

# EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS (EqIAA)

## REVIEW OF ONE STOP SHOPS AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

### SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

#### Service description

Customer Services is often described as the customer face of the council, receiving almost half a million enquiries per annum. It plays a crucial role in influencing the perception customers have of the council. It comprises of four One Stop Shops (OSS) that are strategically placed across the borough and the council's Corporate Contact Centre. The OSS service resolves customer enquiries that are received face to face, often these relate to more complex issues and the majority of customers are from the council's priority neighbourhoods. The Contact Centre receives incoming calls and emails for a wide range of services. Both areas deal with a wide range of enquiries including benefits, council tax, housing, waste and school admissions.

Customer services, including one stop shops (OSS) and the Contact Centre have been identified as an area where a further saving of £60,000 a year by October 2017 could be found on top of £230,000 of savings which have already been achieved or are currently being implemented since 2014. These savings have predominantly been made from a substantial reduction in management and supervisory posts impacting both the Contact Centre and the OSS, along with a reduction in Contact Centre officer posts.

The consultation document in relation to the review of One Stop Shops and Customer Services provided details about One Stop Shops and Customer Services and the options being investigated which are as follows:

1. **Option 1:** Closure of the Thornbury OSS and replacement with a digital by default option – this is the council's preferred option at this stage, or
2. **Option 2:** Part time opening of Thornbury and also either Patchway or Yate, or
3. **Option 3:** Further reduction of up to 3 FTE in the Corporate Contact Centre, equivalent to a 12.5% reduction in current contact centre resources, equivalent to a 46% reduction overall in recent years.

## **SECTION 2 – RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION**

### **Research**

#### **Kingswood**

Analysis of our data shows that the Kingswood One Stop Shop (OSS) receives the most customer enquiries, handling 30,877 enquiries during 2015/16 financial year; that is equivalent to 42% of all OSS queries, and that the majority of these are for the most pressing and serious issues (Benefits, Housing and Council Tax queries).

#### **Yate**

Yate is the second busiest OSS in terms of the number of queries handled, handling 19,070 during the 2015/16 financial year; equivalent to 26% of all enquiries. As with Kingswood OSS, a high proportion of these enquiries are for the more pressing and serious issues.

#### **Patchway**

Patchway is the third busiest OSS in terms of enquires received, handling 14,438 enquiries during 2015/16 financial year; equivalent to 20% of all enquiries. Patchway is sited well to serve the new major development on Filton airfield and the Priority Neighbourhood nearby and is seeing an increasing demand over time for its services since it first opened. OSS visitor numbers have increased from around 600-700per month when first opened to a current average in 2015/16 of 1,250per month.

#### **Thornbury**

Thornbury OSS receives nearly 8,640 queries per annum, equivalent to 12% of all OSS enquiries. However, analysis of our data shows the Thornbury OSS handles lower levels of complex enquiries related to key topics such as housing benefit; council tax; housing and homelessness than the other three OSS.

#### **The Contact Centre**

The Contact Centre is the first point of contact for customers wishing to resolve their enquiry by telephone, responsible for a range of enquiries including benefits, waste, housing, school admissions and registrars.

Currently our performance measured against key performance indicators is mixed when compared with other councils. In recent years as savings have been delivered performance has deteriorated against indicators relating to wait times and abandoned call rates. Performance is stronger against other indicators and productivity measures which indicate that our staff handle around 14,000 enquiries per officer when compared to other councils who handle around 9-10,000 enquiries per officer.

In-line with Council Policy, data is collected in relation to the protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Race and Sex. Data in relation to Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Religion or Belief and Sexual Orientation is not collected in respect of OSS and Customer Services users as they are not believed to be relevant to the services offered; for example for many enquiries we would not require a customer's date of birth or other protected characteristic data – for example in relation to a missed bin collection. Instead, a more practical approach is taken whereby an equalities survey is issued with customer surveys. During 2014/15 these customer surveys were undertaken randomly as customers visited the offices.

