

Equality Impact Assessment – Results

December 2020

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT - RESULTS

Title of Policy	Scotland's Digital Strategy for Planning
Summary of aims and desired outcomes of Policy	The strategy sets out proposals to deliver a digital transformation of Scotland's planning system, embracing the opportunities new digital technologies and data present. The intention of this programme is for Scotland to have a world leading digital planning system that helps connect people with their places to deliver a prosperous, green and fair country.
Directorate: Division: team	DLGC: PAD: Digital Planning

Executive summary

The public sector equality duty requires the Scottish Government to assess the impact of applying a proposed new or revised policy or practice. Equality legislation covers the protected characteristics of: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, sex, sexual orientation and religion and belief.

The Equality Act 2010 harmonised existing equality legislation and includes a public sector duty ('the Duty') which requires public authorities to pay due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other prohibited conduct;
- Advance equality of opportunity; and
- Foster good relations between different groups - by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has considered the potential impacts of the digital transformation of Scotland's planning system on each of the protected characteristics. Potential impacts on people across the protected characteristics are set out under Key Findings.

Background

A package of work to transform Scotland's planning system is underway, combining far-reaching policy reform and legislative change, a renewed focus on place-based planning and the digitalisation of planning. Together these measures will deliver a forward- looking planning system that works for everyone.

Scotland's Digital Strategy for Planning, defines a long- term strategic direction for how Scotland's planning system will digitally transform, embracing the opportunities new digital technologies and data present. It sets out what we intend to deliver, why this is needed and the benefits this transformation will bring. It evidences how we can be confident these changes will produce real improvements by targeting the things that matter most to those involved in planning. It lays the foundation for a forthcoming digital transformation programme that will start to implement the actions contained in the Strategy.

The Scope of the EQIA

In order to determine the potential equality impact of the proposals the Government undertook a review of equality issues using the Government's Equality Evidence Finder alongside evidence from user research conducted over the previous 12 months.

Key Findings

The EQIA determined that the proposed digital transformation of the planning system is unlikely to negatively impact on any of the protected characteristics. Increased use of online platforms should improve the efficiency of the system, increase information and options available to users and increase overall engagement with the planning service. It is anticipated that move to a more digitised service will assist a wider range of users to interact with the systems. In terms of protected characteristics, it may be of particular benefit to those impacted by age and disability who may have difficulty with the current system.

The EQIA also recognised a risk that the digital systems, though beneficial to the great majority, may not be accessible by everyone. The protected characteristics of age and disability may be impacted when this scenario occurs. Evidence exists to suggest that older people are less likely to use the internet and digital devices than younger people, and when they do they can sometimes be less confident meaning they don't always benefit to the same degree. However, evidence is emerging that older

people have grown more familiar with some elements of technology in recent years. Internet usage in that demographic is rising with recent figures showing 66% of over 60s use the internet compared to only 29% in 2007. Paper based systems are not being completely removed so the intention is that those citizens who are not comfortable with IT systems will not be left behind

Recommendations and Conclusion

The EQIA has shown that Scotland's Digital Strategy for Planning is unlikely to have a significant impact on the majority of the protected characteristics. Where it does have an impact, it is most likely to be positive and in relation to the protected characteristics of Age and Disability. The digital transformation that is proposed has the potential to improve access to the planning system to those who have difficulties engaging with it through existing methods.

Negative impacts have been assessed as being limited to the protected characteristics of age and disability. The impact here is the risk that some citizens affected by age or disability may be unable to access the improvements available via the digitised service. These risks will be mitigated by efforts to make the new service as accessible as it can be. It is also important to note that the planning system will continue to value non-digital interactions for those who are more comfortable using paper-based systems. This will ensure that such users will not be left behind by digitisation.



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