Tameside & Glossop Strategic Commission
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

Subject / Title	New Customer Service Centre Delivery Model	
Team	**Department**	**Directorate**
Customer Services	Cultural and Customer Services	Place

Start Date	**Completion Date**
9 April 2021	18 November 2021

Project Lead Officer	Mandy Kinder
Contract / Commissioning Manager	
Assistant Director/ Director	Emma Varnam

EIA Group (lead contact first)	**Job title**	**Service**
Mandy Kinder	Head of Cultural and Customer Services	Cultural and Customer Services
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PART 1 – INITIAL SCREENING

1a.	**What is the project, proposal or service / contract change?**	A review of the Council's face to face Customer Service function.

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1b.	**What are the main aims of the project, proposal or service / contract change?**	To consider the current customer service model and propose a more cost effective and efficient model with the ideal being face to face customer service is only provided to those residents that really need it and those that can self-serve and use other more cost effective channels do so. The new proposed model would remove the 'drop-in' facility at Tameside One for the customer services centre. The current customer services model delivers advice at both Level 1 and Level 2. Customer Services Officers, with a higher level of training, would handle all types of enquiries including those categorised as Level 1 (in-depth housing benefit and council tax enquiries) alongside Level 2 enquires (book, pay, request a service and verification of housing benefit documents). In addition to the offer at Tameside One, all libraries in the Borough also offer Level 2 service to customers, including Ashton library, which is also based in Tameside One on the ground floor. To undertake public consultation on the proposed new model. The principles of the proposed model is as follows: • Not to re-open the expensive reactive drop in customer service centre based in Tameside One at Ashton in the previous format • retain Level 2 enquiries at all Tameside Libraries • promote, encourage and support a digital first model with the expectation that where possible, residents should self-serve utilising the Council website or other technology such as applications where available • where this is not possible a supported service offer over the telephone, web chat, email etc to assist customers with their enquiries • where more detailed assistance is required e.g. completing a housing benefit application a telephone call back service by appointment would be available • face to face appointments only for the most vulnerable to ensure that residents are able to access services and assistance without disadvantage. These will be bookable via

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		telephone

1c. Will the project, proposal or service / contract change have either a direct or indirect impact on, or relevance to, any groups of people with protected equality characteristics? Where there is a direct or indirect impact on, or relevance to, a group of people with protected equality characteristics as a result of the project, proposal or service / contract change please explain why and how that group of people will be affected.				
Protected Characteristic	**Direct Impact/Relevance**	**Indirect Impact/Relevance**	**Little / No Impact/Relevance**	**Explanation**
Age	✓			Some older people may be less likely to access services digitally or have the digital skills to do so and be more reliant on face to face assistance. Resident information from the customer services recording system (NI14) shows 59.23% of customers in 2019/20 were aged under 55 with 40.77% over the age of 55. Data has been considered from Tameside Insight on: Older singles, low income; Older singles, moderate income; pensioners on low income and; affluent pensioners. Specifically, for the purpose of the EIA – preferred method of contact when getting in touch with their local authority. Based on the data available, it shows that there is a mix of preferred methods of contact among older people in Tameside. For example, people falling under the 'older singles, low income' category, there is strong preference for face-to-face contact. However, among the other categories there appears to be no strong demand for accessing council services in this way. Other preferred methods are post, and a neutral attitude to telephone contact. UK Government figures estimate that in Jan/Feb 2020, households with one adult 65 years and over have increased by seven percentage points to 80% since 2019.
Disability	✓			Some residents with a disability may struggle to access services both digitally and on the telephone. This may include those who have a learning disability. There would need to be consideration how those with hearing and sight impairments would be able to access services. Resident information from NI14 shows 21.74% of customers in 2019/20 identified as having a disability
Ethnicity		✓		The data we have available suggests that in 2019/20 71.12% of those contacting customer services identified themselves as British, followed by 28.88% identifying as Ethnic Minorities
Sex			✓	This is a universal service to all residents including

