

Shropshire Council Part 1 ESIIA: initial screening and assessment

Name of service change

Church Stretton – Reduction in appointment availability of Shropshire Council's Registration Service. Change from a permanently staffed office to attendance weekly by appointment.

Aims of the service change and description

We register all births, deaths, marriages, civil partnerships, and still births occurring in the County of Shropshire.

Our services are provided from 10 different locations across the County in 9 towns: Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Bridgnorth, Whitchurch, Market Drayton, Ludlow, Wem, Bishops Castle, and Church Stretton. They had been provided in 11 locations which included at the Maternity Unit at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, this unit has now ceased to operate and the main maternity unit is now based at the Princess Royal Hospital, Telford. The responsibility for the registration of these births now rests with Telford & Wrekin's Registration Service.

The impact on the workload and income of the service of this significant change will not be fully understood for at least 12 months, however it is important that we look at this change and reorganise our services where possible to reflect customer need and usage.

Members of the public can come to register a life event at nine of these locations, and the tenth location is our central register repository, where all of the completed births, deaths and marriage registers containing events which have happened in Shropshire since 1st July 1837 are kept and where our historical certificates are produced, and to where there is no public access.

Alongside the statutory services which have to be provided, the service also provides a range of complimentary services including: Nationality Checking Services, Civil Naming Ceremonies, Civil Renewal of Vows Ceremonies and Civil Funerals, the fees generated from these and the statutory services go towards covering the costs of service provision.

Statutory responsibilities (The duties we have to do by law)

- Register all births,
- Register all deaths,
- Register all still births
- Register all marriages,
- Register all civil partnerships
- To report marriages or civil partnerships which they suspect are being entered into for the purpose of evading UK Immigration Law.
- To collect marriage returns from all of the churches across Shropshire four times per year.
- Responsibility for the administration of the certification and registration of places for worship and religious marriages.
- To administer the Local Authority's approval process for licensing venues for civil marriage and civil partnerships.
- The service is required to meet or exceed national standards which are laid down by the Government, and a report has to be made to the General Register Office on an annual basis reporting on performance against these standards.
- The storage and issue of books of medical cause of death certificates to medical practitioners across the county in hospitals and medical practices.

- The service also retains a stock of marriage registers for issue to the clerics in churches of all denominations in emergency situations
- To provide advice to clerics across the county
- To provide advice and information to a range of other organisations.
- Provision of statistical information to the Government in order that it can plan its social and economic policies based on quantified evidence.

Registrations have to be carried out in person, this is a legal requirement. No charge can be made for the registration of a birth or death and certificate charges are set by statute as are many of the charges which may be levied for Registration Services. The majority of income is produced from our ceremony services (statutory and Celebratory), licensing of approved venues and provision of nationality and citizenship services.

Although much of the work of the service is prescribed in regulation, and there are accommodation guidelines applied by the General Register Office, there is no specific duty placed on a Local Authority to deliver services in specific locations, nor is there any stipulation relating to the number of registration officers or locations per capita. Indeed in many large cities registration services are delivered from a single site. Only local government employees are permitted by law to carry out registration duties.

The numbers of registrations required for events in the Shropshire Council area has remained pretty static over the last six years. At the time the consultation was carried out the figures for 2014/2015 were not available, but as they are now available we have included them. The numbers of registrations in the Shropshire Council Area for 2016 as at 07/01/2016 are also included for your information. As you can see the impact of the loss of birth registrations is significant.

Services delivered over the past six years:

Statutory Services	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 01/04/2015 to 31/12/2015 ytd
Birth registrations	4798	4734	4887	4789	4793	2720	435
Death registrations	2807	2903	2835	3252	3184	3184	2335
Still birth registrations	32	35	19	25	27	9	0
Marriage registrations	1088	1222	1271	1410	1217	1334	1147
Civil Partnership Registrations	23	23	29	41	30	12	4
Notices of Marriage	1837	1993	2398	2136	2029	2152	1501
Notices of Civil Partnership	39	51	64	48	47	13	6
Historical certificates	6976	6385	5818	5456	5530	5201	3288
Civil Partnership to Marriage Conversions						13	13
Non Statutory Services	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 01/04/2015 to 31/12/2015 ytd
Funeral, ceremonies	4	26	26	43	120	103	88
Naming Ceremonies	15	12	5	5	5	2	2
Reaffirmation of Vows Ceremonies	8	10	20	11	10	15	17
British Citizenship	107	116	104	115	162	74	76
Nationality Checking	187	154	227	87	161	75	81

Shropshire Registration Service has a budget of around £200K with which to provide its services. The total expenditure of the service including non-controllable costs is in the region of £950K, non-controllable costs total around £290K. The service itself creates an income of around £750K annually.

