

Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion Impact assessment form

October 2007

Impact assessment of: Interactive Voice Response – Choice Based Lettings and Bulky Collections

Responsible service/ directorate: Planning, Policy and Improvement

Date of assessment: 17th April 2009

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| Summary of service/ policy that was assessed: |
| The Corporate Contact Centre are looking to introduce an Interactive Voice Response facility. This will allow customers to conduct a range of transactions over the telephone via a short series of menus and without the need to speak to a customer services officer. Customer input will be made via either pressing keys or by speaking a word or short phrases. |
| The first IVR applications to be developed will be for Choice Based Lettings bid and requests for bulky collections. This impact assessment focuses on these IVR applications. |

| Summary of Actions arising from Assessment (include all actions arising from sections 2,5,6,7,8 and 9 and ensure that these are included in your service or business plans) | | |
|---|-----------------------|--|
| Actions | Responsibility | Timescale |
| Deliver publicity campaign | IVR Project Manager | To tie in with 'go-live' date |
| Ensure that the IVR infrastructure is properly supported. | IVR Project Manager | Support arrangements to be in place prior to 'go-live'. |
| The IVR processes need to be short, simple to follow and in Plain English. | IVR Project Manager | October '09 for CBL application. April '10 for BC application |
| Voice recognition needs to be comprehensive in order to handle a variety of local accents and dialects. | IVR Project Manager | October '09 for CBL application. April '10 for BC application |

Contact person for the assessment: Anthony Derbyshire

Members of the assessment team:

| Name | Organisation | Role on assessment team e.g. service user, manager of service |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Anthony Derbyshire | Business Transformation, Planning, Policy and Improvement | Project Manager |
| Paddy Clarke | Customer Services | Chief Officer for Contact Centre |

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1. Aims of the service or policy

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) is a system that can provide customers with a 'self-service' route via the telephone to a variety of Council services. It is a transactional system that allows the customer to book a service without needing to speak to a customer services officer. As IVR is fully-automated, it can be made available to the customer 'around the clock', thereby allowing them to access services at a time to suit them. A number of IVR applications already exist around various departments in the Council and it is the intention to consolidate these onto the new IVR platform as and when their contracts are up for renewal, as well as developing new IVR solutions to key high volume/low complexity telephone calls.

It is not the intention to use IVR to over-complicate the call-handling process by introducing multi-layers of options, nor to try and automate a call enquiry type that would be better resolved by a customer services officer. To the contrary, its purpose will be to;

- increase access to Council services – IVR will enable customers to conduct a transaction with the Council outside of normal opening hours.
- handle high volume / low complexity enquiries without the need for customers to be held in a queue
- increase the call-handling capacity of the call centre
- release customer services officers to focus on calls from customers with more complicated enquiries.

Two specific service requests have initially been identified that lend themselves to an IVR application, these being Choice Based Lettings (CBL) bids and requests for bulky collections (BC). It is the intention to create an IVR application for each of these enquiry types which will enable the customer to bid for properties and request a BC without needing to speak to a customer services officer. By fully automating these processes, it will be possible to offer access to these services outside of normal office hours.

This impact assessment focuses on these applications and considers the impact that this new enquiry channel will have.

2. Fact finding

The IVR Business Case demonstrates how the Corporate Contact Centre could benefit from the introduction of IVR technology. This is underpinned by a drive from Central Government to increase the use of electronic channels as a means of communicating with customers/citizens, increase efficiency and optimisation of resource and achieve 3% cashable savings year on year.

The 'Extended Hours Pilot', conducted during 2008, saw the Corporate Contact Centre consult with customers specifically about their preferred times for conducting their business with LCC. Although the traditional opening times are still popular, there is a significant proportion of customers who would prefer to contact us outside of those traditional times, particularly in the evening and weekends. IVR offers LCC the opportunity to offer a variety of services at these times.



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3. Involvement

Have you involved appropriate community groups in the assessment? Please list here who was involved.

If community groups were not involved in the assessment please explain your decision here.

As mentioned in Part 2, consultation during the 'Extended Hours Pilot' demonstrated a customer desire for access to Council services to be available on evenings and weekends.

Positive consultation has also taken place with the ALMO's in respect of a possible IVR application for handling CBL bids. It is already possible to make a bid either at a One Stop Centre, over the telephone, via the internet or by text message. Leeds Homes have expressed an enthusiasm for this project as it provides another access channel to their service, thereby increasing the customer's options and making the placing of a bid as simple and quick as possible.