The most recent data collected as a result of the equalities survey relates to Quarters 1, 2 and 3 of 2014/15. This is based on 150 OSS users (of 50,000 customer enquiries), and provides a 'snapshot' of OSS users. The data is shown in table 1 below:

**Table 1: Table to show the proportion of OSS users according to protected characteristic as compared to the population of South Gloucestershire.**

Protected Characteristic		% of users according to protected characteristic	% of South Gloucestershire population*
Sex	Female	66%	50.5%
	Male	34%	49.5%
Race	White British	84%	91.9%
	Non White British	15%	8.1%
	Ethnicity not known	1%	
Disability	Disabled	19%	15.6%
	Non-Disabled	81%	84.4%
	Not declared	0%	
Age	Under 18	0.6%	21.65%
	18 - 24	11%	8.59%
	25 - 44	41%	26.48%
	45 - 64	32%	26.38%
	65 – 74	9%	9.15%
	Over 75	6%	7.75%
	Prefer not to say	0%	

**NB. usage higher than the proportion of the South Gloucestershire population is highlighted.**

**\*Census 2011 data**

The data in Table 1 shows that those who are proportionately more likely to use One Stop Shops are:

- Females
- People from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds
- Disabled People
- People between the ages of 18 – 64, and in particular those between the ages of 25 – 44.

As such, people from these groups would be proportionately more likely to be impacted should any services reduce.

It is also noted that the data shows that people of all ages and backgrounds do use One Stop Shops.

In relation to option 1 (closure of the Thornbury OSS and replacement with a digital by default option), relevant information also includes points raised within the research report **“Understanding digital exclusion in South Gloucestershire: Data summary for South Gloucestershire digital inclusion strategy, April 2013”** which makes the following key findings:

*“...we can assume at a district level, there are key groups that will need to be treated as more likely to be digitally excluded than other residents, and there are concentrations of these types of populations located throughout South Gloucestershire”.*

*Digitally included / active traits in South Gloucestershire – the LSOAs with the top 10% online response rates tend to have:*

- People aged under 65 years, particularly those aged between 16 to 44 years
- People who are in employment
- Populations where there are more people with higher level qualifications
- More people in employment
- A higher percentage of the population whose main language is not English
- A lower proportion of people claiming key out-of-work benefits

*Digitally excluded / inactive traits in South Gloucestershire – based on the data analysed, the bottom 10% of online response rates do not show such clear traits as the highest 10%. These LSOAs tend to have:*

- People aged over 65 years, particularly those aged over 75 years
- People who have classed themselves as having a limiting illness
- Populations where there are more people with no qualifications
- People who are out of work or who are claiming out-of-work-benefits, particularly those who live in rural areas and are unable to access public provision of internet such as via libraries

This is confirmed via six consultation comments surrounding the issue of digital exclusion for older people which included such comments as:

- *Cutting is not the way forward, elderly people do not have IT knowledge.*

The Council’s Viewpoint survey conducted in 2012 received results which appear to confirm the findings of this research report of April 2013. The table below displays the Viewpoint survey results which show:

- People from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Background (BAME) are more likely to have never used the internet.
- Disabled People are more likely to have never used the internet.
- People over the age of 65 are more likely to have never used the internet.

**Table 2: Table to show responses to the Viewpoint question “How often do you use the internet?”**

Response	TOTAL	GENDER		ETHNICITY		DISABILITY		AGE				
	All	Male	Female	White	Non-White	Disabled	Non disabled	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 64	65+
Daily	66%	68%	65%	66%	44%	44%	71%	74%	88%	81%	61%	29%
A few times a week	15%	13%	17%	15%	17%	17%	15%	26%	9%	14%	17%	17%
Weekly	3%	3%	2%	3%	5%	4%	2%	0%	0%	2%	6%	2%
Fortnightly	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	2%
Monthly	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%	0%	0%	1%	3%	3%
Less often	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	0%	0%	1%	3%	5%
<b>Never</b>	10%	10%	10%	10%	<b>24%</b>	<b>26%</b>	7%	0%	2%	1%	8%	<b>41%</b>
Don't know	*%	*%	*%	*%	1%	0%	*%	0%	0%	0%	0%	*%
Not provided	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	2%

