

Selection of items for equality impact assessment

'Item' means any new policy, procedure, statement of practice or other item, including strategies and work programmes. It also includes policies etc that are under revision.

Name of the item: *Wales Audit Office Social Media Policy*

Name(s) of author(s) of the item: *Ian Phillips and Martin Peters*

Name of reviewer (the person undertaking this selection review): *Martin Peters*

Date of selection review: *10 July 2012*

1. Is the item likely to have a significant effect on any person with protected characteristics?

Yes/No

Briefly explain the reason for the answer, making reference to any relevant evidence:

Reduced access to the work of the WAO (e.g. reporting regarding the use of public resources) or employment opportunities with the WAO are potentially significant adverse effects. Data collected by the marketing agency Xposure indicates that the user profiles of three major social networks—Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter—suggest that users are younger, wealthier and more likely to be male than the UK average. There is therefore a risk that the use of social media may lead to disadvantage to certain people sharing protected characteristics, such as older people and females, in terms of engagement with the WAO. (The disability accessibility issues are much the same as for any other computer-based communication. Blind and partially sighted people may use of software that converts text to voice, though the need to acquire such software is a potential access barrier.)

The social media policy effectively eliminates exclusion effects arising from the use of social media by requiring other channels to be used alongside social media in engaging with the public. In particular, social media is not to be used as the sole means of conducting recruitment campaigns. And the use of social media for recruitment selection, screening or background checks is prohibited by the policy, so eliminating the potentially discriminatory effects of such practices in relation to, for example, sexuality.

2. Is the item likely to have a minor effect on a large number of people with protected characteristics?

Yes/No

Briefly explain the reason for the answer, making reference to any relevant evidence:

Assuming reduced access to the work of the WAO to be a minor adverse effect, the same considerations apply as a significant adverse effect (see 1 above). As under 1, the policy effectively eliminates exclusion effects arising from the use of social media by requiring other channels to be used alongside social media.

3. Is the item likely to have a significant effect on how other organisations operate in terms of equality? (For example, WPI assessment criteria.)

Yes/No

Briefly explain reason for answer, making reference to any relevant evidence:

The WAO's use of social media is not likely to have any appreciable effect on how other organisations operate in terms of equality. If the policy is published, it may serve as an example to other bodies as to how to frame their policies so as to avoid the potential discriminatory effects of the use of social media. It seems unlikely, however, that this will be a significant effect.

4. Does the item relate to an area where there should be significant potential for reducing inequalities or improving outcomes? (For example, improving access to health services for transsexual people.)

Yes/No

Briefly explain reason for answer, making reference to any relevant evidence:

The use of social media may improve the range of choice of channels of access to WAO outputs, engagement processes and employment opportunities, but it is unlikely to provide significant potential for reducing inequalities or improving outcomes. In particular, it is not likely to improve access to persons sharing protected characteristics who suffer disadvantage.

5. Overall is the item likely to affect the WAO's ability to comply with the General Equality Duty to a meaningful extent?

Yes/No

Briefly explain the reason for the answer, making reference to any relevant evidence:

The use of social media in a way that replaced rather than added to other communication channels might impair the WAO's ability to comply with the GED for

the reasons set out under Q1. But as set out under Q1, such an effect is avoided by requiring the use of social media to be alongside other channels for reporting and engaging with the public, including in terms of recruitment. The policy's prohibition of the use of social media for recruitment selection, screening or background checks eliminates the potentially discriminatory effects of such practices.

If the answer to any question above is 'yes', then the item is selected for an equality impact assessment. In such cases, the information on this form should inform the subsequent assessment. In any event, this form should be kept as a record of the review of items selected for assessment.