Addressing Inequalities

Customers and Communities, Library Service, Information Services Team – March 2011

Surrey County Council Equality Impact Assessment Template

Stage one – initial screening

What is being assessed?	**Information Services Team**
Service	**Library Service**
Name of assessor/s	**Gillian Youngman**
Head of service	**Peter Milton**
Date	**March 2011**
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	**Existing**

Write a brief description of your service, policy or function. It is important to focus on the service or policy the project aims to review or improve.
Information Services Team comprises of the county Inter Library Loans unit (see separate EIA) and Enquiries Direct, a central enquiry point which deals with information provision in all its formats. Enquiries Direct delivers a high quality, high level information service by providing answers or referral. Enquiries come via phone, fax, letter, email and online channels. There is no face to face contact with the public unless they come into Guildford Library and staff help is required. The Information Services Team support high quality information delivery through the libraries physical and virtual network and support library staff and development teams in information delivery and act as a central point of contact. They also manage a reference budget for maintaining hard copy reference stock in all libraries as well as subscribing to a number of quality online information sources.

Indicate for each equality group whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, or no impact.				
Equality Group	**Positive**	**Negative**	**No impact**	**Reason**
Age	√			Enquiries Direct assists with information enquiries irrespective of age and runs Homework Help (an online chat service) at school leaving time. Public can contact Enquiries Direct by phone, fax, letter, email, online form or via library staff. Staff help with information enquiries for those without computers or who lack confidence to use one (they can talk them through a search). They also act as mediator for booking tickets for library events as well as processing online joiners. According to the Office of National Statistics only 30% of people in South east England over the age of 65 use the web on a regular basis. Information Services Team promote information via Twitter and are looking to do so by other means such as Facebook which may appeal to a different audience. They also intend to start offering adult online chat which may help with those who do not like using the telephone. Enquiries Direct plan to start using a text service which will hopefully appeal to a younger audience and help those

Indicate for each equality group whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, or no impact.				
Equality Group	**Positive**	**Negative**	**No impact**	**Reason**
				who do not have access to a computer.
Gender Reassignment			√	Enquiries Direct staff remain neutral in providing information. All staff have undertaken Equalities and Diversity training.
Disability	√	√		People with disabilities are able to access information using the technology that provides them with full interaction with the content. Surrey has a large aging population who may experience hearing or vision loss. The library catalogue which staff refer to for dealing with enquiries is DDA compliant. The negative impact is reduced by providing an accessible website (AA compliant) including the provision of software tools (screen reader) for users that do not have their own tools. Although such tools are provided, users may not be proficient or comfortable with them to get the full benefit. The "Listen" function is not very prominent. A high percentage of library pages refer to Enquiries Direct and the online reference sources are accessible from there. Enquiries Direct staff

Indicate for each equality group whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, or no impact.				
Equality Group	**Positive**	**Negative**	**No impact**	**Reason**
				themselves refer to the web pages a lot to answer enquiries and talk enquiries through for future reference. Online reference resources are available 24/7, including several that can be used remotely i.e. without going into the library. It is assumed their sites are DDA compliant but this needs to be checked. Increasingly more services are becoming available online thereby giving users more choice in the way that they are able to access the library service which is lessening the impact on people with disabilities. Enquiries Direct act as first line of contact for housebound readers.
Sex	√			Enquiries Direct staff deal with enquiries regardless of gender and remain neutral in providing information. All staff have undertaken Equalities and Diversity training.
Religion and belief	√			Enquiries Direct staff deal with enquiries regardless of religion and belief and remain neutral in providing information. The Information Services Team wrote and regularly review the Poster and Leaflet Policy which has a clause covering materials from faith organisations. All staff have undertaken

