

PART B – Equality Analysis Form

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.

This form:

- Can be used to prompt discussions, ensure that due regard has been given and remove or minimise disadvantage for an individual or group with a protected characteristic.
- Involves looking at what steps can be taken to advance and maximise equality as well as eliminate discrimination and negative consequences.
- Should be completed before decisions are made, this will remove the need for remedial actions.

Note – An Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A) should be completed prior to this form.

When completing this form consider the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics 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. – see page 11 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

1. Title	
Equality Analysis title: Polling District and Polling Places Review 2023	
Date of Equality Analysis (EA): 03/08/2023	
Directorate: Finance & Customer Services	Service area: Electoral Services
Lead Manager: Mike Thomas	Contact number: 01709 823 268
Is this a:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy / Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Service / Function <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other
If other, please specify. The Council has a statutory duty to conduct a review of its Parliamentary polling districts and polling places between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025. When carrying out the review, regard must be given to the Electoral Commission guidance - Polling place reviews Electoral Commission , including the consideration of accessibility issues. Following the review, the (Acting) Returning Officer’s final proposals must go to Cabinet, before Council for approval.	

2. Names of those involved in the Equality Analysis (Should include minimum of three people) - see page 7 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance

Name	Organisation	Role (e.g. service user, managers, service specialist)
Mike Thomas	RMBC	Electoral Services Manager
Michelle Mellor	RMBC	Principal Electoral Services Officer
Joanne Haywood	RMBC	Senior Electoral Services Officer

3. What is already known? - see page 10 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance

Aim/Scope (who the Policy/Service affects and intended outcomes if known)

This may include a group/s identified by a protected characteristic, other groups, or stakeholder/s e.g. service users, employees, partners, members, suppliers etc.)

Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a duty to divide its area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district.

The Electoral Administration Act 2006, as amended, introduced a duty on all Local Authorities in Great Britain to review their polling districts and polling places at least once every five years. The current review must be completed by January 2025.

The review is governed by the provisions of Schedule 1A of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and must follow the Electoral Commission guidance on the review of polling districts and polling places.

As part of the compulsory review, local authorities must consider the accessibility of potential polling stations when considering designating or reviewing a polling place. In doing so they must seek to ensure that:

- all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

All residents aged 16 or over who are a British, Irish, European Union or qualifying Commonwealth citizens are eligible to register to vote. All British, Irish and qualifying Commonwealth citizens are eligible to vote in UK Parliamentary General elections and all electors are eligible to vote in local elections.

Due to the nature of the legislative requirements of polling districts and polling stations, it may be necessary to use a premises that is not fully accessible, if this is the only premises available in that area. Should this be the case, mitigations will be considered, such as a ramp or an alert 'door' bell at the entrance to a polling station, so an elector who could not gain access could make the staff aware they need assistance to vote.

<p>What equality information is available? (Include any engagement undertaken)</p> <p>There is no specific equality information available, as the electoral register does not hold any equality or diversity information about electors. Services users are all residents who are aged 18 or over and registered to vote.</p> <p>Whilst specific equality information is not available, any comments or complaints from electors in relation to polling places and polling stations are recorded and used when considering proposals for improvements or changes to polling district, polling places and polling stations.</p> <p>All electors, elected members, MPs and other interested parties such as disability groups are able to make representations about the existing and proposed polling districts and polling places scheme during the consultation phase of the statutory review.</p>	
<p>Are there any gaps in the information that you are aware of?</p> <p>None identified in terms of there being no provision in the legislation to collect or hold equality information about electors.</p>	
<p>What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics?</p> <p>Monitoring and recording of any accessibility comments or complaints made by electors, which are then used in considering improvements or changes to the existing polling districts, polling places and polling stations.</p> <p>When there is an election, Polling Station Inspectors conduct visits to evaluate the suitability of polling places and polling stations, including accessibility and suitability for electors with disabilities. Presiding Officers record any issues or comments from electors in terms of accessibility in the Polling Station Logbook. Any feedback is used in consideration of any improvements or changes to the existing polling places and polling stations.</p>	
<p>Engagement undertaken with customers. (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)</p>	<p>Statutory consultation took place between 2 and 30 October 2023, which was open to all electors and interested parties to make representations about the current and proposed polling districts and polling places.</p> <p>There were no findings directly relating to equality, however, where current polling places did not wish to be used, equality was considered when assessing alternative venues. Consideration was given to access to polling stations for electors with disabilities.</p>
<p>Engagement undertaken with staff (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)</p>	<p>Not applicable to a Polling District and Polling Places review, although any comments made by polling staff relating to suitability and accessibility of a polling station from previous elections were considered in the review.</p>

4. The Analysis - of the actual or likely effect of the Policy or Service (Identify by protected characteristics)

How does the Policy/Service meet the needs of different communities and groups? (Protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity) - see glossary on page 14 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance)

The recommendations for the polling districts and polling places scheme follows the legislative requirements and Electoral Commission guidance to ensure as far as is reasonable and practicable that all polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled and that regard has been given to the accessibility needs of disabled persons when considering the designation of polling places.

By doing so, it provides electors with disabilities the best possible facilities for voting in person at the polling station.

