**Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council**

**Section 75 Equality and Good Relations Screening**

**Part 1. Information about the activity/policy/project being screened**

# **Name of the activity/policy/project**

# Centralisation of Registration Service to one office at Lagan Valley Island (LVI), Lisburn.

# **Is this activity/policy/project – an existing one, a revised one, a new one?**

This is a revised policy due to the need to have the registration team operating from one central office.

**What are the intended aims/outcomes the activity/policy/project is trying to achieve?**

Previously there have been two Registration offices, one at Bradford Court, Castlereagh and one at Lagan Valley Island. The aim of the proposal is to centralise the service to achieve a better standard of service and more efficient operating model for the Council.

**Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the registration of births, deaths and marriages were facilitated at both Lagan Valley Island and Bradford Court. One member of staff was permanently located at Bradford Court (Senior Deputy Registrar) with the service provided on a smaller scale than at LVI.

**Current Arrangement**

As a result of the pandemic, the following arrangements have been in place since June 2020;

* All birth registrations take place in Lisburn Registration offices only at LVI.
* All deaths are registered by phone. This will continue until at least March 2022 in line with legislation.
* All marriage ceremony bookings, notices and relevant paperwork are facilitated at Bradford Court only.
* Wedding ceremonies continue to take place at LVI and approved venues.

It is proposed that all Registration Services are now located at LVI, Lisburn. The benefits of this arrangement are:

* More effective management of staff on one site rather than the Manager working across two locations.
* More flexibility and efficiency in staffing arrangements and better team working.
* Certainty and clarity for customers in relation to access to registration services.
* Providing opportunity to make more effective use of Bradford court and increase income through rental arrangements.

The centralisation of the service will mean that all Registration Services will be carried out at LVI from an agreed date to be confirmed.

**Who is the activity/policy/project targeted at and who will benefit? Are there any expected benefits for specific Section 75 categories/groups from this activity/policy/project? If so, please explain.**

The proposed centralisation is intended to benefit all service users / patrons wishing to avail of the Registration Service of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council. It is not targeted at any particular Section 75 group(s). Having the Service in one location will ensure better, more robust service and all staff in one location will ensure a more efficient service. All physical appointments will be facilitated with ease at Lagan Valley Island, due to having additional assistance with a Concierge/Security/Cleaners/Receptionist-Booking Clerk and facilities management to have rooms available, etc.

**Who initiated or developed the activity/policy/project?**

Lagan Valley Island, Corporate Communications and Administration, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

**Who owns and who implements the activity/policy/project?**

Owned by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

To be implemented by Registration Service, Corporate Communication & Administration Department.

**Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the activity/policy/project?**

No

**If yes, are they: financial, legislative, other? Give brief details of any significant factors.**

**Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the activity/policy/project will impact upon?**

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| Staff  | Registration Team which includes:1 x Registrar1 x Senior Deputy Registrar (the only staff member who was located at Bradford Court prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.)4 x p/t Deputy Registrars1 x Admin Assistant/ Deputy Registrar |
| Service Users  | Customers who use the service to register births, deaths, still-births, marriages and civil partnerships |
| Other Public Sector Organisations – please list  | General Registrar Office (GRO)Other registration offices  |
| Voluntary/Community/Trade Unions – please list | N/A  |
| Other – please list (eg, Elected Members, delivery partners, contractors, etc) | N/A  |

**Other policies/strategies/plans with a bearing on this activity/policy/project**

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| --- | --- |
| **Name policy/strategy/plan** | **Who owns or implements?** |
| COVID 19 Regulations | NI Executive |
| LCCC INTERIM Corporate Plan 2021-24 | LCCC  |
| LCCC Community Plan 2017 / 2032 | LCCC |
| LCCC Equality Scheme & associated equality policies & plans | HR & OD |
| GDPR | IT |
| Lagan Valley Island Emergency Evacuation Procedures | LVI Facilities Management Unit |
| ChaSP No. 1 Health and Safety | LCCC Corporate Health & Safety |
| ChaSP No. 2 Risk Assessment | LCCC Corporate Health & Safety |

**Available evidence**

**What evidence/information (qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered or considered to inform this activity/policy? Specify details for each Section 75 category.**

In developing this proposal, LCCC demographic information has been considered. The impact of the operation of the service across two locations and the changes as a result of COVID-19 on customers and staff has also been taken into account.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, one member of registration team was located at Bradford Court and the number of appointments from this office had significantly reduced.

