

Equality Impact Assessment



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| Service Area Being Assessed: | Area Housing Office Service – proposal not to re-open – post Covid-19. |
| Section: | Corporate Services |
| Date of Assessment: | 19 August 2020 update |
| Person(s) Responsible for Assessment: | Marcus Bishop, Head of Business Development |
| Is this a new or existing Policy? | <p>During the Covid-19 lockdown Area Housing Offices were forced to close due to Government restrictions. Despite this change rent income levels from AHO customers have remained strong. During the 5 and half month period (since 23rd March), customers have successfully switched channels to make payments using – Post Offices, Direct Debits, Contact Centre, Pay Zone and the website portal.</p> <p>NEDDC has 7452 tenants. In the 6 months pre lockdown, 1658 used an Area Office to pay rent.</p> <p>RHL has proactively contacted all customers during the lockdown period making welfare calls and supporting people to make rent payments. From these calls, 31 customers confirmed they have not moved to an alternate payment method.</p> <p>Where there has been non-payment of rent the majority of the reasons have been financial difficulties caused by loss of employment and furlough not access to AHO's.</p> <p>NEDDC Revenues and Benefits confirm that a similar payment pattern has emerged regarding Council tax payment. The key reasons for non-payment have been the due to loss of employment and furlough.</p> <p>31 people have made specific comments that they are waiting for the Area Office to reopen to make a payment. RHL have been working to support these 31 customers to make alternative payment arrangements that are suitable for these individuals.</p> <p>Given the circumstances presented because of Covid-19 and the customer response RHL/NEDDC are considering the need for service provision from the 4 Area Housing Offices.</p> |

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| 1. | Briefly describe the function being assessed | Over the counter service provision through the Area Housing Offices at North Wingfield, Clay Cross, Dronfield and Killamarsh. The main services provided are rent and C-Tax payment facility and general enquiries. | | |
| 2. | Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the function? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants and residents • Staff • North East Derbyshire District Council • Parish Councils as office landlords of Clay Cross and North Wingfield • Board Members/Councillor Members | | |
| 3. | Who will be consulted as part of this EIA? What types of consultation will be carried out? | RHL Customer Involvement Group Parish Councils AHO customers RHL Board (completed 21 st June 2020) RHL Operational Board RHL Digital Involvement Group NEDDC – final decision | | |
| 4. | <u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact on racial groups ? | Yes | No | What evidence exists to support your analysis? |
| | | | ✓ | 99% of AHO customers have moved to alternate payments methods. NEDDC closed the Eckington Area Housing Office 2 years ago. The customers successfully moved to alternate payment mechanisms. This proposal would not have a differential impact in terms of race. |
| 5. | <u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact due to gender ? | Yes | No | What evidence exists to support your analysis? |
| | | | ✓ | Of the people not paying rent during the lock down period both male and females have identified that they are waiting for the AHO to re-open. NEDDC closed the Eckington Area Housing Office 2 years ago. The customers successfully moved to alternate payment mechanisms. This proposal would not have a differential impact in terms of gender. |
| 6. | | Yes | No | What evidence exists to support your analysis? |

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| | <u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact on <u>disabled people</u> ? | | ✓ | <p>99% of AHO customers have moved to alternate payments methods.</p> <p>NEDDC closed the Eckington Area Housing Office 2 years ago. The customers successfully moved to alternate payment mechanisms.</p> <p>The range of services provided by the AHO would be re-provided through channels. Over the counter payment facilities exist in current AHO locations. Home visits are already part of the service provided by the Neighbourhood support teams. All services make reasonable adjustments to support customers with a disability.</p> |
| 7. | <u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact due to <u>age</u> ? | Yes | No | What evidence exists to support your analysis? |
| | | | ✓ | <p>Whilst there are more elderly customers likely to be affected by the proposal, the numbers are very small. Bespoke 1 to 1 support for these particular individuals would be provided.</p> <p>NEDDC closed the Eckington Area Housing Office 2 years ago. The customers successfully moved to alternate payment mechanisms.</p> |
| 8. | <u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact due to <u>sexuality</u> ? | Yes | No | What evidence exists to support your analysis? |
| | | | ✓ | <p>99% of AHO customers have moved to alternate payments methods.</p> <p>NEDDC closed the Eckington Area Housing Office 2 years ago. The customers successfully moved to alternate payment mechanisms.</p> <p>This proposal would not have a differential impact in terms of sexuality.</p> |
| 9. | <u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact due to <u>religion or belief</u> ? | Yes | No | What evidence exists to support your analysis? |
| | | | ✓ | <p>99% of AHO customers have moved to alternate payments methods.</p> <p>NEDDC closed the Eckington Area Housing Office 2 years ago. The customers successfully moved to alternate payment mechanisms.</p> <p>This proposal would not have a differential impact in terms of religion or belief.</p> |
| 10. | | Yes | No | What evidence exists to support your analysis? |

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| | <p><u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact due to any other protected or vulnerable characteristics including marriage or civil partnerships, pregnancy or maternity?</p> | | ✓ | <p>99% of AHO customers have moved to alternate payments methods.</p> <p>NEDDC closed the Eckington Area Housing Office 2 years ago. The customers successfully moved to alternate payment mechanisms.</p> <p>This proposal would not have a differential impact in terms of these characteristics.</p> |
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If the answer is NO to all questions 4-10 and no differential treatment has been found, there is no requirement for a full Equality Impact Assessment. Please go back regularly and review the cycle.

