

PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

1. Title

Title: Rothercard Scheme – proposed changes

Directorate:

Finance & Customer Services

Service area:

Customer, Information & Digital Services

Lead person:

Helen Barker, Head of Customer Services

Contact number:

Is this a:

Strategy / Policy

 Service / Function

 Other

If other, please specify

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

The Rothercard scheme was launched as an anti-poverty initiative in 1993 to prioritise support for Rotherham people living on a low-income by offering a discount on a range of Council services, as well as discounts on goods and leisure activities from a small number of other organisations.

Since then, there has been no strategic management or development of Rothercard and there is no formally agreed departmental owner; although in 2019 Customer Services (F&CS) took on the responsibility for administering card applications, implementing an improved digital application process in 2020.

The current scheme has not been developed or promoted for some time. This is likely to mean that some of the people who could most benefit from the scheme, are missing out.

The Council Plan (Page 17, People are safe, healthy, and live well) refers to a 'new' Rothercard 'that will provide discounts on Council services for those who most need them.'

Outcome 2.15 of the Council's Year Ahead Delivery Plan 2022 (Inequalities are addressed and nobody is left behind) sets out an action to complete a review of the Rothercard scheme by June 2022.

A review of the current scheme has recently been undertaken and a number of recommended changes to the scheme will be proposed to Cabinet for approval.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community?	X	
Could the proposal affect service users?	X	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics?	X	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal?	X	
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		X
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices?		X

If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6**.

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4**.

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made.

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).

- **How have you considered equality and diversity?**

Yes.

The Rothercard scheme is designed to offer discounts to residents who most need it; which includes people all groups with protected characteristics.

- **Key findings**

There are two aspects to consider with regard to the Rothercard scheme:

1. The ease with which all residents are able to access information about the scheme so they know what the scheme is about, who can apply for a card and what they need to do to apply. A number of improvements have been identified to make the scheme easier to administer which it is anticipated will increase customer experience. Any agreed changes will be created to meet the Digital Design principles and be aligned with the Council's Customer Access Strategy which sets out how the Council will:

- Make it easier and more attractive for people to access services online
- Increase digital inclusion – a specific programme of works to increase digital inclusion is underway
- Encourage and support more people to regularly 'self-serve' rather than choosing to phone or visit a council office
- Make sure everyone continues to have equal access to the information and help they need regardless of their individual circumstances
- Deliver excellent customer service and enhance customer experience
- Involve customers in designing and building services around their needs – the Customer Services digital team have recruited a number of real customer volunteers to help test/comment on new proposed processes or designs
- Make better use of customer feedback to continually develop and improve .

2. Scheme eligibility

The new Rothercard scheme will provide discounts on Council services for those who most need them. The impact this has on the following groups has therefore been considered:

AGE

Older Adults

- According to DWP Labour Force Survey the average age of labour market exit is now 65.2 years old for men and 64.3 years old for women.
- Linking the eligibility to the state pension age, reflects the national increase in the age of people remaining in work and future proofs the scheme by avoiding setting a specific age which might then need to change in later years.
- The focus of the Rothercard scheme is to benefit residents who most need it, which is not necessarily everyone who has reached pensionable age

Young People

- Take-up under the current scheme is low as the criteria is directed at looked After children and young people aged 16 to 19 years who are in full time education
- Many young people may not be in education but are instead undertaking apprenticeships or other jobs with training/qualifications built into employment.
- These groups are not currently eligible for a card – the new scheme proposes that this be made more attractive and more inclusive for young people up to the age of 21.

Junior Rothercard rate

- A number of leisure activities offer a Junior Rothercard rate for children under the age of 16 who are dependants of a Rothercard holder and who are living in the same household as a Rothercard holder.
- Although changes are proposed to the overarching Rothercard eligibility criteria, children under the age of 16 who are dependants of a Rothercard holder and who are living in the same household as a Rothercard holder will continue to be eligible for a Junior Rothercard.

DISABILITY

- No anticipated impact –changes to the eligibility criteria are being proposed to ensure that discounted services are offered to those who need them the most.

GENDER REASSIGNMENT

- No anticipated impact:

PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY

- No anticipated impact

RACE/LANGUAGE BARRIER

- Section 95 Local Authority supported refugees/asylum seekers are eligible for a Rothercard and future administrative changes to the scheme have been recommended to make this application process easier for this group of customers.
- Anyone wanting to apply for a Rothercard can receive assistance through interpreting

services that are available through DA Languages.

RELIGION OR BELIEF

No anticipated impact

SEX

No anticipated impact

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

No anticipated impact

MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

No anticipated impact.

OTHER

None currently

- **Actions**

1. Equality considerations forms part of our development and implementation of new digital technologies, particularly where these are public facing.
2. Wherever possible residents are involved in the design and testing of solutions designed to meet their needs.
3. Regular updates on new customer access/service initiatives and/or improvements are provided to Community Reference group members.
4. Working with partners, a focussed piece of work to better understand digital exclusion in the Rotherham place is already underway to deliver a longer term programme of work to increase digital inclusion.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:

Within 12 months of the proposed changes being implemented – and on a 12 month basis from then onwards as part of the annual review of the scheme.

Date to complete your Equality Analysis:

TBC

Lead person for your Equality Analysis
(Include name and job title):

Phil Rushton, Customer Services
Manager

5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Helen Barker	Head of Customer Services	29 th November 2022

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date screening completed	21 st November 2022
Report title and date	Rothercard Scheme – proposed changes
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	TBC
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	29.11.22