Indicate for each equality group whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, or no impact.				
Equality Group	**Positive**	**Negative**	**No impact**	**Reason**
				Equalities and Diversity training.
Pregnancy and maternity			√	
Race	√	√		Enquiries Direct staff deal with enquiries regardless of race and remain neutral in providing information. Some people may not speak English as their first language and therefore struggle to understand the text on websites or staff on the telephone. Enquiries Direct staff sometimes have trouble understanding people on the phone for whom English is not their first language. There are online translation services available (on the Information Service Team's weblinks pages). Or the enquirers could make contact via an email / information request, or if they are in a library a member of staff could phone on their behalf. The Contact Centre use a translation service (which is under review).
Sexual orientation			√	Enquiries Direct staff remain neutral in providing information. All staff have undertaken Equalities and Diversity training.
Carers	√			The Reminiscence Collection is held at Redhill library for professionals working in the field of elderly care and those who care for people at home.

Indicate for each equality group whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, or no impact.				
Equality Group	**Positive**	**Negative**	**No impact**	**Reason**
				The catalogue can be viewed online or Enquiries Direct staff can interrogate it on their behalf.
Other equality issues – please state			√	
HR and workforce issues			√	**Please indicate if a separate EIA needs to be carried out**
Human Rights implications if relevant				

If you find a negative impact on any equality group you will need to complete stage one and move on to stage two and carry out a full EIA.

A full EIA will also need to be carried out if this is a high profile or major policy that will either effect many people or have a severe effect on some people.

Is a full EIA required?	Yes (go to stage two) √	No
If no briefly summarise reasons why you have reached this conclusion, the evidence for this and the nature of any stakeholder verification of your conclusion.		
Briefly describe any positive impacts identified that have resulted in improved access or services		

For screenings only:

Review date	
Person responsible for	

review	
Head of Service signed off	
Date completed	

- Signed off electronic version to be kept in your team for review
- Electronic copy to be forwarded to Equality and Diversity Manager for publishing

Stage 2 – Full Equality Impact Assessment - please refer to equality impact assessment guidance available on Snet

Introduction and background

Using the information from your screening please describe your service or function. This should include:

- **The aims and scope of the EIA**
- **The main beneficiaries or users**
- **The main equality, accessibility, social exclusion issues and barriers, and the equality groups they relate to (not all assessments will encounter issues relating to every strand)**

Information Services Team are a central enquiry point based in Guildford Library. They are not a face to face service but deal with enquiries direct from the public or via the Contact Centre or individual libraries. Branch staff also contact them for a wide range of queries. The policy for Information Provision can be found on the Library section of the website where it states that Surrey libraries provides a comprehensive reference and information service which is unbiased.

The Information Services Team is responsible for:
- Staffing a central enquiry point for library enquiries by phone, fax, letter, email or online form via the website
- Answering enquiries which can be for information, problems with online reservations, assistance with online bookings etc
- Troubleshooting, especially with webpages used by the public
- Seeking to find information and where appropriate signposting to relevant sources
- Ensuring any information given out is accurate and up to date
- Dealing with the administration of registration
- Helping users access ebooks and audiobooks
- Staffing a national enquiry online reference service known as Enquire for 2 half days a month
- Staffing Homework Help service Monday to Friday 3.30-5.30pm and Saturday 2.00-4.30pm
- Maintaining reference provision in libraries. This is increasingly by online subscription as sometimes hard copies are no longer published and it is also better value for money as it allows access from all

libraries and often remote access from home 24/7
- Maintaining the county library collection of Government material
- Being a central point of reference for team initiatives
- Liaising with Library Service team members and branches to ensure they provide the correct information to users
- Communicating with the Information Champions of each library to disseminate information to their staff
- Training staff in how to deal with handling enquiries
- Training staff in the use of online searching
- Training staff in the use of subscription reference materials
- Ensuring that their online presence is continually reviewed and that all appropriate pages on the library website lead users to contact them for assistance
- Proposing (from experience) and responding to suggestions to improve the website and catalogue
- Dealing with problems of failed text messages when users have opted to receive notifications using SMS
- Overseeing display material in libraries and regularly reviewing the Posters and Leaflets for Display policy
- Keeping up to date with development in the library field in general and public libraries specifically
- Keeping up to date with developments in new online reference sources and reviewing current sources for use/value for money etc
- All staff have undergone training in Equalities and Diversities and it is a standing item on the monthly team agenda.

