

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Bailiff Collection Guidelines

Question	Response/ findings
<p>What are the main aims and objectives or purpose of the policy, practice, service or function that you are assessing?</p>	<p>To ensure that Bailiffs acting on behalf of DCC know what standards of action and behaviour are expected of them. To give guidance on the correct handling of cases as the bailiffs contact customers.</p>
<p>Who implements, carries out or delivers the policy, practice, service or function? Please state where this is more than one person, team, department, or body – and include any outside organisations who deliver under procurement arrangements</p>	<p>Outside body – Bailiffs acting on behalf of DCC</p>
Question	Response/ findings
<p>Who is affected by the policy, practice, service or function, or by how it is delivered? Such as, who are the external and internal customers, groups, or communities?</p>	<p>People who owe the Council money and have failed to make an arrangement to clear their debt. At present Bailiffs are only used to collect Council Tax and NNDR under statutory provisions.</p>
<p>What outcomes do we want to achieve, why and for whom? For example, what do you want to be providing, how well, what changes or improvements, and what should the benefits be for customers, groups or communities?</p>	<p>Ensure that customers are not disadvantaged in terms of service quality and consistency just because they are in arrears. Where the Bailiff identifies vulnerable individuals there is guidance on how the Council wants those cases handling. There is specific guidance given to bailiffs for cases where there is any form of communication difficulty, and for cases where the bailiff finds that the customer is in receipt of benefits, is suffering illness, bereavement, family problems or is disabled.</p>
Question	Response/ findings

<p>What existing or previous inspections of the policy, practice, service or function are there? For example, Best Value Inspections, policy reviews, research into the effects of a policy or practice.</p> <p>What did they tell you?</p>	<p>Nationally there is guidance already provided in the form of a voluntary code of conduct from the Department of Constitutional Affairs. There is already research on bailiff activity done by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and CAB. We have compared our guidance with the voluntary code of conduct from the DCA to see if there are any amendments to make.</p> <p>We have also had an audit of our bailiffs carried out by our internal audit team to ensure that customers monies are handled correctly.</p>
Identifying potential equality issues and factors	
Question	Response/ findings
<p>What do you already know about the equality impact or need? For example, from research, feedback, consultation or any performance monitoring</p>	<p>See research details identified above.</p>
Question	Response/ findings
<p>Is there any evidence of higher or lower take up under the policy or practice, or of the service or function for any particular groups? For example, who uses the service, who doesn't and why not?</p>	<p>This is not a "take-up" service.</p>
<p>Have there been any important demographic changes or trends locally? For example is the population changing, and if so, how and what might that mean for the service or function?</p>	<p>There are a growing number of different first languages in the area which is leading to a greater need for translation and interpreter services</p> <p>Nationally, the population is aging and there is a known reluctance among the elderly to take up benefits to which they may be entitled.</p>

Question	Response/ findings
Is there an indication that any of the policies or practices involved with the service or function creates particular problems or difficulties for any groups of customers or communities?	Customers may already be experiencing financial problems – so there are referrals to welfare and advice agencies.
What information or data exists? For example, statistics, customer feedback, complaints, research, monitoring – who keeps it and can you get hold of it?	The guidelines relate to the handling of accounts and the behaviour of individual bailiffs. Any breaches may lead to customer complaints. To date, the service has not received any complaints relating to bailiffs breaching guidelines though there is an alternative route of complaint directly to the Bailiff company itself. The service does have access to customer files by an on-line link to the bailiff database. If a complaint is made to DCC the corporate complaints form asks for some details but does not fully reflect the 6 strands.
Question	Response/ findings
Does any equality or diversity objectives already exist? If so, what are they and what is current performance like against them?	No – the guidance is applicable to any person who owes money and is referred to the bailiff.
Is the service having a positive or negative effect on particular people in the community, or particular groups or communities?	The guidance has a positive effect on those debtors who are: elderly, vulnerable, ill and those with communication problems as if these cases reach the bailiff they can be identified and suitable action taken.

Collecting the information and data about how the policy, practice, service or function, impacts on communities

Please record your information and data in this table and think about:

what information or data you will need
using both quantitative and qualitative data
making sure that where possible there is information that allows all perspectives to be considered
identifying any gaps in the information/ data and what it can tell you

There is a general problem with data held for Council Tax purposes – we are statutorily limited to only holding that data which allows us to correctly bill and recover the Council Tax – this data is not and can not be shared between departments. As the 6 strands of equality reach into areas of information beyond this statutory limit, we have no consistent records for equality and diversity record purposes.

Data or information	When and how was it collected?	Where is it from?	What does it tell you? You need to consider all six equality strands where you can	Gaps in information
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Customer feedback and complaints	Through the formal complaints procedure Informal complaints do not normally provide us with equalities data	Customers and through 3 rd party stakeholders eg CAB, DLC etc	If the customer chooses to complete this area of the form it can provide us with their age, gender and limited information relating to their ethnic origin	The questions to gather this information are limited so do not provide us with any data on religion or sexuality, and, being optional, do not necessarily give us any information on age, gender, race or disability.
Consultation and community involvement				
Performance information including Best Value	Internal monitoring of complaints and collection rates	System based data	As above	As above
Census, national or regional statistics	The last census was badly flawed and ONS are working with DCC to remedy this for the 2011 census	ONS	Data gives a profile of the city population but does not relate it in any way to customer experience of our service	

Access audits or assessments such as DDA assessments	Customers do not access the bailiffs premises – all contact is by phone, e-mail or letter. The bailiffs visit the customer.			
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Analysing the information and data and setting equality objectives and targets

Please give your detailed findings in this table

Service or function	Policy or practice	Findings	Which groups are affected and how	Whose needs are not being met and how?

Objectives - process, impact or outcome based

Please give your proposed objectives/ targets in this table

Objective/Target:	Regular review of guidelines to reflect identifiable areas where specific action can be prescribed. NB the document forms part of the contract with the appointed bailiff so can be classed as commercially sensitive.
Specific	Impact of guidance
Measurable	Feedback dependant
Achievable	The guidance affects cases where previous contact has not been achieved
Relevant	Has to be done at this time as appropriate within the contract process
Timed	To be done prior to tender process every time the contract is renewed – next renewal 2007, then 2010

Objective/Target:	
Specific	
Measurable	
Achievable	
Relevant	
Timed	

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