

## Equality Impact Assessment Form

### About the function, policy, project or decision being assessed

What is being assessed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Function
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policy
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Project
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Decision
Title of the function, policy, project, or decision	Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026	
What is this function, policy, project, or decision aiming to achieve?	<p>Our previous Corporate Plan covered the period from 2019 to 2022. This project aims to develop a new set of strategic aims to deliver our ambition for the office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People of Wales feel that public services treat them fairly and respond when things go wrong.</li> <li>• Welsh public services listen to individuals and use their complaints to learn and improve.</li> <li>• Welsh local government is trusted to deliver the highest standards of conduct.</li> <li>• The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales continues to be an influential and respected voice in public service improvement.</li> </ul> <p>This EIA considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CONSULTATION: with a focus on the process of development of the Strategic Plan, to ensure that it considers appropriately access needs of different groups.</li> <li>• CONTENT: with a focus on the content of the Strategic Plan.</li> </ul> <p>The Plan explains how we will measure whether we have made a difference. However, detailed</p>	

	KPIs and other evaluation indicators will be developed as part of the annual Business Plans.	
Who is affected by this function, policy, project, or decision?	<p>All our external stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service users (potential)</li> <li>• Service users (current)</li> <li>• Relevant bodies</li> <li>• Councillors, council staff</li> <li>• Advice and advocacy bodies</li> <li>• MSau, Welsh Government, MPs</li> <li>• Regulators and inspectorates</li> <li>• Sister organisations</li> <li>• Researchers</li> <li>• The press</li> </ul> <p>Our staff</p>	
Who should be consulted about this function, policy, project, or decision?	<p>Our external stakeholders, including organisations working with groups under-represented among our complainants.</p> <p>Our staff</p>	
Who is conducting this impact assessment?	Ania Rolewska – Head of EDI	
	Date: 21/11/2022	Version: 3.0

### Initial screening

Question	Y	N	If 'YES', briefly explain why
Does this policy, project or decision relate to our functions or areas of work within those functions for which EIA has identified equality impacts?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>This project will shape how we undertake our work over the next 3 years. It is likely to have broad impacts on a range of groups that use our service as well as use public services in Wales or are involved in the conduct of local government in Wales.</p> <p>There are several aspects of the Plan directly related to equality impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to raising awareness of the office among groups under-represented among complainants</li> <li>• Commitment to improve accessibility of our service</li> <li>• Commitment to improve diversity of our workforce</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention to how we will promote equality and human rights across our functions</li> <li>• Attention to how we will support and promote the Welsh language across our functions.</li> </ul>
Does this policy, project or decision relate to our Equality Objectives?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The project is relevant to all our Equality Objectives, although (in due course) a new Equality Plan will be developed to support this Strategic Plan.
Is there a risk that this policy, project, or decision could disadvantage any group of people?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>As with any communications project, there is a risk that not all groups will have equal access to the consultation process. The groups that may face disadvantage could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• older people</li> <li>• disabled people</li> <li>• people who do not speak fluent English or Welsh</li> <li>• Welsh speakers</li> </ul>

If you answered 'yes' to any of the questions above, proceed to the full impact assessment.

