Leading Kind

Equality impact aide-mémoire

PROMPT QUESTIONS FOR POLICY AND PROCEDURAL CHANGE

Thinking about the equality impact of a decision helps you make the right decision for people and for your organisation. Getting it wrong can harm people's health and wellbeing and stop them reaching their potential. It can also damage your reputation and cost time and money to put right.

These questions help you think about how a change might affect people whose backgrounds and experiences differ from yours: staff, customers, members, service users, patients, students and the public. Use this document to record your early thinking and your sources of evidence, such as feedback, complaints, monitoring data, research and evaluations of previous work.

01 About the change

Start by setting out what is changing, why, and who it will affect. You can use the space below or your own template.

What is the purpose or aim of the policy or procedural change?

Describe what is happening.

Which strategic aim or KPI will the change support?

Describe why the change is being made.

Who will the change affect?

List the groups, for example staff, volunteers, customers, members, service users, patients, students, contractors or the public.

02 Protected characteristics

These are the characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. For each one, ask whether the change will affect people differently, how you know, and whether you need to adjust your plans.

Will the change affect people of different ages differently?

How do you know?
Look at the age profile of your staff and the people you serve, and at any outcome or satisfaction data broken down by age.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?
If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF	A job advert asks for a set number of years' experience, which can exclude younger applicants who have the skills.
CUSTOMERS	Moving a service online only, which can disadvantage older customers who are less confident using digital tools.
MEMBERS	Age limits on membership categories or benefits that you cannot justify.

Will the change affect disabled people differently?

How do you know?
Check disability data, reasonable adjustment records, complaints and feedback, and ask disabled staff and users directly.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?
If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF	Moving a team to a building or floor without step-free access.
PATIENTS	Making appointment booking phone only, which excludes some Deaf patients and people with speech impairments.
CUSTOMERS	Launching a website, app or self-service kiosk that does not work with screen readers.
STUDENTS	Changing to timed online assessments without checking how agreed adjustments will still apply.

Will the change affect people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment differently?

How do you know?

Data here is often limited. Use feedback from staff networks, user groups and relevant research.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?

If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

ALL	Does your data collection keep information confidential and allow name changes and updates to sex markers for people with a Gender Recognition Certificate? Could an information request or activity 'out' someone?
STAFF AND STUDENTS	Icebreakers that ask people to share childhood photographs can stop people with trans histories, and people who are care experienced, from taking part.
SERVICE USERS	Letters or records that show a previous name to staff or third parties who do not need to see it.

Will the change affect people differently because they are married or in a civil partnership?

How do you know?

This characteristic is protected in employment only. Review HR policies and benefits.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?

If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF	Benefits such as death in service payments, travel or healthcare cover that are offered to spouses but not to civil partners.
STAFF	Assumptions about who will relocate or change working hours based on marital status.

Will the change affect people who are pregnant or on maternity leave differently?

How do you know?

Look at HR data on leave and returners, customer and patient feedback, and complaints.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?

If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF	Bonus, promotion or performance criteria that count maternity leave or pregnancy-related sickness as absence.
CUSTOMERS	No suitable space for breastfeeding, or asking a customer to stop breastfeeding or leave.
STUDENTS	Attendance rules that make no allowance for antenatal appointments or pregnancy-related illness.

Will the change affect people of different nationalities, or people new to the UK, differently?

How do you know?

Check nationality data where you hold it, feedback from international staff and users, and complaints.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?

If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

ALL	Have you checked that your communications can be understood by people who do not share the cultural references and knowledge of people who grew up in the UK?
CUSTOMERS	Identity checks that only accept UK documents when others would do.
STAFF	Right to work checks applied only to people who 'seem' to be from overseas, rather than to everyone.

Will the change affect people from ethnic minority backgrounds differently?

How do you know?

Look at ethnicity monitoring data, outcome gaps, complaints and published research.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?

If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF	Asking colleagues with personal experience of racism to educate others, often unpaid and in their own time, risks exploiting their emotional labour.
STAFF AND STUDENTS	Appearance rules that ban hairstyles such as braids, locs or afros.
PATIENTS	Using equipment or assessments that have not been tested across skin tones. Pulse oximeters, for example, can be less accurate on darker skin.
MEMBERS	Recruiting to boards or committees only through existing networks.

Will the change affect people of different faiths and religions differently?

How do you know?

Use religion or belief monitoring data, feedback from faith networks, and a calendar of religious festivals.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?

If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF AND MEMBERS	Holding regular meetings on a particular day, or a large event on a day of religious celebration, can exclude people who practise their religion.
CUSTOMERS	Catering or products with no options for religious dietary requirements.
PATIENTS	Not giving patients the option to ask for a clinician of the same sex for intimate examinations.

Will the change affect people with protected beliefs differently?

How do you know?
Protected beliefs include religious beliefs and philosophical beliefs such as ethical veganism and the belief that sex is immutable. Lack of belief is also protected.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?
If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF	Requiring, or strongly encouraging, pronouns in email signatures could have a negative impact on people who believe that sex is immutable.
STAFF	Using hand sanitiser that has been tested on animals could adversely affect ethical vegans.
MEMBERS	Codes of conduct that penalise beliefs expressed lawfully and respectfully.

Will the change affect men and women differently?