The service has to make savings from the £200K base budget of around £50K and have examined ways in which this can be achieved. The utilisation of offices and their costs have been examined as a way of identifying ways of achieving these.

In addition to the closure of the Main Consultant led Maternity Unit at RSH, applications for voluntary redundancy received from several members of staff, which have to be considered, and in the context of a number of retirements, the how and where services are provided has had to be considered as staffing is the largest cost to the service.

Currently services are provided in the following localities:

Bridgnorth
 Bishops Castle
 Church Stretton
 Ludlow
 Market Drayton
 Oswestry
 Shrewsbury
 Wem
 Whitchurch.

The actual % of time spent on customer facing appointments in each office is shown in the table below (this does not account for the duties which have to be undertaken after a registration). The figures used in the consultation were prepared prior to the figures being available for 2014/15 which we have now been able to include

Public facing utilisation only - without administrative duties	Shrewsbury	Bridgnorth	Ludlow	Bishops Castle	Church Stretton	Wem	Oswestry	Market Drayton	Whitchurch
2012/13	44%	36%	42%	20%	16%	33%	36%	36%	28%
2013/14	49%	43%	49%	21%	29%	35%	39%	41%	36%
2014/15	46%	41%	49%	25%	32%	29%	35%	35%	35%
01/04/2015 to 31/12/2015 YTD	44%	40%	44%	15%	19%	18%	33%	31%	30%

The figures are based on the percentage of appointment time available in each office which has actually been

used for the purposes of carrying out a registration.

It is clear to see that the offices at Bishops Castle, Church Stretton and Wem are underused and hence become subject to scrutiny in terms of viability, hence why the provision of service in these locations is being altered.

In Church Stretton, the uptake of the service is low and the cost of providing a permanent staffed office for 5 hours per week over 2 days is high. We propose to provide access to appointments in Church Stretton on a single day per week by appointment only, over a period of 2.5 hours and provide a registrar to attend for the purpose of that/those appointment(s) only and do this with the help of the Church Stretton Town Council. The staff can be provided using existing staff who are either usually based elsewhere or who are roving members of staff. We should then be able to delete some vacant posts.

Had the facility to register locally been removed completely there would be additional travel for residents of that particular area of the County, as follows:

Bishops Castle	13 miles
Shrewsbury Registrars Office	13 miles
Ludlow Registrars Office	16 miles

Access to the service is by appointment although we will always see walk in customers if we are able to or make an appointment for these customers to attend. Appointments can be made by telephoning the Shropshire Council Customer Service Centre on 0345 678 9016, or by visiting the Shropshire council website www.shropshire.gov.uk, or by visiting any Shropshire council customer service point.

A domiciliary service is and has always been in place for those people who experience severe difficulties with registration, ie if they are housebound by reason of illness or disability and cannot attend at a registration service point to conduct their business. This provision is rarely requested.

We feel that the evidence gathered demonstrates no significant difficulties would be incurred by the residents of the Church Stretton area which cannot be overcome. We are happy that this change provides an excellent way of reducing costs whilst maintaining a local service.

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change

This change represents a change to the service arrangements for those who wish to register a birth, give notice of marriage or civil partnership, or to register a death. As these situations are experienced by all members of the community, including those in the protected characteristic groupings, this change will potentially affect all members of the community

Evidence used for screening of the service change

As referred to earlier on in this document, significant changes most importantly the cessation of the Consultant led maternity unit have a knock on effect to the numbers of registrations to be done by the Shropshire Registration Service. This and the need to make savings necessitates the need for how, when and where we provide registration services across the council area to be considered.

The evidence for this change is presented in the utilisation figures

Public facing utilisation only - without administrative duties	Shrewsbury	Bridgnorth	Ludlow	Bishops Castle	Church Stretton	Wem	Oswestry	Market Drayton	Whitchurch
2012/13	44%	36%	42%	20%	16%	33%	36%	36%	28%
2013/14	49%	43%	49%	21%	29%	35%	39%	41%	36%
2014/15	46%	41%	49%	25%	32%	29%	35%	35%	35%
01/04/2015 to 31/12/2015 YTD	44%	40%	44%	15%	19%	18%	33%	31%	30%

In order to ensure that the registration service is in the right shape to deal with the changing needs of communities whilst balancing off the Council's statutory obligation for the provision of service dictates that the changes need to be made now in order that the service improves its efficiency.