## Impact Assessment: consultation

Characteristic	Potential impact			Please explain this impact	Can this impact be mitigated or enhanced?  If so, how?	Impact after actions		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive			Negative	Neutral	Positive
Cross-cutting considerations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Plan has a significant potential to focus and expand our work aimed at improving the diversity of communities that complain to us.</p> <p>The first version of the Plan identified a separate Strategic Aim committed to increasing our accessibility and inclusion. Actions under that aim included to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transform our relationship with advice and advocacy bodies, supporting our service users through a programme of outreach and engagement.</li> <li>• Launch an ambitious communications and outreach campaign, supported by more accessible and visual information resources, to reach those communities that are least likely to complain to us.</li> </ul> <p>The Strategic Plan is a high-level document. Actions under the Plan to</p>	<p>This commitment in the Plan was welcomed by the consultees as a positive step. More clarity was sought regarding the groups we would target and organisations we would engage with. This clarity is important, but such level of detail would be difficult to reflect in the high-level document such as the Strategic Plan.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Ensure that these issues are addressed in detail in our new Communications Strategy and Equality Plan.</b></p> <p>In addition, it was decided to rephrase the wording of the second action, to reflect the fact that resources assigned to us by the Senedd for 2023/24 may not be sufficient to undertake a very extensive outreach campaign. The amended wording is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop outreach campaigns, supported by more accessible and visual information resources, to reach those communities that are least likely to complain to us.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Characteristic	Potential impact			Please explain this impact	Can this impact be mitigated or enhanced?  If so, how?	Impact after actions		
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				improve our outreach are likely to benefit various protected groups, and the Plan does not list specific communities. However, see some anticipated impacts below, based on our current equality monitoring, awareness data and other feedback which will inform setting more detailed priorities under the Plan.				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Plan has a significant potential to help us improve the accessibility of our service.</p> <p>The first version of the Plan identified a separate Strategic Aim committed to increasing our accessibility and inclusion. Actions under that aim included to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a new and more accessible website, structured around the needs of our service users</li> <li>• Improve the quality of our communication, including by embedding the use of Plain English / Cymraeg Clir across the organisation.</li> </ul>	<p>This commitment in the Plan was welcomed by the consultees as a positive step.</p> <p>We received extensive detailed comments on our commitment to improving accessibility (see <b>record any consultation and engagement undertaken</b> underneath)</p> <p>To reflect these comments, the wording of the relevant action was amended as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the quality and accessibility of our communication, including by expanding the use of accessible formats and embedding the</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Characteristic	Potential impact			Please explain this impact	Can this impact be mitigated or enhanced?  If so, how?	Impact after actions		
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				The Strategic Plan is a high-level document. Actions under the Plan to improve our accessibility are likely to benefit various protected groups, and the Plan does not list specific communities. However, see some anticipated impacts below, based on our current equality monitoring, awareness data and other feedback which will inform setting more detailed priorities under the Plan.	<p>principles of Plain English / Cymraeg Clir across the organisation.</p> <p>In addition, it was decided to rephrase the wording of the first action, to reflect the fact that resources assigned to us by the Senedd for 2023/24 may not be sufficient to develop an entirely new website. The amended wording is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a more accessible website, structured around the needs of our service users.</li> </ul>			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Plan has a significant potential to help us increase the diversity of our workforce.</p> <p>One of the proposed measures of success under Strategic Aim 4 is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The profile of our workforce is more diverse, better reflecting the communities that we serve.</li> </ul>	There were no suggestions to further strengthen this commitment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Plan offers a potential to explicitly emphasise our commitment to EDI. This emphasis was not included in the Plan as first drafted.	Several external and internal respondents suggested that we strengthen attention to EDI in the Plan. Based on that feedback, in 'Our Strategic Aims' section the following line was added:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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	Negative	Neutral	Positive			Negative	Neutral	Positive
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Across our Strategic Aims, we will work to promote equal and equitable services and human rights considerations.</li> </ul>			
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>CONSULTATION</b> To mitigate possible barriers to access for older people, we <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gave interested people the option to share comments other than in writing (in an online meeting or by phone)</li> <li>shared the consultation details with organisations working with this community (e.g. Age Cymru)</li> </ul>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>CONTENT</b> It is expected that the actions to improve our accessibility will particularly benefit older people. Actions to improve awareness are expected to particularly benefit younger people.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>CONSULTATION</b> To mitigate possible barriers to access for this group, we <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>issued the consultation in EasyRead format</li> </ul>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gave interested people the option to share comments other than in writing (in an online meeting or by phone)</li> <li>shared the consultation details with organisations working with this community (e.g. Disability Wales, Learning Disability Wales, Mencap and others)</li> </ul>				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONTENT</b></p> <p>It is expected that the actions to improve our accessibility and the diversity of our workforce will particularly benefit disabled people.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gender (sex)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONSULTATION</b></p> <p>We identified no barriers to people based on their gender.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONTENT</b></p> <p>Women are well-represented among our complainants and staff. We do not anticipate specific impact on this group.</p>	More detailed actions in relation to Gender Pay Gap will be included in the Strategic Equality Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONSULTATION</b></p> <p>To mitigate possible barriers to access for this group, we</p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