In addition to these research findings, the Council's most recent survey in relation to the Council Budget and Savings Programme (conducted from 9 Nov 2015 to 31 Jan 2016) provides the following information relevant to this review:

**People under the age of 45** are the most likely to agree with cost saving proposals:

- Changing working practices to make better use of technology and more efficient ways of working (91%)

**People from BAME backgrounds** were less likely than average to support:

- Changing working practices to make better use of technology and more efficient ways of working (70%)

**Disabled people** were the least likely of all to:

- Want to see more services available online (46%)

and were less likely than average to:

- Want to see changing working practices to make better use of technology and more efficient ways of working (72%)

It is noted that people aged 16 – 64, particularly those aged up to 44 are highly likely to use digital and internet based methods of customer service.

## Consultation

Consultation was held from 22<sup>nd</sup> February to 13<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

A dedicated consultation webpage was set-up to host documents related to the consultation which included an initial draft equality impact assessment and analysis (EqIAA). Both online and paper based surveys were available.

Email notifications were sent to all South Gloucestershire Councillors, Town and Parish Councils, partners in South Gloucestershire CVS (including Safer Stronger & Priority Neighbourhood Community Groups, Equalities Forums, Healthwatch and the Care Forum) plus the Local Economic Partnership and Local Strategic Partnership. In addition, email notifications and copies of the key documents were sent to and were available from all libraries and One-Stop Shops.

A number of external meetings and drop-in surgeries also took place to ensure that residents, staff and any partners had full opportunity to respond to the consultation.

The consultation also linked to other reviews which were subject to their own consultation running at the same time. These included the review of council accommodation (affecting Kingswood, Yate, Thornbury & Patchway libraries) and the review of Library Services.

There were 24 online responses to the survey plus a further 97 paper copies of the survey were returned: totalling 121 survey responses.

Protected characteristics of those responding are set out as follows:

**Table 3: Age profile of consultation respondents**

15 or under	0%
16 to 25	1%
26 to 35	9%
36 to 45	7%
46 to 55	17%
56 to 65	25%
66 to 75	20%
Over 75	18%
Prefer not to say	4%

**Table 4: Gender profile of consultation respondents**

Female	62%
Male	31%
Prefer not to say	7%

**Table 5: Responses to the question “do you consider yourself to be disabled?”**

Yes	22%
No	73%
Prefer not to say	6%

**Table 6: Ethnicity profile of consultation respondents**

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – African	1%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – Caribbean	1%
Gypsy or Traveller of Irish Heritage	7%
White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	81%
White – Irish	1%
White – Other	7%
Other ethnic group	1%
Prefer not to say	3%

The following data shows the consultation responses as disaggregated according to Protected Characteristic group.

