

Equality Impact Report

Title of report	Early Help Redesign Proposals
Date	July 2021
EIR completed by	Claire Hayes

1. Background

a. The proposal

Children's Services have been developing proposals for a new Early Help offer with the aim of increasing support by targeting those in need and offering additional help to service partners to ensure better identification of children and young people who need help is a shared priority. The main features of the proposals include

- A change to the arrangements for service provision by a move away from building based services to the provision of services direct to those in need. This would mean the loss of centres in some communities although every district or borough on the County will retain a fully operational full-time centre.
- Families would be able to access any Children and Family Centre across the county for support. Families would not be restricted by geographical area and can access the same Early Help service from any building countywide.
- A community-based service where the service goes to those in need rather than requiring people to visit a building.
- Early Help will continue to provide Enabling Families and Targeted Family Support to all families across West Sussex identified as needing support - to create a service that is more targeted to the needs of the most vulnerable children and families who are in most need of support.
- An enhanced offer to schools in each hub area delivered through the dedicated schools' teams and named link workers. This will provide a responsive and flexible approach to support the needs of each individual school across West Sussex.
- There will be likely impact on other services and service users who use the buildings to be vacated by the Early Help service. This consequential rather than designed impact has also been assessed and partners and other providers involved in the plans and their impact managed through discussion.

A public consultation was conducted to inform the development of the new offer. Stakeholders were also engaged and views sought on the model, its planned priorities and activities to be delivered to children, young people and families by Early Help and its partners.

b. The Equality duty

The Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to seek to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

To meet this duty the Council analyses the potential impact of proposed policies, strategies and action plans across all of the protected groups so as to enable decision makers to have due regard to the equality duty through an awareness of that impact.

The characteristics protected by the equality duty are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including, ethnic origin, nationality)
- Religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- Sex/Gender
- Sexual orientation

c. **Approach** - to inform assessment and impact of proposals

The service redesign proposal is aimed at meeting the needs of children, young people and families across the County. An evidence-based approach has been applied to determine the areas of greatest need in West Sussex to plan for delivery of future services. This includes analysing:

- Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019
- Population data
- Current Access to Services profiles
- Rate of Early Help Plans by home location of child
- Mix and magnitude of Children Social Care Level 4 plans by home location of child.

The result of this exercise highlighted that the areas of highest need are in:

- Adur and Worthing
- Arun
- Crawley

This report will not only evaluate the impact on those with protected characteristics but will also pay regard to those in the 3 areas stated above.

Age (and Population)

In West Sussex 20.3% of the population are aged between 0-17 years; the working aged populations, aged 18-64 makes up 56.9% and the older aged population aged 65 or over 22.8%.

Crawley has a higher proportion of younger people – with 24.2% aged 0-17 as well as a higher proportion of working aged populations and Arun and Chichester have higher proportions of population aged 65+ at 28.7% and 26.9% respectively.

The 0-17 population is estimated to be 174,500 with Northbrook in Worthing having the highest proportion of this age range at 27.5% whilst Ferring in Arun the lowest at 10.43%.

The population in West Sussex is projected to increase by 16% over the period of 2017 -41. The highest proportion of increase is expected in Arun (20%). Adur is

projected to have the smallest level of increase in terms of numbers and Crawley the lowest percentage increase.

The current early help offer is predominately delivered through 43 Children and Family Centre (CFCs) areas. The service is aimed at children under the age of 5 and their families. The under 5 population is around 5% of West Sussex total population.

Access to Services, Volume Children Centre Manager (CCM) Database 2019	Total Population 0-5: 46,000	
Target Child Population	Registered	Accessing*
Age under 5 Years	93%	78%
Age under 5 Years from most deprived areas	91%	79%
Age under 5 Years disability	100%	94%
Age under 5 Years Black, Minority Ethnic (BME)	100%	80%

(* registered with centre; has accessed a service at least once.

NB – only 29% of the total services are delivered in an actual Children and Family Centre, the majority are delivered off site).

The table above demonstrates that 93% of the under 5 population is registered with a CFC and 78% are currently accessing a service at least once a year. These figures are relatively similar for those children living in the most deprived areas of the County. The vast majority of registrations and introduction to Early Help are via collaborative working arrangements and information sharing agreements with Maternity Services and Universal Healthy Child Programme services. These services will continue in the proposed offer.

Children with disabilities are a specific target group for Early Help both currently and in the proposed offer (currently 100% registered and 94% accessing) and services will continue to be designed to meet the needs of this group.

Marriage and Civil partnership and single person households

Over 50% of couples are married or in civil partnership and 31% of households are one person households of which around half are single persons aged 65 or over. The highest proportion of single person households are in Arun at 18.3%. Crawley has a higher proportion of lone parent families in the county.

Services for all families will continue to be planned for and delivered across the county. Some areas linked to deprivation analysis and the assessed greater levels of need will have two retained delivery points.

Pregnancy and Maternity

General fertility rates are proportionate across the county except in Chichester and Horsham where they are much lower.

