

**WANDSWORTH COUNCIL  
ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT  
Corporate Communications Service**

**Draft Equality Impact Assessment on reduced frequency of Brightside, the council magazine**

This Equalities Impact Assessment is on the proposed reduction in the frequency of publication of the council Magazine Brightside from 10 per year to 6 per year.

Department	Administration
Service	Corporate Communications
People involved	Louise Raisey (Shared Head of Communications) Steve Mayner (Assistant Director of Administration (Professional Services))
Key dates for the assessment	Start date July 5 2011

**1. What are the aims of the service and what changes are being proposed?**

Brightside is Wandsworth Council's primary vehicle for regular communications and service information provision to the entire local population. It is the only publication currently delivered regularly to every home in the borough and serves to enable the council to meet its duty to inform its residents of service changes, consultation opportunities and major policy proposals.

Brightside has, hitherto, been produced and distributed 10 times per year. Following the publication of DCLG guidelines on local government publicity and the need to make hard choices relating to Council spending the council is proposing to reduce the number of editions per year to 6 and to rely more heavily on local media and online information to disseminate public information between editions. This means that Brightside will be distributed every 2 months

**2. What is the rationale behind these changes?**

On 1 April 2011 the DCLG published new guidelines on local government publicity which restricted the number of editions of council newspapers and magazines to four per year. In addition, the council is required to reduce its budget by £70 million over the next four years and all services are required to review the value for money provided by council services. As a result, the council has produced a proposal report that sets out the considerations in relation to balancing the need for the council to communicate cost-effectively with the need to reduce spending in this area and the need to give proper consideration to the recommendations of the new publicity code. The paper includes an analysis of the efficacy of alternative methods of communications open to the council.

Options considered were:

- Reducing editions of Brightside to meet the code and using local newspapers to communicate to residents between editions
- Reducing editions of Brightside to meet the code and using local websites
- Reducing editions of Brightside to meet the code and writing individual letters to residents.
- Reducing editions of Brightside to 6 a year (a reduction of 4)

**3. Which organisations will have the opportunity to feedback on the EIA?**

The results of this EIA will be submitted to Committee

**4. What data do you have on your service and potential impact of your service change in relation to the following? Data includes use of service, customer satisfaction, feedback on service, results of consultation**

Wandsworth Guardian verified distribution figures  
 Council tenant by ethnicity, gender and age  
 Census data by ward  
 Results of the council's annual reputation survey – 2010

A reduction in the number of issues of Brightside will result in greater reliance on other communications channels such as local papers and websites, none of which are currently able to reach all households in the borough. The highest circulation newspaper, the Wandsworth Guardian, is distributed weekly to 31,540 homes within the borough. Local community websites have a combined readership of 21,000, but it is not possible to ascertain how many of these are local residents.

**5. What does available information show in relation to the impact of the service change? What is the impact on different groups? Please give detail**

**Option One: Reducing editions of Brightside to meet the code and using local newspapers to communicate to residents between editions**

The Wandsworth Guardian, published by Newquest is a weekly newspaper, hand-delivered to 31,540 homes in the borough. It currently carries 5 or 6 news items relating to council services per week. The readership figures provided by JICREG data as at 01/07/2011 which refer to the circulation area of the Wandsworth Guardian and therefore do not exactly match the Wandsworth borough boundaries show that 79,983 adults read the Wandsworth Guardian this represents 22% of their stated demographic profile.

### Total readerships by demographic group:

Adults	Men	Women	Age 15-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65-74	Age 75+
79983	37994	41988	7525	26617	19369	10542	6989	4593	4347

### Demographic Profile of the area:

Adults	Men	Women	Age 15-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65-74	Age 75+
358931	174975	183956	44515	119841	81304	45370	29119	19252	19530

This highlights that relying on the Wandsworth Guardian to communicate with residents in between quarterly issues of Brightside could potentially mean that 78% of the paper's target audience would not be aware of any developments or consultations.

The Council's reputation survey which covered 500 residents via telephone interview showed that 57% said they never read the Wandsworth Guardian.

The JICREG data also shows circulation by area. The total circulation within the borough is shown in the JICREG figures to be 31,540, or 22% of households in the borough. This highlights that circulation in Roehampton is considerably lower than other areas. Circulation is also low in Balham and Battersea. Again relying on the Wandsworth Guardian to communicate with residents in between quarterly issues of Brightside could potentially mean that residents in Roehampton, Battersea and Balham would be less well informed than other areas of the Borough.

Location	Pop	HH	Adult AIR	AIR %	Circ
Balham	17924	9476	2001	11.16	1409
Battersea	26529	14499	3744	14.11	2661
Putney	23973	13309	7016	29.26	5129
Roehampton	24789	12761	1716	6.92	1134
Southfields	18842	10434	6488	34.43	4717
Tooting	50547	25339	14455	28.60	9618
Wandsworth	36331	19689	9644	26.55	6872

Race.