4. Adverse affects

Summarise here any adverse affects identified from your fact finding and assessment team meetings.

| Barrier | Adverse affect | Who does this impact on | Why |
|---------|----------------|-------------------------|-----|
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5. Barriers and actions needed

For each barrier, give some details of the current position in relation to the service/ policy and identify the actions needed, who is responsible for taking the actions forward, when by, any resource implications and who needs to be involved in implementation of the actions.

If a barrier is not applicable to the service/policy, please explain why in the current position box.

| A. Built Environment | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|--|
| Current Position: For example number of buildings open to the public or maintained by the service | | | | |
| Not applicable – this service is being delivered via the telephone. | | | | |
| Action needed | Responsibility | Timescale | Resources | Who should be involved in the implementation? |
| None | | | | |
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B. Location

Current Position: For example where is the service delivered from, is it office based or in a community setting.

This service will be delivered from the Corporate Contact Centre at Westgate. The service will be accessed via existing telephone numbers, with a simple auto-attendant functionality routing the call to the IVR application.

| Action needed | Responsibility | Timescale | Resources | Who should be involved in the implementation? |
|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|--|
| None | | | | |
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C. Information and communication

Current Position: For example what information is provided about the service/ policy and who is this aimed at?

The Contact Centre already handles CBL bids and requests for BC's. Publicity will be undertaken advising customers that they can now access these services outside of normal opening hours. Publicity will be channelled through the internet and existing Council publications. The publicity will be geared at promoting the increased access to these services and the convenience this may bring to our customers. Their actual access route to these services remains unchanged, i.e. it is still the same telephone number and the call will still be handled by the Contact Centre.

| Action needed | Responsibility | Timescale | Resources | Who should be involved in the implementation? |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---|---|---|
| Deliver publicity campaign. | IVR Project Manager | The timing of the publicity will tie in with the 'go-live' date for each IVR application. | Business Transformation Team / Customer Services Development Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project Manager• Senior Supplier (i.e. a Contact Centre manager)• Senior User (i.e. a manager from business-side) |

D. Customer care and staff training

Current Position: For example what training do you provide for your staff in relation to the service/ policy?

The Contact Centre already handles CBL bids and requests for a BC and, therefore, staff are already fully trained in handling such enquiries. An exit route to a customer services officer will exist in the event of the customer having difficulty with IVR and such a call would be routed through to an appropriately trained officer. The actual IVR infrastructure will be supported by Operational Support, Corporate ICT and Sabio (telephony/IVR providers).

| Action needed | Responsibility | Timescale | Resources | Who should be involved in the implementation? |
|---|-----------------------|--|---------------------|---|
| Ensure that the IVR infrastructure is properly supported. | IVR Project Manager | Support arrangements will be determined during the course of the project and be in place prior to 'go-live'. | ICT Project Manager | IVR Project Manager ICT Project Manager Sabio Project Manager |

E. Timing

Current Position: For example is the service based round traditional working hours.

One of the primary benefits of IVR is its ability to offer a transactional service ‘around the clock’. There will, inevitably, be periods of time where the IVR needs to be taken down for maintenance, etc. Such issues will be managed operationally with due regard to maintaining service availability. It should also be borne in mind that IVR is one of a number of access channels to LCC services – should it be unavailable, other methods of contacting the Council will still be open.

| Action needed | Responsibility | Timescale | Resources | Who should be involved in the implementation? |
|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|--|
| None | | | | |
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F. Stereotypes and assumptions

Current Position: For example is the service or policy aimed at one community or a particular type of family unit?

IVR is not aimed at any particular client group although it would benefit those customers who have difficulty in contacting the Council during normal opening hours. Primarily though, it is a new, additional, access channel aimed at improving the manner in which telephony contact is handled, as well as offering a degree of service outside of normal hours. It does, obviously, assume the need for access to a telephone – however, if the customer didn't have access to a telephone, they would not have been able to access the existing services via the Contact Centre regardless. In such instances, alternative access to services is available, i.e. via One Stop Centres.

| Action needed | Responsibility | Timescale | Resources | Who should be involved in the implementation? |
|---------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|---|
| None | | | | |
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G. Cost

Current Position: For example do people have to pay to use the service, will the policy change the way the council charges for its service.

There will be no cost to the customer to access this service, save for the cost of the phone call itself. The call will be routed through existing telephony numbers – these are geographic, i.e. start with 0113, and are therefore suitable for those customers who receive free calls within their own telephony package. One of the benefits of IVR is its ability to deal with a number of concurrent calls without the need for the customer to be held in a queue. This will result in a shorter call time for the customer which, in turn, could actually reduce the cost of their call.

| Action needed | Responsibility | Timescale | Resources | Who should be involved in the implementation? |
|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|--|
| None | | | | |
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H. Consultation and involvement

Current Position: For example what consultation is carried out by the service or what involvement are you planning to implement the policy?

