

# Equalities Impact Assessment Polling District and Places Review 2021

## A. Background

This assessment is informed by the council's Equality Impact Analysis Tool. It reflects the public sector equality duty that came into force in April 2011.

The duty highlights three areas in which public bodies must show compliance. It states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have a due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Equality Act 2010
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

In order to comply with the general duty local authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. Authorities which fail to carry out equality impact assessments risk making poor and unfair decisions which may discriminate against particular groups and worsen inequality.

## B. Summary

This assessment reviews voting at polling station and assesses the impact on residents, and specifically those with protected characteristics. It will identify particular issues that may impact on people with each particular characteristic and will list the mitigations we can take in order to meet the three requirements made of the council as listed in Section A.

All new polling places are subject to a site assessment where electoral officers visit the premises and conduct a thorough assessment of the facilities, access and location.

Existing polling venues have been reviewed using polling station logbooks, completed questionnaires from Presiding Officers, and the risk assessments drawn up for the recent GLA elections which included floorplans and other access information for each polling station.

Note that no polling place will be recommended unless it can be adapted to allow it to pass the assessment (such as by providing temporary ramps or lighting, for example), or, in very exceptional circumstances, where there is simply no more suitable venues or other alternative available within the polling district or within a reasonable distance of it.

The assessment includes access, size of venue, width of entrance and internal doors, space for tellers, lighting, ventilation, kitchen and restroom facilities, etc. In particular, the officer must conduct checks for the accessibility of the site in order to determine suitability as a polling place with regards to disabled voters, such as level access, good lighting, handrails, non-slip flooring and so on.

Protected Characteristic	Impacts	Mitigations / Actions
Age	<p><b>Older voters</b> may generally have more disabilities and have more mobility issues and sight difficulties than younger voters.</p> <p>They may need somewhere to rest and may take more time to complete their ballot papers.</p> <p>Polling stations situated in more inaccessible locations, such as the top of steep hills, may be more difficult to access for people with this protected characteristic</p> <p><b>Younger voters</b> may be more anxious about voting for the first time, and/or be uncertain what the rules are.</p> <p>Location of polling venues may negatively impact if they cannot be sufficiently signposted, or if a venue does not feel welcoming.</p>	<p>(<b>Bold</b> indicates that this is in relation to the review of polling arrangements directly. Ordinary font indicates that the mitigation needs to be carried out regardless of the specific location of a polling place)</p> <p>Where possible the polling place should be situated in a convenient location for most residents in the polling district to be able to walk to it comfortably</p> <p>Polling stations should have level or at least step-free access, good lighting, space for additional seating, equipment and signage. There should be sufficient room for wheelchair and mobility scooters, and door widths should be sufficient to allow easy ingress/exit for voters using them.</p> <p>Ideally, stations will also have parking nearby and parking for disabled people specifically, toilets for public use and all other features listed in the polling station access checklist if possible.</p> <p>Access for voters with disabilities is separately covered in this document, but those mitigations will also be of assistance to older voters with disabilities and/or difficulties with sight, mobility and hearing.</p> <p>Provision of chairs for voters to rest before or after voting.</p> <p>Signage to be clearly displayed, in plain English and in pictorial form where possible/ allowed under legislation so that all voters are aware of what they need to do. Additional signage to assist voters to locate their polling station where needed.</p>

	<p><b>Children</b></p> <p>Children may be negatively impacted if their school or nursery or after school club or activity is closed down for the day to be used as a polling venue.</p> <p>This may affect their education, and in some cases can add to family pressures where alternative childcare is not readily available.</p> <p>Children could potentially be made to feel unwelcome in polling stations.</p>	<p>Calm and welcoming atmosphere created by the polling staff so that new voters are confident and able to ask questions, with additional information leaflets or guidance on display</p> <p>All voters, regardless of any protected characteristics to be greeted warmly, and asked if they need any assistance – the “Spartacus” effect – no one is made to feel singled out, but everyone is asked if they need any help.</p> <p>Schools should be avoided if good, convenient, alternative locations are available in the polling district.</p> <p>Where this is not possible, every effort should be made to support the school to stay open and to minimise disruption. This may mean siting the polling station in an outbuilding such as a gymnasium or nursery room. Additional security or fencing may need to be provided to allow schooling to continue at the same time as polling.</p> <p>In other cases, schools may timetable staff training days or school trips to coincide with polling day, avoiding children missing days.</p> <p>However, the number of buildings that are suitable to use as polling stations is limited, and it is not currently possible to avoid using schools altogether. Schools have good accessibility, are usually well known to local voters and considered safe places for most voters who might be more worried using some other venues, and for that reason in many situations they may still represent the best venue for a polling place in their community.</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 defines a person as having a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term</p>	<p>All new polling venues to be assessed for accessibility.</p> <p>Polling stations should have level or at least step-free access, good lighting, space for additional seating, equipment and signage. There</p>