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				those within the protected characteristic groups Resident information from NI14 shows 52.14% of customers are female and 47.86% male
Religion or Belief			✓	This is a universal service to all residents including those within the protected characteristic groups
Sexual Orientation			✓	This is a universal service to all residents including those within the protected characteristic groups
Gender Reassignment			✓	This is a universal service to all residents including those within the protected characteristic groups
Pregnancy & Maternity			✓	This is a universal service to all residents including those within the protected characteristic groups
Marriage & Civil Partnership			✓	This is a universal service to all residents including those within the protected characteristic groups
Other protected groups determined locally by Tameside and Glossop Strategic Commission?				
Group (*please state*)	**Direct Impact/ Relevance**	**Indirect Impact/ Relevance**	**Little / No Impact/ Relevance**	**Explanation**
Mental Health	✓			People with a mental health issue may struggle to access services digitally and by telephone and may be more reliant on face to face services.
Carers			✓	This is a universal service to all residents including those within the protected characteristic groups
Military Veterans			✓	This is a universal service to all residents including those within the protected characteristic groups
Breast Feeding			✓	This is a universal service to all residents including those within the protected characteristic groups
Are there any other groups who you feel may be impacted by the project, proposal or service/contract change or which it may have relevance to? (*e.g. vulnerable residents, isolated residents, those who are homeless*)				
Group (*please state*)	**Direct Impact/ Relevance**	**Indirect Impact/ Relevance**	**Little / No Impact/ Relevance**	**Explanation**
Low or no income groups	✓			As the majority of the enquiries to customer services are housing benefit/council tax related which affects low income groups there may be some impact. This group are potentially less likely to have funds to secure devices/data/telephone credit to contact the council

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People whose first language isn't English	✓			Some residents whose first language is not English may struggle to access services digitally and by telephone and may be more reliant on face to face services. Resident information from NI14 in 2019/20 showed 71.12% of customers identifying as British with 28.88% identifying as Ethnic Minorities.
Vulnerable residents	✓			There may be some impact on vulnerable residents who may have difficulty accessing services digitally or by telephone.

"Low or no income groups" should be included as a key consideration when assessing the impact of your project, proposal, policy or service/contract change.
Wherever a direct or indirect impact or relevance has been identified you should consider undertaking a full EIA or be able to adequately explain your reasoning for not doing so. Where little / no impact or relevance is anticipated, this can be explored in more detail when undertaking a full EIA.

1d.	**Does the project, proposal or service / contract change require a full EIA?**	**Yes**	**No**
		✓	
1e.	**What are your reasons for the decision made at 1d?**	If the proposed service model is implemented it will be on the basis that face to face customer service is only provided to those residents that really need it and those that can self-serve and use other more cost effective channels do so. The expectation will be that customers self-service digitally where possible and if this is not possible then access via more cost effective supported channels i.e. telephone, web chat, email etc is utilised. Face to face would only be for those customers where other channels are not appropriate. This may impact older people who are not as familiar with digital technology, those with a disability or people who do not have English as their first language. By removing the 'drop-in' facility for customers, it should be considered how those residents with a protected characteristic are able to access the service, and in particular how they can access a face to face appointment if this is required. Any concerns raised through the consultation should be considered. The consultation needs to take account of people with these protected characteristic to ensure they have equal access to services.	

PART 2 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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2a. Summary
Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic face to face customer services was offered on a reactive drop in basis from level one of Tameside One in Ashton. The opening hours were: Monday – Wednesday 8.30am – 5.00pm Thursday - 8.30am – 4.30pm Friday – 8.30am – 4.00pm Customer Services Officers, with a higher level of training, would handle all types of enquiries including those categorised as Level 1 (in-depth housing benefit and council tax enquiries) alongside Level 2 enquires (book, pay, request a service and verification of housing benefit documents). In addition to the offer at Tameside One, all libraries in the Borough also offered Level 2 service to customers, including Ashton library, which is also based in Tameside One on the ground floor. The face to face customer services function at Tameside One in Ashton has been suspended for almost two years due to the Covid 19 pandemic. During this time, residents have had to make contact with the Council via other channels including telephone, web chat, on-line etc. Customer Service Officers have been assisting residents to complete claim forms for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support over the telephone rather than face to face. Another consequence of the coronavirus has meant that this is one of the most difficult budget rounds ever as the pandemic has led to a large increase in spending, as well as a significant reduction in revenue. The face to face Customer Services function is the most expensive provision when compared to on-line and telephone/web chat, yet it serves the fewest customers. Analysis of the enquires received at Ashton Customer Service Centre during the 12 months prior to Covid 19 indicate that nearly 66% were general level enquiries and only 34% were higher level enquiries. During normal operating times, all libraries can assist with general level enquiries, meaning that customers who are travelling to Ashton could possibly seek assistance at a venue closer to their home. Also, many level 2 enquiries can be dealt with over the phone, via web chat or email. As protectors of public funds, it is incumbent upon all council services to review the service provision from time to time and ensure services are cost effective whilst meeting residents' needs. The Covid-19 pandemic has created a unique circumstance where change has been accelerated at pace and this change has led to many residents becoming less reliant on face to face services. These circumstances should be capitalised upon when determining future service provision rather than simply returning to the previous landscape. Based on this, it was proposed that the council undertake a review of the face to face Customer Service provision. The ideal would be that expensive face to face customer service is only provided to those residents that really need it and those that can self-serve and use other more cost effective channels do so. The main drivers for a review: • Covid-19 and the health and safety of residents and staff with the likelihood that