Statistics provided by NISRA/GRO indicate that the majority of birth/death registrations facilitated at the Bradford Court office were from outside the LCCC area.

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The Registration Team completes the legal paperwork, Official Notice of Intention to Marry, for all religious ceremonies taking place with the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area. Since the beginning of the pandemic, all couples send their paperwork in by post and only have to attend the office once, when collecting the paperwork (marriage schedule) for the wedding. They return the marriage schedule by Freepost. Normally, there would have been three visits to the office. Couples have indicated that they are very happy to attend only once.

Due to staffing pressures, it would be much more effective to provide the service from one location to ensure annual leave and sickness absence can be covered with no impact on service delivery.

It should be noted, that all birth appointments for residents in the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council have been facilitated at Lagan Valley Island from 1st June 2020 due to COVID-19 and no complaints have been received from any residents during this time. The team have also only been registering births for those babies born in the LCCC district (except in exceptional circumstances) which has resulted in a significant drop in this figure.

Marriages can only be registered in the district where they are due to take place. Moving this service to the Lisburn Registration Office should have minimal impact on residents as has been demonstrated during COVID-19, where the process was only undertaken at the Castlereagh Office and no complaints have been received during this time.

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| Sec 75 Category | Details of evidence/information |
| Religious Belief | Census 2011 data for LCCC – 23.95% of the LCCC population were brought up in the Catholic religion and 66.9% were brought up in the Protestant & Other Christian religions. 9.14% identified as no religion or ‘other non-Christian’ |
| Political Opinion | Local Gov elections 2019 - Elected representatives on LCCC (40): DUP – 15; UUP – 11; Alliance – 9; SDLP – 2; Sinn Fein – 2; Green Party NI – 1.Vote share: 37.5% - DUP; 27.5% - UUP; 22.5% - APNI; 5% - SDLP; 5% - Sinn Fein; and 2.5% - Green Party. |
| Racial Group | Census 2011 data suggests approximately 2% of the population are from a Black or Minority Ethnic group. LCCC has small populations of different nationalities, including a small number of Syrian Refugees who have come here through the government resettlement scheme. |
| Age | Census 2011 data on age of LCCC population:0-15 years - 20.3%16-64 years – 62.3%65+ years – 17.4%LCCC has slightly higher than national average of people over 65 years, with 2% of older people over 85 years. |
| Marital Status | Census data: 36% single; 51% married (including civil partnership); 3% separated; 4% divorced; 6% widowed |
| Sexual Orientation | No official Census statistics. ONS 2017 suggest approx. 2% of the population identify as LGB. [Sexual orientation, UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2017#main-points) |
| Men & Women Generally | LCCC population reflects the national picture – 51% female (Census data) |
| Disability | Just over 18% of the LCCC population declared a disability or long term health condition that impacts their day to day activities (Census data) |
| Dependants | People with dependants may have personal responsibility for the care of a child (or children), a person with a disability, and/or a dependent older person. Census data for LCCC 2011 suggests 46.3% of residents have dependants. |

### Needs, experiences and priorities

**Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular activity/policy/decision? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories**

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| **Section 75 Category** | **Details of needs/experiences/priorities** |
| Religious Belief | No different needs identified by religious group.  |
| Political Opinion | No different needs based on political opinion.  |
| Racial Group | Some people from minority ethnic communities may have specific needs in relation to language barriers and may need additional help with understanding registration requirements or to access services. This is currently addressed by the use of translation and interpreting services where appropriate and will continue should the service be centralised. |
| Age | Some older people may need additional help to understand information or registration procedures.  |
| Marital Status | No specific needs have been associated with the marital status category. |
| Sexual Orientation | No specific needs have been associated with the sexual orientation category. |
| Men & Women Generally | No different needs have been identified for male and female service users. |
| Disability | Those with a disability may have specific needs regarding access to information and physical access to our buildings. The LVI site provides enhanced accessibility for people with a range of disabilities, including disabled parking and the provision of a ‘Changing Places’ facility. The assistance of the concierge is also available. Information and forms can be provided in alternative formats and longer appointments are available where applicable. |
| Dependants | No specific needs have been associated with the dependants category but some people with dependants benefit from accessibility measures that are primarily targeted at older people. The facilities at LVI are better able to accommodate parents with buggies/prams etc. Dependants can attend appointments as and when required. |

**Part 2. Screening questions**

**1 What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this activity/policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories**

The registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships is a service used by all, regardless of race, religion, political opinion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, etc.