If the answer is YES to any of the questions 4-10, please continue to question 11.

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| 11. | <p>In what areas could the differential impact identified in 4-9 be considered to be an adverse impact in this function? (Please tick if yes)</p> | Other protected characteristics | Race | Gender | Disability | Age | Sexuality | Religion/belief |
| 12. | <p>What solutions will be introduced to overcome these adverse impacts?</p> | <p>Bespoke 1 to 1 support for the 31 customers who have exclusively used the Area Housing Offices from Financial Inclusion Officers.</p> <p>Home visits from the Housing Support Officers and Financial Inclusion Team would be provided to support any person with difficulties accessing services.</p> <p>Online how-to videos to pay online + use website.</p> <p>Implement regular drop-in sessions.</p> <p>IT support sessions to help people use Rykneld Website.</p> <p>Increased promotion of locations to pay in local area.</p> <p>Signpost to voluntary sector where issues identified.</p> <p>Re-introduce my money and me workshops.</p> | | | | | | |
| 13. | <p>In what areas does this service mitigate possible differential impacts? (Please tick)</p> | Other protected characteristics | Race | Gender | Disability | Age | Sexuality | Religion/belief |
| 14. | <p>What Strategies are in place to safeguard and mitigate these impacts?</p> | <p>Community Involvement Strategy</p> <p>Customer Care Strategy</p> <p>NEDDC Digital Transformation Strategy</p> | | | | | | |

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| | | <p>Business Plan – to expand and promote the Community Alarm Service</p> <p>Tenancy Strategy</p> <p>Rent Policy</p> <p>Financial Inclusion</p> |
| 15. | Which Action Plans have these solutions/Strategies been transferred into? | <p>Should the Council decide to close the offices, Rykneld Homes Community Involvement Team and Financial Inclusion Team would deliver a programme of projects to support any customers who need help to access services. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online how-to videos to pay online + use website <p>To be sent via link to customers email/smart phones or accessed through website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement regular drop in sessions <p>Sessions would be once a week with future frequency determined by demand. When NEDDC closed the Eckington Area Office, RHL provided drop-in sessions at the Eckington Community Centre until the attendance levels dropped to one or no visitors for each advertised session. Our Community Involvement Team deliver and attend a number of multi-agency events each year across the district. Support would continue to be provided at these events, with new events introduced to provide support where a demand is identified.</p> <p>The sessions would be delivered so people can come and make enquires and collect relevant literature. Specific officers could be invited if we see a pattern of questions, such as homeless or financial inclusion enquiries. IT equipment would be made available for people who might want to use online services who don't have their own equipment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for Housing Applicants <p>Applications can be posted to Pioneer House.</p> <p>Applicants can visit Pioneer House.</p> <p>Our Choice Move Team and Neighbourhood Support team will make home visits.</p> |

Our Community Involvement Team and Choice Move Team will be part of drop-in sessions to support any customers to access services.

- **Support for Homeless Applicants**

Our Community Involvement Team and Choice Move Team will arrange drop-in sessions to support any customers to access services. NEDDC staff could attend the advertised drop-in sessions to support homeless applicants. RHL staff would always support applicants at any such event.

The AHO's are not the main hub for providing the support for homeless applicants – this is the Councils Homeless Team at Mill Lane.

Homeless applicants could get a Homeless Application from NEDDC offices such as Dronfield and Eckington Leisure Centre in the north, and Sharley Park, Clay Cross and NEDDC, Mill Lane, Wingerworth in the south. Forms could also be made available at other community facilities.

- **IT support sessions to help people use Rykneld Website**

Either in group or 1 to 1 support sessions.

- **Increased promotion of locations to pay in local area**

In the specific locations of the 4 Area Housing Offices these are:

Clay Cross 6 current alternate payment locations:

Post Office, 42 High Street, Clay Cross
Post Office, 101 Pilsley Road, Danesmoor
Post Office, 55 Harewood Crescent, Holmgate
Payzone, Paul News For You, Market Street, Clay Cross
Payzone, Smiths Creamland Ices, High Street, Clay Cross
Payzone, Danesmoor Mini Market, Pilsley Road

North Wingfield 3 current alternate payment locations

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| | | <p>Post Office, 14 The Green, North Wingfield PayZone, Alma Convenience Store, 2 Alma Rd, North Wingfield PayZone, Wingfield Store, 77 Station Road, North Wingfield</p> <p>Killamarsh 4 current alternate payment locations</p> <p>Post Office, 28 Bridge Street, Killamarsh PayZone, Killamarsh News, 205 Sheffield Rd PayZone, Rai Convenience Store, Delves Rd PayZone, Stop n Shop, Cherry Tree Drive</p> <p>Dronfield 3 current alternate payment locations</p> <p>Post Office, 73 Chesterfield Rd, Dronfield Post Office, 3 Barnes Lane, Dronfield Woodhouse Payzone, Holmesdale Convenience, 69 Holmsdale Rd</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased promotion of alternate payment methods <p>Contact Centres, Direct Debit, Payzone, Post Office, Customer Portal (Website), Automated Phone line</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signpost to voluntary sector where issue identified <p>Links CVS, Befriending services, Royal voluntary service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-introduce my money and me workshops <p>Targeted at people who currently use AHO's. CIT would facilitate the workshops with a member of the financial inclusion team.</p> <p>We can identify who currently uses the service and target them specifically through a mail out or telephone contact. Using this information, we can identify the barriers that will prevent them using alternative payment methods and develop a solution.</p> |
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