we will be living with Covid for the foreseeable future
- Using learning from the lockdown to shape the future service and build back better
- A desire to improve and modernise the service offer to residents
- Improvements in technology and on-line support
- Understanding that visiting Ashton is not always the most convenient or cost effective for residents
- Take into consideration vulnerable customers to ensure they can access services and do not suffer any detriment
- Use the limited resources in the best way possible and ensure the most cost effective delivery model which also meets residents requirements

The proposed service model for the future would be based on providing the most appropriate access channel according to customers' requirements and would be very similar to the current offer but with the addition of face to face contact where necessary and only for those where other channels would not be suitable. The principles would be:

- retain Level 2 enquiries at all Tameside Libraries
- promote, encourage and support a digital first model with the expectation that where possible, residents should self-serve utilising the Council website or other technology such as mobile applications (Apps) where available
- where this is not possible a supported service offer over the telephone, web chat, email etc to assist customers with their enquiries
- where more detailed assistance is required, for example completing a housing benefit application, a telephone call back service by appointment would be available
- face to face appointments only for the most vulnerable to ensure that residents are able to access services and assistance without disadvantage. Appointments will be bookable by telephone
- not to re-open the expensive reactive drop in Customer Service centre based in Tameside One at Ashton in the previous format

Executive Cabinet agreed on 23 June 2021 that public consultation on the proposed new delivery model should be undertaken. The consultation took place between 28 June 2021 and 19 September 2021 and subsequently, taking into account the feedback received, proposals for the new customer service centre delivery model have been developed. This EIA has been updated to reflect the consultation process, the proposals which have been developed and the impact on customers.

From the initial screening the protected characteristics of age, disability, ethnicity and mental health, and the locally determined characteristics of low or no income groups and people whose first language is not English were identified as being potentially impacted by the proposals. Therefore, a full Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken to investigate these impacts in further detail and decide whether they can be justified if sufficient mitigations are put in place.

To ensure these groups' views were represented during the consultation, there was continual monitoring of responses received throughout the consultation period. This monitoring enabled further promotion of the consultation to be undertaken with any specific groups that appeared to be under-represented from the overall survey sample

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Following the consultation, it has been determined that an additional group, 'vulnerable residents' should be included in the EIA as a group potentially affected by the proposals.

2b. Issues to Consider

The issues to consider are the impact that the changes to the face to face customer services will have on customers in respect of the protected characteristics of age, disability, ethnicity, mental health, and the locally determined characteristics of low or no income groups, people whose first language is not English and vulnerable residents. The EIA will examine the equalities impact in terms of the proposed changes to the face to face customer service.

In the initial draft EIA, the main issue to consider was to ensure that the diverse population within the Borough were able to access the consultation and have their views taken into account, having due regard to the Equality Act.

Consultation, engagement & feedback

Public consultation on the potential future model for the delivery of customer services was undertaken over a 12 week period between 28 June and 19 September 2021.

The consultation was in the form of a standard questionnaire with an introduction to explain the reasons for the proposed changes followed by a series of questions to seek relevant views, which would be used to shape the future provision of the service. Additionally the survey contained free format text boxes to seek more detailed views from responders.

The questionnaire was available digitally through the Council's Big Conversation process, which allowed the results to be captured and evaluated in a consistent manner. Consideration was given to those residents in protected characteristic groups in ensuring they knew about the consultation and were able to complete the questionnaire, in particular during the Covid 19 pandemic when many face to face services were closed to the public. The consultation pack was also available in paper format from all libraries with posters promoting the consultation displayed in libraries with staff actively encouraging people to complete the questionnaire and express their views.

