

## EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### Digitally Enabled Council: Voice Automation

Reference: EIA000330

Date: 01/02/2024



 **RESET**

 **RESHAPE**

 **RESTART**

### EIA Form – About your EIA

Reference number	EIA000330
Date Submitted	01/02/2024
Subject of the EIA	Digitally Enabled Council: Voice Automation
Brief description of the policy, service or function covered by the EIA	Voice automation is a technology that can understand, process and respond to human language, and can release contact centre agents from mundane and repetitive tasks to focus on the high-value and more complex work that matters to residents.
Equality Assessment is in support of...	["New function","New service"]
How frequently will you review impact and mitigation measures identified in this EIA?	Quarterly
Due date of the first review	2024-04-01

### Directorate, Division & Service Area

Which directorate(s) are responsible for this EIA?	["Strategy, Equalities and Partnerships"]
Division	Customer Service, Business Support & Digital Mail
Service area	Customer Service Programme
Budget Saving	Yes

### Officers

What is the responsible officer's email address?	Nikki Spencer
What is the accountable officer's email address?	Wendy Griffiths

### Data Sources

Data sources	["Birmingham City Observatory data and insight","Consultation results","Quantitative data (please specify in the box below)","Per service area: Funding sources, number of calls answered, average handling times, calls per day, minutes per day, minutes in year, suitability for automation, handling time in hours, effort to handle calls, yearly staff cost to handle calls, CSat - customer satisfaction and complaints, research with other LAs, Immersion events and workshops with citizens, staff and Councillors"]
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Data source details	Hillingdon Council <a href="https://www.pwc.co.uk/who-we-are/annual-report/stories/2023/supporting-hillingdon-councils-digital-transformation.html">https://www.pwc.co.uk/who-we-are/annual-report/stories/2023/supporting-hillingdon-councils-digital-transformation.html</a> Customer Service Programme, Customer Panel Corporate Contact Centre Customer Services Satisfaction Survey Baselined Top 50 Services (based on volume, satisfaction, complaints and self service request data) City Observatory and ONS Census Data 2022 <a href="https://birmingham-city-observatory.datopian.com/uploads/showcase/2022-12-19-123948.825372Census-Image.pn">https://birmingham-city-observatory.datopian.com/uploads/showcase/2022-12-19-123948.825372Census-Image.pn</a>
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### Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic – Age	
Does this proposal impact people due to their age as per the Equality Act 2010?	Yes
What age groups are impacted by your proposal?	["60-69 years", "70-79 years", "80-89 years", "90 years or over"]
Please describe the impact to the age characteristic	<p>150,475 of Birmingham's population is aged 65 and over (31%)</p> <p>Technical advancement within the organisation with the deployment of voice automation could potentially exclude older citizens as they may not have experienced the new processes before. However, deployment of the solution may result in citizens acquiring new skills that broaden their experience and skillset.</p> <p>The identified age groups may be more digitally excluded but as voice automation uses traditional methods (i.e. telephone and voice) the impact will be neutral.</p>
How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the age characteristic?	<p>Implementation expects that even for the interactions most appropriate for automation, up to 20% of calls will still require a human agent to conduct that interaction. It is also anticipated that 60% of general enquiries and 40% of transactional interactions are suitable for voice automation. Customers can also choose to opt out of the automation solution, if they are vulnerable and/or prefer the option to talk to an agent so their calls bypass voice automation.</p>

### Protected Characteristic – Disability

Does this proposal impact those people with a disability as per the Equality Act 2010?	Yes
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<p>Please describe the impact to the disability characteristic</p>	<p>198,064 (17.3%) of residents in Birmingham with a registered disability under the Equality Act        849 Residents in Birmingham with sign and supported languages. (ONS data does not provide data on the total number of d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. People who use sign and supported languages as their main language will be used as an approximate for the d/Deaf and HoH population).</p> <p>The modernisation and more efficient running of the Council and resulting technological advancements proposed, aims to encourage customers to self-serve, releasing traditional methods of accessing services such as telephone and face2face to provide focussed support for our more vulnerable users, who may rely on these channels.</p> <p>However, there may be particular groups that may be less able to use the voice automation solution such as citizens with hearing difficulties or speech impediments.</p>
<p>How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the disability characteristic?</p>	<p>Implementation expects that even for the interactions most appropriate for automation, up to 20% of calls will still require a human agent to conduct that interaction. It is also anticipated that 60% of general enquiries and 40% of transactional interactions are suitable for voice automation.</p> <p>The voice automation solution will be established to enable citizens' preferences to be configured for identified vulnerable citizens and will also provide customers with the choice to opt out of the automation solution, so their calls bypass voice automation and go directly to an agent.</p>

Protected Characteristic – Sex	
<p>Does this proposal impact citizens based on their sex as per the Equality Act 2010?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>What sexes will be impacted by this proposal?</p>	
<p>Please describe the impact to the sex characteristic</p>	
<p>How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the sex characteristic?</p>	

**Protected Characteristic - Gender Reassignment**



Does this proposal impact people who are proposing to undergo, undergoing or have undergone a process to reassign one's sex as per the Equality Act 2010?	No
Please describe the impact to the gender reassignment characteristic	
How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the gender reassignment characteristic?	

