

# EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT – POLLING DISTRICTS, PLACES AND STATIONS REVIEW 2023

## SECTION ONE: INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSAL

<b>Author(s):</b> The person completing the EIA template.	Maddie Halifax	<b>Department and service:</b>	Electoral Services CEX Office	<b>Date of assessment:</b>	September 2024
<b>Lead Officer:</b> Head of Service, Service Director, or Strategic Director.	Glenda Favor-Ankersen	<b>Signature:</b>		<b>Approval date:</b>	
<b>Overview:</b>	<p>There are specific legal duties under equality law on individuals and organisations involved in administering elections to make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled people to exercise their vote. This includes taking steps to ensure that information, for example on how to vote, is available in formats that are accessible to disabled people such as those with visual impairments and people with learning difficulties. Reasonable steps must be taken to ensure premises where voting takes place are accessible to people with reduced mobility. Processes and facilities to exercise voting rights by proxy or by post must also be accessible for disabled people in so far as this is reasonable and consistent with other legislative requirements. In addition, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), those carrying out public functions must have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity for disabled people.</p> <p>Election laws also specify measures for visually impaired voters. All polling stations are required to display a large print copy of the ballot paper, which voters are permitted to take into the voting booth. A companion or member of polling station staff is permitted to read out the list of candidate names. Visually impaired voters can be assisted to the polling booth and ballot box. Each polling station is required to provide a tactile voting device to help visually impaired voters cast their votes.</p> <p>Source:  <a href="https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/equality-and-human-rights-law-during-an-election-period.pdf">https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/equality-and-human-rights-law-during-an-election-period.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Our aim:</b>                  Plymouth City Council aims to make voting as accessible to everyone as possible, with a focus on the harder to reach groups of voters with disabilities within the electorate.</p>				

	<p>The introduction of the Elections Bill sees the introduction of Voter ID for elections held from 4 May 2023. There is a further tranche of provisions for elections held from 2 May 2024. The Cabinet Office have completed an EIA for all elements of the Elections Bill. <a href="https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-02/0138/2021-07-01/ElectorallIntegrityBillEqualityImpactAssessment.pdf">https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-02/0138/2021-07-01/ElectorallIntegrityBillEqualityImpactAssessment.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Our objectives:</b></p> <p>Plymouth City Council have set out the following objectives;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No barriers to voting for people with a disability</li> <li>2. Everyone can vote on their own and in secret</li> <li>3. People with disabilities know about their voting rights, that they can vote and can have support to vote</li> <li>4. Carers and Support Workers know how to support the people they care for when they vote</li> </ol> <p>People running elections understand the needs of people with disabilities and how to make it easy for people with disabilities to register and vote</p>
<b>Decision required:</b>	EIA for Polling Districts, Places and Stations Review 2023

**SECTION TWO: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING TOOL**

<b>Potential external impacts:</b> Does the proposal have the potential to negatively impact service users, communities or residents with protected characteristics?	<b>Yes</b>	X	<b>No</b>	
<b>Potential internal impacts:</b> Does the proposal have the potential to negatively impact Plymouth City Council employees?	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	X
Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required? (if you have answered yes to either of the questions above then a full impact assessment is required and you must complete section three)	<b>Yes</b>	X	<b>No</b>	
If you do not agree that a full equality impact assessment is required, please set out your justification for why not.				

**SECTION THREE: FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Protected characteristics (Equality Act, 2010)	Evidence and information (e.g. data and consultation feedback)	Adverse impact	Mitigation activities	Timescale and responsible department
<b>Age</b>	<p>Plymouth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16.4 per cent of people in Plymouth are children aged under 15.</li> <li>• 65.1 per cent are adults aged 15 to 64.</li> <li>• 18.5 percent are adults aged 65 and over.</li> <li>• 2.4 percent of the resident population are 85 and over.</li> </ul> <p>South West</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15.9 per cent of people are aged 0 to 14, 61.8 per cent are aged 15 to 64.</li> <li>• 22.3 per cent are aged 65 and over.</li> </ul> <p>England</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17.4 per cent of people are aged 0 to 14.</li> <li>• 64.2 per cent of people are aged 15 to 64.</li> <li>• 18.4 per cent of people are aged 65 and over.</li> </ul> <p>(2021 Census)</p>	<p>The way information is accessed may vary between groups of different age. Solely providing information by digital means may prevent some segments of this population from accessing information.</p> <p>For many residents, participating in the polling process is synonymous with attending a polling station. This can be a means of socialising that some residents prefer to postal voting.</p> <p>Old age also brings about physical challenges that are described in the disability paragraph of this report. Those may prevent individuals from accessing polling stations and must be mitigated against.</p>	<p>Access to PDPPR information must be facilitated for all age groups.</p>	<p>November 2023 publishing of the public consultation</p> <p>September 2024 publishing of the review's outcomes</p> <p>Electoral Services</p>