As mentioned in Parts 2 and 3, during the 'Extended Hours Pilot', conducted during 2008, we consulted specifically about customers preferred times to conduct their business with LCC. Although the Contact Centres traditional opening times are still popular, there is a significant proportion of our customers who would prefer to contact us outside of those times, particularly in the evening and weekends. IVR allows us to offer such an access channel.

Support for the Choice Based Lettings application has also been given by Leeds Homes as such an application compliments their other access channels to the service, i.e. via the internet and SMS.

| Action needed | Responsibility | Timescale | Resources | Who should be involved in the implementation? |
|---------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|---|
| | | | | |

I. Any other barriers specific to the service/ policy

Current Position: For example are there any other barriers that haven't been covered such as partnership working and any statutory limitations or obligations?

For IVR to be successful, it is essential that its front-end is simple, intuitive and customer-friendly. Any failure in this area will result in customers opting of the IVR processes and pursuing their service request by other means, thereby negating any benefit that this application should bring.

| Action needed | Responsibility | Timescale | Resources | Who should be involved in the implementation? |
|---|---------------------|--|---|--|
| The IVR processes need to be short, simple to follow and in Plain English. | IVR Project Manager | October '09 for CBL application. April '10 for BC application | Development to be undertaken by project team. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Manager • Project Officer • Housing Leads representative (for CBL application) • Environment representative (for BC application) • Sabio |
| Voice recognition needs to be comprehensive in order to handle a variety of local accents and dialects. | IVR Project Manager | October '09 for CBL application. April '10 for BC application | Development to be undertaken by project team. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Manager • Project Officer • Housing Leads representative (for CBL application) • Environment representative (for BC application) • Sabio |

6 . Which communities may perceive the impact on them differently?

It is important to look at the potential impact of the service or policy on different sectors of the community and community relations The impact could be negative in that one or more groups are disadvantaged by the service or policy or positive, in that one group may receive greater benefit from the service or policy than do other groups. For example if a grant fund is aimed at one community how will other communities perceive this? The table below may be useful in focussing on specific aspects, if there are a number of areas to be considered.

| Aspect of service/ policy | Negative impact | Positive Impact | Action needed or justification for decision |
|----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Service is telephony based. | Not available to customers without a telephone. | <p>Will increase call-handling volumes by the Contact Centre.</p> <p>Will speed up the handling of service requests.</p> <p>Offers a quicker and improved customer experience as well as an extended level of service.</p> | <p>IVR is one of a number of channels offering access to Council Services. IVR improves the telephony service offered by LCC.</p> <p>Customers without a telephone, whilst in the minority, would not be disadvantaged by this as they would not be attempting to access services via the telephone regardless of whether IVR was in place or not. Alternative access channels to services are already in place.</p> |
| Introduction of new technology | Some customers may have difficulty in responding to IVR. | <p>Will increase call-handling volumes by the Contact Centre.</p> <p>Will speed up the handling of service requests.</p> <p>Offers a quicker and improved customer experience as well as an extended level of service.</p> | <p>IVR is commonplace in many Contact Centres and so the majority of customers will be familiar with, and expect, such a facility.</p> <p>The customer will be given the opportunity to 'drop out' of the IVR process and speak to a customer services officer if they prefer.</p> |

7. Community Relations

What is the impact of this service or policy on community relations? How can this service or policy be used to promote good/better community relations and what actions do you need to put in place to make this happen?

For example providing opportunities for people from different backgrounds or communities to meet.

| Impact | Action needed | Responsibility | Timescale |
|--------|---------------|----------------|-----------|
| None | | | |
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8. Community Safety

What is the impact of this policy, service or function on community safety and what actions do you need to put in place to make this happen?

For example what is the potential for the service/policy to reduce crime or disorder?

| Impact | Action needed | Responsibility | Timescale |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------|
| Not applicable | | | |
| | | | |

9. Governance and ownership

Who needs to agree the actions identified by this assessment and ensure progress is made? How will this be monitored? For example a report to senior management team or the project board responsible for the policy.

The actions in this Impact Assessment will be owned by the Project Manager who will ensure they are undertaken as part of the overall IVR project. The Project Manager will provide progress reports to the Customer Services Management Team on a regular basis.

10. Approved by

State here who has approved the actions and outcomes from your impact assessment. This may be your senior management team, your director or Board.

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11. Summary form completed and passed to the Equality Team.

Who by:

Date:

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