**Table 7: Table to show responses to the question: How often do you use:-**

	Total Consultation response	16 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 55	56 to 65	66 to 75	Over 75	Age - Prefer not to say	Female	Male	Sex - Prefer not to say	Disability - Yes	Disability - No	Disability - Prefer not to say	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - African	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - Caribbean	Gypsy or Traveller of Irish Heritage	White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	White - Irish	White - Other	Other ethnic group
<b>Kingswood One Stop Shop</b>																						
Weekly	1%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Fortnightly	1%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	17%	0%	0%	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Monthly	2%	0%	0%	0%	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Less often	11%	0%	10%	25%	18%	11%	4%	5%	0%	12%	11%	14%	9%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	29%	0%
Never	26%	0%	30%	13%	29%	25%	30%	25%	50%	25%	21%	43%	17%	31%	33%	0%	0%	0%	32%	0%	14%	100%
<b>Patchway One Stop Shop</b>																						
Weekly	9%	0%	30%	38%	6%	7%	4%	0%	0%	10%	4%	0%	4%	9%	17%	0%	0%	86%	4%	0%	0%	0%
Fortnightly	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Monthly	1%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Less often	11%	0%	0%	25%	6%	18%	9%	10%	25%	10%	14%	14%	4%	12%	17%	100%	0%	0%	11%	0%	14%	0%
Never	33%	0%	40%	13%	41%	32%	30%	30%	50%	31%	32%	43%	26%	36%	33%	0%	100%	0%	38%	0%	14%	100%
<b>Thornbury One Stop Shop</b>																						
Weekly	9%	0%	20%	0%	24%	7%	4%	0%	0%	12%	7%	0%	44%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	100%	29%	0%
Fortnightly	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	7%	4%	5%	0%	3%	7%	0%	4%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%
Monthly	10%	0%	0%	13%	6%	4%	22%	15%	25%	8%	14%	0%	0%	11%	50%	0%	0%	14%	9%	0%	14%	0%
Less often	21%	0%	0%	25%	6%	29%	35%	20%	25%	20%	25%	29%	17%	23%	17%	100%	0%	0%	22%	0%	14%	100%
Never	26%	0%	40%	13%	35%	21%	22%	25%	50%	28%	21%	29%	22%	29%	33%	0%	100%	0%	29%	0%	29%	0%
<b>Yate One Stop Shop</b>																						
Weekly	3%	0%	10%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	2%	4%	0%	9%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	14%	0%
Fortnightly	2%	0%	0%	13%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	2%	4%	0%	4%	0%	17%	0%	0%	14%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Monthly	8%	100%	10%	0%	18%	11%	4%	0%	0%	8%	14%	0%	4%	11%	0%	0%	100%	0%	8%	0%	14%	0%
Less often	15%	0%	0%	38%	18%	11%	22%	20%	0%	18%	7%	29%	13%	19%	17%	0%	0%	0%	18%	0%	29%	100%
Never	21%	0%	40%	13%	24%	14%	17%	15%	50%	20%	18%	29%	13%	23%	17%	0%	0%	0%	24%	0%	14%	0%
<b>Council Contact Centre</b>																						
Weekly	4%	0%	10%	0%	6%	4%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	9%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	100%	0%	0%
Fortnightly	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Monthly	5%	0%	0%	13%	6%	14%	0%	0%	0%	3%	14%	0%	13%	3%	17%	0%	100%	14%	4%	0%	14%	0%
Less often	17%	0%	20%	38%	18%	11%	13%	15%	25%	21%	0%	14%	9%	19%	33%	0%	0%	0%	18%	0%	14%	0%
Never	16%	0%	30%	0%	29%	7%	22%	15%	0%	16%	18%	14%	13%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	19%	0%	14%	100%
<b>Council website and online forms</b>																						
Weekly	5%	0%	0%	0%	12%	11%	0%	0%	0%	5%	7%	0%	9%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	100%	0%	0%
Fortnightly	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Monthly	7%	0%	20%	25%	12%	4%	0%	0%	25%	8%	7%	14%	9%	7%	17%	0%	0%	14%	7%	0%	14%	0%
Less often	18%	0%	10%	25%	29%	18%	17%	0%	50%	21%	0%	57%	4%	20%	33%	0%	0%	0%	15%	0%	29%	100%
Never	9%	0%	10%	0%	12%	4%	13%	20%	0%	7%	14%	0%	9%	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%

Areas highlighted GREEN are those where the proportion of people with this characteristic stating their usage of each OSS is 5% or more above the proportion of all consultation respondents.

Areas highlighted RED are those where the proportion of people with this characteristic stating their usage of each OSS is 5% or more below the proportion of all consultation respondents.

The table shows that:

### **Kingswood One Stop Shop**

People aged 36 – 45 are more likely than average to use this OSS.

People from a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller background are more likely than average to use this OSS.

### **Patchway One Stop Shop**

People aged 26 – 45 are more likely than average to use this OSS.

People from a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller background are far more likely than average to use this OSS.