Staff were available in libraries to assist people to complete the questionnaire if this was required, covid restrictions allowing. Assistance was also offered by telephone through the contact centre to help people complete the questionnaire. In order to seek the views of residents currently using the Customer Services facility, officers made residents aware of the questionnaire during telephone appointments and offered assistance to complete where this was required.

The following channels were used to communicate to the public and wider stakeholders (including staff) that the consultation was taking place:

- Press release
- Tameside Council website
- Chief Executive's Brief
- Leaders blog
- Twitter
- Citizen – Summer 2021 edition
- Facebook
- Partnership Engagement Network

- Healthwatch Tameside
- Inequalities Reference Group
- Independent Advisory Group
- Information Ambassadors Network Mailing List

In addition to promotion through the above channels, the consultation was also promoted in other ways. These include via:

- Partnership Engagement Network workshop delivered on 1 July 2021 – a network of 390 contacts; public, patients, stakeholders, partners and voluntary and community sector
- Council departments where customer services had assisted their customers prior to Covid-19. Dedicated meetings arranged for those services that wished to express views
- All Council Assistant Directors and Service Unit Managers asking for their views and also that they circulate a link to the consultation to staff and service users
- Elected Members and MP's by way of a briefing note and link to the consultation

Staff in Customer Services and Libraries were encouraged to complete the survey so that their perspective could be included in the evaluation.
The consultation was shared via existing groups, networks and services including organisations that support people in protected characteristic groups. A full list of all the organisations contacted can be found below at **Appendix 1.**
A total of 222 responses to the survey were received along with additional comments by email and three engagement sessions were undertaken. All views from the consultation responses and engagement sessions have been fully considered as part of evaluation process.

With regard to ethnicity, 132 people answered the question. Of these, the large majority 90.15% (119) classed themselves as White British, 1.52% classed themselves as Asian Bangladeshi and 1.52% of respondents classed themselves as Asian Pakistani. This is different to the balance of the wider Tameside population where 88% of residents identify as White British, 2% as Asian Bangladeshi and 2.2% as Asian Pakistani. Customer Services user data indicates that just 0.28% of its customers identified as Asian Bangladeshi and this group was therefore over represented in the survey results. As comparison however, 10.52% of customers to the service identified as Asian Pakistani and therefore further contact was undertaken during the consultation period with organisations representing BAME groups. Diversity Matters North West, Community Champions and Action Together were contacted to further promote the survey with their members to encourage responses.

149 people answered the question regarding whether their day-to-day activities were limited by a health problem or disability. Of these, 40.27% (60) stated that their activities were limited a little/a lot. This is higher than the wider Tameside population of 21% people in Tameside have a disability that affects their day-to-day life.

A quarter of survey respondents (25.17%) were aged between 30 - 44 years age which is a reasonably representative sample compared to the wider Tameside population of 19.39% and customer services data held of 31.29%.

Individuals in the older age bracket were over-represented in the sample with over a third (35.66%) of respondents indicating they were over 60 years of age, compared to 23.38% in the wider Tameside population. In comparison, customer service data held on previous users of the service indicated that 23.45% of customers were aged over 60 years of age.

In summary, the survey responses relevant to the EIA show that a representative sample was achieved in the protected characteristic groups of older people and disability. Some respondents did directly

address mental health groups within comments received and therefore this group may be included within the disability group responses. Ethnicity and people whose first language is not English were under-represented in the sample despite efforts being taken during the consultation period to increase responses from these groups. Of the few comments received, this has been addressed within the report, specifically for those customers whose first language is not English. An appointment would be offered and if the person were unable to bring someone with them to assist in their appointment, suitable interpretation services would be organised. Although carers were not an identified group within the EIA, they were well represented within the survey sample (35.81%) and very likely are supporting vulnerable residents who may be impacted by the proposals.

The full percentages of responses from each demographic group compared to the Tameside population are in the table below. Where available, customer services user data has been included for further comparison.

