

**Shropshire Council Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)**  
**Part One Screening Record 2020**

**A. Summary Sheet on Accountability and Actions**

**Name of proposed service change**

Shropshire Council Equality Objectives Action Plan 2020 to 2024

**Name of lead officer carrying out the screening**

Mrs Lois Dale

**Decision, review and monitoring**

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

*If completion of a Part One assessment is an appropriate and proportionate action at this stage, please use the boxes below and sign off as indicated. If a Part Two report is required, please move on to full report stage.*

**Actions to mitigate negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations**

Screening indicates that a medium positive impact is anticipated for all groupings within the community and thus for the whole community, as the Council's equality objectives action plan sets out to help the Council make progress towards achieving the three national equality aims set out in the general equality duty placed upon local authorities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

The workforce of the Council is a key target group in the Council's equality endeavours, as are the elected Members of the Council as community leaders. The assistance of all staff across all service areas, in taking account of equality considerations in their everyday actions and in applying such considerations to planned changes to services, for example through ESIIAs, will help the Council to proactively meet its PSED as well as mitigate against any risks of non compliance.

Publication of the Equality Objectives Action Plan for 2020 to 2024 will allow the Council to further collaborate with communities and partners at a local level, with stakeholders at a local and sub-regional level, and with Government at a national level. This will maximise the opportunities to realise policy intentions and in so doing increase positive impacts across groupings. It will also enable the Council to build upon progress made during the period 2016 to 2020.

National evidence to date has identified a disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic for groupings including Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) communities, faith communities, younger people, older people, people with disabilities, and those for whom there

is a gendered economic impact. These groupings all fall within what are termed Protected Characteristic groupings under the Equality Act 2010.

The recent Public Health England (PHE) report, entitled: *“Beyond the data; understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups”*, has brought into sharp relief the additional challenges in BAME communities around finding out about and accessing services, in terms of the information and support that we provide, and the ways in which we seek to provide such help. This also brings in joint efforts across our area and work with other neighbouring authorities, public sector organisations, and the voluntary and community sector across our borders

Considerations around social inclusion and access to services are to the forefront of our minds as a large and sparsely populated rural county, as well as in the minds of national policymakers, as the impacts of the pandemic have thrown such inequalities into sharp relief.

The Equality Objectives Action Plan accordingly includes proposed actions for joint work to identify and seek to address the inequalities emerging to date across a range of groupings and communities affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This should then facilitate tie in with national actions in response to a range of groupings affected, as well as to the recommendations made in the Public Health England report.

The work will usefully build upon the relationships already established with faith communities as part of the Council’s ongoing efforts to work with communities and schools to commemorate annual Holocaust Memorial Day, through planting a cherry tree every year and in so doing growing a cherry tree orchard of remembrance across the county. The aims are to ensure that the Holocaust and other genocides are never forgotten, to learn more about this history of persecution towards groupings, and to help children to understand the importance of fostering good relationships between people of different faiths.

#### **Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations**

We will continue to target efforts at identifying any gaps in equality and diversity data, and in finding out where there may be barriers to accessing particular services, and how this might be addressed, for people with one or more of the Protected Characteristics and for people at risk of social exclusion. This will be reported upon in the annual Service User and Workforce Diversity Reports published online.

Cabinet is also being asked to agree to receive a progress report on equality developments at local and national level at a timely future date, at which point further recommendations may be tabled, specifically with regard to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic upon groupings and communities in Shropshire.

The Council is developing actions to enhance any positive impacts for groupings arising from the pandemic, due to realising the potential of online services to increase social inclusion, eg for faith communities eg for younger people, older people, and people at risk of social isolation, subject to acquisition of digital skills and to assured digital connectivity.

Research has been scoped out and is underway into the impact for groupings of a lack of physical access to facilities such as leisure centres, day centres and open spaces during the pandemic, and to schools and colleges.

Any changes to service configurations towards greater use of online resources will need to ensure that the importance of physical access to such facilities and amenities, not least in minimising social isolation, remains to the forefront of our minds.

