

February 2010



Equality Impact Assessment

Budget Consultation

Bedfordshire Police Authority seeks the views of the public before setting the annual budget of the county's police, including the contribution from local residents. In this document we consider the extent to which our budget consultation process has any adverse impact on different groups of people.

Available in large print

Stage 1 – Defining the Scope of the Assessment

This section asks you to think about initial planning and risk assessment to make sure that the basic requirements are in place to carry out an equality impact assessment that can improve the way a policy, service, plan or function is delivered.

Setting up – Responsibilities

Carrying out the Assessment
Please state if any external partners/stakeholders are involved in writing, reviewing or approving the equality impact assessment
Whilst this is an assessment of an Authority process, Bedfordshire Police are a key stakeholder. The force produces detailed proposals for different levels of precept change that also inform the Authority's budget decision taken in February of each year. The force have the primary responsibility for the submitting budget proposals and planning resource allocation and have agreed to equality impact assess these processes.
Policy, service, plan or function being assessed
Budget Consultation
Lead Member/Officer carrying out the assessment
Name, title, email and telephone number
Andrew Lane, Policy and Project Officer, andrew.lane@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk , 01234 842208
Others to be involved in the process
Other officers and external partners
Budget Consultation EIA Working Group Bedfordshire and Luton Chamber of Commerce Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel EIA training, Bedfordshire Police Authority

Defining the scope of the Assessment / Carrying out an initial risk assessment

What do you think are the main issues relating to equality (ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, gender reassignment, marital/civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, socio-economic disadvantage) within your policy, service, plan or function?

In your response please consider:

- Any impact on the diverse needs of communities in Bedfordshire
- Whether there are barriers to delivering a policy, service, plan or function in terms of equality / diversity either in the aim of the policy or in the way it is delivered
- Whether there are any improvements that can be made and how?
- How you have involved other stakeholders (internal and external) in the process of developing the policy
- What other stakeholders (internal and external) have said about the policy, service, plan or function that is being developed?

A Budget Consultation EIA Working Group met and discussed:

How are the public engaged and consulted on the budget?

Which individuals and groups are included or excluded from consultation processes?

Proportionate research then tested the hypothesis that our budget consultation methods should be further developed to better reach women, younger people, specific BME communities (as identified), people with specific disabilities (as identified) and specific socio-economic groups (as identified).

Based on the evidence available what is the proposed Impact Assessment Level (high, medium, low) of the policy, service, plan or function?

High – requires a detailed and thorough process with significant external involvement

Medium – requires a reasonably robust process with some degree of external involvement

Low – requires some evidence to confirm that it is in line with statutory duties but external involvement is not needed

HIGH

This level was determined by a separate assessment and prioritisation of Police Authority activity. This prioritisation and time-limited EIA programme was agreed by the Authority's Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel on 12 January 2010.

Section 2 Impact Assessment

This section asks you to identify whether the proposed policy, service, plan or function may have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity or how relations between different equalities groups may be affected.

Description

Briefly describe the policy, service, plan or function that is being assessed including its aims and objectives.

In your response please consider:

- Who might be adversely affected by the proposed activity?
- Who are the main stakeholders?
- What outcomes are required?
- Does the policy, service, plan or function have any measures to promote equality of opportunity or reduce socio economic disadvantage?

Bedfordshire Police Authority seeks to set a budget that enables the police service to match the expectations of our local communities and be good value for money. This ambition is underpinned by the Chief Constable's four priorities of ensuring people are safer, ensuring people feel safer, ensuring people are more satisfied with the service they receive from Bedfordshire Police and ensuring that people have more confidence in Bedfordshire Police.

Members refine their budget options at a seminar at the beginning of February each year, directly following a presentation of budget consultation results. More accurate budgetary proposals are then developed for consideration by members a few weeks later. This Equality Impact Assessment considers the budget consultation that is provided to Members at the February seminar.

In an effort to obtain the widest possible understanding of public opinion the Authority conducts an online survey, using a web address that can be linked from any other website. Awareness of and access to this survey will always be greater amongst some members of our community, whilst our means of publicity and surveying will always have the undesired affect of excluding others. This assessment aims to identify potentially excluded individuals or groups so that the Authority can continually seek to address these gaps.

What do you think are the main issues that could hinder the effective implementation of equality and diversity within your policy, service, plan or function ?

In your response please consider whether the policy, plan, service or function complements other key activities , e.g. resources.

Gaps in Member / Secretariat community contacts and engagement experience (e.g. organising focus groups)

Financial resources and other consultation activity

Means of collecting and collating public opinion, in this case through the internet / computer access

Assessing Service Delivery and Practical Outcomes

What available data or research have you reviewed or carried out in the process of developing the policy, service, plan or function?

In your response please consider:

- How do current practices and measures affect different groups, eg. by making a positive contribution to equality of opportunity / good race relations or by causing an adverse impact.
- The ways in which policies, services, plans or functions are delivered or communicated and whether there are alternative measures that would have a more positive impact.