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	Negative	Neutral	Positive			Negative	Neutral	Positive
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shared the consultation details with organisations working with this community (e.g. Stonewall)</li> </ul>				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONTENT</b> People who identify as trans are currently comparatively well represented among our complainants, but not represented at all among our staff.</p>	We know that people who identify as trans may be in particular need of our services. We will evaluate how we should support this group under our Communications Strategy and Strategic Equality Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage & civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONSULTATION</b> We identified no barriers to people because of their marital status</p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONTENT</b> We identified no specific impact on this group.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy & maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONSULTATION</b> We identified no barriers to people in this group.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONTENT</b> We identified no specific impact on people in this group.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONSULTATION</b> To mitigate possible barriers to access for this group, we</p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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	Negative	Neutral	Positive			Negative	Neutral	Positive
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shared the consultation details with organisations working with this community (e.g. EYST; Race Equality First)</li> </ul>				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONTENT</b></p> <p>It is expected that the actions to improve the awareness and understanding of our office, as well as improve the diversity of our workforce will particularly benefit people from diverse ethnic backgrounds and nationalities.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONSULTATION</b></p> <p>To mitigate possible barriers to access for this group, we</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shared the consultation details with organisations working with this community (e.g. Cytun)</li> </ul>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONTENT</b></p> <p>People who identify with diverse religions are currently comparatively well represented among our complainants. We currently do not anticipate a specific impact on this group.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Characteristic	Potential impact			Please explain this impact	Can this impact be mitigated or enhanced?  If so, how?	Impact after actions		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive			Negative	Neutral	Positive
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONSULTATION</b></p> <p>To mitigate possible barriers to access for this group, we</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shared the consultation details with organisations working with this community (e.g. Stonewall)</li> </ul>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONTENT</b></p> <p>People who identify with diverse sexual orientations are comparatively well-represented among our complainants. However, it is expected that the actions to improve the diversity of our workforce will particularly benefit people in this group.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Welsh language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONSULTATION</b></p> <p>There was a risk that the consultation will not be accessible to Welsh speakers and will not comply with our Welsh language standards.</p> <p>To mitigate that risk, the consultation was launched bilingually, with all channels to submit responses (including online meetings) available in Welsh. The</p>	One consultee questioned whether by issuing the consultation in Welsh and English separately we complied with the Welsh language standards. We considered our approach and were assured that it was compliant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Characteristic	Potential impact			Please explain this impact	Can this impact be mitigated or enhanced? If so, how?	Impact after actions		
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				consultation questions included questions about possible impact on the Welsh language.				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>CONTENT</b></p> <p>The first draft of the Plan (as consulted on) did not reference the Welsh language, though questions about the possible impact were asked during the consultation.</p>	<p>We received extensive detailed comments from the consultees on the impact of the Plan on the Welsh language (see <b>record any consultation and engagement undertaken</b> underneath).</p> <p>We decided that it would not be feasible to reference the Welsh language for every Strategic Aim. Rather, to reflect the cross-cutting nature of these considerations, it was decided to insert a new paragraph in the Strategic Aims section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will continue to comply with our Welsh language standards and will explore ways to facilitate and promote the use of Welsh across all the Strategic Aims.</li> </ul> <p><b>This commitment will be reinforced by the following actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the consultation comments as part of the review of our Welsh Language Policy (Jan</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Characteristic	Potential impact			Please explain this impact	Can this impact be mitigated or enhanced? If so, how?	Impact after actions		
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					2023) and development of our new Strategic Equality Plan (Jan-March 2023)			
Socio-economic characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>rurality</li> <li>low/no income</li> <li>caring duties</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Plan as consulted on does not reference socio-economic duty.	One consultee suggested that the socio-economic duty is referenced in the Plan. We did not include that reference, as our understanding of equality already includes socio-economic disadvantage.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please record the evidence that you used to assess impact:**

**PART 1**

The assessment included similar considerations to any communications project, with particular attention to access needs of people in different age groups; disabled people; people who may be time-poor (e.g. carers) and Welsh speakers.

**PART 2**

The development of the initial draft of the Strategic Plan was informed by extensive research that we undertake to understand trends in our casework and views of our stakeholders. This included:

- Service user feedback (including via the annual telephone survey) (which includes questions about our accessibility)
- National public awareness survey results (which break down the results by respondents' ethnicity, age, disability, geographic location and ability to speak Welsh)
- Feedback from the bodies in our jurisdiction (via our annual Sounding Board and an online survey)
- Our internal staff survey
- Chwarae Teg Learning and Development focus groups
- Chwarae Teg FairPlay employer assessment
- Our staff and complainant equality data

The assessment was also informed by the consultation and engagement below.