The year to date figures for utilisation and the year to date figures for numbers of registrations bears out the need to rationalise provision of services.

Statutory Services	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 01/04/2015 to 31/12/2015 ytd
Birth registrations	4798	4734	4887	4789	4793	2720	435
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There is clearly nothing in the above figures which supports the case to leave things as they are, but we also recognise that it would be incredibly difficult for many residents if all service was based in Shrewsbury.

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change

Public Consultation was carried out over a 6 week period between June and August 2015, via the Shropshire Council Consultation Portal and the local councillors had been involved in cross party discussion group prior to the issue of the consultation. Publicity for the consultation appeared in the local newspapers and on local radio.

48 responses were received on line and 7 responses were received in writing.

Of the on line responses:

48% supported leaving provision exactly as it is currently

38% supported the closure of Church Stretton, and Wem service points (Bishops Castle Closure was not given as an option) in favour of retaining the other out stations

14% supported the centralisation of registration services in Shrewsbury and the closure of all out stations.

Of the on-line responses:

42% of respondents were male

47% of respondents were female

11% of respondents preferred not to say

8% of respondents were aged between 25 and 40

24% of respondents were aged between 41 and 59

55% of respondents were aged over 60 years

13% of respondents preferred not to say

The 7 written responses showed the following:

2 of the responses were from Town Councils

1 of the responses was from a local councillor

1 of the responses was from a member of the public who also organised community transport

2 of the responses were from members of the public

1 of the responses was anonymous

Respondents local register offices as identified from consultation:

Bishops Castle:	0
Bridgnorth:	3
Church Stretton:	15
Ludlow:	13
Oswestry:	3
Market Drayton:	0
Wem:	11
Whitchurch:	1
Shrewsbury:	7
South Offices in General:	1
Unidentified	1

From the feedback received from those who cited their local register office as Church Stretton, it was clear how much the service is valued and that potential hardships could be avoided by finding a way in which we could continue to offer our service within this town. From the consultation offers of assistance, from Church Stretton Town Council, with accommodation issues has been forthcoming and will be explored to the full.

The Shropshire Registration Service carry out a full customer survey at least once per year for a period of 1 month and ask for customer feedback on a number of areas including access to services. These results and comments are published on the Shropshire council website and are provided to the General Register Office for whom a stewardship report has to be prepared annually. This change, as with any organisational change will be monitored closely and the service is prepared to react quickly to any areas which create significant problems.

Potential impact on Protected Characteristic groups and on social inclusion

Guidance notes on how to carry out the initial assessment

Using the results of evidence gathering and specific consultation and engagement, please consider how the service change as proposed may affect people within the nine Protected Characteristic groups and people at risk of social exclusion.

1. Have the intended audiences and target groups been consulted about:
 - their current needs and aspirations and what is important to them;
 - the potential impact of this service change on them, whether positive or negative, intended or unintended;
 - the potential barriers they may face.
2. If the intended audience and target groups have not been consulted directly, have representatives been consulted, or people with specialist knowledge, or research explored?
3. Have other stakeholder groups and secondary groups, for example carers of service users, been explored in terms of potential unintended impacts?
4. Are there systems set up to:
 - monitor the impact, positive or negative, intended or intended, for all the different groups;
 - enable open feedback and suggestions from a variety of audiences through a variety of methods.
5. Are there any Human Rights implications? For example, is there a breach of one or more of the human rights of an individual or group?
6. Will the service change as proposed have a positive or negative impact on fostering good relations?
7. Will the service change as proposed have a positive or negative impact on social inclusion?

Guidance on what a negative impact might look like

High Negative	Significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place or no evidence available: urgent need for consultation with customers, general public, workforce
Medium Negative	Some potential impact, some mitigating measures in place but no evidence available how effective they are: would be beneficial to consult with customers, general public, workforce
Low Negative	Almost bordering on non-relevance to the ESIIA process (heavily legislation led, very little discretion can be exercised, limited public facing aspect, national policy affecting degree of local impact possible)

Initial assessment for each group

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have on a group, through inserting a tick in the relevant column. Please add any extra notes that you think might be helpful for readers.

