

PART A - Initial Impact Assessment

Proposal Name: 2025-26 Council Customer Voice Update

EIA ID: 3565

EIA Author: Corleen Bygraves-Paul (CEX)

Approval Status: Approved

Proposal Outline: Sheffield City Council's Customer Experience Strategy aims to focus on residents' feedback to improve services, shifting from a process-driven complaints model to a broader Customer Voice approach. This includes merging feedback, complaints, compliments, and contact insights for a clearer understanding of service issues and solutions. The strategy supports digital-first methods, enabling customers to self-serve online or access inclusive support as needed. The annual complaint performance report for 2025-26 has evolved into a 'Customer Voice' report, featuring case studies, positive feedback, progress updates, and enhanced customer satisfaction metrics. Future reports will also share new insights from improved feedback channels alongside traditional complaint performance data. The report also seeks approval to procure a longer-term, compliant interpretation, translation and British Sign Language services contract, supporting inclusive access, clearer governance and better value for money. This is subject to a separate EIA (3555). It further asks Committee to endorse the Housing & Repairs Service self-assessment, Complaint Service Improvement Plan and Governing Body Statement, which set out compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Code and targeted actions to improve complaint handling, tenant satisfaction and service outcomes.

Proposal Type: No

Year Of Proposal: 25/26

Lead Director for proposal: Tom Smith

Service Area: Customer Experience

EIA Start Date: 03/08/2026

Lead Equality Objective:

Delivery of Services

Equality Lead Officer:

Ed Sexton

Decision Type

Committees:

Policy Committees

- Strategy & Resources

Portfolio

Primary Portfolio:

Neighbourhoods

EIA is cross portfolio:

No

EIA is joint with another organisation:

No

Overview of Impact

Overview Summery:

The proposal is expected to have a positive impact on people who use Council services by strengthening how the Council listens to, responds to and learns from complaints, feedback and customer insight. It is particularly relevant to residents who may experience barriers to accessing services or raising concerns, including disabled people, people whose first language is not English, people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, older people, tenants, and others who may rely on accessible, responsive and fair complaint handling. While no adverse equality impacts are expected, the report highlights the need to continue improving reasonable adjustments, equality-related complaint recording, service responsiveness and learning from complaints so that any disproportionate impacts on protected groups are identified and addressed. This EIA will be kept under review and developed as necessary to inform the future plans. subject to the committee's decision.

Impacted characteristics:

- Race
- Disability
- Age
- Sex
- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Reassignment
- Other

Consultation and other engagement

Is consultation or other engagement required:

No

No further consultation or engagement is required for this report because it is being presented to Strategy & Resources Policy Committee as part of the Council's established governance arrangements for complaints oversight, performance monitoring and statutory Ombudsman reporting. The report does not propose a change to policy or service entitlement that would require public consultation. Instead, it draws on existing customer feedback, complaints, Ombudsman findings, equality-related complaint data and service improvement learning, all of which already reflect resident and service-user experience. The Committee's consideration provides the appropriate democratic oversight and approval route for the recommendations.

Cumulative Impact

Does the proposal have a cumulative impact:

Yes

Impact areas:

Year on Year, Across a Community of Identity/Interest

Initial Sign-Off

Full impact assessment required: Yes

Review Date: 03/02/2027

PART B - Full Impact Assessment

Age

Staff Impacted: No

Customers Impacted: Yes

Description of Impact: Age may be impacted because the report covers complaint themes and service improvements in areas that are particularly relevant to different age groups, including adult social care, children's services, education/SEND, housing, repairs and access to Council services. Older people may be more affected where complaints relate to care and support, housing conditions, heating failures, repairs delays, communication difficulties or digital exclusion, as these issues can affect independence, wellbeing and safety. Children, young people and families may be affected where complaints relate to children's social care, education, SEND support, housing suitability or delays in service responses. The proposal is expected to have a positive impact by strengthening complaint handling, improving learning from complaints, supporting better access to interpretation and communication services, and enabling services to identify recurring issues that may disproportionately affect people at different life stages. However, if improvements are not delivered consistently, there remains a risk that delays, poor communication or unresolved service issues could have a greater cumulative impact on older people, children, young people and families who rely on timely and responsive Council services.