Legally, births can be registered in any office in Northern Ireland, providing the baby was born in Northern Ireland. This is by a physical appointment. For the last 18 months, birth registration appointments have taken place in Lisburn Registration Office for the whole district. There have been no complaints to date.

Death registrations are currently completed by telephone, under COVID-19 Pandemic Legislation. At present deaths are only registered for those who reside in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area. Should it revert back to physical appointments, the informant can register the death in any office in Northern Ireland. Prior to the pandemic, two thirds of the deaths registered in Bradford Court, were by residents of Belfast City Council.

Other Registration Offices in the surrounding areas where customers can register births/deaths include: Bangor, Belfast, Banbridge, Craigavon and Newtownabbey offices.

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| **Section 75 Category** | **Details of impact** | **Level of impact** |
| Religious Belief | The centralisation is unlikely to cause significant impact and is likely to provide a better service.  | Minor |
| Political Opinion | The centralisation is unlikely to have a significant impact and is likely to provide a better service.  | Minor |
| Racial Group | No differential impact identified. The centralisation is likely to provide better facilities and a better customer experience for service users.  | Minor |
| Age | Some older people may be slightly inconvenienced by having to travel further to LVI if they choose. Alternative registry offices may be more convenient or attendance in person is not required. For example, the Registration of deaths is currently being completed by telephone and all information is provided by telephone and through the post.  | Minor |
| Marital Status | no differential impacts identified | None |
| Sexual Orientation | no differential impacts identified | None |
| Men & Women Generally | no differential impacts identified | None |
| Disability | While a small number of disabled people may be inconvenienced if they choose to travel further to LVI, the relocation is likely to provide better facilities in terms of accessibility and a better customer experience. They may also use other council registration facilities that may be more convenient. If issues arise they will be addressed. For example, the concierge at LVI can provide additional support to visitors who attend in person.  | Minor |
| Dependants | No differential impact identified. The facilities at LVI may provide a better experience for visitors with dependants.  | Minor |

**2(a) Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?**

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| **Section 75 Category** | **IF Yes, provide details** | **If No, provide details** |
| Religious Belief |  | The registration service is available to all sections of the community. The changes as a result of the relocation will apply equally to all groups within the Section 75 equality categories, as we will be able to provide a more efficient, more robust service with appropriate staffing to ensure continual delivery of the service |
| Political Opinion |  |
| Racial Group |  |
| Age |  |
| Marital Status |  |
| Sexual Orientation |  |
| Men & Women Generally |  |
| Disability |  |
| Dependants |  |

**2(b) DDA Disability Duties (see Disability Action Plan 2021-2025)**

Does this policy/activity present opportunities to contribute to the actions in our Disability Action Plan:

* to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

Potentially yes. There is greater accessibility provision at LVI which may encourage more people with disabilities to engage directly with services. Increased visibility may contribute to more positive attitudes.

* to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?

Potentially yes. The facilities and features at Lagan Valley Island for disabled people include parking, access, ground level seating, disabled toilets, ‘Changing Places’ toilet provision and concierge support. This enables disabled people to actively engage with the services provided by the Registration team. Disabled service users can be asked for feedback on services – this contributes to the Disability Action Plan.

**3 To what extent is the activity/policy/project likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

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| **Good Relations Category** | **Details of likely impact. Will it be positive or negative?** [if no specific impact identified, say none] | **Level of impact –** **minor/major\*** |
| Religious Belief | The centralisation of the registration service will not impact on good relations | None |
| Political Opinion |
| Racial Group |

**4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Good Relations Category** | **IF Yes, provide details** | **If No, provide details** |
| Religious Belief |  | NoThe registration service will be available to all NI citizens regardless of their religious belief, political opinion or racial group. The changes in service provision do not relate specifically to any of these characteristics. |
| Political Opinion |
| Racial Group |

**Multiple identity**

**Provide details of any data on the impact of the activity/policy/project on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.**

The Council recognises that no individual is exclusive to just one group; and this has been given consideration with respect to this proposal.

