

Equality Impact Assessment Form

1- Policy details	
Name of policy	Leicestershire County Council's Customer Experience Strategy
Department and service	Council wide (cross cutting)
Who has been involved in completing the Equality Impact Assessment?	Katy Murphy (Change Lead, Customer Programme) Derrabella Hadley (Head of Customer Service) Wider programme team reps
Contact numbers	0116305 2693, 0116305 9243
Date of completion	2 nd September 2024

2- Objectives and background of policy or practice change Use this section to describe the policy or practice change
--

<p>What is the purpose, expected outcomes and rationale? Include the background information and context</p>	
<p>What is the proposal?</p> <p>What change and impact is intended by the proposal?</p>	<p>To put in place a strategy aimed at creating a shared commitment and transparency around our customer service standards across the organisation... if we get it right for customers, this should in turn alleviate contact demand on our services and improve overall satisfaction.</p> <p>The strategy has been created to ensure that across our services...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the focus is on our customers; • our customers have a good experience in the interactions they have with us; • all council staff take responsibility for customer service, not just employees in frontline services who deal with customers directly; • we adopt best practice from within the council and other organisations; • we maximise taxpayers' money by making sure that customer interactions add value and are efficient, in a fair and inclusive way; • customers help us to help them by using online channels if they can; • changes to customer interactions are managed appropriately. <p>The strategy aims to ensure that those customers who can go online, do so, in order to free up phones for those who are unable to access digital channels. For example, a proportion of people contacting our services are people contacting us on behalf of others, such as partner organisations or family/friends and carers, there are also organisations trying to request things from our services or report issues with our services not on behalf of other people – the strategy aims to improve the channels which make accessing services online easier, so that such customers do not need to contact us by telephone where ever possible.</p> <p>Some customer journeys can be streamlined, through internal process simplification there is the opportunity to reduce the time it takes to hear from us about something a customer has made contact on (although the strategy does not look to resolve council wide decision making where</p>

	<p>policies and legislation dictates this e.g. whether we are able to provide someone with specialist education provision or if we are able to cut an overgrown hedge), process simplification looks to reduce the manual steps required by officers either removing the step altogether or replacing it with technology/automation to support quicker processing. Such activity reduces officer time, mitigating the need to grow a service and potentially making a cost saving altogether; any cashable savings through changes made will be achieved through vacancy freezes /attrition.</p>
<p>What is the rationale for this proposal?</p>	<p>Following a Customer and Automation update to Scrutiny Commission in Spring 2024, it was recognised that the principles that underpin the concepts and actions that the customer programme is undertaking need to be publicly set out and signed up to by elected members.</p> <p>The strategy is needed to ensure council action in relation to customer service is aligned to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changing customer needs and expectations; • advancing technologies; and • the council’s financial position <p>This is in the context of population growth; demand is increasing for our services, and in line with that growth there is increased contact, contact often takes up a disproportionate amount of office time, so the more we can do to make customer journeys clearer, manage expectations about what the council can deliver and what it can’t, as well as transparency around service levels and timescales, the less pressure there will be on services, and the more satisfied customers will be.</p> <p>We know from the insights gained as part of trialling various changes in front facing services as part of the programme, and through recent informal customer service feedback across our services that we could do better to ensure we get it right for the customer.</p>

3- Evidence gathered on equality implications - Data and engagement

What evidence about potential equality impacts is already available?

This could come from research, service analysis, questionnaires, and engagement with protected characteristics groups

What equalities information or data has been gathered so far?

What does it show?

Key statistics from our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2022-25

Age: Compared with the average population of England, the population of Leicestershire is older, with a higher proportion aged 40-64 (33% in the county compared with 32.1% in England) and 65 and over (20.7% compared with 18.4% in England).

Language: 95.2% of residents have English as their main language. This is followed by Polish and Gujarati (both 0.8%), Panjabi (0.6%) and Romanian (0.4%).

Deprivation: Leicestershire cannot be considered deprived overall; the county is ranked 137th out of 152 upper tier authorities in England for Multiple Deprivation, where 1st is the most deprived. However, pockets of significant deprivation do exist in parts of the county.

