Equality Impact Assessment Template

Before carrying out EqIA, you should familiarise yourself with the University's EqIA Policy Statement and Guidance and Checklist Notes, and undertake our online training on Equality and Diversity and EqIA. These, along with further information and resources, are available at www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity/impact-assessment

EqIA covers policies, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services, but will be referred to as 'policy/practice' hereinafter.

A. Policy/Practice (name or brief description):   **Change in operations of the Student Counselling Service within Murchison House to accommodate social distancing requirements due to Covid-19 pandemic**
B. Reason for Equality Impact Asessment (Mark **yes** against the applicable reason):   • Proposed new policy/practice   • Proposed change to an existing policy/practice (changing the way the Student Counselling Service operates to incorporate social distancing guidelines)   • Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice   • Other (please state):
C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice: Name: Ronnie Millar   Job title: Director of Counselling Services   School/service/unit: Student Counselling Service
D. An Impact Assessment should be carried out if any if the following apply to the policy/practice, if it: • affects primary or high level functions of the University   • is relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' as set out in the Policy and Guidance)?   • It is one which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqIA?
E. Equality Groups   To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (add notes against the following applicable equality group/s)   • Age - YES   • Disability - YES   • race (including ethnicity and nationality) - YES   • religion or belief - No   • sex - YES

- sexual orientation – YES
- gender reassignment - YES
- pregnancy and maternity - YES
- marriage or civil partnership[1]   NO

Notes against applicable equality groups

AGE: Evidence that the susceptibility of individuals to Covid-19 increases with increasing age. Robust, consistent operating procedures will reduce this risk and provide reassurance to this group. Travel to and from work using public transport may be more difficult and risky for older individuals. Mitigated by altering opening hours to reduce peak use of public transport and encouragement to use other methods of transport when possible (e.g. walking, cycling, private car) and provision of shower facilities for cyclists.

DISABILITY:
The one-way circulation system implemented to maintain social distancing will create longer walking routes around building. This could impact negatively on those people with impaired mobility.

The use of face coverings may not be possible for some users, making access to physical service more difficult. Users with underlying health conditions may be reluctant to access on site services. Retaining on line and telephone consultations will allows students in these circumstances to access an equivalent service.

Staff with underlying health conditions will continue to work from home delivering our digital offer.

Signage in the building is that developed by the University, produced in consultation with the University's Disability Service and with accessibility addressed.

RACE (including ethnicity and nationality)
There is evidence that BAME individuals are more susceptible to Covid-19 and experience higher mortality rates. Robust, consistent operating procedures will reduce this risk and provide reassurance to this group.

BAME users may be reluctant to access on site services. Retaining on line video and telephone consultations, will allows students in these circumstances to access an equivalent service.

SEX
There is strong evidence to show that during the Covid-19 pandemic, women have taken on higher levels of caring responsibilities, *e.g.* childcare, home schooling, elderly care. Accommodating personal circumstances in rotas and work locations will help this, however this is balanced with possible health and safety issues with regard to being asked to continue to work at home in unsuitable work spaces or feeling isolated.

Staff have completed at home working and return to campus self-assessment and training videos. This enables staff to set up their existing home working environment as best as possible. We have facilitated the safe retrieval of items (e.g. office chairs, monitors, keyboards, etc.) from buildings to support this.

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[1] Note: only the duty to eliminate discrimination applies to marriage and civil partnership. There is no need to have regard to advancing equality or opportunity or fostering good relations in this respect.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION:
Some LGBT+ people may be hiding aspects of their lives from people that they are living with. The requirement to continue to work from home may cause disproportionate feelings of isolation and mental health and wellbeing problems for LBGT+ people. Staff are made aware of wellbeing resources. Staff are reminded if they use a rainbow lanyard to continue to do so in remote interactions with both students and colleagues.

PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY
Pregnant women have been included in the list of people at moderate risk (clinically vulnerable) as a precaution. The Service will comply with health and safety and absence leave requirements for pregnancy and maternity. A risk assessment will be undertaken for all pregnant workers and new mothers.

- **On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups:**

The requirement to create a socially distant workplace is not a challenge that the Student Counselling Service faces alone. We will respond to University wide guidance.

- **Any gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how this be will be addressed:**

Continue to monitor usage data, invite feedback from users and have regular line management conversations with staff to identify and address any issues, in what is a dynamic situation.

- **If application of this policy/practice leads to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups:**

The implementation of this new practice has the potential to impact indirectly on inclusion. We believe these impacts are justified in achieving the aim of protecting staff and students from Covid-19 illness and mitigating the spread of infection. And that we have reduced the impact on marginalised groups wherever possible. We will be monitoring the impacts on equality to identify any further mitigating actions.

- **If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity[2]**

The new practice should enable students and staff from all equality groups to resume an element of physical service delivery in addition to the digital provision.

- **If there is an opportunity in applying this policy/practice to foster good relations**

Applying this practice and ensuring its good communication will provide reassurance to **all** staff and students that their health, safety, and well-being are being prioritised, and that issues of equality have been carefully considered. Continued support for staff to work from home, work flexibly can foster good relations with those for whom these flexible working practices allow them to maintain good work-life balance.   Digital provision increases access for some groups, e.g. commuter students, those with caring requirements.

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[2] This question does not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership

- **How the communication of the policy/practice is made accessible to all groups, if relevant?**

Briefing document and information sessions for all staff. Web and email information for students.

- **How equality groups or communities are involved in the development, review and/or monitoring of the policy or practice?**

The service Director has provided updates to all staff via regular email bulletins, and questionnaires re returning to work. Line managers have had regular discussions with their teams. Through these interactions staff have been involved in and updated on planning and are able to ask questions, make suggestions and raise concerns. We have made use of information from university and external survey on student views and concerns, and are in contact with EUSA Reps. Operations will initially be reviewed fortnightly on implementation.

- **Any potential or actual impact of applying the policy or practice, with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and promote good relations:**

Applying this practice and ensuring its good communication will provide reassurance to all staff and students that their health, safety, and well-being are being prioritised, and that issues of equality have been carefully considered.

F. Equality Impact Assessment Outcome

Select one of the four options below to indicate how the development/review of the policy/practice will be progressed and state the rationale for the decision

Option 1: No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.

Option 2: Adjust the policy or practice – this involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality and/or to foster good relations.

Option 3: Continue the policy or practice despite the potential for adverse impact, and which can be mitigated/or justified

Option 4: Stop the policy or practice as there are adverse effects cannot be prevented/mitigated/or justified.

G. Action and Monitoring

1. **Specify the actions required for implementing findings of this EqIA and how the policy or practice will be monitored in relation to its equality impact (or note where this is specified above).**

Actions have incorporated into the Service Operational Plan for Resuming on campus delivery at Murchison House.

2. **When will the policy/practice next be reviewed?**

    The practices will initially be reviewed fortnightly on implementation, and then on a monthly basis. Responsibility for monitoring and implementation of any changes rests with the EDI Committee, Head of Service, Health & Safety Manager, and Technical Services Manager.

H. Publication of EqIA

Can this EqIA be published in full, now? Yes

If No – please specify when it may be published or indicate restrictions that apply:

I. Sign-off

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)):

Accepted by (name): Ronnie Millar, Director of Counselling Services

Date: 14/09/20

Retain a copy of this form for your own records and send a copy to
equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk