

UNITS EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT PUBLIC FACILITIES

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1) AUTHOR(S) OF ASSESSMENT

Gwyn Morris Jones, Head of Highways and Municipal Department

2) ASSESSMENT START DATE

6 July 2015

3) VERSION AND/OR DATE OF COMPLETION OF THE ASSESSMENT

It is expected that there will be more than one version of the Assessment. The different versions should be noted to ensure accuracy.

17/12/15

4) PURPOSE OF THE UNIT AND DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

Note briefly the purpose of the unit and details of the proposal in question

The unit maintains, manages and cleans 73 public toilets across the County, and is responsible for managing the Public Toilets Grant Scheme for 35 businesses across the County.

It is possible to cut the entire budget as, at present, there is no statutory requirement to maintain public facilities.

This would involve:

- Closing every one of the 73 public toilets across the County, making 39 toilet cleaners who are currently employed redundant;
- An impact on residents and visitors who would no longer have convenient facilities.

5) PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION

The Older People's Council was of the opinion that cutting the Public Toilets service would affect them and note it as a priority. It is an essential service for them when they go out. A lack of public toilets would affect older people's independence.

“A very important resource for older people who don't like to go to private

locations. Older people are more likely to have health issues which makes toilets more important and toilets in pubs are often not the cleanest"

"Public toilets – basic human needs. Needs to be free. Safety comes first – toilets we all need them"

The Pwllheli Carers' Outreach Group was of the opinion that cutting the Public Toilets service would have an impact on disabled people. They see this service as essential when they go out.

The users of CILDe Gwynedd (disabled people) note toilets as a priority but said that they would be willing to pay for it.

Some Ysgol Botwnnog pupils also said that public toilets were important:

- "Public toilets, something that's important everywhere, where would tourists use the toilet? Need to buy something in order to use many toilets e.g. Wetherspoon's."

On the questionnaire, people aged over 50 told us:

"Public toilets. Disproportionately affects the elderly, many of whom are prescribed diuretics, which already makes going out of the house difficult. Many elderly people have become increasingly housebound due to lack of existing provision. Any more would make them unable to go out at all.""

"...Also I use Gwynedd's public toilets in every town I visit so please don't close them!....."

A disabled person said:

"Hello, I`m disabled and unable to drive so bus cuts affect my ability to travel also I use the public disabled toilets a lot, So cuts in these services will have marked impact on my quality of life “.

Other people noted

"Closing any toilets would seriously affect people with diabetes who need to urinate at a distressing frequency throughout the day. With no available toilet - where would they be supposed to 'pee' - in the street ? !!! Toilet closures would be criminal!"

"With young children, I make regular use of the leisure centres, parks and library's. Families with young children are also dependant on public toilets."

6) THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE

Include any relevant information about equality, e.g. will the change affect one cohort of people more than others (e.g. older people, women, etc.?) How do you know this? The evidence can be local, regional or national e.g. a report by the Assembly, engagement with a specific group of local people, data about gratitude or complaints, etc.

Public Health White Paper - Welsh Government October 2014 (Intend to create legislation which makes it statutory for Local Councils to have a strategy for providing public toilets

“Help the Aged” paper: Nowhere to Go: Provision of Public Facilities in Britain (May 2007) highlights the social cost for older people of the reduction in public facilities:

12% of older people (1.2 million) feel confined to their homes, 13% of older people (1.26 million) do not go out more than once a week and approximately 100,000 never go out.

Its evidence suggests that the lack of public facilities is a significant contributory factor to the loneliness older people feel, with more than half of older people feeling that the lack of local public conveniences prevents them from going out as often as they would wish.

House of Commons' Select Committee - Provision of Public Facilities, twelve session report 2007-08

The Community and Local Government Department: Improving the Public's Access to Quality Public Facilities - Strategic Guidance

7) RELEVANCE AND IMPACT

The relevance of the proposal to the general equality duties and to all of the protected characteristics (equality groups) must be shown. It should clearly note what the actual or likely impact will be. It is possible that not all duties or characteristics will be of relevance or will be impacted; however, should relevance and/or impact be identified in any one or more categories, there will be a need to proceed with the Assessment.

7a)

General Duties of the Equality Act	Relevance Does the cut affect the duties below?	The actual or likely impact
Abolishing illegal discrimination, harassment and victimisation	no	
Promoting equal opportunities	yes	Some cohorts would find it difficult to go out and would therefore experience problems accessing services, socialising etc.
Encouraging good relationships	yes	Failing to go out could affect socialising which is contrary to the duty to encourage good relationships.

7b)

Characteristics	Relevance Does the cut affect the characteristics below?	The actual or likely impact
Race	no	No discriminatory impact.
Disability	Yes	Likely impact - Disability Charities and organisations which represent older people are of the opinion that cuts to public facilities will have a very damaging effect in terms of them being prevented or being afraid of venturing out of their homes due to the lack of facilities available in the community. Some ailments or impairments could make the impact worse.
Gender	no	No discriminatory impact.
Gender reassignment	no	No discriminatory impact.
Sexual orientation	no	No discriminatory impact.
Religion or belief	relevance	In general terms, there would be no more impact on these groups than on the general public; but with some religions using alternative private facilities would be restricted in using some establishments (e.g. pubs) - it could be against a religion or belief.
The Welsh language	no	No discriminatory impact.
Age	Yes	Likely impact - Older People

		Charities and organisations which represent older people are of the opinion that cuts to public facilities will have a very damaging effect in terms of them being prevented or being afraid of venturing out of their homes due to the lack of facilities available in the community.
Pregnancy and maternity	Yes	<p>Likely impact - Children</p> <p>Parents and guardians of babies and young children need to be able to use suitable facilities in men and women's public facilities when visiting public places and often at short notice. Parents with babies and young children could be unwilling to use facilities in pubs, which limits the choice of facilities for them.</p>
Marriage and civil partnership	no	No discriminatory impact.

8) ADDRESSING THE IMPACT

a)	Note any possible impact in terms of equality Summary of the above The reduction in facilities affects everyone. However, the proposal does not target specific groups, but some groups could be affected more than others due to the cut. The reduction in public facilities could have an impact on the willingness of specific groups, namely older people, children and disabled people to access public places, socialise and shop locally. This can lead to loneliness and a detrimental impact on an individual's welfare.
b)	What steps can be taken to reduce or improve these impacts? Retain an element of the budget for the after-care of the buildings and to develop a system of funding local businesses to offer use of their facilities for the public, similar to the Local Public Facilities Grant Scheme currently funded by Welsh Government. The needs of the different characteristics would have to be considered in doing this. Any provision will need to consider the need for accessible toilets and changing areas.
c)	Is there a need to reconsider the plan? This proposed cut is part of the Council's Cuts Regime. All of the information, including views from the consultation and this equality impact assessment, will be considered by the Cabinet and the Full Council when making the decision on what is to be cut.