The online survey asks respondents to identify themselves by location, council tax band, disability, ethnicity, age band and gender. This allows the Authority to assess the extent to which survey respondents reflect the people of Bedfordshire.

Age

The online survey was successful in reaching significant numbers of respondents from a range of age groups, with the exception of the under 25s (only 2.4% of online survey respondents). As the table below show this proportion will need to increase seven fold for it to be representative of the wider population. This further supports the Authority's planned focus on youth engagement as part of our Community Engagement Strategy for 2010-13. To a lesser extent the online survey also under-represents 25 to 34 year olds, currently 60% of the number required to be representative in a survey of 1000 people.

15-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
17%	17%	28%	21%	17%

Bedfordshire including Luton (2007 mid-year figures, ONS / Eastern Region Public Health Observatory). Percentages exclude the 0-14 years.

Disability

More than twelve per cent of online survey respondents considered themselves to have a disability, meeting the estimates of disability within the UK population. Some types of disability are likely to be better represented than others. Two per cent of the population is thought to have learning disabilities, and this group may benefit from questions that ask respondents to consider a range of complex or competing ideas to be communicated in a different way.

The online survey is unlikely to have a significant impact on individuals with specific mental or emotional needs due to the subject under consideration. The questions are focused on public priorities for policing and do not ask respondents to recall specific incidents when they may have been a victim of crime.

Ethnicity

This table shows the population of Bedfordshire as calculated from the combined mid-year estimates provided by the Office of National Statistics for Luton, Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough. These figures are compared with online survey respondents to highlight significant gaps.

	BEDS POP'N Jun 2007	Online Survey Responden ts Dec 2009	Difference
All Persons	100.0	100.0	0.0
White	82.2	91.3	9.1
White: British	76.7	87.9	11.2
White: Irish	1.9	1.4	-0.5
White: Other White	3.6	2.0	-1.6
Mixed	2.1	0.5	-1.6
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0.9	0.1	-0.8
Mixed: White and Black African	0.2	0.0	-0.2
Mixed: White and Asian	0.6	0.1	-0.5
Mixed: Other Mixed	0.5	0.3	-0.2
Asian or Asian British	9.9	2.1	-7.8
Asian or Asian British: Indian	3.1	1.1	-2.0
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	4.2	0.4	-3.8
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	2.0	0.3	-1.7
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	0.6	0.3	-0.3
Black or Black British	4.1	1.0	-3.1
Black or Black British: Caribbean	2.1	0.9	-1.2
Black or Black British: African	1.8	0.1	-1.7
Black or Black British: Other Black	0.3	0.0	-0.3
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	1.6	0.3	-1.3
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Chinese	1.0	0.1	-0.9
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Other Ethnic Group	0.6	0.2	-0.4

Asian and Black Respondents

As the table shows our county is estimate to have been 17.7% BME in June 2007. Only 3.9% of survey respondents defined themselves as BME. There are however significant differences between the number of respondents from different groups.

Whilst the number of respondents was more than a third of a representative number of people who define themselves as Asian/Asian British Indian, this compares with much lower rates for Asian/Asian British Pakistani (10% of a representative number), or Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi (15% of a representative number). The table further shows that whilst over forty per cent of a representative sample was achieved for Black/Black British Caribbean, only one twentieth of a sample for Black/British African was achieved.

Emerging Communities

Recent migration from accession states has increased the diversity of many of our communities. This group might be expected to define themselves as White Other, a group that we recorded as having survey 55% of the sample needed. It is possible that a much smaller proportion of survey respondents were from emerging communities, as it is common for this figure to be effected by other UK nationalities, such as Cornish, English, Scottish and Welsh. White individuals from southern African states, such as Zimbabwe, also define themselves using the White Other option.

Language

Bedfordshire Police Authority has received two requests for information in other languages in recent years, both for south Asian languages. A similar Police Authority reports receiving requests for documentation in Punjabi and Urdu. Due to the cost of translation it may not be proportionate to pre-emptively translate the survey, but would be appropriate to consult partners on best practice in this area. The Authority's secretariat would consider how best to meet any request to translate the budget survey.

Socio-Economic Disadvantage

The average council tax per household in Luton between April 2009 and March 2010 is £1,017.00, which is band B. Eighty-four per cent of properties in Luton are currently banded as A, B or C. The average council tax per household in Bedford is at the very top end of band B and the Central Bedfordshire towns of Biggleswade and Leighton Buzzard are at the higher end of band C. Unfortunately, this does not appear to be reflected in our survey respondents. Four times as many respondents from bands G and H completed the survey than did those from band A. Whilst a third of respondents were from band D, 286 residents completed the survey from bands E-H compared with only 263 respondents from bands A-C.

