Diversity workshop: Equality Impact Assessments, Monitoring and Evaluation

Attendees

Kit Stoner	Bat Conservation Trust
Rachael Cooper-Bohanon	Bat Conservation Trust
Phillip Briggs	Bat Conservation Trust
Clare Dinham	Buglife
Sinead Lynch	Bumblebee Conservation Trust
Llinos Humphreys	Coed Cadw/Woodland Trust
Sophie Thomas	Coed Cadw/Woodland Trust
Claire Holmes	Cymdeithas Eryri/Snowdonia Society
Maria Wilding	Llais y Goedwig
Rebecca Brough	Ramblers Cymru
Tove Hubbard	RSPB Cymru
Roger Thomas	WEL
Karen Whitfield	WEL
Susan Evans	WEL

This session was led by Ele Hicks, Policy, Engagement and Research Manager at Diverse Cymru.

Purpose of Equality Impact Assessments

Ele described the EIA process, if done well, as a process for looking at how different groups access a project or service in order to make positive changes that can benefit them. It is not just a process for identifying and removing barriers that amount to discrimination in legal terms.

The EIA form is just a way to record the process you have gone through: it isn't the whole point of the process. The process can be used to identify biases that might otherwise be difficult to recognise. They are also learning tools that can

be revisited before the next project to build in the things learned as part of the impact assessment.

What you should consider as part of the EIA process

- Impacts should be assessed right from the start of a project or service, at design stage
- Think about how to maximise positive benefits and minimise negative impacts from the beginning, and also as the project or service develops.
- Start with the legal requirements – how to prevent unlawful discrimination and remove adverse impacts
- Then consider if there are opportunities for positive impact
- Don't just consider the protected characteristics individually, but those with multiple protected characteristic e.g. how does the experience of a young, black, disabled service user differ from an older, black, disabled service user? Or how would a person with both mobility and visual impairments access a service?
- Will the approach you are taking to your project or service affect relations between different groups, e.g. how could a project to support women in leadership roles be communicated to men so that they don't feel discriminated against?

What does good look like?

A good process for EIAs would take the following approach:

- Include all staff and volunteers (including Trustees) that are involved in designing or delivering the project or service, not just your HR or Diversity Manager.
- Set up a team to work on this, although you will still need a designated lead with the right authorisation to make change decisions within a reasonable timescale and responsibility to undertake tracking and monitoring, and follow up on actions.
- The level of assessment you will need will relate to your project's relevance to the people and communities you are working with, not how many people are involved.
- There is a public sector duty to engage and involve communities that doesn't apply to the eNGO sector – however, it provides best practice

principles to follow and can result in good evidence gathering that can make future projects stronger and provide confidence in the organisation for funders.

- If negative impacts of your project or service design approach are discovered, you must make any changes to the project needed to remove or minimise those impacts. If change is not possible then you need to consider whether you can justify continuing with the project or service using the current approach, or whether it would be better not to continue.
- You should also take any actions possible to advance and promote equality and good relations.
- It is important to follow through on actions and monitor the impact of these, using milestones.
- Good EIA processes with take into account individual protected characteristics as well as interactions between them.
- They will link to other relevant policies or projects.
- They will gather qualitative evidence, such as case studies, lived experience, information from focus groups, as well as quantitative and statistical evidence.
- Whilst EIAs should take place at the start of a project it is also valuable to review existing projects if they didn't go through this process, or if they went through the process a long time ago.

How do these link to Integrated Impact Assessments?

Integrated Impact Assessments are a way of bringing together a number of impact assessments that may be required as part of project or service design. Other impact assessments that might also need to be undertaken are those on the Welsh Language, Children's Rights, Human Rights, Environmental Impacts, and the Well-being of Future Generations Assessment on how the projects impacts delivery of the well-being goals and five ways of working. Looking at these other impact assessments along with Equality Impact Assessments can provide an easier way of seeing cross-over impacts and maximising contributions to equality.

Evaluation and evidence

Ele discussed the importance of evaluation as a tool to improve on further projects. Using an external evaluator provides confidence in the findings and evaluation can combine equalities evaluation with overall evaluation of the success of the project to ensure no duplication of effort. Evidence is very important and key things to consider with evidence gathering are:

- Use qualitative as well as quantitative evidence
- Lack of formal evidence is not an acceptable reason for concluding there is no impact on a community – gaps in evidence can be filled with focus groups and lived experiences.
- Ask people about the best and worst bits of their experience with your project or service and monitor whether they continue to participate.
- Current demographic statistics are largely out of date until the 2021 census data is published.
- If there are no formal statistics that you can refer to, to find out about the communities your project or service might impact upon, then it is important to reach out to local community groups.
- Build in time and budget to do your research properly at the start of the project

Use of equality monitoring in recruitment or Board recruitment

Many organisations undertake equality monitoring in the form of equality forms sent out along with job applications. Often the purpose of this to job applicants isn't made clear, resulting in poor response numbers to these forms.

It's important to provide clear context showing why your organisation is gathering this information and how it will be used, e.g. helping your organisation to make improvements that will allow it to reach more diverse communities. It is also important to be clear that the forms will be analysed in a way that preserves anonymity, will not affect the recruitment process in any way, and are only used for organisational improvement.

For the forms themselves you must make it clear that people can answer some questions but have the option to skip questions they don't want to answer. You could explain this at the start of the form or include "prefer not to say" options. Apart from the question on age, there should always be an "other"

option people can tick with an optional text box people can fill in so that respondents that don't feel they fit neatly into a category can describe themselves in terms they are happy with.

As with project research, local community groups can be valuable in advertising jobs and volunteering opportunities. Don't assume that because online jobs boards like Environment Job or Countryside Jobs are available to all, that those outside the usual environment community know about them. Particularly for volunteering opportunities, digitally excluded people will not be able to access these opportunities and so advertising through local groups is the best way to reach them. Local CVCs can provide information on local groups.

There was also a discussion on language and the preference for using the term "seldom heard" groups as opposed to "hard to reach". This is because the latter makes it sound as though local communities are being deliberately difficult to contact, rather than organisations simply not taking the extra steps to identify, adapt to, and communicate with them.

Events

A few points were raised on event organisation in terms of giving participants lots of options of how to communicate with the organisers and let them know what their access, language, and other requirements are. Don't assume you know your audience. Actively ask participants to tell you about their requirements so that they don't feel as though they are being difficult if they have to communicate a particular requirement and to overcome people not taking part because they don't know their requirements will be met.

The live subtitles / translation tools provided by PowerPoint and Zoom were also discussed as ways to help event participants understand a presentation, workshop, discussion, conference or focus group. This can be helpful for all attendees, not only those with hearing impairments. Use of these tools is not perfect however and relies on the speaker speaking slowly and clearly. The tools sometimes struggle with different accents, but they are improving all the time.

Resources

- Ele agreed to send the template EIA form that Diverse Cymru uses (to be circulated by WEL)
- Ele agreed to send Diverse Cymru's equality monitoring form (to be circulated by WEL)
- Instructions on how to use the simultaneous subtitle tools in PowerPoint and Zoom will be circulated by WEL.