Demographic	**Customer Services Consultation Results**	**Customer Services Data**	**Tameside figures**
Sex	Female 65.13%	Female 52.14%	51% female
	Male 30.26%	Male 47.86 %	49% male
	Prefer not to say 4.61%		
Age Group			
26-29	2.80% (4)	4.90%	5.35%
30-44	25.17% (36)	31.29%	19.39%
45-49	11.89% (17)	15.51%	6.46%
50-54	12.59% (18)	12.25%	7.28%
55-59	11.89% (17)	11.45%	7.12%
60-64	13.29% (19)	7.30%	5.78%
65-69	8.39% (12)	8.60%	4.86%
70-74	6.29% (9)	5.10%	4.99%
75-79	5.59% (8)	1.70%	3.47%
80-84	0.70% (1)	0.38%	2.37%
85+	1.40% (2)	0.37%	1.91%
Ethnic group	White British 90.15%	British 71.12%	White British: 88%
	White: Irish 0.76%	Pakistani 10.52%	
	Asian Pakistani: 1.52%	African 0.67%	Asian Pakistani 2.2%
	Asian Bangladeshi 1.52%	Other White Background 0.37%	Asian: Bangladeshi 2%
	Asian Indian: 0.76%	Bangladeshi 0.28%	
	Black British: African: 1.52%	Other Asian 0.27%	
	Any other ethnic group: 3.79%	Indian 0.19%	

	Day-to-day activities limited by health problem/disability	Yes (limited a little/a lot) 40.27%	Yes 21.74%	21% people in Tameside have a disability that affects their day-to-day life
		No 59.73%		
	Do you look after/give support to family members etc.	No 64.19%		11% people in Tameside have caring responsibilities
		Yes 35.81%		
	Do you have access to the internet at home?	Yes 93.21%		93% of people in Greater Manchester had used the internet in the past 3 months
		No 6.79%		

2c. Impact/Relevance

The new model will encourage a self-serve digital approach and retain other supported channels (telephone, web chat and email) for those who need additional assistance. Telephone and face to face appointments would be accessible in the new model.

It is not proposed to remove the face to face customer service facility, but to replace the reactive drop in service with an appointment system delivered either by telephone or face to face.

Face to face contact is in some instances a matter of preference for the customer. However, for certain groups it is a necessity, for example particular customers who find it difficult to complete forms without assistance, or if the query is particularly complex or there are multiple issues. This may include, amongst others, elderly customers, customers with language barriers and customers with a disability. In addition, there are customers who do not fall into these groups but would still have difficulty completing transactions either by phone or on the internet. This may include those on very low income who have no access to the internet or phone credit to use the telephone. It was imperative that the views of these customers were received during the consultation in order to understand how the proposals may affect them.

As the proposals remove the customer services drop-in, any concerns raised in the consultation around how people would be able to make a face to face appointment should be considered, particularly those in a protected characteristic group who may struggle using the internet or telephone.

Based on the consultation findings, it is anticipated that the changes will not affect the general population, but may affect older people, people with mental health issues, those who have digital access issues and those with disabilities. A high number of comments referred to 'vulnerable residents' and how the proposals would adversely impact them. When asked how the proposals may affect you, family, friends or others in question 13, out of 142 comments received, 18% (26) had concerns about older people, 13% (19) vulnerable residents, 6% (8) disability, 2% (3) mental health and one comment raised concerns for those without English as a first language.
Similarly, in question 14 when asked if there were any final comments to make about customer

services, 91 comments were received; 13% (12) had concerns about the vulnerable, 4% (4) disability, 3% (3) older people, and one comment raised concerns about people with mental health.

- The majority of comments received highlighted the need to retain a face to face customer service. In particular, for people who struggle to use technology, those with mental health issues and for people who need another person to support them
- Concerns raised about those people who are digitally excluded e.g. older people, people with no internet access or suitable device
- Some older people may be less likely to access services digitally or have the digital skills to do so and be more reliant on face to face assistance.
- Concerns about how people, especially the vulnerable will access an appointment and the importance of allowing professionals supporting others to make appointments on their behalf.
- People with disabilities may have difficulties using telephone/on-line methods and will still need to access services face to face e.g. hearing/visual impairment, mental health, elderly. Some customers will be unable to access remote methods due to literacy issues.
- Concerns that any changes to the service could cause the vulnerable to slip through the net/cause stress.
- Some residents whose first language is not English may struggle to access services digitally and by telephone and may be more reliant on face to face services

Digital exclusion/access

93.21% of respondents to the survey indicated that they had access to the internet at home using a suitable device. This is slightly greater than ONS data for Greater Manchester whereby in quarter 1 of 2020, 93% of people had used the internet in the last 3 months or prior to that.