It must be noted that although a large proportion of customers of the council are residents of Leicestershire county council, there are other customers that we transact with that are not necessarily residents, for example, visitors to Leicestershire coming to use our amenities or wanting to report an issue with one of the services they are using, the council also handles a lot of licensing activity and again, permits and licenses are often related to an organisation or business, who may or may not be an individual and/or resident of the county.

Council Services are not actively monitoring equalities information and data that may be collected in relation to customer service, although services capture details about the customers who are making contact, in terms of customer type, and their contact reason, this doesn't always include demographic information nor is it always actively used to make improvements. Customer information is fragmented across the local authority, due to the various systems in place to manage cases in relation to the service being provided.

	<p>We know that the profile of our customers for different services ranges considerably, particularly in terms of age and disability, this is all down to the breadth of services we provide. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in adult social care roughly 1/3 of customers make direct contact about themselves, 1/3 are family/friend/neighbour contacting on behalf of someone else, and the other 1/3 are professional organisations making contact. We do not as a standard capture the demographic of those people making contact, we will only hold demographic information on the people that are physically supported. - In School admissions, the majority of contacts are parents and carers of school age d children (so the working age population), contacting about their child; the demographic information the service will hold is in relation to the child such as age, disability, ethnicity, free school meals etc but only where the parent has opted to provide this. - In highways, customer demographic beyond type of customer is not collected as standard, for example, someone reporting a broken grit bin is unlikely to provide more indepth information about themself. What we do know is over 90% of people contacting are the general public (who may or may not be a resident of Leicestershire, as they may be reporting something whilst travelling through the county), the re maining 10% of customers are a broad range, from parish councils and the police through to skips and scaffolding companies.
<p>What engagement has been undertaken so far?</p> <p>What does it show?</p>	<p>During summer 2024 the programme team has actively made contact with recent customers to ask them about their overall customer experience with the council and what their contact channel preferences are and why, within the data collected we invited respondents to provide demographic data around their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender • Age • Ethnicity • Disability • Sexuality <p>This helped give us a better understanding around any variations between customer groups based on the service they were contacting about.</p>

3000 Customers were approached at random via text message following a contact they had recently had with one of our services, customers were from a broad range of our services, the survey was also publicised in libraries and in county hall reception as well as on the website.

Out of 316 total survey respondents, approximately 20% chose not to answer questions on demographics, those who answered the questions reported the following:



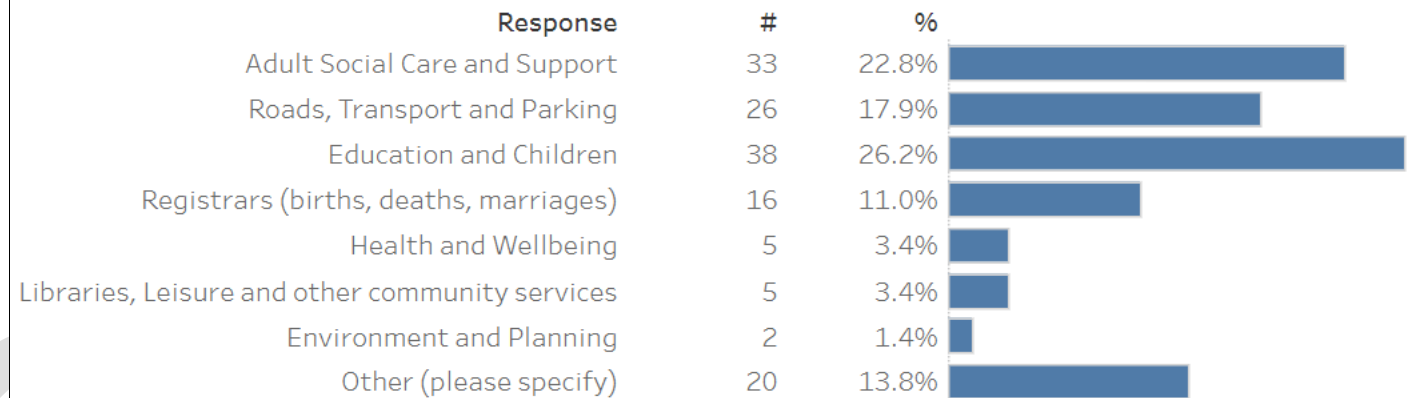
In summary the majority of respondents were:

- a Leicestershire resident (72.2%)
- female (66.4%)

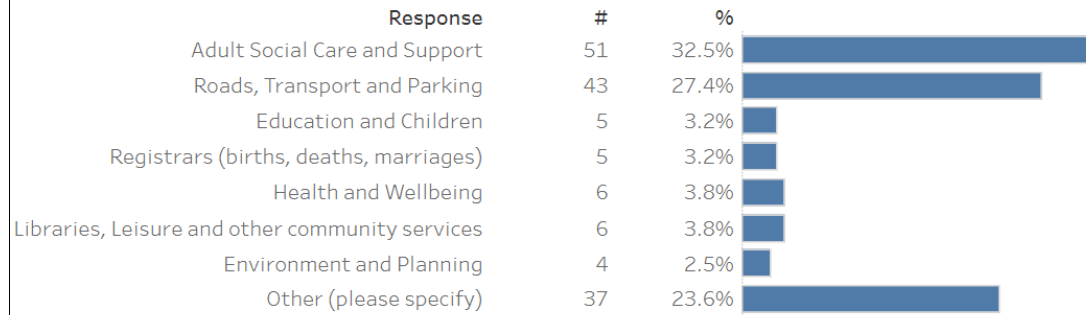
- aged between 45 and 74 (68.2%)
- did not have a long standing illness or disability (60.8%)
- white ethnicity (90.9%)
- Straight/heterosexual (91.2%)

The demographic for different services can vary greatly in terms of the age profile of a customer and also those reporting to have a disability or long term illness, there were no obvious trends in varying demographics of services in relation to gender, ethnicity or sexuality.

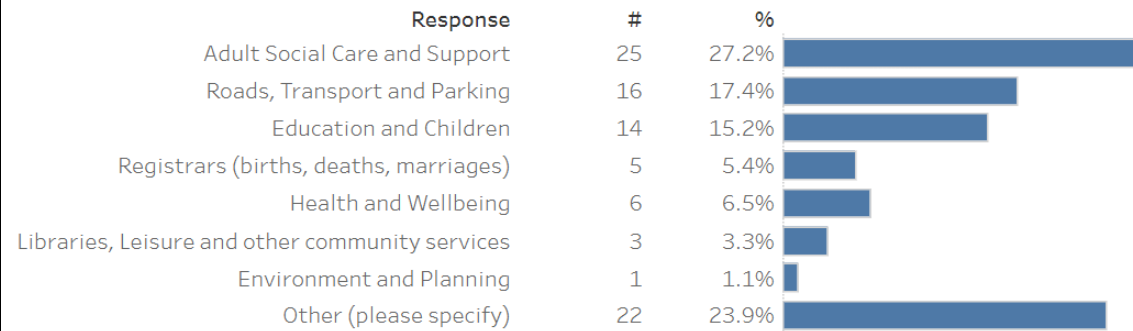
Age by service area – those reporting to be age 64 and under:



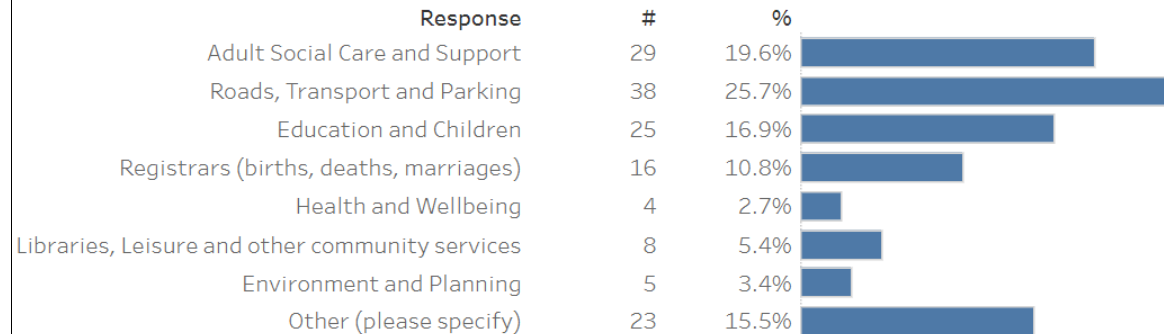
Age – those reporting to be age 65 and over:



Disability - Those reporting to have a disability or long standing illness in relation to each of the below services:



No disability –



Customer satisfaction levels by demographic group:

Over 85's reported highest level of dissatisfaction, although the total cohort of responses were significantly smaller.

Age	% reporting dissatisfaction	Total cohort	Comment – dominant service area causing dissatisfaction and volume
15-24	50%	4	Registrars (1), unspecified (1)
25-34	23%	13	n/a insignificant
35-44	55%	29	Education and Children (13)
45-54	54%	48	Adult social care (6), Education and Children (11), roads and transport (5)
55-64	54%	56	Adult Social Care (7), roads and transport (7), Other (8)
65-74	29%	66	Roads and transport (8), Other (6)
75-84	21%	24	n/a – insignificant
85 +	67%	7	Roads and transport (1), Other (3)

Similar levels of dissatisfaction between Males and Females, those who selected that they choose another term for their gender reported higher dissatisfaction although the cohort was considerably smaller.

- Female: 42% dissatisfaction (total cohort: 171)
- Male: 45% dissatisfaction (total cohort: 80)
- Use another term: 67% dissatisfaction (total cohort: 4/6)

Limited difference in satisfaction levels between ethnic groups or between those reporting to have a disability or not.

Customer contact/communication preferences by demographic group:

Age:

Respondents over the age of 75 stated that telephone (93%) and email (92%) were the most important channels of communication for them, with 63% of this group also stating that online was fairly or very important.

Those aged between 35 and 44 years of age, were most likely to regard online as fairly or very important to them when communicating with the council at 89%.

Ethnicity:

Although not statistically significant due to the sample size, 89% of non-white respondents considered the online change fairly or very important to them (all of these customers were aged 64 or below).

Disability:

79% of respondents reporting to have a disability or long term illness classed the online channel as either very important or fairly important to them.

Gender: There were no differences of significance

A small minority of customers (11 people, and 3% of respondents who answered the question) reported access to a mobile device or computer being a reason that would prevent them from going online.

The full informal customer engagement report is attached.

Formal consultation is now underway to seek views on the draft customer experience strategy, this consultation runs for 8 weeks until 10th November; findings from this consultation will be added here in due course. The questions asked in this formal consultation are directly about our proposals within the strategy, including:

1. In what role are you responding to the strategy
2. When was the last time you were in contact with the council
3. To what extent do you agree with the vision
4. To what extent do you agree with each of the principles (Each principle within the strategy is broken down into individual questions)
5. Customers are asked to expand on why they provided the response
6. What else, if anything, should we consider within our draft Customer Experience Strategy 2024-28? Do you have any views about what we could do to deliver this?

The formal consultation of the strategy has been live for 8 weeks, from 14th September until 10th November 2024. There have been multiple media releases, social media publicity, an online survey option for the duration of the consultation on the website, posters around county hall and in reception and LCC libraries, as well as targeted email communications to staff group networks including:

1. Disabled workers group
2. LGBTQ+
3. Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME)

And targeted communication to a range of voluntary and community groups including:

1. Carers network
2. District Councils
3. Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group (LECG)
4. Vistablind

5. Leicestershiregate (Traveller, gypsy and roma community group)
6. Leicestershiredeafforum
7. Police
8. NHS
9. Fire Service
10. East Midlands Ambulance Service

1748 text messages were sent to customers who had made contact with the council's Customer Service Centre (i.e. Highways, School Admissions and Adult Social Care) between mid Sep and mid Oct 2024, to help raise awareness with real customers regarding the consultation.