### **Associated ESIIAs**

A screening ESIIA was carried out for the previous Equality and Objectives Action Plan 2016 to 2020, reported to Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

### **Actions to mitigate negative impact, enhance positive impact, and review and monitor overall impacts in terms of any other considerations. This includes climate change and health and well being considerations**

Cabinet gave recent approval to the use of health impact assessments. This proposal provides an early opportunity for utilising the guidance that has been developed for use in this regard, in order to more fully capture the health and well being benefits anticipated. It is timely that such approval was sought and given, as the decision was made just before the Covid-19 pandemic reached Shropshire, and as the Council will be able to focus and shape local outcomes to improve health and well being across groupings through joint efforts across sectors, utilising emerging national evidence and national learning points. This is particularly so for people in BAME groupings, for men, for people who are obese, and for older people.



Maximising the positive equality impacts in terms of economic benefits is focussed upon joint efforts to influence national policy around social inclusion, including through the Rural Services Network, and joint work through the Shropshire Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly and the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). This has involved collating and submitting evidence to parliamentary select committee inquiries around digital and social inclusion issues, the rural economy, and regional disparities. We also engage directly with Government Departments on such issues, for example with the Department of Health on the Industrial Strategy Grand Challenge of an Ageing Society. We will continue to do so.

The groupings likely to benefit in economic terms are younger people, people who do not have digital skills to enable them to make the most of online opportunities to access services and support, and people at risk of physical and digital isolation, whether they live in one of our more rural areas or within one of our market towns and villages.

Looking at environmental impacts, with regard to the planting of trees, there is a complementary action to carbon offsetting in that there is anticipated to be a low positive outcome in relation specifically to the growing of a Holocaust Memorial cherry tree orchard of remembrance across Shropshire, with a tree planted with a different primary school each year. Each time a tree is planted, the children at the school learn more about the natural environment and the need to care for the natural world that they see around them, as well as about the need to never forget the Holocaust and other genocides, and to care for the people around them. There are now twelve trees planted across Shropshire.

This action could be complemented by other environmental activities through schools and maximisation of use of outdoor amenities and green spaces, to further promote mental and physical well being and opportunities for people to access such amenities regardless of their location within Shropshire. This could for example include transport arrangements.

### Scrutiny at Part One screening stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
Lead officer carrying out the screening <b>Mrs Lois Dale, Rurality and Equalities Specialist</b>		22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2020
Any internal support* <b>Tom Dodds, Intelligence and Insight Manager</b>		25 <sup>th</sup> June 2020
Any external support**		

*\*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 from a peer authority*

### Sign off at Part One screening stage

Name	Signatures	Date
Lead officer's name		22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2020
Accountable officer's name		25 <sup>th</sup> June 2020

*\*This may either be the Head of Service or the lead officer*

## B. Detailed Screening Assessment

### Aims of the service change and description

The Equality Act 2010 legislation states that a local authority listed in the Act must comply with both a general equality duty and with specific duties, as set out in the Act and described as the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This includes Shropshire Council as a local unitary authority.

To demonstrate full compliance with the general duty, we are required to publish annual information about our workforce diversity and service user diversity. In order to demonstrate full compliance with the specific duties, we are required to publish one or more equality objectives which we think we should achieve. The frequency for these is a minimum of every four years.

The regulations also specify that an authority listed in the Act must publish its equality information and equality objectives in a manner which is accessible to the public and may publish this information within another published document. Diversity reports are therefore on the Council website, along with the equality objectives action plan 2016 to 2020 and other associated materials, within the section "Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion".

If the Council did not publish an action plan for the period 2020 to 2024, it would not be in a position to readily demonstrate compliance with the PSED. This would represent a major risk, not least in reputational terms, as it would involve breach of legal obligation, affect more than one group of stakeholders, attract the medium-term attention of legislative or regulatory bodies and potentially attract significant adverse media interest. This is likely to be heightened already, given what is known to date about the disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic upon people in Protected Characteristic groupings

Publication of the Equality Objectives Action Plan for 2020 to 2024 will allow the Council to further collaborate with communities and partners at a local level, with stakeholders at a local and sub-regional level, and with Government at a national level, in order to maximise the opportunities to realise policy intentions as per core corporate values around equality.

The requirement provides an opportunity to not only set out our proposed actions for the next four year period, covering 2020 to 2024, but also reflect upon progress made over the course of the four year period 2016 to 2020, in terms of equality, diversity and social inclusion.

Emphasis placed by the Council upon these actions, and visible commitment shown by the Council in so doing, aids the Council to meet its general equality duty under the PSED. This may be described as the duty on a public authority, when carrying out its functions, to have what is called *due regard* to three national equality aims.

The national equality aims are:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advancing equality of opportunity;
- Fostering good relations.

Publication of an approved Equality Objectives Action Plan 2020 to 2024 will thus enable up to date positioning of the Council to assist in efforts to meet its PSED, seek to demonstrate and develop good practice in so doing, and facilitate timely links with other local and national policy and strategy development in the arena of equality, diversity, and social inclusion.

National evidence to date has identified a disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic for groupings including Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) communities, faith communities, younger people, older people, people with disabilities, and those for whom there is a gendered economic impact. These groupings all fall within what are termed Protected Characteristic groupings under the Equality Act 2010.

Considerations around social inclusion and access to services are also to the forefront of our minds as a large and sparsely populated rural county, as well as in the minds of national policymakers, as the impacts of the pandemic have thrown such inequalities into sharp relief.

The Equality Objectives Action Plan accordingly includes proposed actions for joint work to identify and seek to address the inequalities emerging to date across a range of groupings and communities affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This should then facilitate tie in with national actions in response to a range of groupings affected, as well as to the recommendations made in the Public Health England report *“Beyond the data; understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups”*; PHE, June 2020.

### **Intended audiences and target groups for the service change**

All those who live in, work in and visit Shropshire.

All those who seek to serve and support communities and groupings within them across Shropshire, including, in alphabetical order:

- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Government Departments and agencies
- Holocaust Memorial Day Trust
- Inter faith forums and faith communities
- Local authorities and collectives thereof, including the County Councils Network (CCN), the Local Government Association (LGA), the Rural Services Network (RSN), and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)
- Local Members of Parliament
- Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
- Other public sector and business sector organisations
- Parish and town councils
- Schools, colleges and universities
- Shropshire Business Board
- Shropshire Council councillors
- Shropshire Council workforce
- Shropshire Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly
- Voluntary and community organisations, alliances and movements

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but it is intended to demonstrate inclusive approaches alongside the need to engage with specific target groupings according to specific circumstances eg approaches to achieve digital connectivity across the county involve a range of sectors and organisations.

### **Evidence used for screening of the service change**

- Equality and Human Rights Commission resources and guidance
- Equality Objectives Action Plans 2012 to 2016 and 2016 to 2020
- Local authority comparator data
- ONS Statistics
- Public Health England statistics and analyses with regard to the Covid-19 pandemic
- Rural Services Network resources on rural issues and needs
- Shropshire Council county level and area profiles, statistical analyses and reports
- Shropshire Council service area data

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but it is intended to demonstrate the breadth of evidence not only collated to date but also required to be kept up to date, in order to facilitate timely and evidence based decision making processes.

In producing the draft action plan for 2020 to 2024, use has also been made of: evidence collected for annual service user and workforce diversity reports; learning points from actions completed for 2016 to 2020; feedback from communities, stakeholders and staff in development of approaches including place based approaches towards working with communities; Council and other contributions to national consultations and opportunities to submit evidence about needs; and good practice examples of approaches to equality and social inclusion, particularly in rural areas.

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

Actions have been scoped out within the action plan 2020 to 2024 around specific groupings eg BAME groupings adversely affected by Covid-19, as well as around general approaches, eg joint efforts to tackle racism eg efforts to promote social inclusion across our rural county eg updates of staff and Member training and guidance resources around equality, diversity and social inclusion.