### Protected Characteristic - Marriage and Civil Partnership

Does this proposal impact people who are married or in a civil partnership as per the Equality Act 2010?	No
What legal marital or registered civil partnership status will be impacted by this proposal?	
Please describe the impact to the marriage and civil partnership characteristic	
How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the marriage and civil partnership characteristic?	

### Protected Characteristic - Pregnancy and Maternity

Does this proposal impact people covered by the Equality Act 2010 under the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity?	No
Please describe the impact to the pregnancy and maternity characteristic	
How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the pregnancy and maternity characteristic?	

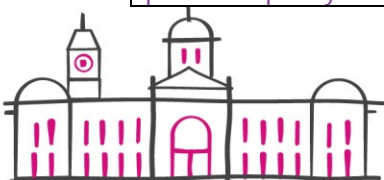
### Protected Characteristic - Ethnicity and Race



Does this proposal impact people due to their race as per the Equality Act 2010?	Yes
What ethnic groups would be impacted by this proposal?	["Bangladeshi","Chinese","Indian","Pakistani","Other Asian","African","Caribbean","Arab","Latin American","Central and Eastern Europe","Western and Southern Europe"]
Please describe the impact to the ethnicity and race characteristic	48.6% of the Birmingham population is White and therefore 51.4% of the population is non-White. 15.6% of the Birmingham population's main language is not English as a result there may be particular groups that may be more excluded or may be less able to use a voice automation service due to factors such as proficiency in the English.
How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the ethnicity and race characteristic?	<p>Selecting calls for automation will take account of the language used by callers - both in terms of diversity of language proficiency and diversity of lexicon and accents. Calls will only be automated after call listening has identified these language considerations and suitable handling approaches have been created.</p> <p>In the event that a caller is unable to make themselves understood to the automation solution, their call will be forwarded to an agent. By combining the actions of the agent and the call recordings of these calls, we will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the accuracy of speech recognition of domain-specific terminology by expanding and tailoring the vocabulary of the speech-to-text engine. Typically, this would involve amending the words spoken by the automation solution and/or increasing the range of words spoken by callers that would be recognised by the automation solution. This would apply in relation to, for example, idiomatic phrases, accents, or pronunciations.</li> <li>• Associate a caller's number with metadata that would result in future calls bypassing the automation solution and going straight to an agent. This would apply in relation to, for example, disability or proficiency of speaking English.</li> <li>• Continue offering natural-language voice calls, with the use of conversational AI, with the option of human support where needed.</li> </ul>

### Protected Characteristic - Religion or Beliefs

Does this proposal impact people's religion or beliefs as per the Equality Act 2010?	No
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What religions could be impacted by this proposal?	
Please describe the impact to the religion or beliefs characteristic	
How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the religion or beliefs characteristic?	

### Protected Characteristic - Sexual Orientation

Does this proposal impact people's sexual orientation as per the Equality Act 2010?	No
What sexual orientations may be impacted by this proposal?	
Please describe the impact to the sexual orientation characteristic	
How will you mitigate against any negative impact to the sexual orientation characteristic?	

### Monitoring

How will you ensure any adverse impact and mitigation measures are monitored?	<p>Adoption of voice automation will be tracked through a real-time reporting dashboard established as part of the implementation, providing weekly status updates on the agreed success measures and benefit realisation outcomes, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and duration of calls taken</li> <li>Rate of success of the voice automations (i.e. where the intended call flow is completed successfully and resolves the request at first point of contact)</li> <li>Number and cause of unsuccessful interactions with voice automations (including, but not limited to 'caller unable to interact with voice automation, voice automation unable to understand caller, technical/integration error).</li> <li>Number and duration of calls transferred to agents.</li> <li>Cause of calls being transferred to agents.</li> <li>Number and duration of calls requiring additional AWS services, such as translation</li> </ul>
Please enter the email address for the officer responsible for monitoring impact and mitigation	Sheraz Yaqub



