

EQIA Customer Access – Online Only Policy

Version number	1
Date last reviewed:	
Approved by:	Steve Moore
Date approved:	
Next review date:	
Saved as:	

1. Management of the EQIA

Ron Springer, Customer Services Operational Manager

2. Identification of policy aims, objectives and purpose

The aim of the Customer Access – Online Only Policy is to formalise a process which will encourage and support more residents to utilise our online facilities, support the council’s resilience agenda and maximum cost effectiveness for the Council.

This proposal forms parts of the council’s broader strategic aim to channel shift services which has included: Customer Access – Realising the benefits 2011, Cash Office removal 2011 and the Housing Allocations Scheme 2012. The implementation of these policies have supported residents to access council services online thus supporting building resilience in our community.

As the Council continues to invest and develop its online service provisions a policy of ‘online only’ for some service requests is now required to support our drive to increase the number of transactions through our automated systems. An online only policy will formalise the natural transition of our residents into the digital age as Newham and other organisations, both public and private further develop their online services. This policy will continue the Customer Access Strategy of channel shift, which has already seen many Newham services shifted from face-to-face and telephone, to online only which include:

- Resident, carers, disabled and visitor parking permits
- Housing registration
- Landlord licensing
- Allotment renewals
- Payment Transactions

The online only policy will:

- Realise the Council’s aim to optimise our online offer and significantly increase the number of customer transactions received through this more cost effective channel.
- Support the Council’s Resilience agenda.
- Deliver future savings through a reduction in transactional costs within the telephony and face-to-face channels.

The overall equality impact on residents as a result of these proposals has been determined as low. Evidence has shown that residents have adapted, with support, well to previous channel shift strategies such as the closing of the cash offices in 2012, the reduction of face-to-face customer service centres in addition to the move to the online only services listed above.

However to mitigate against residents being denied access to a council service as a result of implementation of an online only policy the following measures have been put in place:

Residents who may require some assistance with accessing services online will be advised to seek help from a family member or friend.

- Residents who require access to a computer can visit any of Newham's ten libraries to obtain free use of a PC, scanner and receive support and advice from a member of the Community Neighbourhood team to access online services
- Residents who require support to improve their IT literacy will be able to attend free online training sessions held at each of Newham's libraries.
- Residents who require assistance outside of normal working hours will be advised that all Newham libraries offer at least one late night opening a week up to 8pm. All libraries are open on a Saturday and Stratford library operates on a Sunday between 1pm to 5pm.
- A publicity campaign to promote our online services will continue with guidance for residents.
- A 'web chat' service will be implemented from January 2015, to support residents to navigate key aspects of the MyNewham website whilst online.
- Customer Services staff will retain the authority to use their discretion with vulnerable residents who call the council for a service and where support needs are identified they will continue to offer a telephony service.

3. Scope / focus of the EQIA

The purpose of this EQIA is to identify the impact that the proposed Customer Access - Online Only policy may have on protected equality groups within the borough.

Newham like many other local authorities has already moved a number of its services online, which has added convenience and increased resident's access to council services. This aids social inclusion for Newham residents, as they can now make a request for a service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and on most occasions from the comfort of their own home. Residents can also access a council service through mobile devices such as a smart phone, laptop or a tablet again for ease of convenience.

In a digital age where online banking, shopping and requesting of services are becoming the 'norm' the proposed Online Only Policy will assist residents to become more skilled and

confident in transacting through the web in everyday life. It also opens up the opportunity for residents to connect quicker and easily with services within Newham, where previously a trip to a customer service centre or a phone call would have been necessary.

Services in Newham which have previously been moved to online only such as resident and visitor parking permits, are a great example of shifting simple transactions to the website which has been highly successful. These transactions moved from 100% face-to-face to 100% online with little impact on residents but huge benefits to the council. The move to online only enabled the reduction from eight to one customer service centre (East Ham) and achieved large cost savings to the council, whilst continuing to provide this high demand transactional service.