- The beneficiaries of the Enquiries Direct aspect of the Information Services Team are varied and include:
- Members (councillors)
- Library members
- Residents of Surrey
- Businesses and people who work in Surrey or the surrounding area
- Community Groups
- Partners of Surrey County Council
- Visitors to Surrey
- Contact Centre
- Staff of Surrey County Council
- Surrey History Centre
- Other Library Services
- People from all over the country (when participating in the UK collaborative People's Network national online enquiry service "Enquire")
- People from all over the world especially for local and family history enquiries

The main equalities issues centre around:
- Older people are less likely to use the internet
- Younger people are less likely to interact with the council and when

doing so will not always chose the accepted mediums. Homework Help has been such an example.

Now describe how this fits into 'the bigger picture' including other council or local plans and priorities.

- Public Libraries & Museums Act, 1964

7 General duty of library authorities.

(2)In fulfilling its duty under the preceding subsection, a library authority shall in particular have regard to the desirability—

(a)of securing, by the keeping of adequate stocks, by arrangements with other library authorities, and by any other appropriate means, that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other printed matter, and pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials, sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children; and

(b)of encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it; and

- Strategies – local & national
- Localism Bill 2010-2011
- Making a Difference Corporate Strategy 2010
- Offering as many different options as possible to people who want to access library services and information
- 24 hour access to information via the website/Enquire (24 hour service staffed overseas during the night)
- Digital Access - Surrey was one of the first local authorities to sign up to Race Online 2012 (a national project to promote the benefits of the internet supported by the UK's Digital Champion Martha Lane Fox – Surrey had a target of getting 10,000 more local people using the internet by 2012).
- Library Public Value Review 2010

Evidence gathering and fact-finding

What evidence is available to support your views above? Please include a summary of the available evidence including identifying where there are gaps to be included in the action plan.

Remember to consider accessibility alongside the equality groups

The Enquiries Direct webpage had 5232 hits in the past year. The enquiries to Enquiries Direct during 2010 totalled 23643 broken down as follows:
Phone calls   57.5%
Emails   41.7%

Information Requests   .8%

In 2010 Enquiries Direct dealt with162 enquiries which came in via the national People's Network Enquire online reference service. Countrywide, during the first 10 months of 2010 an average of 101 questions were answered a day.

It is hoped to expand this to a local online chat service in 2011 which will benefit users who are disabled or need an immediate answer.
The Information Services Team subscribe to over 20 online reference resources 14 of which can be accessed remotely. They include business and family history sources as well as dictionaries and newspaper databases. Some are only accessible at Guildford Library – this is an equality issue but staff will do research on behalf of those unable to travel or do research themselves. Ancestry is the most popular of these with 916 sessions recorded in January 2011 resulting in 20078 searches.
In 2010, 25 enquiries were made via Homework Help online chat which is available 12.5 hours a week.

The Government Collection is in closed access but the majority of it is available for loan and 87 items were issued in 2010. Public Information Online has been subscribed to since November 2010 which is accessible in libraries and 24/7 remotely. Due to decline in use and the increase of what is available online the majority of the hard copy subscription has been stopped this year. Lending copies of Acts of Parliament will continue to be purchased as they are the most requested and can be large and unwieldy to read online. Enquiries Direct act as a mediator for selling tickets for events. In January 2011 they had sold 545 (46.3%) tickets for 29 health and wellbeing events.

The Information Services Team also deal with requests for display material in libraries using a leaflet and poster policy they wrote which covers material from faith organisations. It can be accepted provided that it meets the geographical criteria and represents a local organisation, and that the material seeks to inform, but not to lobby or pressure sections of government or the population.

Sources of evidence may include:
- Service monitoring reports including equality monitoring data
- User feedback
- Population data – census, Mosaic
- Complaints data
- Published research, local or national.
- Feedback from consultations and focus groups
- Feedback from individuals or organisations representing the interests of key target groups
- Evidence from partner organisations, other council departments, district or borough councils and other local authorities

How have stakeholders been involved in this assessment? Who are they, and what is their view?