Disability

Staff Impacted: No

Customers Impacted: Yes

Description of Impact:

Disability is a key equality consideration because some customers may need reasonable adjustments, accessible communication formats, British Sign Language, advocacy support, additional time, or alternative ways to raise and pursue complaints. For customers, the proposal is expected to have a positive impact by improving access to complaints processes, strengthening the recording and delivery of reasonable adjustments, and ensuring that learning from disability-related complaints is used to improve services. This is particularly important where delays, poor communication, inaccessible information, housing repairs issues, or failures to make adjustments could affect a person's independence, wellbeing, safety or ability to resolve concerns. For staff, the proposal should provide clearer processes, guidance and support for identifying and responding to disability-related needs, including when to arrange interpretation, BSL, accessible formats or other adjustments. This should help staff handle complaints more consistently and confidently, reduce avoidable escalation, and improve compliance with equality duties. However, there is a risk that if staff guidance, recording systems or escalation routes are not consistently applied, disabled customers may continue to experience barriers or inconsistent service responses. The improvement actions in the report, including strengthening reasonable-adjustment processes, improving staff guidance and reviewing high-risk equality themes, are intended to mitigate this risk.

Gender Reassignment

Staff Impacted:

No

Customers Impacted:

Yes

Description of Impact:

Gender reassignment may be impacted where trans, non-binary or gender-diverse customers need to access Council services, raise complaints, or discuss sensitive matters relating to housing, social care, safeguarding, homelessness, anti-social behaviour, repairs, family circumstances or personal safety. For customers, respectful communication, correct use of names and pronouns, privacy, dignity and confidentiality are important to ensuring that people feel safe and confident to raise concerns. Poor handling, incorrect assumptions, inappropriate language or unnecessary disclosure of personal information could reduce trust in Council services and discourage people from pursuing complaints or seeking support. The proposal is expected to have a positive impact by strengthening complaint handling, improving equality-related recording, increasing staff awareness of inclusive communication, and ensuring learning from complaints is used to improve service responses. For staff, the proposal should provide clearer expectations, guidance and

support when handling complaints involving gender identity, privacy, vulnerability or discrimination concerns. This should help staff respond consistently and sensitively, reduce the risk of avoidable escalation, and support compliance with equality duties. However, if staff guidance, systems or recording practices are not applied consistently, there remains a risk of insensitive communication, misidentification, or inappropriate disclosure. The improvement actions within the report, including better equality recording, staff guidance and review of high-risk equality themes, should help mitigate these risks for both customers and staff.

Pregnancy / Maternity

Staff Impacted: No

Customers Impacted: Yes

Description of Impact: Pregnancy and maternity may be impacted where pregnant women, new parents or families with babies experience delays, poor communication, unsuitable housing conditions, access barriers or delays in care and support. The report's focus on complaint handling, housing repairs, damp, mould, leaks, heating failures, adult social care, children's services and access to interpretation or translation services is relevant because these issues can have a greater effect during pregnancy or early parenthood, when timely, safe and responsive services are particularly important. Poor housing conditions, delayed repairs or unresolved service issues may affect health, wellbeing, safety and family stability, while delays in complaint responses can prolong stress or uncertainty. The proposal is expected to have a positive impact by strengthening complaint handling, improving learning from complaints, supporting quicker resolution of service failures, and ensuring customer voice data is used to identify recurring issues. However, the EIA should recognise that if improvements are not delivered consistently, pregnant women and new parents may continue to experience disproportionate cumulative impacts where service delays or unresolved complaints affect their living conditions, access to support or ability to care for a young child.

Race

Staff Impacted: No

Customers Impacted: Yes

Description of Impact:

Race is a key equality consideration because the proposal includes a compliant procurement exercise for interpretation, translation and British Sign Language services, alongside wider improvements to complaint handling and customer voice. Residents whose first language is not English, and some people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, may face additional barriers when accessing Council services, understanding information, explaining concerns, or pursuing complaints if language support is not timely, accessible or consistently available. This can affect confidence, trust, participation, and the ability to secure fair outcomes. The proposal is expected to have a positive impact by helping ensure residents can communicate with the Council in a language or format they understand, particularly in high-risk or sensitive service areas such as housing, repairs, adult social care, children's services, safeguarding, homelessness, and complaint handling. Improved access to interpretation and translation should reduce the risk of misunderstanding, delayed responses, escalation of complaints, or unequal access to remedies and service improvements. The report also identifies equality-related complaints, including those linked to race and disability, which highlights the need for better recording, monitoring and learning from complaint themes. If implemented effectively, the proposal should support more inclusive customer access, improve consistency for staff when arranging language support, and strengthen the Council's ability to identify whether particular communities are experiencing disproportionate barriers or poorer outcomes. However, if interpretation and translation arrangements are not embedded consistently across services, there remains a risk that residents from minority ethnic communities or those with limited English proficiency may continue to experience avoidable barriers, delays or reduced confidence in Council services.