### **Thornbury One Stop Shop**

People aged 26 – 35 and 46 - 55 are more likely than average to use this OSS as are 66+.

Disabled people are far more likely than average to use this OSS.

People from a White Other background are more likely than average to use this OSS.

### **Yate One Stop Shop**

People aged 16 – 55 are more likely than average to use this OSS.

Males are more likely than average to use this OSS.

Disabled people are more likely than average to use this OSS.

People from a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller background are more likely than average to use this OSS.

People from a White Other background are far more likely than average to use this OSS.

### **Council Corporate Contact Centre**

People aged 26 – 45 and 56 – 65 are more likely than average to use this service.

Males are more likely than average to use the Corporate Contact Centre (CCC)

Disabled people are more likely than average to use the CCC

People from a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller background are more likely than average to use the CCC

People from a White Other background are more likely to use the CCC

### **Council website and online forms**

People under the age of 65 are more likely than average to use these services.

Over 75s are the least likely to use these services.

People from a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller background are more likely than average to use these services.

People from a White Other background are more likely than average to use these services.

### **Overall**

Females are more likely to use the OSS more regularly than Males, however, Males do use OSS albeit on a less regular basis.

**Table 8: Table to show responses to the question: If you have used our customer services, what did you contact us about?**

	Total	16 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 55	56 to 65	66 to 75	Over 75	Age - Prefer not to say	Female	Male	Sex - Prefer not to say	Disability - Yes	Disability - No	Disability - Prefer not to say	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – African	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – Caribbean	Gypsy or Traveller of Irish Heritage	White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	White – Irish	White – Other	Other ethnic group
Council Tax	48%	100%	70%	63%	53%	61%	26%	25%	50%	48%	61%	43%	61%	43%	50%	100%	100%	100%	40%	0%	57%	100%
Housing	20%	0%	50%	38%	12%	29%	4%	0%	25%	20%	21%	14%	30%	15%	33%	100%	0%	86%	12%	0%	29%	0%
Housing bene	27%	100%	60%	38%	24%	29%	22%	0%	25%	26%	32%	14%	35%	23%	33%	0%	100%	100%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Streetcare	44%	0%	20%	25%	59%	46%	52%	45%	25%	44%	43%	29%	65%	39%	17%	0%	0%	0%	51%	100%	43%	0%
Waste & recy	55%	0%	50%	38%	59%	46%	52%	70%	50%	59%	57%	14%	65%	53%	33%	0%	0%	0%	60%	0%	57%	0%
Concessionar	44%	0%	20%	13%	24%	50%	57%	70%	25%	43%	54%	29%	74%	37%	33%	100%	0%	0%	47%	100%	43%	0%
Other, please	19%	0%	20%	13%	12%	25%	17%	25%	0%	21%	25%	14%	30%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	22%	0%	29%	0%

The table shows that

### Council Tax

People over 66 are less likely than average to contact the council about this subject.

People more likely than average to contact the council about this subject are: aged between 16 – 65, males, disabled people and people from minority ethnic groups.

### Housing

People more likely than average to contact the council about this subject are: aged between 26 – 45 and 56 – 65, disabled people, people from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller backgrounds, people from Black/African/Caribbean/British backgrounds and people from White Other backgrounds.

### Housing Benefit

People more likely than average to contact the council about this subject are: aged between 16 – 45, males, disabled people, people from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller backgrounds and people from Black/African/Caribbean/British backgrounds.

### Streetcare

People more likely than average to contact the council about this subject are: aged between 46 – 65 and 66 – 75, disabled people, people from White British backgrounds and people from White Irish backgrounds.

**Waste & Recycling**

People more likely than average to contact the council about this subject are: aged between 46 – 65, over 75s, females, disabled people and people from White British backgrounds.

We know that in relation to Streetcare and Waste services, over 50% of contacts are online.

**Concessionary Travel**

People more likely than average to contact the council about this subject are: 56+, males, disabled people, people from Black/African/Caribbean/British backgrounds and people from White Irish backgrounds.

