the assessment were as follows:-

1. Community Safety. The presence of uniformed personnel in public spaces provided benefits to a range of groups not only in terms of the services they were providing, but also in terms of helping to make people feel safe in public places and acting as the councils' "eyes and ears". The current contractor's operatives frequently provide help and reassurance to the public and useful information about anti-social activities to the council and its partners. The assessment team recommended that the contract included specific provision to ensure that contractors and their staff continued this work in future and were aware of issues such as hate crime reporting.

2. Safeguarding. A detailed discussion took place on the issues of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and domestic abuse. In light of the councils' legal responsibilities in these areas, the assessment team felt that (a) there could be a situation where workers in these services encountered actual or potential situations involving abuse of adults or children, and (b) that it was important to ensure that the contractor was aware of these issues and provided appropriate training to its staff on how to recognise and report such occurrences.

Specific points raised related to CRB checking of employees working with young people on work experience and those who may effectively be supervising or interacting with children at sports grounds. (It was noted that safeguarding issues would also apply in relation to the – separate – contract on the cleaning of public conveniences.)

3. Gypsies and travellers. Since the domestic waste collection service is not provided to this group unless they live on an officially recognised site because of (a) this group not paying council tax and (b) planning issues the team concluded that this aspect of the contract had no impact on this group. However, other elements of the contract had, arguably, an actual or potential positive impact. The contract provides for the clearance of illegal sites after they have been vacated and for the removal of some sorts of waste (e.g. old cars) during occupation. In addition, clinical waste would be collected if a request was made via a GP practice.

4. Cemeteries. The cemetery service in both districts is managed by the client team to ensure that it meets the needs of all religious groups and those with no religious beliefs. Contractor's staff working on these sites will be required to have attended an approved cemetery operatives training course, which the assessment team understands includes equality training.

4. Key Recommendations

The key recommendations relate to ensuring that the contractor is aware of issues around safeguarding and public safety outlined above and provides appropriate training for staff.

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In addition, there is an obvious need to ensure that the contractor complies with equality law as an employer.

The complaints and monitoring procedures must be capable of identifying discriminatory behaviour by individual workers.

5. *Monitoring*

Responsibilities for implementation of the defined actions are allocated to named officers, and progress will be kept under review via the Business Planning arrangements and through individual supervision sessions with the officers concerned.

6. *Conclusions.*

6.1 Detailed Assessment

No detailed assessment is required.

6.2 Improvement Plan

No improvement plan is required as the issues raised here will be dealt with by amending the contract specifications and the Invitation To Tender Documents or, if appropriate, Terms and Conditions. The Evaluation of tenders process will also score and assess applicants on equality grounds.

If you have any comments on this impact assessment. Please contact the officer responsible
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