**Please record any consultation and engagement undertaken**

**Sister organisations**

During May and June 2022, we liaised with colleagues at the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman and Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman to learn about their approach to development of their Strategic Plans. Two of these plans distinguished inclusion, awareness and accessibility as separate strategic aims.

**Staff:**

3 pre-consultation engagement sessions (June and July 2022)

3 engagement sessions during the public consultation (October – November 2022)

- Staff comments included a suggestion that human rights work should be emphasised in the final Plan

## External stakeholders:

Public consultation (September – November 2022)

Several respondents called for

- more clarity on the focus and scope of our planned outreach as well as accessibility support, including:
  - how we will engage with the ‘silent minority’ among our potential service users
  - how we will reach and support those whose first language is neither English, nor Welsh
  - how we will support those with learning difficulties
  - a lack of focus on socio-economic deprivation
  - the need to consider targeted work with underrepresented groups and using key gatekeepers within the community to take out our message
  - our commitments not going far enough, with the need for much more emphasis on accessibility, beyond Plain English - for example, languages other than Welsh, BSL, audio versions, easy read, Braille services, representatives from all backgrounds who can act as advocated on behalf of those who require it)
  - what we will do to ensure bilingual access
  - an emphasis on the need for clear and effective marketing
- the need to strengthen the attention to EDI, with suggestions that
  - our focus on good customer service, as well as our proactive improvement work could feature more emphasis on promotion of equity/equitable services;
  - ‘the fundamentals of the Equalities Act 2010’ are integrated within the scope of the Strategic Aims
  - there is more focus on diversity of staff

One respondent acknowledged our work on human rights and stated that ‘we would like to see other regulators taking on a more explicit role in inspecting for progress on the delivery of equality objectives and outcomes in their sectors and consideration of potential breaches of equality and human rights issues.’

In relation to the Welsh language, areas of concern, criticism or where there were calls for more clarity were as follows:

- A lack of clarity whether outreach and systemic improvement work would consider also the needs of Welsh speakers
- A lack of clarity on how we will ensure bilingual access, represent that culture of Wales and the diversity of its citizens and how we will link with Welsh Government commitment to increase the number of Welsh speakers by 2050.
- One respondent suggested that
  - in general, it would be beneficial if we considered the relevance of the Welsh language standards to each of the proposed actions under every Strategic Aim and the methods of measuring success. This is particularly relevant to elements relating to information technology, service provision and communication, and staff development.
  - as part of strategic aim 2 we should carry out analysis work to find out why so few people wish to use your services in Welsh and take steps to increase more use of those services in Welsh.
  - strategic aim 2 should cover the need to comply with standard 77 of the Welsh language standards.
  - we should develop a policy on the use of the Welsh language internally with the intention of promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language amongst the workforce.
  - the respondents was keen to underline the specific requirement for public bodies under the Welsh language standards to publish a complaints procedure which details how they intend to deal with complaints regarding their compliance with the standards that they are under a duty to comply with, and also provide training for their staff to deal with those complaints.
- One respondent stated that we need consider how the Strategic Aims will demonstrate how we will support Welsh speakers to work in an agile way (e.g. availability of translation software) and also how we will support to that end disabled people and users of other languages.
- One respondent questioned whether the consultation treated the Welsh language at least as favourably as the English language, stating that 'it would have been more suitable to conduct the consultation completely bilingually rather than saying that the document was also available in Welsh'. It stated that the Plan should include more attention to the Welsh Language and the effects of the Aims on the Welsh language. It also stated that the Plan should also consider the competences of the PSOW in relation to complaints about the use of the Welsh language.



- One respondent stated that we should ensure that both languages are given equal standing – ‘as long as there is no pressure to ‘push’ use of Welsh, rather allowing a personal choice’.
- One respondent emphasised the need to give visibility also to BSL

### Outcomes report

<b>EIA stage completed</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Initial screening
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Full assessment
<b>Summary of negative impacts identified</b>	The assessment identified no negative impacts.	
<b>Decision</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Proceed – no changes
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Proceed – actions needed
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do not proceed
<b>Action plan</b>	<p>The actions identified relate to other policies and strategies which will be reviewed or developed in due course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welsh Language Policy</li> <li>• Strategic Equality Plan</li> <li>• Communications Strategy</li> </ul>	
<b>Authorised by</b>		<b>Date</b>
MT		January 2023