

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

The separate EIA guidance notes outline what should be included for each section. Please read them before you begin. If you have any queries, contact your Corporate Equality Group rep, or the Engagement Team on 643 2828.

1. Author, service area, date

Joanne Macgregor, Law & Governance 17/10/16

2. Who else has been involved in writing this EIA?

Judith Dawson, Law & Governance

3. What proposal is this EIA assessing?

The accommodation at Age UK Centre, Park Road, Whitley Bay is no longer available to use as a polling place, and therefore it has been necessary to look for an alternative facility. It is proposed to relocate the polling place to Livingstone Hall, Whitley Bay Baptist Church, Park Parade, Whitley Bay; it is located in the north of the polling district, near to the current polling place.

4. What is the purpose of your proposal and what is it expected to achieve?

As detailed above a polling place in Whitley Bay Ward is no longer available and therefore an alternative venue has been sought. The Authority must seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances, and to ensure that the polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled. When considering the designation of a polling place, the Authority must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons. If it is necessary to use a place where the access is not ideal then every reasonable adjustment must be undertaken to provide access for electors.

The building has been viewed and assessed for suitability, and the following noted:

- The external entrance has a lightly sloping path from the public pathway towards the lobby

- Entrance doors from outside and into the main hall are either double doors or wider than a standard door, which can easily accommodate a wheelchair, motorised chair, a person using sticks or crutches or a child’s pushchair. As with all stations, doors will be held open wherever possible to assist all electors to gain entry to the station.
- The flooring from the front door through to the main hall (where the polling station(s) will be located) is continuous with minimum door threshes in place required for fire doors.
- The toilet facilities provided for polling staff on the day are on the same floor level and include an accessible toilet.
- The venue, including its entrance, has been assessed using the Electoral Commission’s evaluation form and polling station standards.
- There is on-street parking available at the entrance to the hall, which would be free to blue badge holders
- There is no requirement to make reasonable adjustments to make the hall more accessible for electors, the hall is a public building that has made recent improvements to ensure the facility is accessible to all in the community.

5. Is there any relevance to the aims of the public sector equality duty? *Write your answers in the table*

Aim	Yes, No, or N/A	Details if ‘yes’
Eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment	N/A	
Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not	Yes	To provide voting facilities for eligible electors, and where access is not ideal to make every reasonable adjustment to provide access for electors.
Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not	Yes	People who share a protected characteristic and those who do not would be attending the same polling station.

6. Analysis by characteristic *Write your answers in the table*

Protected characteristic	Potential positive or negative impact?	Explanation and evidence
Age	Positive	Improve accessibility of polling stations – see section 4
Disability	Positive	Improve accessibility of polling stations – see section 4
Gender	N/A	
Gender reassignment	N/A	
Marriage and civil partnership status	N/A	
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive	Improve accessibility of polling stations – see section 4
Race	N/A	
Religion or belief	Positive	Whilst the hall is attached to and run by the Baptist Church next door, it is a community building used by the whole community.
Sexual orientation	N/A	

7. Have you carried out any engagement in relation to this proposal? If so, what?

Ward Members in the affected ward and the Elected Mayor have been consulted on the Returning Officer's proposal on the alternative polling places and all are supportive of the venue identified.

8. Is there any information you don't have that you need to find?

No

9. What actions are already in place, or will be taken, to remove or reduce potential negative impacts? (add more lines to the table if you need to) *Write your answers in the table*

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Writing to all affected electors informing them of the change and new	Judith Dawson	Distributed December 2016

arrangements and offering a postal vote if they would prefer		
Poll Cards for station electors to have new station clearly marked	Judith Dawson	Distributed March 2017

10. Are there any potential negative impacts that cannot be removed or reduced? If so, why is this?

A lack of suitable alternative venues for polling stations.

11. Based on your conclusions from this assessment, what are your next steps?

The next step will be to monitor whether the proposed station works effectively as a polling place. This cannot be fully assessed until there is an election in progress. An assessment will be made during the day of the election to ensure it is accessible by all.

12. How will the impact of this proposal be monitored after it is introduced?

The station will be inspected prior to its use, the officer in charge of the station will be trained to identify and resolve any issues and a Station Inspector will be appointed to review the use of the station during the day of the election. We will also ask for station users' feedback as they visit.

13. When will this EIA be reviewed?

- Once the venue has been approved by Council, the Senior Station Inspector will carry out a further assessment.
- Once the May 2017 elections have concluded, feedback from polling station staff, the Area Station Inspector and electors will be collated. This information will be used to update the EIA in June 2017.