Some people with multiple identities may particularly benefit from the relocation of the registration service to Lagan Valley Island, for example older people who are also disabled.

**Part 3. Screening decision/outcome**

Equality and good relations screening is used to identify whether there is a need to carry out a full equality impact assessment on a proposed policy or project. There are 3 possible outcomes:

1. **Screen out** - no need for a full equality impact assessment and no mitigations required because no negative impacts identified (or only entirely positive impacts for all groups). This may be the case for a purely technical policy for example.
2. **Screen out with mitigation** - no need for a full equality impact assessment but some minor impacts identified which can easily be mitigated. Most activity will probably fall into this category.
3. **Screen in for full equality impact assessment** – potential for significant (and potentially negative) impact identified for one or more groups so proposal requires a more detailed impact assessment. [see Equality Commission guidance on justifying a screening decision.]

**Choose only one of these** and provide reasons for your decision and ensure evidence is noted/referenced for any decision reached.

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| **Screening Decision/Outcome**  | **Reasons/Evidence** |
| Option 1**Screen out** – no equality impact assessment and no mitigation required  |  |
| Option 2**Screen out with mitigation** – some potential impacts identified but they can be addressed with appropriate mitigation  | Equality screening has concluded that the relocation of the registration service should not have a negative impact for any section of the community who have a need to access the service.  In fact, it is likely that there will be some benefits from the service being centralised at LVI, including an improved customer experience.  Some potential service users may experience minor inconvenience if they are no longer able to access the service at Bradford Court but there are alternatives for most services and we can consider mitigations if the need arises. |
| Option 3**Screen in** for a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)  |  |

**Mitigation (Only relevant to Option 2)**

**Can the activity/policy/project plan be amended or an alternative activity/policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?** [Can you take specific mitigating steps that will address the potential issues/needs identified through screening?]

Mitigations are already in place for service users who have particular needs (including in relation to age, disability and language barriers) and we will try to accommodate service users who experience difficulties as a result of the centralisation.  The service will be monitored and further mitigations considered if difficulties arise for any group of service user.

**Timetabling and prioritising for EQIA (only relevant to Option 3)**

**Not applicable**

**Is the activity/policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? No**

**Part 4. Monitoring**

**Two elements to monitoring:**

1. **Monitoring the activity generally as part of normal review and evaluation or service improvement and 2) monitoring by equality category.**

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission’s Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the activity/policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Effective monitoring will help the public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the activity/policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and activity/policy development.

**Who will undertake and sign-off the monitoring of this activity/policy and on what frequency? What will be monitored and how? What specific equality monitoring will be done? Please give details belo**w:

The service will be monitored by the Administration Manager on an ongoing basis. Any issues reported by different equality groups in the event that we have not identified potential issues through this screening exercise will be addressed.

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| --- | --- |
| Will be undertaken by:Name & Position/Job Title: | Frequency (eg. Annually): |
| Stephanie Kelly – Administration Manager | QuarterlyThe operation of the service will be monitored and action taken if anything issues arise. |
| Will be signed-off by: |  |
| Name & HoS Title: | Frances Byrne – HoS CC&A |

**Part 5 - Approval and authorisation**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Screened by:** | **Position/Job Title**  | **Date** |
| Insert name (s) | Administration Manager/ Stephanie Kelly | 11.10.21 |
|  |  |  |
| Reviewed by | Equality Officer/Mary McSorley | 11.10.21 |
| **Approved by:** | Frances Byrne |  |
| Frances Byrne | Head of Service Corporate Communications and Administration | 16.10.21 |

Note: On completion of the screening exercise, a copy of the completed Screening Report should be:

* ‘signed off’ and approved by a senior manager responsible for the activity/policy
* sent to the Equality Officer for the quarterly screening report to consultees and internal reporting
* published on the LCCC website accompanied by a copy of the policy/project/plan being screened
* made available to the public on request.

Evidence referenced in the screening report should also be available if requested.

Appendix 1 – Equality Commission guidance on equality impact

\*Major impact:

1. The policy/project is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
2. Potential equality matters are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
3. Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
4. Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
5. The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
6. The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

Minor impact

1. The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
2. The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
3. Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
4. By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

No impact (none)

1. The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations;
2. The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.