




Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer or www.somerset.gov.uk/impactassessment

Organisation prepared for (mark as appropriate)	 Somerset Council	x	 NHS Somerset	 NHS Somerset NHS Foundation Trust	
Version	2	Date Completed		31/10/2024	
Description of what is being impact assessed- Waste Services					
<p>Like many other councils, Somerset Council is facing an extremely challenging financial position, with the cost of delivering services increasing significantly faster than the income received and the demand for public sector services, such as social care, rising.</p> <p>The Council aims to reduce its pay-bill of approximately £40 million to help close the 2025/26 budget gap while minimizing the need for compulsory redundancies. This impact assessment will consider the equality impacts of the workforce reduction within Waste Services to assist the Council in reducing its pay-bill.</p> <p>Initial structures proposed by Service Directors were considered by the Design Authority Panel and were subject to further review. At the formation of Somerset Council, the service had a staffing level of 23 FTE. Through the voluntary redundancy process accompanying the restructure, headcount has been reduced to 18, with existing Service staff costs at £837K for salaries. Further proposed headcount reductions through the restructure will reduce the headcount by 5 (28%) to 13 FTE, bringing the salary budget down to £584K per year. The reduction in headcount will yield a total budget saving for the service of around 0.45%.</p> <p>The service operates with a gross expenditure of £58 million per year, delivering contracted Waste Collection Services, Recycling Centre Provision, and Waste Treatment (including garden, food, and residual waste). Additionally, it provides Community Engagement Services, all within complex, interdependent, and evolving legislative and contractual frameworks.</p> <p>The services provided are highly visible and impacts every household within the county. Given the diversity of Somerset residents, the service is designed to ensure that processes and procedures are in place to address a range of situations, including those involving protected characteristics, particularly the elderly, individuals with disabilities, people suffering from ill-health, and those from the broadest spectrum socio-economic backgrounds and ranges of behaviours that can bring. While the majority of customer</p>					

contacts the service receives are handled through automated processes and resolved at the first point of contact, there are a range of requests that require manual intervention and specialist service knowledge.

Typical service interventions with equalities characteristics are:

- The service provides clinical waste collections for households. Where customers require regular clinical collections, the service assessing each case individually to determine the appropriate collection frequency and containers. It also advises on the disposal of offensive hygiene waste, some of which can be disposed of with regular domestic rubbish. (The existing requirement for processing with Clinical waste requests is five working days)
- Every household in the county has access to waste collections. However, due to ill-health or mental illness and those with additional learning difficulties, some individuals may lose track of their waste collection schedules, leading to waste accumulation in their homes. The service collaborates with Social Services, Housing Associations, and Environmental Health to address these issues and on occasions facilitates special collections and other arrangements to alleviate these problems. The service would typically deal with issues as a General Enquiry where we have 10 Working Days to respond, but typically a resolution may take longer depending on the complexity of the issue.
- Elderly, infirm, pregnant, or ill individuals may struggle to physically access the waste collection service. In such cases, coordination between the Service and contractors is necessary to ensure collections can occur, considering the location and manner in which the waste is presented. Usually these requests are automated and be processed by the following collection day unless a site specific assessment is required and alternative timeframe agreed with the customer.
- Working with Planning Teams and developers to ensure waste collection services can access households, making sure collections are made from the property boundaries and are easily accessible.
- Ensuring that sufficient waste collection capacity is available for those who require it through illness or infirmity. The service aims to process all additional capacity requests within 5 Working Days
- Educating individuals who struggle to follow service rules, particularly in economically deprived areas and those with additional learning difficulties, as well as, resolving location specific waste collection issues. The service would typically deal with issues as a General Enquiry where we have 10 Working Days to respond, but typically a resolution may take longer depending on the complexity of the issue.

With a reduced headcount, there is a risk that Waste Service interventions may exceed service level agreements, leading to longer response times for customer requests. Customer demand for the service fluctuates due to changes in the service itself and external factors beyond our control, such as weather, flooding, traffic and staff illness, which can affect service provision and our ability to process requests. It is difficult to quantify the exact impact due to these variables combined with the reduced capacity within the service to process customer requests, during periods of increased demand, service level agreements may have to be increased, with priority maintained for those individuals exhibiting protected characteristics.

The service receives approximately 15,000 contact requests annually from the public that are not directly related to transactional matters. These requests can range from contractor complaints and council complaints to waste nuisance issues. Due to the broad scope of the service, the variety of non-standard requests is extensive and varies in urgency.