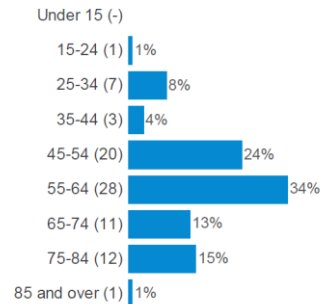
All groups have been invited to comment on the strategy using the survey link or by getting in touch with the programme team to arrange face to face or virtual briefings.

An in-person session is scheduled with LECG for 27th November 2024, although outside of the consultation period, the session will enable the team to ensure any implications from discussion are taken forward as part of strategy implementation.

Midpoint stats on the consultation as at 14/10/2024:

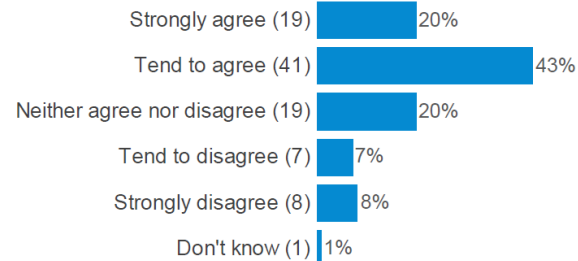
- Total of 95 respondents
- 51% Leicestershire resident, 21% family/friend of Leicestershire resident, 24% LCC employee, 2% parish or district council, 2% other
- Gender: 38% male, 62% female, 1% use another term

What was your age on your last birthday? (derived)



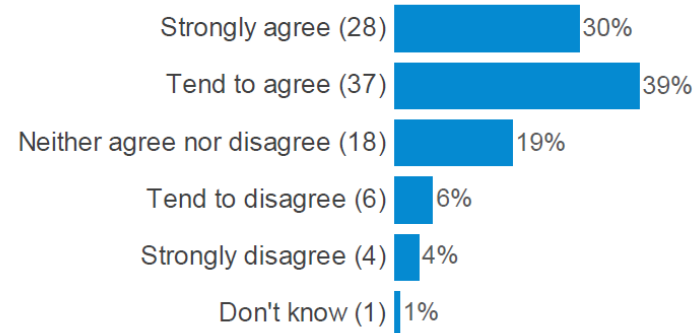
- 21% were parent/carer for a young person aged 17 or under
- 49% were carers for a person over 18 years or over
- 32% stated they had a long standing illness or disability
- 92% were of white ethnicity, 1% mixed, 6% Asian or Asian British, 1% other ethnic group
- 31% had no religion, 62% Christian, 1% hindu, 1% muslim, 4% other religion
- Sexual orientation: bi 3%, gay or lesbian 5%, heterosexual 89%, 4% use another term

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our vision?



Customer Experience Strategy Consultation

Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with our draft Customer Experience Strategy 2024-28?



Where people are less in support of the vision, its principles and the strategy overall, is primarily where people have doubt that it is possible to achieve with less money, and through their dissatisfaction of how customer service currently works.

Strong need for people to still be able to talk to people and to ensure routes are clear and in plain English.

4- Benefits, concerns and mitigating action

Please specify if any individuals or community groups who identify with any of the 'protected characteristics' may **potentially** be affected by the policy and describe any benefits and concerns including any barriers. Use this section to demonstrate how risks would be mitigated for each affected group. If a group will not be affected by the proposal please state so.