Examples of online services take up (% processed online):

- 100% - Parking Permits
- 100% - Carers permits
- 100% - Disabled residents permits
- 100% - Visitor permits
- 100% - Free visitor parking permits
- 100% - Housing registration
- 100% - Landlord licensing
- 100% – Allotment renewals
- 69% - Green waste collection requests
- 62% - Bulky waste collection requests
- 61% Fly tipping reporting (via Love Newham)

Note: 78% of Newham households have a MyNewham account registered (138,000 residents)

It is recognised even with these recent successes that not all residents will be comfortable with the idea of going online and may still require some support to enable them to do so. However recent research into the affects of the move to digital services by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) on UK citizens (People and Places – Online Access February 2014) reported several key points which support the move to online services:

Key Points – Coverage UK

- 90% of all people in London were internet users (increasing)
- 77% use internet on a regular basis
- 89% men / 85% women were users of the internet
- 87% of adults in the UK had used the internet (9 in every 10 people)
- 13% of adults in UK had not used the internet but this is falling
- 69% of people who were disabled had used the internet.
- Finally, comparatively little difference of internet users between ethnic groups (range 82.6% – 96.6%)

Internet Users by Age (UK)

Age	% of Users
16 – 34	99%
35 – 54	96%
55 – 64	87%
65 – 74	69%
75+	36%

Newham Household Panel survey (2013)

Internet access- NHPS 2013 (Newham Household Panel Survey)

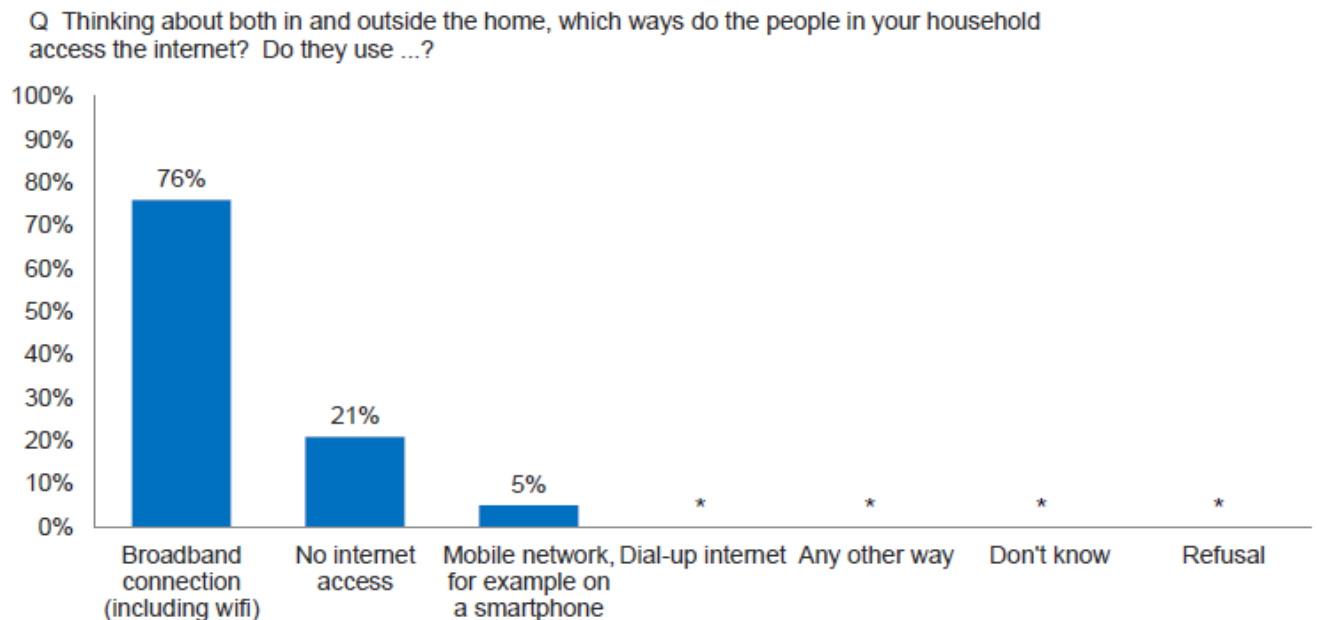
The Newham Household Panel Survey raised some challenges with the implementation of an online only policy for certain transactions. It identified that 21% of Newham households stated they do not access the internet inside or outside of the home, and access is low amongst older and lower income residents. About a quarter of residents (24%) lack a computer at home.

Age and income are important factors for internet access, again reflecting national data. Older members of the Newham population are far less likely to have internet access either in or away from the home: nearly two-thirds (65%) of residents aged 65+ reported that their household does not have internet access. Almost half the households (48%) in the lowest quartile of household income are also without internet access, and half of residents with a disability are in households that do not have internet access.

A quarter of residents with no qualifications have no access to the internet and just over a quarter (29%) has no computer at home. A third of residents in arrears on three or more bills lack access to the internet to get advice online and a fifth of those who see their friends less than once a month, have no online access. Over a quarter of residents with either mixed ethnicity or Black Caribbean residents do not have internet access and a quarter of White British residents.