How do you know?
Look at data broken down by sex, pay gap data, and research on how the issue affects men and women.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?
If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF	A requirement for a set number of years' experience could exclude women, who are more likely to have career breaks for caring. Would the absence of PPE in smaller sizes adversely affect women? Would investment in a women-only leadership programme adversely affect men?
SERVICE USERS	Decisions about single-sex spaces and services should follow current law and guidance.
CUSTOMERS	Products or equipment designed around the average male body.
ALL	Is there a dress code or uniform that is sex specific without good reason? This can also affect people who are gender non-conforming.

Will the change affect people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual differently?

How do you know?
Use sexual orientation monitoring data, staff network feedback and user surveys.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?
If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF	A shared parental leave policy that assumes families are led by opposite-sex couples would disadvantage staff in same-sex relationships.
MEMBERS AND CUSTOMERS	Joint or family membership forms that only allow for a 'husband and wife' or 'mother and father'.
PATIENTS	Forms and conversations that assume a patient's partner is of the opposite sex.

03 Wider factors

These are not protected characteristics, but they affect who can take part and are often closely linked to them. Evidence shows they have a real effect on outcomes, so they are worth checking.

Will the change affect people who do not have English as a first language (including BSL users) differently?

How do you know?

Check language needs recorded on your systems and the demand for interpreters and translations.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?

If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

ALL	Do timetables, appointments and meetings allow enough time to book interpreters?
PATIENTS	Relying on family members, including children, to interpret.
CUSTOMERS	Important information such as terms, prices or safety notices provided only in English.

Will the change affect people who live in rural areas differently?

How do you know?

Look at postcode data for your staff and users.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?

If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

ALL	Would a change to timetables or opening hours stop people getting home safely by public transport?
CUSTOMERS	Closing local branches or moving services to a single city-centre site.

Will the change affect people who live in areas of economic disadvantage differently?

How do you know?

Use local deprivation data, such as the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, or sector data such as POLAR for student participation.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?

If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

ALL	Would a requirement to pay an application fee or pay expenses up front adversely affect people who do not have savings or financial support?
MEMBERS	A rise in membership fees with no reduced rate or payment plan.
CUSTOMERS	Offering the best prices only to people who pay by direct debit or online.

Will the change affect carers differently?

How do you know?
Check whether you record caring responsibilities, and look at requests for flexible working.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?
If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF	Changing working hours or start times so they clash with school or care drop-offs.
SERVICE USERS	Offering appointments only at times that are hard for people who care for others.

Will the change affect people who are care experienced differently?

How do you know?
Few organisations hold this data. Use research and feedback from people with lived experience.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?
If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF AND STUDENTS	Course work or icebreakers that ask people to share information about family, which reinforce ideas of traditional family set-ups.
CUSTOMERS	Requiring a parent or family guarantor, or family contact details, with no alternative.

Will the change affect people who rely on public transport differently?

How do you know?
Check travel surveys, or map your sites against local transport routes and times.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?
If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF AND STUDENTS	Arranging meetings or work placements in places that cannot be reached by public transport, without offering an alternative.
PATIENTS	Moving a clinic to an out-of-town site with a limited bus service.

Will the change affect people who do not have reliable or affordable internet access, or a suitable device, differently?

How do you know?
Look at digital inclusion research, and ask how people currently contact you.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?
If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

ALL	Creating video content that needs a fast internet connection to download or stream.
MEMBERS AND CUSTOMERS	Making booking, payment or membership cards available through an app only.

Will the change affect people who do not work a traditional working pattern differently?

How do you know?

Check contract types, shift patterns and part-time working across your workforce.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?

If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF	Scheduling development or networking opportunities in school holidays, which disadvantages people on term-time contracts.
STAFF	Holding all training and briefings during office hours, which excludes night and weekend shift workers.

Will the change affect people who have experience of the criminal justice system differently?

How do you know?

Review your recruitment, vetting and admissions rules against the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the rules on spent convictions.

Do you need to change your policy or procedure?

If so, note what you will change and why.

FOR EXAMPLE

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS	Would a conviction for a driving offence stop someone pursuing a role with safeguarding duties, when it has no bearing on the risk?
MEMBERS AND CUSTOMERS	Blanket bans on anyone with a criminal record, when only certain offences are relevant.

04 Bringing it together

Once you have worked through the questions, step back and look at the whole picture.

INTERSECTIONS

Have you considered how characteristics combine, and the differences within groups? For example, the impact on women from ethnic minority backgrounds, or on gay disabled people.

CONNECTIONS

Have you considered how protected characteristics affect other areas of inclusion? For example, the links between race, immigration status, poverty, disability and care experience.

GOOD RELATIONS

Will the change help or hinder your organisation's ability to foster good relations? For example, how you support people to work together when they hold different views or have different experiences.

JUSTIFICATION

If some disadvantage cannot be avoided, can you explain the legitimate aim behind the change and why it is a proportionate way of achieving it? What will you do to reduce the impact, and how will you explain the decision?

MEASURING IMPACT

What measures will you put in place to check the impact of the change once it is in place, and when will you review it?

05 Your record

Keep a short record of your thinking. It shows how you reached your decision and gives you a baseline for review.

Decision or change	
Completed by	
Date	
Sources of evidence used	
Main impacts identified	
Actions and mitigations	
Date of review	

If your organisation is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty, a record like this helps show that you have paid due regard to the duty. It is good practice for every organisation.