In an E-PLUS (Public Libraries User Survey) conducted in February 2010, there were 1890 respondents from 19 libraries. 99% respondents said they were using a library pc or terminal. Respondents were asked what they wanted to do on the day of the survey and 51.4% said Find Information which was the second highest response. The report states "It would appear that with regard to information searches users are tending to use an electronic medium and "doing it for themselves" as opposed to contacting Enquiries Direct and/or asking staff in libraries".

Respondents were asked to rate aspects of library support:
Staff as Information Finders:
Helpfulness – the average was 83.8% (answers per library for satisfactory/good ranged from 72.1% to 95.4%)
Customer Care – the average was 83.8% (answers per library for satisfactory/good ranged from 66.7% to 96.9%)

The survey showed that ICT facilities users are younger and the overall majority are male". One of the recommendations of the survey was that "further training of staff on software packages is required…it is possible training need to be targeted toward individual libraries".

In a PLUS survey conducted in November 2009 at 20 libraries (including mobiles), there were 4718 respondents. An average of 79% found information provision satisfactory, very good or good (answers ranged from 64% to 95%). About ¼ of users visited the library to find something out and over 1/3 did not find the information they were seeking, but the nature of the questionnaire does not indicate whether there was staff assistance with the enquiry or whether users made their own information searches.
A Libraries Information Technology Survey Analysis was carried out November 2009 to January 2010 to support the writing of a specification for Surrey Library Service's IT contract. It was completed by 265 members of the public (including the Over 50 Network) and one of the comments was "free access to Ancestry".

"Hear us, see our diversity" (Single Equality Scheme Equality Feedback Report - April 2010) contained these comments:
- Suggested video booths in libraries to speak directly to the Contact Centre to assist with lipreading – *presumably for libraries too*.
- Disability training in mental health, memory, speech problems and sensory disability.
- Staff in libraries do not always seem aware of guidance, clarity needed for staff and faith and belief groups and this needs to be shared with faith groups.
- *The response to the last point is the leaflet and poster policy which states: Material from faith organisations can be accepted provided that it meets the geographical criteria and represents a local organisation, and that the*

material seeks to inform, but not to lobby or pressure sections of government or the population.

There are systems in place for feedback from:
- the public via website feedback forms or emails
- library staff who work with the users face to face
- Information Services Team meetings and staff being represented at other meetings
- library and Contact Centre staff on Enquiries Direct awareness visits
- other Library Service teams

In 2010 Enquiries Direct received 973 thank you's from the public. Enquiries Direct has not received any complaints themselves but receive them and pass them to the relevant member of staff or team.

Analysis and assessment

Given the available information, what is the actual or likely impact on minority, disadvantaged, vulnerable and socially excluded groups? Is this impact positive or negative or a mixture of both?
(Refer to the EIA guidance for full list of issues to consider when making your analysis)

So long as the sites are DDA compliant, online reference sources are invaluable in that several can be accessed remotely 24/7.
Homework Help was introduced to enable children to be able to receive help from home or the library but has not achieved a significant number of enquiries.

An increasing number of library transactions and options are available for users to do remotely. If they encounter a difficulty they can report it to Enquiries Direct who can monitor such problems and get them addressed. Enquiries Direct is not open on Sundays when Walton Library is so their access to information is restricted, nor is Homework Help available. The statistics show that this would not be economically viable.

What can be done to reduce the effects of any negative impacts? Where negative impact cannot be completely diminished, can this be justified, and is it lawful?

It is hoped to shortly introduce an online chat service for adult enquiries which will benefit those with hearing or speech disabilities or unable to get to the library.

Text a librarian may be available within the next 6 months too which is better engagement with children and young people as well as all those familiar with the technology.

The "listen" symbol isn't very prominent. There is a new web content management system shortly being introduced which may address this issue.