<p><b>Care experienced individuals</b></p> <p>(Note that as per the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care recommendations, Plymouth City Council is treating care experience as though it is a protected characteristic).</p>	<p>It is estimated that 26 per cent of the homeless population in the UK have care experience. In Plymouth there are currently 7 per cent of care leavers open to the service (6 per cent aged 18-20 and 12 per cent of those aged 21+) who are in unsuitable accommodation.</p> <p>The Care Review reported that 41 per cent of 19-21 year old care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to 12 per cent of all other young people in the same age group.</p> <p>In Plymouth there are currently 50 per cent of care leavers aged 18-21 Not in Education Training or Employment (54 per cent of all those care leavers aged 18-24 who are open to the service).</p> <p>There are currently 195 care leavers aged 18 to 20 (statutory service) and 58 aged 21 to 24 (extended offer). There are more care leavers aged 21 to 24 who could return for support from services if they wished to.</p>	<p>The review is not anticipated to have any adverse impact on care experienced individuals</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
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<p><b>Disability</b></p>	<p>9.4 per cent of residents in Plymouth have their activities limited ‘a lot’ because of a physical or mental health problem.</p> <p>12.2 per cent of residents in Plymouth have their activities limited ‘a little’ because of a physical or mental health problem (2021 Census)</p>	<p>People with disabilities will have important views and helpful suggestions as to the accessibility of Polling Stations which must be captured by the review. The review is anticipated to have a positive impact on those groups.</p> <p><b>Autism / (ASD):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May show no external symptoms</li> <li>• May experience challenges when trying to communicate their needs</li> <li>• Will have different needs to anyone else with Autism</li> </ul> <p><b>Chronic Illness:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May show no external symptoms</li> <li>• May have fluctuating symptoms and needs within short periods of time</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing impairments, hearing loss and deafness:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People who are British Sign Language users may not have English as a first language. They may struggle to understand signs, posters and instructions written in English. They may have a lower comprehension of</li> </ul>	<p>For each of the following groups it is recommended that the review calls on views from representative support groups and charities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication and engagement campaign to promote the review</li> <li>• Consultation with disabled voters, local charities and organisations to ask what we can do to support elections for everyone; capture experiences of people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Work with disability organisations; to provide information in accessible formats. Visits to PADAN and contribution to newsletter.</li> <li>• Use historical information collected from Presiding Officers detailed any advice / help offered to people with disabilities so we can track how many people have been helped to vote and</li> </ul>	<p>6 November to 18 December 2023: publishing of the review consultation on our website</p> <p>Electoral Services</p> <p>May 2026: implementation of the Review’s recommendations.</p> <p>Electoral Services</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobility difficulties inside a polling station</li> </ul> <p><b>Speech and Language disorders:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not be able to find or say the words they want to in order to communicate their needs</li> <li>• May experience challenges when trying to communicate their needs</li> <li>• May not have the confidence to share their views</li> </ul> <p><b>Visual impairments, vision loss and blindness:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not be able to read the proposals for change and maps</li> <li>• May experience challenges reading information on our website</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Gender reassignment</b></p>	<p>0.5 per cent of residents in Plymouth have a gender identity that is different from their sex registered at birth. 0.1 per cent of residents identify as a trans man, 0.1 per cent identify as non-binary and, 0.1 per cent identify as a trans women (2021 Census).</p>	<p>The review is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on any of the issues related to gender reassignment</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>



