

Equality Impact Assessment

1.	Title of Proposal:	Social Work SMS Text Messaging Communication Policy
2.	Service Area: Department:	Social Work Social Work
3.	Description:	<p>Scottish Borders Council (SBC) Social Work Service is developing a policy to assist promote the responsible use of Short Message Service (SMS/ Text Messaging). This policy will outline the key principles and expected conduct of all employees employed within a social work/social care/integrated health settings when using SMS Text messaging for business use.</p> <p>The policy will assist employees to make appropriate decisions regarding their use of SMS Text Messaging.</p> <p>The objective of the policy will be to protect staff, service users and the reputation of SBC by providing a framework for the effective and safe use of SMS Text Messaging.</p> <p>The policy will clarify the standards required of SBC employees when using SMS Text messaging for business.</p> <p>All staff employed by SBC will require to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and safeguard the confidentiality of any personal information which is held.</p>

		<p>All staff employed by SBC will require to ensure that they utilise mobile phones within the law i.e. do not text, read or reply to text messages or other phone correspondence when driving.</p> <p>It is proposed that the policy will be compatible with the Corporate Communications policy. Additionally the policy responds to and sits within the context of Caldicott Governance and should be read and applied in conjunction with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBC’s Code of Practice on the Data Protection • SBC Social Media Policy. • SBC Employees Code of Conduct. <p>Registered staff including social workers, social care employees are required to be mindful of registration body codes of practice i.e. SSSC Codes of Practice and Conduct and Use of Social Media Guidance.</p>
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4.	<p>Relevance to the Equality Duty.</p> <p>Do you believe your proposal has any relevance to the following duties of the Council under the Equality Act 2010?</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Duty</p> <p>Elimination of discrimination (both direct & indirect), victimisation and harassment.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Yes/No</p> <p>Yes: By utilising a standard direct method of contact to issue appointments, the potential for stigma and or discrimination that might be otherwise be identified through the use of letter headed papers or confusing narrative will eliminate discrimination.</p> <p>The use of text is more likely to be inclusive to a substantial number of social work service users who present with a variety of issues including poor literacy, hearing, language and accommodation.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the use of text messaging will assist in the inclusion of young adults and children and those who have chaotic life styles as a result of substance use or poor mental</p>

		<p>health. Reminder text is anticipated to reduce the numbers of individuals who fail to attend.</p> <p>For those who do not have access to a mobile phone, existing methods of communication will continue to be utilised. The use of TEXT messaging appointments will be an additional communication pathway.</p>
	<p>Promotion of equality of opportunity?</p>	<p>All service users have the right to a standard service. The use of text including reminder text either in place of or in addition to written appointments will work toward ensuring all service user groups have an opportunity to engage.</p> <p>The use of text appointments will bring Scottish Borders Social Work in line with the NHS, who routinely utilise Text appointment reminders.</p> <p>This provides an opportunity to standardise communication and enhance integration.</p>
	<p>Foster good relations?</p>	<p>The use of text will essentially provide a basic generic form of correspondence to individuals, that will focus on numerical data to provide times and dates. This provides an expanded universal base language from which service user/service relations can be expanded.</p>

5. Which groups of people may be impacted (both positively and negatively) if the proposal is advanced?				
Equality Characteristic	Impact			Description
	No Impact	Possible Positive Impact	Possible Negative Impact	
Gender, Religious or other Beliefs; Pregnancy and Maternity, Sexual Orientation and Carers		X		It is not anticipated that this policy will have any negative impacts regardless of the protected characteristic that an individual identifies with or belongs to. Where further observations have become relevant these are noted below.
Age (Older or younger people or a specific age grouping)		X		Children, young adults along with a broad section of the adult population are in a position to access and benefit from the use of SMS text, given the extensive mobile phone ownership and preferred use of text and social media as a form of communication within these social groupings. For those who do not have access to a mobile phone, this may include a greater percentage of older people, the use of existing communication methods will be retained and implemented. The introduction of this form of communication will not disadvantage any individual.
Disability e.g. Effects on people with mental, physical, sensory impairment, learning disability, visible/invisible, progressive or recurring		X		The use of text as an additional method of contact will not have a negative impact in those with disability. It is anticipated that targeted appointment information, formatted in a basic numerical format will assist and have a positive impact for those presenting with protected equality characteristics including mental, physical, physical and sensory impairments.
Race Groups: including colour, nationality, ethnic		X		The use of basic text formatting may assist those within this characteristic group, who present with language or no fixed accommodation issues that might otherwise form a barrier to attendance.

	origins, including minorities (e.g. gypsy travellers, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers)			
	Poverty (people who are on a low income including benefits claimants, people experiencing fuel poverty, isolated rural communities etc)	X		For those who do not own mobile phones due to cost, existing methods of communication will remain. The introduction of this form of communication will not disadvantage any individual.
	Employees (those employed by the Council including full time, part time and temporary)		X	This policy clarifies the standards required of SBC employees when using SMS Text messaging for business purposes. Additionally the application of the policy should enhance the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 by safeguarding the confidentiality of any personal information that is held.

6.	Mitigation	
	Where you have identified a potential negative impact, please detail what mitigations will need to be put in place in order for your proposal to progress.	
	Characteristic	Mitigation
		Monitoring of the policy will be undertaken the Chief Social Work Officers Management Group (CSWO's MG) for effectiveness. Any trends identified will be reviewed and investigated as to the reasons and rectified where required. Furthermore, the policy will be reviewed by the CSWO'sMG for general monitoring purposes annually, and formal review every 2 years.

	<p>Dissemination and staff awareness. The policy will be internally disseminated to Social Work staff by Team Leaders. Group Managers will ensure all Team Leaders are provided with the policy for dissemination. The policy will be accessed via the intranet - Social Work Employee Page.</p> <p>External dissemination will be facilitated through inclusion in the SBC online staff magazine and posted on the Intranet announcements page.</p>
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7.	How certain are you of the answers you have given?	
	Answer	Tick One
	Certain - I have populated the evidence base to support my answers.	X
	Fairly Certain – but don't have concrete evidence to support my answers so would recommend further assessment is conducted if the proposal is progressed.	
	Not Certain – further assessment is recommended if proposal is progressed.	

Completed By			
Name	Kim McPartland: Marcia Connor : Brian Paris	Service Area.	Social Work
Post	Group Manager Completed on behalf of the CSWO Managers meeting	Date	5 th December 2019