Consultation and engagement will therefore be adapted according to the actions to be carried out, and it may be that specific screening ESIAs will need to be undertaken, particularly if there is public consultation planned.

### **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.***

<b>Protected Characteristic groups and other groups in Shropshire</b>	<b>High negative impact</b> <i>Part Two ESIIA required</i>	<b>High positive impact</b> <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	<b>Medium positive or negative impact</b> <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	<b>Low positive or negative impact</b> <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>
<b>Age</b> (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)			Medium positive impact	
<b>Disability</b> (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV)			Medium positive impact	
<b>Gender re-assignment</b> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)			Medium positive impact	
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b> (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)			Medium positive impact	
<b>Pregnancy &amp; Maternity</b> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)			Medium positive impact	
<b>Race</b> (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, gypsy, traveller)			Medium positive impact	
<b>Religion and belief</b> (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)			Medium positive impact	
<b>Sex</b> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)			Medium positive impact	
<b>Sexual Orientation</b> (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)			Medium positive impact	
<b>Other: Social Inclusion</b> (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)			Medium positive impact	



## Identification of likely impact of the service change in terms of other considerations including climate change and health and well being

Cabinet gave recent approval to the use of health impact assessments. This proposal provides an early opportunity for utilising the guidance that has been developed by Public Health colleagues with regard to impact upon health and well being, in order to more fully optimise evidence alongside it and capture health and well being benefits across groupings.

The 2020 to 2024 Action Plan as proposed is intended to have positive impacts in terms of the human rights of individuals and groups.

The 2020 to 2024 Action Plan as proposed is intended to have a positive or negative impact on fostering good relations and promoting social inclusion.

There are intended to be positive equality impacts in terms of economic benefits, which are focussed upon joint efforts to influence national policy around social inclusion, including through the Rural Services Network, and joint work through the Shropshire Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly and the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). This has involved collating and submitting evidence to parliamentary select committee inquiries around digital and social inclusion issues, the rural economy, and regional disparities. We have also engaged directly with Government Departments on such issues. We will continue to do so.

The groupings likely to benefit in economic terms are younger people, people who do not have digital skills to enable them to make the most of online opportunities to access services and support, and people at risk of physical and digital isolation, whether they live in one of our more rural areas or within one of our market towns and villages.

Looking at environmental impacts, with regard to the planting of trees, there is a complementary action to carbon offsetting in that there is anticipated to be a low positive outcome in relation specifically to the growing of a Holocaust Memorial cherry tree orchard of remembrance across Shropshire, with a tree planted with a different primary school each year. Each time a tree is planted, the children at the school learn more about the natural environment and the need to care for the natural world that they see around them, as well as about the need to never forget the Holocaust and other genocides, and to care for the people around them. There are now twelve trees planted across Shropshire.

There is anticipated to continue to be a neutral to low positive outcome in relation to the following aspects of climate change mitigation, with efforts to introduce and maximise online resources matched by efforts to improve digital connectivity and reduce social isolation across the county. Any energy efficiency changes to the fabric of community assets and buildings that improves their energy and fuel outputs will be of benefit to the communities that make use of them, as well as to the wider environment, just as better use of local buildings that reduces or obviates the need to travel other than on foot or by bicycle will also be of benefit to the wider environment.

- Energy and fuel consumption
- Renewable energy generation
- Climate Change adaptation

## **Guidance Notes**

### **1. Corporate and Service Area Policy and Practice on Equality and Social inclusion**

This involves taking an equality and social inclusion approach in planning changes to services, policies or procedures, including those that may be required by Government.

The decisions that you make when you are planning a service change need to be recorded, to demonstrate that you have thought about the possible equality impacts on communities and to show openness and transparency in your decision making processes.

This is where Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessments (ESIAs) come in. Where you carry out an ESIA in your service area, this provides an opportunity to show:

- What evidence you have drawn upon to help you to recommend a strategy or policy or a course of action to Cabinet;
- What target groups and audiences you have worked with to date;
- What actions you will take in order to mitigate any likely negative impact upon a group or groupings, and enhance any positive effects for a group or groupings; and
- What actions you are planning to review the impact of your planned service change.