The circulation by location highlights an equality issue in that Battersea has according to the 2001 Census the second highest BME population (22%) and the largest Black or Black British population (13%) of wards in Wandsworth. This means that by relying more on the Guardian potentially BME residents would be disadvantaged in terms of having access to information on Council consultations.

In addition the Wandsworth Guardian is not currently widely delivered to Council. Analysis of Council tenants conducted in 2011 showed that 39% of council tenants are from BME backgrounds as compared to GLA forecast for 2011 for Wandsworth which shows that overall 23% of the population are from BME backgrounds. This means that by relying more on the Wandsworth guardian potentially a significant number of BME residents would not have access to information on council consultations.

Age.

42% of Council tenants are aged 55+. This means that by relying more on the Wandsworth guardian potentially a significant number of older residents would not have access to information on council consultations.

Gender.

63% of Council tenants are female. This is above the borough profile of 51.2% according to 2009 GLA projections. This means that by relying more on the Wandsworth Guardian potentially female residents would have less access to information on council consultations.

Disability.

All content published in Brightside is made available on the council's website, enhancing accessibility for disabled people with access to the internet and to all other sections of the community with access to the internet via public access facilities such as libraries. Internet access enables disabled users with screen-readers and type-size adjustment facilities better access to information than via written publications such as Brightside.

**Option Two: Reducing editions of Brightside to meet the code and using local websites to communicate to residents between editions**

There are no equality figures available for local websites. Therefore no comparisons can be made with the local population. However, overall readership numbers are available. These show that there are roughly 21,000 unique visitors per month. It is not possible to say if these are all local residents, however if they were this would equate to 15% of households. This highlights that relying on local websites to communicate with residents in between quarterly issues of Brightside could potentially mean that 93% of residents would not be aware of any developments or consultations. Despite there being no equality data such a significant percentage of non-readers would have equality impacts.

**Option Three: Reducing editions of Brightside to meet the code and using letters to households to communicate to residents between editions**

As the distribution for this option would use the Brightside distribution list there are no equality aspects to this as the same coverage would be achieved. However there are cost implications to this option. For an A4 sheet the cost would be £12,300 per sheet sent out. This compares to the £7,200 edition costs of Brightside, which equates to £0.003 per page.

**Option Four: Reduce circulation to bi-monthly.**

The Code suggests that Council publications be reduced to 4 a year. However the analysis above shows that relying on alternative methods of communicating with residents in between editions would risk a significant proportion of residents and in particular BME residents, female residents and older residents missing out on public service information and on council consultations. Reducing the number to 6 would reduce that significantly as most major consultation span this shorter gap.

**6. What does your review of the information show? Evidence for your answer**

a) No impact continue with change	
b) Adjust change in light of impact	In view of the equalities impact of reducing the frequency of Brightside, but mindful of the restrictions of the new publicity code and of the need to reduce spending on communications, the assessment conclusion is to reduce the number of issues of Brightside to six issues, rather than four per year.
c) Continue with change despite impact	
d) stop change	

**7. Have you identified any actions that will improve the proposed service change or mitigate any negative impact?**

The decision to produce 6 editions mitigates the impacts identified. In addition, publishing Brightside online will allow the use of online translation facilities, such as BabelFish and Google Translator, and therefore enable people without English to access public information in a wide range of other languages.

The council will continue to send all available public information to the local papers and to encourage them to include this information in their titles accurately and promptly.

<b>8. What future monitoring and evaluation tools will be appropriate and effective?</b>
Monitor use of local media and websites on an on-going basis in order that if changes in readership are identified the decision to publish 6 Brightsides a year can be reviewed again

<b>9. Are the aims of the service/policy consistent with wider Council policies on Equality and Diversity?</b>
Yes. The Council's equality statement says, "It is our policy that no service user is discriminated against because of their disability, gender, race/ethnicity and other dimensions of disadvantage and discrimination including age, sexuality and religion or belief." Brightside and other corporate and service-based communications channels, both on paper and online, support this through the provision of accessible service information – a key component of the council's equalities and diversity policy.

<b>10. Which of the following does the service/policy relate to? (you can select more than one)</b>
The communications service relates to the following policies : 1. Eliminating discrimination 2. Promoting equal opportunities 3. Promoting good relations

<b>11. How would you rank the service/policy in relation to relevance to equality?</b>	
<i>Medium</i>	
<b>Why did you allocate this ranking?</b>	Relevant, timely and accessible service information is essential to equality of access to services. Accessible information on public consultations is essential to ensuring all parts of the local community have an equal opportunity to influence local decision-making.

## Action Plan

These actions will be added to the Corporate Equality Plan.

Action	Who will be responsible?	Target
Ensure all public information relevant to equal access to council services and to equality of opportunity to influence council decision-making is published on the council website.	Head of Communications. All service managers.	Information on all relevant consultations and service changes published to the website on the same day as it is released via other channels.

## Feedback on the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment

<b>What did external organisations say about your findings when you shared this EIA with them?</b>
N/A
<b>What changes did you make as a result of this feedback?</b>
N/A

This page is intentionally left blank