Protected Characteristic groups and other groups in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Part Two ESIIA required</i>	High positive impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	Medium positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	Low positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>

<p>Age (please include children, young people, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group eg child for whom there are safeguarding concerns eg older person with disability)</p>				<p>X There could be a small negative impact for older people, wishing to register a death, who may have to wait a little longer to register locally. This negative impact is based on the requirement to register a death within 5 days unless the Coroner has been involved in which case the requirement is waived.</p>
<p>Disability (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV)</p>				<p>X there should be no significant impact on those with any disability other than the possibility of having to wait a little longer to register a death. In cases of severe hardship the registration service operates a domiciliary service for the registration of births and deaths. This could be used if the person responsible for the registration were housebound for example</p>
<p>Gender re-assignment (please include associated</p>				<p>X This change would have no</p>

aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				impact either negative or positive for this group other than a reduced access to registration service should they need to register a birth or death or give notice of marriage or civil partnership
Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				X There should be minimal impact on this group of people. In reality people can give notice of marriage up to 12 months in advance of their chosen date of marriage and a minimum of 28 days beforehand. Legislation provides for housebound or detained people to give notice where they reside.
Pregnancy & Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				X there should be no positive or negative impact on this group, other than having reduced access to registration services locally, however following the birth of a child a family have 42 days during which they should register the birth.
Race (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture,				X This change will have no

language, gypsy, traveller)			<p>impact on this aspect. Marriage and Civil Partnership law already determines that those subject to immigration control have to give notice at a designated register office, which would necessitate the couple travelling to Shrewsbury or to another designated office. These amendments will have no direct impact as a result of someone's race.</p>
Religion and belief (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)			<p>X No changes are being made which would affect any aspect of someone's religious beliefs. The law requires a death to be registered within 5 days for everyone unless the Coroner is involved in some way. No distinction is made on the basis of religion or belief. We do recognise that for the Muslim and Jewish communities there can be a desire to have deaths registered very</p>

				<p>quickly especially where a body is to be removed from England and Wales. This can only be facilitated where there is no Coroner involvement and the Registration Service always accommodates these (perhaps one per year) even out of hours where possible. We also have links with the bigger muslim community in Telford which we meet with at their request to address any particular issues, of which there have not been any, or to participate in Q&A sessions if required. Most of the deaths of people from these communities are dealt with by one particular funeral director with whom we have very strong links.</p>
Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				X The proposed amendments do not impact on either sex in a negative or positive way.
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects:				X The proposed

safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				amendments do not impact on the sexual orientation of any person in a negative or positive way.
Other: Social Inclusion (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people for whom there are safeguarding concerns; people you consider to be vulnerable)			X There is a potential for medium negative impact on those people living in the rural area in and around Church Stretton. Whilst they would still be able to register locally they may have to wait a little longer to be able to do so	

Decision, review and monitoring

Decision	Yes	No
Part One ESIIA Only?	X	
Proceed to Part Two Full Report?		

If Part One, please now use the boxes below and sign off at the foot of the page. If Part Two, please move on to the full report stage.



Actions to mitigate negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change
The consultation originally discussed the potential for the closure of the Office in Church Stretton outright, or the centralisation of all registration services in Shrewsbury. The discussions with the local councillors and the feedback received from the consultation caused a rethink in terms of the option for outright closure. The rurality of the area and the potential hardships that a closure would cause to residents has resulted in the proposal to retain registration services in Church Stretton but on an appointment only basis on one occasion per week.

Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change
<i>Shropshire Registration Service conduct at least one consultation with its customers over the period of a month every year and uses the information gained to inform future plans and considerations. Usage of the planned facility in Church Stretton will also be monitored to ensure that there is sufficient provision or if there appears to be insufficient provision to look again at the situation.</i>
In addition we will liaise with colleagues in Shropshire Council's Performance and Policy team on ways

to systemically and in a proportionate and non intrusive manner collect equalities data to enable us to monitor the effects of this change on those residents with protected characteristics.

The service area will seek to make use, where possible of national comparator data on demographic changes and models of registrar service delivery that reflect the rurality of the area and the changing nature of the service, for example reduction in the numbers of civil partnerships now that equal marriage is in place


Scrutiny at Part One screening stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
Lead officer carrying out the screening	 Mrs Karen Burton, Registration & Coroners Service Manager; ext 8478	12/01/2016
Any internal support*		
Any external support**	 Mrs Lois Dale, Rurality and Equalities Specialist; ext 5684	11/01/16
Head of service		

*This refers to other officers within the service area

**This refers either to support external to the service but within the Council, eg from the Rurality and Equalities Specialist, or support external to the Council, eg perhaps from a peer authority

Sign off at Part One screening stage

Name	Signatures	Date
Lead officer's name		
Head of service's name		