The formal template is there not only to help the service area but also to act as a stand alone for a member of the public to read.

The approach helps to identify whether or not any new or significant changes to services, including policies, procedures, functions or projects, may have an adverse impact on a particular group of people, and whether the human rights of individuals may be affected.

This assessment encompasses consideration of social inclusion. This is so that we are thinking as carefully and completely as possible about all Shropshire groups and communities, including people in rural areas and people we may describe as vulnerable, for example due to low income or to safeguarding concerns, as well as people in what are described as the nine 'protected characteristics' of groups of people in our population, eg Age. We demonstrate equal treatment to people who are in these groups and to people who are not, through having what is termed 'due regard' to their needs and views when developing and implementing policy and strategy and when commissioning, procuring, arranging or delivering services.

When you are not carrying out an ESIA, you still need to demonstrate that you have considered equality in your decision-making processes. It is up to you what format you choose.-You could use a checklist, an explanatory note, or a document setting out our expectations of standards of behaviour, for contractors to read and sign. It may well not be something that is in the public domain like an ESIA, but you should still be ready for it to be made available.

**Both the approaches sit with a manager, and the manager has to make the call, and record the decision made on behalf of the Council. Help and guidance is also available via the Commissioning Support Team, either for data, or for policy advice from the Rurality and Equalities Specialist. Here are some examples to get you thinking.**

*Carry out an ESIIA:*

- If you are building or reconfiguring a building;
- If you are planning to reduce or remove a service;
- If you are consulting on a policy or a strategy;
- If you are bringing in a change to a process or procedure that involves other stakeholders and the wider community as well as particular groupings

For example, there may be a planned change to a leisure facility. This gives you the chance to look at things like flexible changing room provision, which will maximise positive impacts for everyone. A specific grouping that would benefit would be people undergoing gender reassignment

*Carry out an equality and social inclusion approach:*

- If you are setting out how you expect a contractor to behave with regard to equality, where you are commissioning a service or product from them;
- If you are setting out the standards of behaviour we expect from people who work with vulnerable groupings, such as taxi drivers that we license;
- If you are planning consultation and engagement activity, where we need to collect equality data in ways that will be proportionate and non-intrusive as well as meaningful for the purposes of the consultation itself;
- If you are looking at services provided by others that help the community, where we need to demonstrate a community leadership approach

For example, you may be involved in commissioning a production to tour schools or appear at a local venue, whether a community hall or somewhere like Theatre Severn. The production company should be made aware of our equality policies and our expectation that they will seek to avoid promotion of potentially negative stereotypes. Specific groupings that could be affected include: Disability, Race, Religion and Belief, and Sexual Orientation. There is positive impact to be gained from positive portrayals and use of appropriate and respectful language in regard to these groupings in particular.

## **2. Legal Context**

It is a legal requirement for local authorities to assess the equality and human rights impact of changes proposed or made to services. It is up to us as an authority to decide what form our equality impact assessment may take. Carrying out ESIIAs helps us as a public authority to ensure that, as far as possible, we are taking actions to meet the general equality duty placed on us by the Equality Act 2010, and to thus demonstrate that the three equality aims are integral to our decision making processes. These are: eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations.

Service areas would ordinarily carry out a screening assessment, or Part One equality impact assessment. This enables energies to be focussed on review and monitoring and ongoing evidence collection about the positive or negative impacts of a service change upon groupings in the community, and for any adjustments to be considered and made accordingly.

If the screening indicates that there are likely to be significant negative impacts for groupings within the community, the service area would need to carry out a full report, or Part Two assessment. This will enable more evidence to be collected that will help the service area to reach an informed opinion. Please contact the equality policy lead within the Council for more advice and guidance in this regard, as per details below.

***For further information on the use of ESIIAs: please contact your head of service or contact Mrs Lois Dale, Rurality and Equalities Specialist and Council policy support on equality, via telephone 01743 258528, or email [lois.dale@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:lois.dale@shropshire.gov.uk).***