

# IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

October 2009

Equality Impact Assessments, a compliance led process that emerged from the McPherson enquiry can have a real business impact if handled the correct way



## Equality Impact Assessments - are they really useful?

By Peter Campbell

For some, Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are challenging pieces of work, seeming to be resource intensive without offering any tangible business returns.

EIAs started out life as Race Impact Assessments, and were part of the package of recommendations from the Macpherson inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence. They required public sector organisations to re-examine how they developed and administered their policies and functions and required them to identify adverse impact on people from different races. So given their origin and requirements, it is not surprising that people sometimes find them to be arduous, time-consuming, and distracting from daily work.

Given that the original work on Impact Assessments was based solely on a compliance agenda it is no surprise that they impose rigorous assessment procedures on organisations. Despite this, the use of Race

Impact Assessments in encouraging organisations to examine their policies and functions was deemed to be successful and in 2005 the requirement for conducting Impact Assessments was extended to disability; and then on to gender the following year. The inclusion of disability and gender in the impact assessment regime eventually developed an all-encompassing approach that is generally referred to as an Equality Impact Assessment.

The question then is how do we make EIAs useful to a business? In the 9 years since the introduction of the Race Relations Amendment Act we have observed, that contrary to popular belief, organisations can use them as tools to drive improvements in service delivery and internal decision-making. This will only occur though when their use is elevated beyond compliance and they are used to analyse business activity. This is often most successful

when carried out in conjunction with customer segmentation and coupled with examining the wider demographic profile of an area. This approach has delivered real advances in understanding the impact of business operations on both current and potential customers and has also been used to understand the impact of internal decisions that affect the lives of employees, improving internal relationships throughout the organisation.

We view EIAs as a business tool that can help support an increased understanding of customers and employees, which in turn provides the organisation with information to make decisions that deliver services that meet and even surpass customer expectations whilst at the same time, taking account of the impact of decisions on employees and other stakeholders.

# A Unique Support Package

## - supporting you through EIAs

Conducting EIA's is an information-led process, it requires assessors to make judgements of the impact of a policy based on empirical data that is either available in-house, or if necessary obtained elsewhere. Equality Foundation's EIA support package is different from others as it heavily promotes the use of data to make judgements of impact; thus using this package will require you to find useful data, and demonstrate the ability to use information to inform decision-making.

**“The style of delivery coupled with the way the facilitator linked the use of EIAs to the performance of our business made this one of the most insightful training events we have experienced”** Director of Housing

This package encourages organisational independence from using consultants to conduct EIAs and promotes the development of in-house capability and proficiency to use EIAs as a business tool that can improve strategy development, planning, and decision-making.

The package will take your organisation through a structured approach to conducting an EIA. The package is split into three sections which are detailed to the right, if you'd like to know more about how this package can help your organisation then contact Robin Williams on [r.williams@equalityfoundation.com](mailto:r.williams@equalityfoundation.com) or call him on 07799 641021.

### Part 1 - Preliminary Action.

This details what actions are required to prepare for conducting an EIA. Depending on the length of a policy, procedure or decision this stage can be up to a 1/2 day exercise where EFL will review your policy or function and determine what type of information is required to successfully carry out the EIA. The output from Part 1 will include providing you with details of what information is required; and ideas on how to obtain it.

### Part 2 – Screening.

This is a 1-day workshop that will take you through the process of conducting a screening exercise. Live policies or functions will be screened using the information obtained from Part 1. Included in Part 2 is the paper or electronic completion an EIA template (If the organisation already has a template, theirs will be used, alternatively, one can be provided by EFL). The output from this section will be a determination on whether the assessment will end at the screening stage or progress to a full EIA.

### Part 3 – Full Impact Assessments

Part 3 provides detailed instructions on how to conduct a full EIA. It provides useful tips on conducting a deeper analysis of the data you have collected; developing a strategy for conducting consultation exercises; and developing a monitoring discipline. Due the nature of Full EIA's, the level of EFL's involvement will depend on how much support is needed by the organisation.

Successfully completing Equality impact Assessments can support an organisation in better engaging with a diverse client base