Sexual Orientation

Staff Impacted:

No

Customers Impacted:

Yes

Description of Impact:

Sexual orientation may be impacted where LGBT+ residents need to access Council services, raise complaints, or seek support in relation to housing, adult social care, children's services, safeguarding, homelessness, anti-social behaviour or other sensitive service areas. The proposal is expected to have a positive impact by strengthening complaint handling, improving staff consistency, and supporting a more inclusive and respectful approach to customer contact. This is important because LGBT+ residents may be less likely to raise concerns if they have previously experienced discrimination, felt

misunderstood, or lacked confidence that their complaint would be handled sensitively. Improved customer voice arrangements should help the Council identify whether LGBT+ residents experience any barriers, poor communication, inappropriate language, privacy concerns, or unequal service outcomes. The proposal should also support staff to respond more confidently and respectfully where complaints involve personal identity, household circumstances, harassment, vulnerability or safety concerns. While no adverse impact is anticipated, there remains a risk that poor recording, inconsistent complaint handling or lack of staff awareness could reduce trust and make it harder for LGBT+ residents to raise concerns. The improvement actions in the report, including better equality recording, learning from complaints and improved guidance, should help mitigate this risk.

Other

Staff Impacted: Yes

Customers Impacted: Yes

Description of Impact: Marriage and civil partnership is likely to have a limited direct impact, as the proposal does not change eligibility for services, legal status, or access to benefits or entitlements based on whether a person is married or in a civil partnership. However, it should still be considered as part of the EIA screening because complaints and customer contact may involve household circumstances, housing applications, tenancy matters, adult social care, caring responsibilities, bereavement, safeguarding, financial vulnerability or family-related issues where marital or civil partnership status may be relevant. For customers, the proposal is expected to have a positive impact by improving complaint handling, communication and consistency where residents raise concerns about services affecting them or their household. This may include ensuring that partners, spouses or civil partners are appropriately recognised where they are authorised to act on behalf of someone, involved in care or housing matters, or affected by a service failure. Good complaint handling should support respectful communication, privacy and fair access to remedies. For staff, the proposal should support clearer and more consistent handling of complaints where relationship status, consent, next of kin, household composition or advocate arrangements are relevant. This can help staff manage sensitive information appropriately, avoid assumptions about family or household relationships, and ensure that complaints are handled in line with data protection, equality and customer care requirements. No adverse impact is anticipated, but staff guidance and recording processes should

continue to support respectful and lawful handling of personal and household information.

Action Plan & Supporting Evidence

Outline of action plan:

Strengthen reasonable adjustment processes so disabled customers can consistently access complaints, services, information and support in ways that meet their needs. Improve equality recording and monitoring, particularly for complaints relating to race, disability, language access, reasonable adjustments, accessibility, dignity and discrimination. Embed interpretation, translation and BSL provision within the new procurement specification, including clear standards for timeliness, quality, availability, safeguarding and use in high-risk service areas. Provide clearer staff guidance and training on inclusive complaint handling, respectful communication, reasonable adjustments, use of interpreters, accessibility, privacy and confidentiality. Monitor disproportionate impacts by protected characteristic, especially where complaints relate to housing repairs, damp and mould, heating failures, adult social care, children's services, SEND, homelessness or access to services. Use complaints and customer voice data to identify cumulative impacts on groups who may experience repeated or prolonged service failures, including disabled people, older people, tenants, families, carers and residents whose first language is not English. Ensure service improvement plans address equality themes, including recurring issues linked to delay, poor communication, accessibility, staff conduct, repairs and complaint escalation. Improve communication with customers so people understand how to make complaints, what support is available, how their complaint will be handled and what remedies or service improvements may follow. Review high-risk equality complaint themes regularly through performance reporting and governance routes, including updates to Strategy & Resources Policy Committee where appropriate. Build equality requirements into contract and performance management, particularly for interpretation, translation and BSL services, including quality assurance, user feedback, usage data and escalation routes. Continue learning from complaints and Ombudsman findings to ensure equality-related issues are not treated as isolated cases but inform wider service improvement. Keep the EIA under review as the Customer Voice consolidation project, complaint improvement plan and interpretation/translation procurement are implemented, so any emerging impacts can be identified and mitigated early.

Action plan evidence:

Changes made as a result of action plan:

Mitigation

Significant risk after mitigation measures: No

Outline of impact and risks:

Review Date

Review Date: 03/02/2027