**Other**

People more likely than average to contact the council about this subject are: aged between 56 – 65, 75+, males, disabled people and people from White – Other backgrounds.

**Table 9: Table to show responses to the question: Which of the following options described in more detail in the consultation document do you think the council should adopt to achieve the savings target?**

	Total	16 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 55	56 to 65	66 to 75	Over 75	Age - Prefer not to say	Female	Male	Sex - Prefer not to say	Disability - Yes	Disability - No	Disability - Prefer not to say	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – African	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – Caribbean	Gypsy or Traveller of Irish Heritage	White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	White – Irish	White – Other	Other ethnic group
Option 1: Closure of the Thornbury OSS and replacement with a digital by default option	38%	0%	50%	38%	41%	25%	22%	35%	25%	30%	32%	43%	22%	33%	33%	0%	0%	29%	33%	0%	14%	0%
Option 2: Part time opening of Thornbury and also either Patchway or Yate	35%	0%	0%	13%	12%	32%	44%	55%	50%	30%	29%	29%	9%	35%	33%	0%	0%	0%	37%	0%	43%	0%
Option 3: Further reduction of up to 3 FTE in the Corporate Contact Centre	3%	0%	0%	0%	6%	4%	4%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	9%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%
The council should make savings within customer services in a different way	5%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	4%	0%	25%	5%	4%	0%	4%	1%	33%	0%	0%	14%	1%	0%	0%	0%
The council should make alternative savings from other council services	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	14%	4%	0%	0%	5%	4%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	14%	0%
Don't know	13%	100%	20%	13%	18%	11%	13%	5%	0%	13%	14%	14%	9%	16%	0%	100%	0%	43%	9%	0%	14%	100%

Overall, the table shows:

- Option 1 was slightly more preferred than Option 2, with the other options having a small level of agreement.
- 26 – 35 and 46 - 55 were more likely than average to prefer option 1.
- 66+ and White Other were more likely to prefer option 2.

## **SECTION 3 – IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF EQUALITIES ISSUES AND IMPACTS**

### **Option 1: Closure of the Thornbury OSS and replacement with a digital by default option.**

In relation to this option, the data shown in Section 2 of this EqIAA clearly shows that:

1. Disabled People
2. People from BAME backgrounds
3. Older People

would be proportionately more negatively impacted by any decision to close the Thornbury OSS and replace with a digital by default option.

It is noted that:

- Around half of all enquiries are not complex and relate to general or simple enquiries such as streetcare, waste or handing in documents for concessionary travel applications; these customers could therefore still resolve their enquiry should we move to a more digital model, including those with protected characteristics as stated above. A digital by default option would see customers self-serve and/or mediated contact available through contact centre availability and/or video conferencing where required. Such enquiries would tend to focus more so on receiving documents and/or general or simple enquiries.
- Even though people from BAME backgrounds were less likely than average to support changing working practices to make better use of technology and more efficient ways of working (the Council's most recent survey in relation to the Council Budget and Savings Programme), a high percentage were in favour (70%).
- Even though disabled people were less likely than average to want to see changing working practices to make better use of technology and more efficient ways of working (the Council's most recent survey in relation to the Council Budget and Savings Programme), a high percentage were in favour (72%). In addition, 46% of disabled people stated that they wanted to see more services available online.
- Comparing financial years, Thornbury OSS was the only office in which there was a recorded decrease in customer enquiries - 13% from 2013/14 to 2015/16.
- Customers who currently visit for either concessionary travel and/or blue badge applications would still be able to get their enquiry resolved – either by collecting and/or leaving an application along with any evidence. Telephones to the councils contact centre would be installed should customers need or want to speak to the contact centre directly.