	<p>adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.</p> <p>Disabled Voters may not be aware of the assistance available to them in polling stations and assume that absent voting is the only available method open to them.</p> <p>Ability to access polling venues due to lack of wheelchair/mobility entrance, parking, light and space.</p> <p>Insufficient light inside polling venue.</p> <p>Signage and official notices – at wrong height or too small.</p> <p>Inability to hear instructions of polling staff.</p> <p>Difficulty in understanding the polling process.</p> <p>Inability to read ballot papers or make a mark on ballot papers.</p> <p>Voters with these characteristics may have experienced, or fear experiencing discrimination from polling station staff or other venue users.</p>	<p>should be sufficient room for wheelchair and mobility scooters, and door widths should be sufficient to allow easy ingress/exit for voters using them.</p> <p>Ideally, stations will also have parking nearby and parking for disabled people specifically, toilets for public use and all other features listed in the polling station access checklist if possible.</p> <p>All polling places to be DDA compliant</p> <p>Polling places to be in venues without intrusive noise where possible. (A certain amount of noise is inevitable in polling venues in London, but some mitigation can still take place, such as siting a temporary cabin in a quiet side road rather than on a main thoroughfare, for example)</p> <p>Inclusive polling publicity materials and campaigns – co-production of posters/online advertising around polling station voting and registration deadlines.</p> <p>A chair available for voters who need a rest before or after voting.</p> <p>Temporary ramps and lighting installed inside and outside polling venues where necessary.</p> <p>Training for all polling staff on how to use equipment such as the tactile voting devices, and awareness of all the other measures that can be used to assist Disabled Voters.</p> <p>Signage at polling stations in large fonts, handheld large print reference ballot papers.</p> <p>Training for all polling staff about what assistance may be offered,</p>
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		<p>what barriers polling stations may present in terms of physical access.</p> <p>Specific attention paid to Electoral Commission guidance and materials concerning the needs of Disabled Voters.</p> <p>Polling staff to follow standard procedures assisting all electors that do not “other” voters with disabilities – e.g. Asking every elector if any help is needed. Using plain English, listening carefully, being approachable, being comfortable with how to use materials such as tactile voting device or the pictorial voting guide.</p> <p>Additional training for presiding officers on the official procedures and forms required for them to assist voters with disabilities or for companions to assist voters with disabilities.</p> <p>Equalities training for polling staff.</p>
Gender reassignment	<p>This group may be anxious about being mis-gendered by the polling staff – e.g. referred to by the wrong gender.</p> <p>This group may fear transphobia or other discrimination by polling staff or other venue users</p>	<p>Procedure notes and training for polling staff is gender neutral.</p> <p>Equalities training and awareness is incorporated in training for polling staff.</p> <p>Calm, welcoming atmosphere at polling stations for all voters promoted at training.</p> <p>All polling stations are assessed for lighting – in winter elections additional lighting is provided externally, where street lighting may be inadequate, to promote physical safety from trips and falls, but also to ensure voters feel safer on their approach to and exit from the station.</p>
Marriage and Civil Partnership	<p>No to very little direct impact anticipated in terms of polling scheme itself – however there may be some intersection in terms of impact with</p>	<p>Equalities training and awareness is incorporated in training for polling staff.</p> <p>Calm, welcoming atmosphere at polling stations for all voters</p>