<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	<p>40.1 per cent of residents have never married and never registered a civil partnership. 10 per cent are divorced, 6 percent are widowed, with 2.5 per cent are separated but still married.</p> <p>0.49 per cent of residents are, or were, married or in a civil partnerships of the same sex. 0.06 per cent of residents are in a civil partnerships with the opposite sex (2021 Census).</p>	The review is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on any of the issues related to marriage and civil partnership	N/A	N/A
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	The total fertility rate (TFR) for England was 1.62 children per woman in 2021. The total fertility rate (TFR) for Plymouth in 2021 was 1.5.	<p>The review is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on any of the issues related to pregnancy and maternity.</p> <p>Accessibility of polling stations should be the same for families with young children (possibly with pushchairs) as for any other residents.</p>	Where practicable, ensure that our polling stations are push chair friendly	<p>May 2026 implementation of the Review's recommendations.</p> <p>Electoral services.</p>
<b>Race</b>	<p>In 2021, 94.9 per cent of Plymouth's population identified their ethnicity as White, 2.3 per cent as Asian and 1.1 per cent as Black (2021 Census)</p> <p>People with a mixed ethnic background comprised 1.8 per cent of the population. 1 per cent of the population use a different term to describe their ethnicity (2021 Census)</p> <p>92.7 per cent of residents speak English as their main language. 2021 Census data shows that after English, Polish, Romanian, Chinese, Portuguese, and Arabic are the most spoken languages in Plymouth (2021 Census).</p>	The review is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on any of the issues related to race	N/A	N/A

<b>Religion or belief</b>	48.9 per cent of the Plymouth population stated they had no religion. 42.5 per cent of the population identified as Christian (2021 Census). Those who identified as Muslim account for 1.3 per cent of Plymouth’s population while Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish or Sikh combined totalled less than 1 per cent (2021 Census).	Many of the existing polling stations in Plymouth are located in Christian churches or church halls. This may have an impact on residents of other faiths who may not feel welcome or may not want to enter such places.	As much as practicable, ensure that polling stations are located in venues that are secular.  Ensure that churches are used only when strictly necessary, and with awareness of the potential impact on the local community.	May 2026 implementation of the Review’s recommendations.  Electoral Services
<b>Sex</b>	51 per cent of our population are women and 49 per cent are men (2021 Census).	The review is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on any of the issues related to sex	N/A	N/A
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	88.95 per cent of residents aged 16 years and over in Plymouth describe their sexual orientation as straight or heterosexual. 2.06 per cent describe their sexuality as bisexual, 1.97 per cent of people describe their sexual orientation as gay or lesbian. 0.42 per cent of residents describe their sexual orientation using a different term (2021 Census).	The review is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on any of the issues related to sexual orientation	N/A	N/A

**SECTION FOUR: HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

<b>Human Rights</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Mitigation Actions</b>	<b>Timescale and responsible department</b>
	The Human Rights Act 1998 conveys the right to participate in free elections and the right not to be discriminated against. The review of Polling District and Polling Stations intends to have positive implications on the exercise of this human right. The actions taken during the review of our polling stations and polling district intend to remove or minimise any barriers	N/A	November 2023 (consultation) until May 2026 (implementation)

	<p>to access for residents, thus preventing disenfranchisement.</p> <p>Equality and human rights law, protection for freedom of expression.</p> <p>The right to freedom of expression does not justify incitement to racial or religious violence or hatred, or other unlawful conduct. The right to freedom of expression cannot be at the expense of the rights and freedoms of others.</p>		
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**SECTION FIVE: OUR EQUALITY OBJECTIVES**

Equality objectives	Implications	Mitigation Actions	Timescale and responsible department
<p><b>Work together in partnership to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ promote equality, diversity and inclusion</li> <li>▪ facilitate community cohesion</li> <li>▪ support people with different backgrounds and lived experiences to get on well together</li> </ul>	<p>Electors with disabilities can access the democratic process. This contributes to ensure Plymouth is a welcoming city.</p>		<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Electoral Services</p>
<p><b>Give specific consideration to care experienced people to improve their life outcomes, including access to training, employment and housing.</b></p>	<p>No adverse implications</p>	<p>No action required</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Build and develop a diverse workforce that represents the community and citizens it serves.</b></p>	<p>No adverse implications</p>	<p>No action required</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Support diverse communities to feel confident to report crime and anti-social behaviour, including hate crime and hate incidents, and work with partners to</b></p>	<p>Promoting the fact that everyone is different and ensuring that the service meets the needs of individuals at a sensitive time.</p>	<p>Ensure that we can consider how best to meet the needs of all communities in the city as part of the service delivery model</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Electoral Services</p>

<b>ensure Plymouth is a city where everybody feels safe and welcome.</b>			
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