

# 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.

<b>1. IDENTIFICATION OF FUNCTION, POLICY OR PLAN</b>	
<b>Name of function/policy/plan to be assessed</b>	Introduction of postal votes in all the outer islands of Westray; Sanday; Stronsay; Flotta; Hoy & Walls; Rousay, Egilsay, Wyre and Gairsay; Eday and Shapinsay.
Service/service area responsible	Corporate Services
Name of person carrying out the assessment and contact details	Fiona Ratter, Election Manager <a href="mailto:fiona.ratter@orkney.gov.uk">fiona.ratter@orkney.gov.uk</a>
Date of assessment	31 October 2011
Is the function/policy/plan new or existing? (Please indicate also if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly)	Existing
<b>2. INITIAL SCREENING</b>	
What are the intended outcomes of the function/policy/plan?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce the cost of running the election by reducing the number of polling stations through the planned extension of postal voting to identified island districts.</li> <li>To remove the need to use schools as polling stations thereby avoiding the need to disrupt pupil attendance.</li> </ol>
State <b>who</b> is, or may be affected by this function/policy/plan, and <b>how</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voting public, disrupted school pupils and staff.</li> <li>Voting public, identified Community Councils, disrupted school pupils and staff</li> </ol>

<p>How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this function/policy/plan?</p>	<p>Consultation on the use of postal votes for all outer islands was advertised in the local press and placed on the Council website at the beginning of October 2011. All the relevant outer Island Community Councils were written to for their comments. The results of the Consultation are attached to the report.</p> <p>The focus is on a reduction in overheads and administration rather than any reduction in service to the voter. It can be argued that the option to vote in post improves accessibility to the electoral process by removing the need to appear in person at a polling station. However, this cannot be assumed to be true in each individual case. This being the case, in addition to the option of voting by post, voters with particular needs can elect to nominate a proxy, or, for those who do not wish to vote by post arrangements will be made to allow voters who wish to vote in person to cast their vote at a nominated polling station on the mainland of Orkney.</p>
<p>Is there any existing data and/or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise.</p> <p>e.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic/consultants' reports, benchmarking (see equalities resources on OIC information portal)</p>	<p>Yes. The Electoral Commission has produced guidance for Returning Officers and their staff in respect of access to voting for vulnerable groups. In addition, the performance standards for Returning Officers detail the requirements in respect of equalities issues. This guidance has been adhered to.</p> <p>Postal voting only has already been successfully carried out in North Ronaldsay, Papa Westray and Graemsay.</p>
<p>Could the function/policy have a differential impact on any of the following equality strands?</p>	<p>(Please provide any evidence – positive impacts/benefits, negative impacts and reasons)</p>
<p>1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>2. Sex: a man or a woman</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>5. Pregnancy and maternity</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>6. Age: people of different ages</p>	<p>Yes</p>

7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists)	No
8. Caring responsibilities	Yes
9. Marriage and Civil Partnership	No
10. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not)	Yes

### 3. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	Yes. It is felt that the impact of introducing postal votes is a positive step in terms of meeting the needs of protected groups. By voting at home the requirement to travel to and access a polling station is removed. In addition, by removing the need to use schools where the pupil day has been disrupted, the need to protect pupil education is secured.
How could you minimise or remove any potential negative impacts?	Where there may be problems regarding accessing the printed materials which accompany a postal vote it is felt the impact can be managed through access to a proxy, or, for those who wish to make use of a polling station, arrangements will be made to have box for the polling district available at another polling station on the mainland of Orkney. The various options available, along with the option of having something in larger print, will be publicised well before the Election.
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	Yes. Postal voting has been in operation for some time and the number of voters taking up the option of a postal vote is increasing.

### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND PLANNED ACTION

Is further work required?	Yes. Findings from the consultation will now be presented to Policy and Resources Committee on 22 November 2011 to be ratified at Full Council on 6 December 2011.
What action is to be taken?	If agreed at Policy & Resources Committee and thereafter at Full Council, letters will be sent out to all those involved in the islands from the Electoral Registration Office with regards to providing them with the appropriate details for a postal vote.
Who will undertake it?	The Election Manager in consultation with the Electoral Registration Office, Kirkwall.
When will it be done?	By end December 2011.

How will it be monitored? (e.g. through service plans)	Reports to the Election Project Board and Policy and Resources Committee and any complaint are monitored and dealt with.
--	--

Signature

Date 31.10.11

Name FIONA RATTER  
(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.**