

Early Help Redesign Proposal - Equality Impact Assessment – approach to consultation

West Sussex County Council is committed to equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and eliminating unlawful discrimination. This commitment is embedded in the policy framework of the Council and informs all decisions, service plans and their implementation. It also forms a critical aim of public and service user engagement and consultation to inform decision-making.

West Sussex County Council will meet its obligations under the [Equality Act 2010](#). The County Council, in preparing for and in the taking of all service decisions, recognises its duty (the Public Sector Equality Duty) to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it and to
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

In the development and in the implementation of arrangements for any decision arising from the proposals being prepared for consultation the Council will ensure that decision-makers will, in a timely way, have due regard to these commitments and can show how this has been done. The consultation plan recognises the need for the assessment of proposals actions against the public sector equality duty to be carried out by reference to real and accurate information about the likely or expected impact of the proposals. Consultation and engagement activity and the evaluation of available data will be used in a focused way to understand the potential impact of proposals.

Some core information about the communities of West Sussex will provide a starting point:

- **Age** – A full understanding of the West Sussex population profile and how different age profiles appear in particular areas or communities and the implications for the groups and communities with an interest in the services covered by the proposal. To have an understanding of the age groups most affected by the service under review.
- **Disability** – To have a clear understanding of the full range of disabilities of those with an interest or stake in the service under review and its future form of provision. Using data from a national survey, the portion of the population with a disability equates to 21% of the total population, ranging from 3% of 0-4 year-olds to 60% of people aged 80+ years. This can be used as a baseline reference to assist the data available for the service under review
- **Ethnicity** – Population level data are available from the Census. In 2011, 89% of the county population were White British. Ethnicity differs between areas of the County. Crawley has 72% White British and 5.2% and 4.3% from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds respectively. The process will use the known ethnicity distribution to inform communication for the consultation as well as the assessment of output.
- **Gender/Transgender** – Data on gender is strong but there is an absence of reliable data at a national or local level for those people who have/are seeking

gender re-assignment or identify with a different gender than that assigned at birth. National statistical guide data may be relied upon.

- **Marital Status/Civil Partnership** – The Census 2011 described the marital/civil partnership status of residents. In West Sussex, 51% of people aged 16+ were married or in civil relationships, 29% single, 10% divorced, 8% widowed, and 2% separated.
- **Pregnancy and Maternity** – In West Sussex, in 2018, there were 8,540 births, 38 of which were to mothers aged 18 years or under.
- **Religion/Belief** – Data on religion are collected infrequently and the census (where the question was voluntary) remains the most comprehensive source. 66% of people in West Sussex stated they had a religious belief. Crawley had a higher percentage of people who stated their religion as Hindu (5%) or Muslim (7.5%). Sensitivity to the needs of those belonging to particular faiths or faith communities will inform assessment work.
- **Sexual Orientation** - Data are collected as part of national surveys such as the Annual Population Survey. Nationally (in 2016) ONS estimated that 2.5% of the UK population aged 16 or above identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or 'other'. This represents 17,500 people aged 16+ in West Sussex.

Consultation design

It is important that all groups in the community of West Sussex who have an interest in the service affected by the proposal have the opportunity to participate in the consultation. This requires that the consultation is designed so that it:

- Is communicated so as to reach all those affected or interested
- Is accessible to all who wish to take part
- Ensures opportunities for active engagement
- Records all relevant data and comment
- Is transparent in what data is collected and how it is assessed
- Produces analysis that is understood by those responsible for the decision
- Provides analysis that fully informs the decision for equality purposes.

Impacts of the proposed change and service design aims

The service plan under review and subject to consultation aims to deliver positive outcomes for the people of West Sussex and in particular for those for whom the core aims of the service are designed. A number of the measures in the proposal are aimed to have a positive impact upon the lives of groups of people with protected characteristics. It is intended that there should not be any negative impacts on any group with a protected characteristic. These initial assumptions will be tested as plans are developed and implemented. The consultation process will gather the information for this exercise and the analysis of that information will support the application of the Public Sector Equality Duty referred to above.

Impact Assessment and Informed decision-making

The work of analysing service data and information gathered as part of the comprehensive consultation process will include arrangements to ensure an understanding of all potential impacts on those with protected characteristics and the responsibilities of the Council under the public sector equality duty. There will be time

provided in the development of final proposals to ensure the data is fully understood in terms of its implications and that options to revise proposals in light of those known implications are considered.

This will ensure that those who prepare proposals for consideration, those who have the task of scrutinising proposals and those charged with taking decisions carry out these tasks with the information they need to ensure the Council's equality and diversity commitments are met.

The record of the decision will provide the evidence base for the way in which the Council has discharged its responsibilities and the commitments it makes by reference to equality and diversity.