Prior to Covid, 37.91% of survey respondents had previously accessed the service through on-line methods. A number of responses (33) from the consultation did however highlight concerns about residents who were unable to use technology or digitally excluded. These included the elderly who cannot use digital services or find it more difficult to adapt to on-line services. Other comments related to those without access to the internet or a suitable device. Respondents had concerns around customers with disabilities such as hearing and visual impairments, mental health and those with literacy issues who may have difficulties using on-line methods and will still need to access face to face services.

Accessibility to services is important to those digitally excluded. Free PC access is available at libraries if people are able to use digital means and library staff can assist help people get on-line.
If a person is not able to self-serve then a face to face or telephone appointment can be made via library staff, email or by telephoning customer services.

Telephone access

Responders to the survey indicated that telephone was the most used way of contacting the Council for service both before (60.19%) and since the start of the pandemic (72.09%). Some respondents who had chosen this method of contact stated that they had done so because it was easier, quick and less effort than making a journey for face to face contact. Others said that accessing the service by telephone had been ineffective with some enquiries not fully resolved and some calls not returned.

People with disabilities may have difficulties using the telephone and will still need access to a face to face service. Some people, including the elderly can get anxious or lack confidence in using the telephone.

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Currently the service is being delivered remotely by customer services. The service has been providing telephone appointments for housing benefit and council tax support claim forms with approximately 15 claims being made each week. The customer services officers assisting with these enquiries are of the view that around 25% of customers assisted would have benefited from a face to face appointment had this been available.

For those people who struggle using the telephone and require a face to face appointment, this will be accessible via library staff or by emailing the service. If the person is supported by a professional, appointments can be booked on their behalf.

Face to face appointments

Face to face customer services has been suspended for almost two years due to the pandemic. The proposed new model replaces the drop in service with an appointment system.

The consultation responses (96) overwhelmingly support that a face to face customer service be retained under any new model. A small number of respondents (9) indicated there is still a need for drop in without the need to book an appointment. Any customers, including more vulnerable residents, can drop into any library with level 2 enquiries for a face to face service or if the customer requires a face to face appointment with customer services then this can be arranged.
Respondents indicated that a face to face service is needed for elderly, visually impaired, hard of hearing, mental health, vulnerable and for those who need the support of another.
The new model would retain the face to face service for those customers that require this with appointments bookable by telephone, email or via the library. Depending on the needs of the customer, appointments will be delivered either by telephone or face to face.

Communication, triage and appointments

Concerns were raised in the consultation around how the new service model would be communicated and how appointments would be accessed.

Communication around how to access an appointment will be particularly important. This will be cascaded through the council's communication channels and via partner organisations/community groups. Libraries will also act as a communication channel to inform residents how they can access the service including arranging a face to face or telephone appointment where required.

The triage and appointment booking process for either a telephone or face to face appointment will be administered via Customer Services. Customers will be able to access the triage and appointment booking process in a number of ways; by visiting any library, by telephoning customer services directly on a dedicated number or by email. It is envisaged that a discussion with the customer will take place during triage to establish the channel of access that best suits the customer needs. Referrals will also continue to be taken from other services such as the council's Exchequer service for those customers who require an appointment. Face to face appointments are expected to be delivered from Tameside One in Ashton.

Appointments will be organised to ensure that customers are seen promptly and staffing levels will be closely monitored to accommodate this. This will be particularly important to ensure that residents maximise any potential entitlement to housing benefit and/or council tax support. Processes will be in place to protect the start date of a claim and it is envisaged that if there were capacity on the day that someone presents for an appointment, then this would be facilitated.

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Professionals supporting vulnerable residents will be able to request an appointment on a person's behalf.

Conclusion

Since the start of the pandemic people have accessed the service mainly by telephone and through on-line methods. The proposed new model for customer services will include a mix of different ways to contact the service with appointments offered either by telephone or face to face. This is an increased offer compared to how the service was delivered prior to the pandemic.

Considerations have been made regarding the impact that the proposals may have on residents and mitigations are detailed in the section below.

