

Equality Impact Assessment Template

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a function, policy or plan by anticipating the consequences, and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

1. IDENTIFICATION OF FUNCTION, POLICY OR PLAN	
Name of function/policy/plan to be assessed	New charge for a Blue Badge following Blue Badge Reform and Blue Badge Improvement Scheme (BBIS)
Service/service area responsible	Corporate Services
Name of person carrying out the assessment and contact details	Marie Love, Policy Officer (Equalities) Extn 4052 marie.love@orkney.gov.uk
Date of assessment	02.09.11
Is the function/policy/plan new or existing? (Please indicate also if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly)	Revision of Existing Charge
2. INITIAL SCREENING	
What are the intended outcomes of the function/policy/plan?	Increase charge for a Blue Badge from £1.15 to £10.00 for new or replacement badges and £12.50 for fast tracked badges.
State <i>who</i> is, or may be affected by this function/policy/plan, and <i>how</i>	Existing and future holders of Blue Badges.
How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this function/policy/plan?	Officers from Corporate Services have involved officers from Finance and Orkney Health and Care in discussions regarding the recommendations in the report. Local consultation has not taken place as it is not proposed that current policy in respect of charging be changed. In addition, the Council had no discretion over Blue Badge Reform and subsequent additional charges. However, national consultation took place in 2010 as detailed in the next section.

Is there any existing data and/or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise.

e.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic/consultants' reports, benchmarking (see equalities resources on OIC information portal)

Benchmarking information has been sought from other local authorities. Of the 32 local authorities, 21 have moved to a £20 charge. This represents a significant increase in some local authority areas.

The consultation on "*Blue Badge Reform*" was published by the Scottish Government on 5 July 2010 and ran until 8 October 2010. The consultation document was placed on both the Consultation section and the Blue Badge section of the Scottish Government's website. As well as being issued to the Government's list of mandatory consultees, the Blue Badge team wrote to over 300 organisations, the majority of which were disability organisations.

The consultation invited comments on a number of themes, including fees. Consultees were asked if they thought it should be mandatory for all local authorities to charge a fee of £20 for every application. Slightly more respondents disagreed (249 out of 501) than agreed (226 out of 501) with this proposal. The most common reason for opposing the proposal to charge a mandatory £20 fee for applications was that most people with disabilities cannot afford this charge. In response to the question of whether there should also be a charge of £20 for replacement badges, more respondents agreed (261 out of 500) than disagreed (215 out of 500) with the proposal. More respondents were in favour of the proposal than not. For those who were not in favour of the proposal, there was a wide range of reasons for this. Whilst some respondents indicated that they thought £20 was a fair price to charge, others thought that it was not appropriate to charge for the reissue of the badge as people on benefits would not be able to afford it. Finally, consultees were invited to provide their views on whether the maximum fee should be raised to above £20. The majority of respondents opposed this proposed measure (410 out of 497) with just 68 out of 410 respondents supporting it. There was a strong negative response to this proposal; the most common response was that many Blue Badge holders cannot afford the £20 charge.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission Response to the Scottish Government Consultation on Blue Badge Reform, published by the Commission in October 2010, stated that the provision of a Blue Badge is an important aspect of promoting equality for disabled people in the face of a public transport system which is often inaccessible. It also suggested that £20 should be the absolute maximum local authorities could charge for the issuing of a badge with the further proviso that this should relate to issue, not application.

Could the function/policy have a differential impact on any of the following equality strands?	(Please provide any evidence – positive impacts/benefits, negative impacts and reasons)
1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality	No. If there was a language barrier there are procedures in place specifically intended to address this. However, there is no differential impact when it comes to the actual charge.
2. Sex: a man or a woman	Yes (negative). Statistically there are more older women than men.
3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes	No.
4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another	No. While officers are cognisant of the fact that sensitive handling of Blue Badge applications from transgender people is imperative, particularly when it comes to aspects such as the provision of a photograph and the name the person is known by and whether this can legally appear on the Badge (if the individual has not legally changed name/gender) there is no differential impact when it comes to the actual charge.
5. Pregnancy and maternity	No.
6. Age: people of different ages	Yes (negative). Statistically older people are more likely to have disabilities and therefore there is a greater probability they will require a Blue Badge.
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists)	No.
8. Caring responsibilities	Yes (negative). Parents/carers may apply for a Blue Badge on behalf of a child who has a disability. Although the Badge is in the name of the child it is the parents/carers who will pay.
9. Marriage and Civil Partnership	No.
10. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not)	Yes (negative). All applicants will be charged for their first application, renewal or lost Blue Badges.

3. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	Yes. There is likely to be a greater differential negative impact on women, older people, people with caring responsibilities and people with disabilities.
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<p>How could you minimise or remove any potential negative impacts?</p>	<p>Although negative impacts have been identified in order to minimise these as far as possible it is proposed that the Council will continue to subsidise the cost of a Blue Badge.</p> <p>The Council currently makes a charge of £1.15 for a Blue Badge. This charge was set some years ago and the actual cost to the Council of producing badges is £3.81. The Council has therefore effectively been subsidising the cost of Blue Badges.</p> <p>The introduction of the Blue Badge Improvement Service means the Council is compelled to meet the £5.52 charged by Northgate for production of a new or replacement Blue Badge as well as the £2.45 charge for a fast-track badge. In addition to these charges there will be costs to the Council for administering the new scheme. It is anticipated that total costs, including charges and administration costs, will be £10.56 for a badge or replacement and £13.01 for a fast-track badge.</p> <p>The reality is that, in the current times of financial constraint, the Council has a legal duty to continue to provide its core statutory services while moving onto a more secure financial footing and does not therefore have the resources to continue to provide the existing level of subsidisation for the costs of Blue Badges. However, it is proposed that the Blue Badge charge continues to be subsidised, in line with current policy, to mitigate the negative impacts as far as is considered possible in the current financial climate.</p> <p>As can be seen from the benchmarking information the proposed charge in Orkney is significantly less than those in the majority of local authority areas. Most Blue Badges last for three years so the cost is effectively £3.33 per year.</p>
<p>Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>

<p>4. CONCLUSIONS AND PLANNED ACTION</p>	
<p>Is further work required?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>What action is to be taken?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Who will undertake it?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>When will it be done?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>How will it be monitored? (e.g. through service plans)</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Signature *M. Love*

Date 05.09.11

Name MARIE LOVE
(BLOCK CAPITALS)

Please sign and date this form, keep one copy and send a copy to Corporate and Community Strategy. It should also be emailed to Corporate and Community Strategy.