Gender

The survey asks respondents to select a gender, and provides two options, male and female. It is difficult to determine what best practice in this area is, but an increasing number of public sector organisations appear to be including an 'other' option. Not including other gender options on our online surveys could be considered to exclude those who identify themselves as transgender, transsexual or intersex. As part of our Single Equality Scheme the Authority seeks to hear from and

represent all members of our diverse community, and this small addition would be an important recognition of the trans people in Bedfordshire.

Whilst our diversity strands include sexual orientation and religion, respondents are not asked for this information when completing the survey. It could be considered disproportionate to ask these questions as part of the online survey due to their sensitivity.

What are your conclusions on the likely impact of the proposed policy, service, plan or function on different equalities groups?

(i.e. race, gender, disability, sexual orientation , age, transgender, religion or similar belief etc.)

Please consider:

- How will the policy impact upon people from different equalities groups and socio economic groups?
- If there is an adverse impact, what are the reasons?

Disability

The Bedfordshire Police Authority website is a Browsealoud enabled website, so software linked from our website will convert written text into audio sound. Whilst this software will be suitable for listening to web content, completing a survey that asks respondents to click their responses may not be possible.

Publication Methods

Bedfordshire and Luton Chamber of Commerce kindly allowed our survey to be distributed to their members. At the time of updating them on the overall feedback from our business respondents a request was made by the Secretariat to understand the approximate demographics of their membership in terms of business type, ethnicity, gender and urban/rural split. They do not hold all of this information but were able to say that their 1100 businesses range from one person enterprises to larger companies such as Luton Airport or Vauxhall, and that they represent a mixture of ethnic backgrounds.

The Community Messaging Systems (Ringmaster) coordinated by the Community Safety departments at Luton and Greyfriars Police Stations was also used to advertise our online survey. Ringmaster does not collect demographic information, but the department in Luton have indicated approximate divisions by age, gender and ethnicity to assist in this assessment. This suggested that the gender and ethnicity of those receiving the online survey link via the Community Messaging Systems was broadly proportionate to that of the population as a whole. This is not true of age as the majority of users are thought to be 40 years and older.

Survey Title

Could an alternative name for the Budget Survey may have greater appeal to younger people who may not directly pay council tax, for example calling it 'Your Priorities Survey'.

What can be done to reduce any potential adverse impact ?

Please consider:

- For example, changes in communication methods, language support, disability measures, changes in eligibility criteria, engagement activity, shared targets with other partners etc.
- Factors that can hinder the implementation of the suggested measures such as financial resources, competencies, managerial support, etc.

As above

External involvement

What do stakeholders think about the policy, service or function that you are developing?

Please consider:

- Please use this section to describe how you have consulted/ engaged with key stakeholders in the process of developing the policy, service, plan or function.

This assessment will be distributed to our partnership Consultation Practitioners to seek further views.

Stage 3 – Conclusions & Recommendations

This section should set out what you need to do to deal with any adverse impact, or identified lack of positive impact of a policy, service, plan or function on equality.

What are the main conclusions and the key recommendations of the equality impact assessment?

Please consider:

- Does the policy consider and address the specific needs of specific equalities groups?
- What gaps can be immediately addressed and what will require wider decisions
- Whether the policy will directly or indirectly have an adverse impact on any equality group?
What actions will be taken to mitigate this impact?

This Equality Impact Assessment has highlighted a range of different or adverse impacts of our budget consultation. Where groups have been seen to be under-represented, the impact is that Police Authority Members will receive a sample of public opinion that does not include them. This could be understood as a form of indirect discrimination that has a wider impact where survey results are provided for Members to consider as part of their budget decision making process.

This impact assessment has shown that particular communities that have not been engaged by budget consultation to the greatest extent are:

- 16-25 years olds
- Asian / Asian British Pakistani individuals
- Asian / Asian British Bangladeshi individuals
- Black / Black British African individuals
- Eastern European / Emerging Communities
- Women
- Residents in Council tax bands A-C

It will never be possible to entirely mitigate every differing or adverse impact of budget consultation as our communities are formed of diverse and complex individuals. It is possible however to make a number of proportionate changes as outlined at stage 4 below.

Stage 4 – Implementation and Review

Please use the following template to develop any actions required:

Actions Required	Timeframe	Responsible Officer / Member	Relevant Performance Indicators
Contact selected partners to ask if they can publicise the survey on their email distribution lists. Luton Borough Council have been suggested as having email contact with a more diverse range of ages.			
Access appropriate and recent demographic information for the county to take into account when planning and distributing the budget consultation			
Consider a 'please forward' feature on the online survey to improve number and diversity of recipients			
Consider focus groups, with harder to reach individuals / communities			

Actions Required	Timeframe	Lead Member	Relevant Performance Indicators
Consult partners on their translation of consultation activity			
Add an 'other' option to our gender pick list for all future surveys, where a gender question is asked.			
Consider a specific initiative in Luton to attract recipients			
Seek to identify a women's business group that we could approach to distribute the survey.			