Group	What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?	What are the concerns identified and how will these affect those from the following groups?	How will the known concerns be mitigated?
-------	--	---	---

<p>Age</p>	<p>Increased and improved online offer for those customers considering the online channel as important</p> <p>For those customers that are notably older i.e. over 75s, where required, there will be a quicker response time via more traditional channels as a result of other customers directed online</p>	<p>Unable to use or access online offerings</p>	<p>Assisted digital via telephone appointments for those services with groups of customers that could be at risk of isolation, are measures that will be put in place.</p> <p>Telephone remains a channel for such groups, and customers can continue to speak with advisors at County Hall reception where needed.</p> <p>Paper by exception as part of a reasonable adjustment.</p> <p>Access to computers and internet via library provisions.</p> <p>Adult learning courses to support digital upskilling</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>Improved easy to read information and advice</p> <p>Simplified journeys</p> <p>For customers with a disability or illness that impacts their ability to use online channels, such individuals will continue to be supported via more traditional</p>	<p>Unable to use or access online offers</p>	<p>Ensure there is always a human agent that can speak to a customer who would benefit from discussing a matter with someone</p> <p>make online offers easier to use and content plain English – designed and tested with user in mind</p>

	<p>channels such as the phone line, getting through quicker as other customers are directed online</p> <p>More “accessible” routes</p>		<p>Increase confidence in using online services through publicising adult learning offers that support upskilling</p> <p>Improve breadth of services available online</p> <p>Accessible formats for all, with alternative formats available on request (e.g. braille, easy read, alternative language etc), we make the journey clear and simple for people to make such requests working with customer feedback to improve the offer</p>
Race	<p>No impact, although simplified journeys with clear plain English context will support those whose first language is not English, to navigate easier</p>	<p>Nothing of note, although customers of non-white ethnic origin deemed online channels more important to them</p>	<p>through each customer journey make explicit from the outset what translation services are available for people</p>
Sex	<p>No impact – although improved customer service standards across the organisation will promote positive behaviours</p>	<p>Although only a small cohort, there were 4/6 people (67%) of people who refer to another gender term reported a level of dissatisfaction with customer service, higher the average across those classifying as female or male.</p> <p>Awaiting additional analysis of strategy consultation feedback</p>	

Gender Reassignment	No impact – although improved customer service standards across the organisation will promote positive behaviours	Nothing of note	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No impact – although improved customer service standards across the organisation will promote positive behaviours	Not measured	
Sexual Orientation	No impact – although improved customer service standards across the organisation will promote positive behaviours	Awaiting analysis of full strategy consultation feedback	
Pregnancy and Maternity	No impact – although improved customer service standards across the organisation will promote positive behaviours	Not measured	
Religion or Belief	No impact – although improved customer service standards across the organisation will promote positive behaviours	Awaiting analysis of full strategy consultation feedback	
Armed Forces (including veterans)	No impact – although improved customer service standards across the organisation will promote positive behaviours	Not measured	

<p>People with lived care experience</p>	<p>No impact – although improved customer service standards across the organisation will promote positive behaviours</p>	<p>Awaiting analysis of full strategy consultation feedback</p>	
<p>Other groups: e.g., rural isolation, deprivation, health inequality, carers, asylum seeker and refugee communities, looked after children, deprived or disadvantaged communities</p>	<p>Community libraries across the county provide access to computers and internet for those unable to make contact via other means.</p> <p>Assisted digital via telephone appointments for those services with groups of customers that could be at risk of isolation, are measures that will be put in place.</p> <p>Telephone remains a channel for such groups.</p> <p>Council resources will be directed to supporting those genuinely unable to go online or use such services.</p>	<p>Awaiting analysis of full strategy consultation feedback</p>	<p>Encouraged use of support networks that the customer has</p>

5- Action Plan			
Produce a framework to outline how identified risks/concerns identified in section 4 will be mitigated.			
What action is planned?	Who is responsible for the action?	Timescale	Expected outcome
Build in clarity within the strategy to reflect the concerns raised	Customer programme team	November 2024	Revised strategy to address any gaps, realistic and measurable implementation plan
Draw specific links to the councils Equality Diversity and Inclusion strategy which commits itself to “accessible and fair services”	Customer programme team	November 2024	Clear alignment to the measures to support accessible communication

6- Approval Process

Departmental Equalities Group	(please post any comments from the Departmental Equalities Group here) Set out the date when the EIA was considered
Corporate Policy Team	Please set out comments from the Corporate Policy Team
Sign off by the Senior Responsible Officer for the Project.	

DRAFT