- Approximately 30% of customers visiting Thornbury OSS do so for help with Housing Benefit and/or Local Council Tax Reduction (LCTR). Whilst customers on low incomes are not recognised as a protected group in terms of the Equality Act, it is noted that proportionately there is an equalities dimension in that some groups protected by the Act including older people, younger people, people from BAME backgrounds and disabled people are proportionately more likely to be in these low income groups. In terms of such enquiries the following is noted:
  - Thornbury has less types of enquiries when compared with other offices.
  - Considering the other options (making an alternative OSS office part time) may in turn have a more significant impact as the priority neighbourhoods have higher levels of deprivation and low income customer groups. Thornbury OSS is the only OSS not located within one of the Councils priority neighbourhoods.
  - Of the more complex enquiries (including benefit enquiries) received at Thornbury, 20% of these customers have an alternative OSS facility closer to their home.
  - Customers would still have the ability to leave documents, and/or make telephone contact with the Council's CCC should they wish to do so.
  - Customers would also have the option of travelling to an alternative OSS office in either Yate or Patchway.
  - Self-service customer PC's would be set up and support provided by library staff and voluntary groups (as is done now).
  - Self-service PC's would support both the Council's and central government drive of digital by default. South Gloucestershire as a whole has similar levels of customers with online access to those nationally – around 84%.

A key point raised by consultees was that of digital exclusion for older people – in others words older people are less likely to wish to or have the knowledge to use computers to self-serve. This point is backed-up by the research information shown in Section 2 of this EqIAA. In mitigation of this, it is proposed that should Thornbury OSS move to a digital model, support would be provided by library staff for those using computerised services.

Whilst it is noted that older people are less likely to want to self-serve, 25% of those aged 56 to 65, 22% of those aged 66 to 74 and 35% of those aged over 75 expressed support for Option 1 (Closure Thornbury OSS). We have also highlighted that Thornbury has fewer complex cases when compared against other offices and that we have other options for customers. For Streetcare and Waste we have a wide range of online forms that can be used. For waste enquiries around 50% of customers complete forms online. We have made these forms simple to use and therefore it would be possible for library staff to support customers where needed. Libraries also provide IT training for customers. If customers don't want to log their enquiry by going online they would still have access to our CCC. Finally, we anticipate a possible reduction in waste enquiries as a result of changes to waste collections later in 2017, as a result of the adoption of the Waste Strategy by Council.

For other enquiries, customers will be able to deposit and pick up documents, application forms etc. We are also reviewing our Customer Services Strategy, which will be updated to include principles around reducing customer effort, i.e. the amount of effort and therefore contact customers have to make to resolve their enquiry.

A key point raised by Thornbury Foodbank (TFB) noted that Thornbury OSS is one of the key referrers of people in need of food aid to TFB and their view is that the Council's preferred option of closing the Thornbury One Stop Shop (Thornbury OSS) would limit severely TFBs ability to secure access to families in Thornbury who need its emergency food aid services.

TFB also stated that should any digital by default option be pursued, then a pilot of any implementation whilst Thornbury OSS is fully open would be preferable. This recognises the importance of the digital exclusion of vulnerable people and ensures work in partnership with TFB on training staff and to address more fully its key role in stimulating a proper community and multi-agency approach to ensuring assistance to often isolated vulnerable people in the Thornbury area.

The council, as stated in Section 2 of this EqIAA, recognises the digitally excluded / inactive traits in South Gloucestershire relating to more vulnerable residents (i.e. people who are out of work or who are claiming out-of-work-benefits, particularly those who live in rural areas and are unable to access public provision of internet such as via libraries). Through the recent Library Services EqIAA, the recommended option would see a retention of staff as opposed to the use of volunteers. This means the continuation of the usage of staff who are well trained in meeting the diverse needs of residents with protected characteristics and who would remain available to assist customers with resolving their enquiry.