The proposed new customer service model and in particular the triage and appointment booking system will be kept under review and closely monitored to ensure quality of service and that vulnerable residents are able to access appointments. A further report will be presented to Executive Cabinet after 12 months of operation with the results of the review.

2d. Mitigations *(Where you have identified an impact/relevance, what can be done to reduce or mitigate it?)*	
Residents are not able to access the consultation due to no access to the internet	Posters and paper copies of the consultation will made accessible in libraries and help provided from library staff where required
Residents without digital skills who require assistance to complete the questionnaire	Help is available through the contact centre to complete the questionnaire.
Protected characteristic groups do not know about the consultation	The consultation will be accessible digitally through the Big Conversation, with paper copies of the survey made available in libraries. Posters will be displayed in libraries to let people know about the consultation. The consultation will also be promoted by customer services officers whilst carrying out telephone appointments. The consultation will be promoted through the PEN, Social Media channels, Registered Providers, Public Health, Action Together, Citizens Advice and Community and Voluntary Sector organisations.
Protected characteristic groups do not know how to access the service	Should the proposed new service model be implemented, communication with residents and potential service users would be required. Publicity would be undertaken through libraries, social media channels, and the council website. Partner organisations such as registered housing providers, community and voluntary sector via Action Together and internal networking groups such as the Information Ambassador Network would be asked to assist in circulating information on the new service provision. The publicity campaign would provide details on how customers can access services including on-line, telephone and face to face.
Protected characteristic	The most vulnerable will be supported to access the service by staff in libraries and through the councils contact centre. If an appointment is

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groups do not know how to access an appointment	required then contact will be made with customer services and either a telephone or face to face appointment will be arranged. Professionals supporting customers will also be able to access an appointment on their behalf.
Protected characteristic groups unable to use digital channels	Face to face customer services will be retained and an appointment can be made to see a Customer Services Officer. Customer services can also be accessed by dropping into any library in the Borough where the majority of level 2 customer services enquiries can be handled. Library staff will also be able to access an appointment for those customers where that is the contact method required. This appointment could be arranged either via telephone or face to face. Appointments can also be accessed by telephoning the dedicated customer services line or by email.
Residents with low income without access to the internet	Free PC access is available at libraries if people are able to use digital means. Alternatively, telephone access is available and face to face appointments where this is the most appropriate contact channel for the customer
Residents with low income without access to a telephone	Free PC access is available at libraries if people are able to use digital means. For those residents who need a face to face appointment, this can be arranged either by email or through any of the libraries in the Borough.

2e. Evidence Sources

- NI14 data – this is the customer services database which includes number and type of enquiry along with demographic data - ethnicity/age/disability and gender
- Anecdotal evidence from the officers who work in customer services as well as colleagues in welfare rights and exchequer who have been making referrals to customer services for residents who require assistance during covid-19.
- Internet access – households and individuals, Great Britain - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
- [Link Removed]
- Consultation exercise June – September 2021
- Data collected within the service of telephone appointments undertaken since 26 January 2021

2f. Monitoring progress

Issue / Action	Lead officer	Timescale
Required	*Required*	*Required*

Tameside & Glossop Strategic Commission
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

Signature of Contract / Commissioning Manager	Date
Signature of Assistant Director / Director	**Date**

Appendix 1
Customer Services Consultation Engagement Plan

Group
Tameside and Glossop Partnership Engagement Network
Inequalities Reference Group
Independent Advisory Group
Information Ambassadors Network
Diversity Matters North West
Community Champions
Tameside Carers Association/Carers Centre
Action Together
The Grafton Centre
Age UK Tameside
Tameside and Glossop MIND
West African Group
Anthony Seddon Fund
Welfare Rights Service
Revenues & Benefits
Planning
Citizens Advice
Department for Work & Pensions
Social landlords (all) and homelessness services
Mint
Tameside Housing Advice
Parking Services
Tameside Resettlement Scheme
Adult Social Care
Children's Services
Democratic Services
Street Scene
Waste Services
Planning
Education Admissions
Environmental Health
Highways
Assistant Executive Directors/Service Unit Managers
Elected Members/MPs
Cashbox Credit Union
Community Mental Health Team
Foodbanks
Employment and Skills

Tameside & Glossop Strategic Commission
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

Change Grow Live
Community Safety

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