	<p>Sex/Sexual Orientation and and the gender reassignment protected characteristics impacts.</p> <p>Specifically, there may be some apprehension that staff will assume that couples are or are not married or in civil partnerships.</p>	<p>promoted at training.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Pregnant voters may have mobility issues.</p> <p>Pregnant voters may need to rest at the polling station, before or after voting.</p> <p>Parents may need to bring their children to the polling venue and fear that their children may not be welcomed or viewed as a nuisance by polling station staff or other venue users.</p>	<p>Where possible the polling place should be situated in a convenient location for most residents in the polling district to be able to walk to it comfortably.</p> <p>Polling stations are assessed for their accessibility in terms of level access / handrails where required / non-slip surfaces etc, as described above.</p> <p>Polling venues should have enough room for pushchairs/buggies to be easily manoeuvred round the polling station and for extra seating.</p> <p>Ideally, polling stations will have toilets and baby changing rooms available for voters.</p> <p>Children are allowed into polling stations, and staff are careful to ensure that polling places are as safe as possible for them.</p> <p>Polling station staff training incorporates equalities training, and our encouraged to let parents know that children are very welcome in our polling stations.</p>
Race	<p>Voters from this group may not speak English or may not have be fluent English speakers.</p> <p>This can lead to several negative impacts including: difficulty in</p>	<p>Provide maps as part of polling places and stations review, as well as written texts.</p> <p>Emails to local residents to encourage a community response. Use of Twitter and other social media means that translations are somewhat “built in”. The Council’s website also has a translation</p>

	<p>identifying the polling venue address, difficulty in speaking with polling staff, polling staff not understanding the voter, and accessibility of signs and notices.</p> <p>Additionally, voters from this group may have suffered from racism, and may feel that they are not welcome to take part in elections, or feel intimidated or concerned by the formality of polling stations and interactions with “officialdom”.</p> <p>There is some intersection with Religion/belief – voters may not be comfortable using polling venues housed in religious buildings</p>	<p>facility.</p> <p>Maps are provided on poll cards.</p> <p>Polling stations are located in easy to find locations, with good lighting and warm and welcoming staff.</p> <p>Polling staff have a telephone translation service available throughout polling day.</p> <p>Staff in our polling stations reflect the communities we serve – they are often local residents, as well as council staff, and provide a calm, helpful and welcoming atmosphere for voting residents.</p> <p>See Religion/belief below.</p>
<p>Religion/belief (including non-belief)</p>	<p>Some voters may not wish to enter dedicated religious building in order to vote.</p> <p>Voters may not wish to enter premises where alcohol or particular animal products are produced, sold or consumed due to their beliefs and/or religious proscription.</p> <p>Some voters may experience discrimination, or the fear of discrimination, from polling staff or other venue users.</p>	<p>Where possible, places of worship are avoided, but buildings such as church hall, where worship doesn't typically take place do not generally cause any concern.</p> <p>However, it is not entirely possible to avoid using religious buildings entirely. When using a religious building, overt iconography is covered, with the building owners' permission.</p> <p>Public houses are avoided wherever possible.</p> <p>As with religious buildings, halls or extensions/games rooms to public houses may be considered, if available. If no other options were to be available, then any alcohol on display would need to be covered or removed, and consideration might be needed to giving deep cleaning to remove the smell of alcohol from the polling station.</p> <p>Equalities training and awareness is incorporated in training for</p>

		<p>polling staff.</p> <p>Calm, welcoming atmosphere at polling stations for all voters promoted at training.</p>
Sex	<p>Women may feel more concerned than men about approaching stations that are not in well-lit areas or that can only be accessed by alleyways or subways (although fear of assault is not limited to women).</p> <p>This may prevent women voting if they are not able to access their polling station during daylight hours, or if their perception of a polling place's environs is one of unsafety.</p>	<p>External areas are assessed for perceived safety – there should be good street lighting, the general area should be open with high visibility of surroundings, and venues that are not easily accessed other than via any dimly lit subways or alleys should be avoided.</p> <p>The polling station should be easily located from main roads, and well signposted. Additional signage can be provided to guide voters to stations if it is not immediately apparent from the major thoroughfare.</p> <p>Maps are provided on poll cards, and the Council also provides an online search tool to find detailed maps to polling stations.</p>
Sexual Orientation	<p>Voters with these characteristics may have experienced, or fear experiencing discrimination from polling station staff or other venue users.</p>	<p>Equalities training and awareness is incorporated in training for polling staff.</p> <p>Calm, welcoming atmosphere at polling stations for all voters promoted at training.</p>