## **Option 2: Part time opening of Thornbury and also either Patchway or Yate.**

It is anticipated that this option would be less likely to result in the issues pertaining specifically to the digital by default option and the resultant impact on the protected characteristic groups highlighted above. However, the following points are noted:

- Yate and Patchway OSS deal with a higher proportion of customers than Thornbury OSS as follows:
  - Yate – 19,070 equivalent to 26% total customers
  - Patchway – 14,438 equivalent to 20% total customers
- As there is a high number of customers in both Yate and Patchway (which, as shown in the research and consultation data is made up of proportionately more people between the ages of 16 – 55, disabled people and people from BAME backgrounds, including people from a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller background), a result of this would be that a greater total number of people with these protected characteristics would be negatively impacted by the implementation of this option as compared to option 1.
- There is a Gypsy and Traveller drop-in session held at Patchway once per week and this is highly attended by families and children (average of 14 families attending per session) resulting in the provision of a significant resource. If this option is taken forward, care would be required in designing opening times to take this activity into account.

### **Option 3: Further reduction of up to 3 FTE in the Corporate Contact Centre.**

It is anticipated that this option would be less likely to result in the issues pertaining specifically to the digital by default option and the resultant impact on the protected characteristic groups highlighted above. However, the following points are noted:

- This option only received a total support level of 3%.
- The CCC is the first point of contact for customers wishing to resolve their enquiry by telephone, responsible for a range of enquiries including benefits, waste, housing, school admissions and registrars. This option would result in a 12.5% reduction in current CCC resources, and would be equivalent to a cumulative 46% reduction in contact centre resources. The effect of this option is increased wait times, higher numbers of abandoned calls and expected higher numbers of complaints as calls go unanswered.
- In recent years as savings have been delivered performance has deteriorated against indicators relating to wait times and abandoned call rates. Performance is stronger against other indicators and productivity measures which indicate that our staff handle around 14,000 enquiries per officer when compared to other councils who handle around 9-10,000 enquiries per officer.
- Considering the significant number of customers utilising the CCC, a result of this would be that a greater total number of people with protected characteristics would be negatively impacted by the implementation of this option as compared to option 1.

### **Other Options**

It is noted that the other options presented received very small levels of support (5%) and, should they be pursued, would require further equalities analysis in order to fully understand the implications for protected groups.

## SECTION 4 - EqIAA OUTCOME

Outcome	Response	Reason(s) and Justification
<b>Outcome 1:</b> No major change required.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Outcome 2:</b> Adjustments to remove barriers or to better promote equality have been identified.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Should Option 1 be taken forward, there is a need to ensure that impacts for those who are more likely to be digitally excluded (as identified within this EqIAA) are mitigated via action to support the use of digital technologies. Should Option 2 be taken forward, there is a need to ensure that the impact in relation to service users from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller backgrounds are not negatively impacted by any changes to the support provided by Patchway OSS.
<b>Outcome 3:</b> Continue despite having identified potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Outcome 4:</b> Stop and Rethink	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## SECTION 5 – ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN AS A RESULT OF THIS EqIAA

- Should Option 1 be taken forward, there is a need to ensure that impacts for those who are more likely to be digitally excluded (as identified within this EqIAA) are mitigated via action to support the use of digital technologies. This includes specific actions Including:-
  - Implementing facilities at Thornbury OSS to collect and drop-off forms and applications.
  - Installation of telephones to the council’s contact centre for customers who need or want to speak to the contact centre directly.
  - Installation of self-service customer PC’s with support provided by library staff and voluntary groups (as is done now).
- Should Option 2 be taken forward, there is a need to ensure that the impact in relation to service users from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller backgrounds are not negatively impacted by any changes to the support provided by Patchway OSS.

## SECTION 6 – EVIDENCE INFORMING THIS EqIAA

Sources of information:

- Equalities survey data relating to Quarters 1, 2 and 3 of 2014/15.
- *“Understanding digital exclusion in South Gloucestershire: Data summary for South Gloucestershire digital inclusion strategy” April 2013.*
- Council Budget and Savings Programme consultation and EqIAA data, 2016.
- Consultation feedback.
- *“Is Britain Fairer? The state of equality and human rights 2015”* - the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s statutory five-yearly report on equality and human rights progress in England, Scotland and Wales.