Does your Policy/Service present any problems or barriers to communities or Groups?

Age: Children may be negatively impacted if their school or nursery is used as a polling place and has to close on polling day. This could affect their education and, in some cases, can add to family pressures where alternative childcare is not available, particularly for short notice elections.

Disability and Age: Those voters who have a disability or have reduced mobility due to their age, may have issues getting to their polling place, particularly if it is located up a hill or on the other side of a busy road.

They may also have accessibility issues with polling places that are unsuitable, small or have steps, narrow doorways, or other obstacles.

Religion and belief: The use of religious or consecrated buildings may discourage other faith groups from voting. There are a number of religious buildings used as polling places in Rotherham.

Unemployed and people on low incomes: Those who are unemployed and people on low incomes may not have access to a car or may not be able to afford public transport. If a polling place is some distance from their home, they may have difficulty affording the travel costs and may therefore be disenfranchised.

Does the Service/Policy provide any positive impact/s including improvements or remove barriers?

Age: Where possible the Returning Officers avoids using schools. However, publicly funded buildings have a duty in the law to be used as polling stations and if there are no other suitable and available premises in the polling district, schools may have to be used.

Disability and Age: The Returning Officer aims to ensure polling places are centrally located within a polling district as possible, however, this is not always the case depending on where suitable and available premises are located. Should an elector have difficulty getting to a polling station, they have the option of applying to vote by post or proxy.

To ensure voters with disabilities are able to vote, the Returning Officer evaluates all polling places against the Electoral Commission checklist, which has a particular emphasis on ensuring:

- Level access at entrance and within polling place (or space for a temporary ramp)
- Wide enough doorways and corridors.
- Sufficient space within the polling places to enable motorised wheelchair manoeuvrability.

Religion and belief: Due to the requirement to provide polling places in a specified area (a polling district) and the requirement to make them accessible to all, it is often not possible to secure the use of a more generic premises.

Where a religious building is used as a polling station, this is clearly stated on the poll card. Electors are also made aware of the option of applying for a postal or proxy vote, should they not be able or not wish to go to the polling station.

Unemployed and people on low incomes: The Returning Officer aims to ensure polling places are centrally located within a polling district as possible, however, this is not always the case depending on where suitable and available premises are located. When considering the use of a premises as a polling place, the Returning Officer has regard for transportation links including access from public transport. Should an elector have difficulty getting to a polling station, they have the option of applying to vote by post or proxy.

What affect will the Policy/Service have on community relations? (may also need to consider activity which may be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another)

The aim of the review is to provide electors the chance to express their concerns or comments about their polling district, polling place and polling station arrangements. Where possible, if there are issues, the Returning Officer will endeavour to put in place alternative arrangements, although sometimes this is not possible.

Electors can provide comment or complaint about the accessibility of their polling district and polling place following any election. This information is used to consider any necessary mitigating actions.

Providing this opportunity for electors to provide feedback on the accessibility of their polling district and polling place should give rise to a positive relationship between the community and the Council.

Please list any **actions and targets** that need to be taken as a consequence of this assessment on the action plan below and ensure that they are added into your service plan for monitoring purposes – see page 12 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

5. Summary of findings and Equality Analysis Action Plan

If the analysis is done at the right time, i.e. early before decisions are made, changes should be built in before the policy or change is signed off. This will remove the need for remedial actions. Where this is achieved, the only action required will be to monitor the impact of the policy/service/change on communities or groups according to their protected characteristic - See page 11 of the Equality Screening and Analysis guidance.

Title of analysis: Polling District and Polling Places Review 2023
Directorate and service area: Finance & Customer Services, Electoral Services
Lead Manager: Mike Thomas
Summary of findings:
During the consultation, there was no representations made in relation to poor accessibility of polling places in terms disability. The (Acting) Returning Officer's final proposals are based on the best available options for ensuring, as far as practicable, that all polling districts and polling places are accessible to all electors, including people with disabilities.

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics as listed below	Target date (MM/YY)
To ensure Presiding Officers carry out an evaluation of the suitability and accessibility of all polling places and polling stations at the next scheduled election in May 2024. This information will be used to assess if any mitigations are required for future elections, or if any changes are needed in terms of polling stations or polling places. Further evaluation will be undertaken at each election.	A, D, RoB, O	02/05/2024

*A = Age, D= Disability, S = Sex, GR Gender Reassignment, RE= Race/ Ethnicity, RoB= Religion or Belief, SO= Sexual Orientation, PM= Pregnancy/Maternity, CPM = Civil Partnership or Marriage. C= Carers, O= other groups

6. Governance, ownership, and approval		
Please state those that have approved the Equality Analysis. Approval should be obtained by the Director and approval sought from DLT and the relevant Cabinet Member.		
Name	Job title	Date
Sharon Kemp	Chief Executive	06/11/2023
Councillor Saghir Alam	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	

7. Publishing	
The Equality Analysis will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.	
If this Equality Analysis 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 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 Equality Analysis completed	31/10/2023
Report title and date	Polling District and Polling Places Review 2023
Date report sent for publication	Monday 6 November 2023
Date Equality Analysis sent to Performance, Intelligence, and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	01/11/2023