Of those households who use broadband, the majority only access broadband in the home (86%). One-eighth (13%) of them have access to broadband both in the home and outside it, but this figure is significantly higher among those aged 16-24 (30%) and the highest income quartile (21%). Households made up of a couple and at least three children are more likely to access broadband only at home (96% compared with 89% overall).

Figure 4.5 – Internet access in Newham



Base: All Household respondents (997).

In supporting the move to online services Newham has to take advantage of the fact that it has a relatively young population ,with around 60% of residents under the age 34 years. Taking this into account and the key points from the ONS data there is real opportunity to support both the channel shift and resilience agendas.

Even with a young population, some residents may still require a level of assistance and support to build confidence in using and accessing our services online. Support will be available from a number of different sources:

- Members of family and friends
- Support workers – If they have one already assigned
- Community Neighbourhoods – Provide free use of kiosks, pc and scanners
- Community Neighbourhoods – Provide face to face support and guidance for residents
- Community Neighbourhoods – Provide PC training for beginners
- Customer Services Team through web chat
- Customer Services Team – Telephone support to help residents navigate online applications
- Customer Services – Continue to take service requests over the phone from vulnerable residents where support needs have been identified.

Protected characteristic	Assessment of relevance High, Medium, Low	Evidence
Class or socio-economic disadvantage	Low	Residents who are of a lower socio-economic group may be less regular users of the internet. They may not have a computer and may be less IT literate. However support mechanisms will be in place to support residents and increase social inclusion opportunities.
Age	Medium	<p>Newham has a relatively young population structure which benefits the boroughs move to shift more services online. This policy also has the potential to bring communities closer together as friends and family member support each other to get online.</p> <p>NHPS 2013 identified that older members of Newham's population are less likely to have internet access. Additional support for older residents will continue to be offered through our Community Neighbourhood team as well as our Contact Centre staff. In addition to residents receiving assistance when completing online forms, they will also be invited to attend our 'Do It Online' sessions which are available through our libraries. These sessions help to improve IT skills whilst providing community networking.</p>
Disability	Low	For those residents with additional support needs officers within Community Neighbourhoods and Customer Services will provide support. Residents with support needs will continue to be able to access our services through the telephony service.
Pregnancy and maternity	Low	No impact as pregnancy and maternity will not impact a residents ability to use the internet. However they will benefit by being able to request a service from home 24/7, 7 days a week.
Race	Low	No impact as based on the information from the NOS data demonstrated high internet use of all races.
Religion / belief	Low	No impact as religion and beliefs will not impact a residents ability to use the internet
Sex	Low	No impact as a residents gender will not impact a residents ability to use the internet
Sexual orientation	Low	No impact as sexual orientation will not impact a residents ability to use the internet
Transgender	Low	No impact as transgender will not impact a residents ability to use the internet

4. Assessment of Impact and outcomes

Protected characteristics	Issues taken from evidence	Judgement (positive / negative)	Recommendations
Class or socio-economic disadvantage	Access to computer and IT literate	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide free access to kiosks, PC and scanners in community neighbourhoods. • Provide guidance to residents when completing applications. • Provide IT beginner classes
Age	IT literate	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide free access to kiosks, PC and scanners in community neighbourhoods. • Provide guidance to residents when completing applications. • Provide IT beginner classes • Apply discretion at contact centre based on an individuals circumstance and where support needs are apparent continue to offer a telephone service.
Disability	IT Literacy Disability prevents using a computer	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support within community neighbourhoods. • Apply discretion at contact centre based on individuals' circumstances and where support needs are apparent continue to offer a telephone service.

Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan for Customer Access – Online Only Policy						
Issues identified and groups affected	Actions to be taken	Timescales of actions	Who is responsible for delivery	Intended outcomes	Performance measures	Reference to service or other plans
Class or socio-economic disadvantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support network to be provided at the community neighbourhoods. Contact centre to be able to apply discretion and continue to offer a telephony service based on an individuals circumstance. 	Implemented	Customer Services operational Manager / Head of Community Neighbourhoods	Resident support	None	
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support network to be provided at the community neighbourhoods. Contact centre to be able to apply discretion and continue to offer a telephony service based on an individuals circumstance. 	Implemented	Customer Services operational Manager	Resident support	None	
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support network to be provided at the community neighbourhoods. Contact centre to be able to apply discretion and continue 	Implemented	Customer Services			

	to offer a telephony service based on an individuals circumstance.		operational Manager / Head of Community Neighbourhoods	Resident support	None	
--	--	--	--	------------------	------	--

- 6. **Formal agreement**
 - a. Divisional Director
 - b. Head of Strategic Commissioning and Intelligence

- 7. **Publication of results**
 - a. January 2015