Currently, these types of requests are triaged, with urgent matters being addressed as quickly as possible. Given the anticipated demand on the service is likely to remain similar, and with a reduced headcount, it is more probable that non-urgent tasks will experience delays, increasing the likelihood of failure demand. Additionally, it is not always clear if the contact is made by an individual with a protected characteristic.

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#), should be detailed here

Somerset Council Waste Services provides assisted collections to people who are not able to access the kerbside waste collection service, currently the service provides assisted collections to around 8,000 individual households across Somerset. Every year the Service provides over 7,000 individual clinical waste collections to households throughout Somerset, these collections are to assist people who are receiving self-administered care at home and who are receiving health care at home.

Age

An estimated 125,000 people over the age of 65 live in Somerset, and approximately 9,000 of them have dementia. These individuals may require additional support or specific waste collection arrangements to ensure their household waste is collected.

Disability

Approximately 18.8% of Somerset's 100,000 residents have their day-to-day activities limited due to a disability or long-term health issue. These individuals meet the definition of disability under the Equality Act. In some cases, they may require additional support or specific waste collection arrangements to ensure their household waste is collected.

Mental Health

Just over 4,600 people in Somerset have been diagnosed with a mental health condition. Depending on the nature and extent of their condition, some may struggle with managing household waste and may require tailored assistance from the service to facilitate collections and address any issues.

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups and what have they told you? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

No Consultation undertaken, as unable to do so within the time frame set.

Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elderly people are more likely to require assisted collections, some of which require assessment to ensure that they suitable and signposted to collection operations. A reduction in headcount may mean that these assessments are delayed/unfulfilled Elderly people are more likely to require clinical waste assessment and advice on disposal of offensive/hygiene waste. A reduction in headcount may mean that these requests for assessment are delayed. Elderly people may not be able to adequately follow service rules and may require special assistance, arrangements or further explanation, these interventions may be delayed. 	☒	☐	☐

Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some residents with disabilities may be unable to follow the service rules and waste collection schedules, requiring service intervention to resolve that may be delayed or unfulfilled. • Some residents with disabilities are more likely to require assisted collections, some of which require assessment to ensure that they suitable and signposted to collection operations. A reduction in headcount may mean that these assessments are delayed. • Some residents with disabilities are more likely to require clinical waste assessment and advice on disposal of offensive/hygiene waste. A reduction in headcount may mean that these assessments are delayed 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is expected to be no disproportionate affect to those exhibiting this characteristic. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is expected to be no disproportionate effect to those exhibiting this characteristic. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those residents who are pregnant are more likely to require assisted collections, some of which require assessment to ensure that they suitable and signposted to collection operations. A reduction in headcount may mean that these inspections are delayed. • Those residents who are pregnant are more likely to require clinical waste assessment. A reduction in headcount may mean that these requests are delayed 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Race and ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is expected to be no disproportionate effect to those exhibiting this characteristic. 	☐	☒	☐
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is expected to be no disproportionate effect to those exhibiting this characteristic. 	☐	☒	☐
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is expected to be no disproportionate effect to those exhibiting this characteristic. 	☐	☒	☐
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is expected to be no disproportionate effect to those exhibiting this characteristic. 	☐	☒	☐
Armed Forces (including serving personnel, families and veterans)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is expected to be no disproportionate effect to those exhibiting this characteristic. 	☐	☒	☐
Other, e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is the view of the service that those high density economically deprived areas suffer from greater levels of waste accumulation/waste nuisance issues. Adequate service rectification and education within these areas will be challenging to fulfil. 	☒	☐	☐

Negative outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
During periods when the service fails to meet service level agreements, incoming requests should be triaged to prioritise vulnerable individuals. This could include protected characteristics where this is relevant.	01/04/2025	M Cowdell	Ongoing Review	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide training for remaining staff to recognise and prioritise the needs of individuals with protected characteristics.	01/04/2025	M Cowdell	Training Register	<input type="checkbox"/>
To review after a six-month period following the implementation of the new structure within the service to evaluate its effectiveness and identify any functional issues that need to be addressed.	01/10/2025	M Cowdell	Report	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>

If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

Some incoming requests may not clearly indicate whether customers have protected characteristics. Consequently, certain individuals might not be identified during the triage process, potentially causing delays in addressing their requests or concerns.

Completed by:	M.Cowdell
Date	06/01/2025
Signed off by:	Chris Hall
Date	10/01/2025
Equality Lead sign off name:	Tom Rutland
Equality Lead sign off date:	06/01/2025
To be reviewed by: (officer name)	M.Cowdell
Review date:	01/08/2025