Need to check if the online resources are all DDA compliant.

Information Services Team to remind staff of the Poster and Leaflet Policy with special regard to the section about faith organisations.

The publicity for ways to contact Enquiries Direct should be reviewed to see if the options can be made clearer for those for whom English is not their first language.

Where there are positive impacts, what changes have been or will be made, who are the beneficiaries and how have they benefited?

The online subscriptions to reference products are continually being reviewed and remote access offered where possible/affordable which enables access to a wider audience and to use at a time of their choice.

Bookings for events with Enquiries Direct mediating has prevented the public having to make long trips to participating libraries just to buy a ticket and therefore events have reached a wider audience.

Recommendations

Please summarise the main recommendations arising from the assessment. If it is impossible to diminish negative impacts to an acceptable or even lawful level the recommendation should be that the proposal or the relevant part of it should not proceed.

- Enquiry training which the Information Services Team has written in collaboration with the Virtual Services Team to be rolled out as soon as possible (currently being trialled by a Library Management Training Group). It has been included in the Library Training Plan and all staff will undergo this training in due course.
- Ask a Librarian (Online chat) is to be introduced as an alternative means for users to contact Enquiries Direct during opening hours which will benefit those who have problems using a telephone and aims to give immediate answers which will help users with imminent deadlines e.g homework .
- Texting to be implemented as an alternative means for users to contact

Enquiries Direct. People of all ages tend to have mobile phones and younger people tend to be very adept at using them. They can also be used anywhere there is a signal so it is hoped that new users will start to use the service if it is publicised accordingly.

- Review Enquiries Direct publicity to see if the options for contacting them can be made clearer so that those for whom English is not their first language can use an alternative method of contact if they prefer.

Action Plan – actions needed to implement the EIA recommendations

Issue	Action	Expected outcome	Who	Deadline for action
Enquiry training	**Roll out training programme after pilot**	**Better informed to help users**	**Branch staff**	**May 2011**
Email enquiries do not always get an instant reply	**Introduce Ask a Librarian**	**Better for those wanting immediate answers or who have trouble using a telephone**	**All users with access to a pc**	**July 2011**
Texting not a method of communication	**Introduce texting enquiries**	**An appeal to a wider audience and those who have trouble speaking on the telephone or using a pc**	**Anyone with a phone with texting facility**	**September 2011**
Enquiries Direct publicity	**Review publicity for Enquiries Direct**	**Make alternatives methods to contact Enquiries Direct more obvious if necessary**	**Those for whom English is not their first language**	**May 2011**

- Actions should have SMART Targets

- Actions should be reported to the Directorate Equality Group (DEG) and incorporated into the Equality and Diversity Action Plan, Service Plans and/or personal objectives of key staff.

Date taken to Directorate Equality Group for challenge and feedback	31st March 2011
Review date	April 2012
Person responsible for review	Gillian Youngman
Head of Service signed off	12th May 2011
Date completed	13th May 2011
Date forwarded to EIA coordinator for publishing	13th May 2011

- **Signed off electronic version to be kept in your team for review**
- **Electronic copy to be forwarded to your service EIA coordinator to forward for publishing on the external website**

EIA publishing checklist

- Plain English – will your EIA make sense to the public?
- Acronyms – check that you have explained any specialist names or terminology
- Evidence – will your evidence stand up to scrutiny; can you justify your conclusions?
- Stakeholders and verification – have you included a range of views and perspectives to back up your analysis?
- Gaps and information – have you identified any gaps in services or information that need to be addressed in the action plan?
- Legal framework – have you identified any potential discrimination and included actions to address it?
- Success stories – have you included any positive impacts that have resulted in change for the better?
- Action plan – is your action plan SMART? Have you informed the relevant people to ensure the action plan is carried out?
- Review – have you included a review date and a named person to carry it out?
- Challenge – has your EIA been taken to your DEG for challenge
- Signing off – has your Head of Service signed off your EIA?
- Basics – have you signed and dated your EIA and named it for publishing?