Collaborative working arrangements and information sharing agreements with Maternity Services and Universal Healthy Child Programme services will continue in the proposed offer, as will the development of Family Assist.

Race and ethnic origin and Nationality

The largest ethnic group in West Sussex is White British (88.9%) and the largest minority ethnic group is White other (2.9%) followed by Asian/Asian British (1.7%). Minority groups are largely concentrated in Crawley and in coastal towns such as Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Worthing.

Crawley has a significantly higher minority ethnic population than the rest of the county and specifically the Asian and Asia British population accounting for over 12% of the population.

In terms of languages spoken, 96% of the population speak English as their main language. However, in Crawley around 5% of the population have a South Asian language as their main language – Urdu and Gujarati being the most widely spoken. Polish is the main language of 1.8% of residents in Arun and 1.6% in Crawley.

Ethnic disproportionality, if not addressed through appropriate provision, can result in unequal future outcomes, and this issue is increasingly salient as the BAME population in England continues to grow. Services and support for BAME groups will continue to form part of the targeted Early Help Offer and specifically in Crawley and parts of Arun.

Religion or belief (including lack of belief)

In West Sussex just over a quarter of residents are known to have no religion, and 61.8% are Christians. There are no known religious or other beliefs that directly affect the planning for or delivery of services. Some consultation responses have referred to faith groups and their connections with service provision and location but it does not indicate any adverse impact linked to the service change proposals.

Sex, Gender including sexual health

There is roughly an equal split between men and women in the West Sussex population. Although services are planned and delivered for both parents, typically mothers access services more than fathers. Many more women than men responded to the consultation although additional measures were taken to secure responses from men.

Teenage pregnancy rates have decreased over the past 18 years to levels 50% below the 1998 rates. However, these vary significantly across the county with the highest rates in Arun, Crawley and Adur & Worthing. Services and support for teenage parents will continue to be provided as part of the new Early Help offer.

Sexual Orientation

Nationally it is estimated that between 5-7% of the population have identified themselves by other sexual orientations to that of heterosexual. The consultation asked for respondent's sexual orientation and a number of comments were received relating to advice and information and service access relating to LGBTQ needs. These will be taken into account in relation to the more detailed planning for future services. The comments do not raise issues in relation to the overall design and principles underpinning the service model.

2. Describe any negative impact for customers or residents.

It is not considered that the proposals for the service will have notable negative effects on customers or residents with protected characteristics.

The following elements of the proposals should be considered in this context:

1. The plans to end service provision at a number of centres, extending journeys to those which remain or leading to fewer visits to those centres as the service model shifts, but also making access to targeted services less dependent on attendance at buildings.
2. The reduction or loss of established group activity or mutual support groups currently linked to specific locations
3. The loss of close community links to centres for a range of services by which people with shared experiences may come together. This could reduce with the reduction in the number of services based at centres and the focus on targeted services direct to customers.
4. It is possible that aspects of community support or mutual support linked to groups who share protected characteristics (such as ethnicity, disability or pregnancy) may be reduced or perceived to be lost.
5. It is the case that most service users are female. This is largely due to the nature of the services especially those linked to pregnancy and supporting the very early child rearing period. Any service change will therefore disproportionately affect women.

The Consultation feedback is addressed in a separate report and the issues relating to those with protected characteristics have been covered in this impact assessment. The consultation analysis report addresses areas where the feedback is based on misunderstandings of current or planned arrangements. It also provides responses to points or concerns and new proposals offered by respondents including those relevant to the equality duty. That report should therefore be considered alongside this impact assessment.

3. Describe any positive effects which may offset any negative impact.

The basis of the early help proposal is to provide improved and more targeted services to the most vulnerable and in need of support. There are several positive effects which offset or mitigate the negative impacts or those identified as potential negative impacts in the consultation responses:

- Whilst there will be a reduction in the overall number of delivery points, the proposed centres to retain will be open for longer hours than currently operated, offering a 9-5, Monday -Friday service. The centres will also be in available in each hub area within West Sussex and within areas of deprivation where there is a greater need for support.
- Information, advice and guidance will be available for all families through a wide range of access points including online, social media, One Front Door, Family Information Service, Family Assist, Community Hubs, Schools and early years and childcare providers
- Family Assist provides age specific advice digitally and includes direct communication to families with the most up to date information at each key age milestone of their children.
- Healthy Child Programme will remain supportive of all families with an under 5 through its universal and targeted programme and can provide advice and guidance through the Health Visiting Team.
- Free Entitlement early years will continue to be available for all three- and four-years old and eligible 2-year olds.

- The proposals have been revised to make specific but flexible provision to support local support groups where a local need is identified.

4. Describe whether and how the proposal helps to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

The proposals and new model prioritise inclusion, and as such will help eliminate discrimination harassment and victimisation.

The service has always adopted an inclusive approach to service delivery and has sought to ensure access by all those whose circumstances may provide challenges to inclusion and seeking advice and support. There will be no change to this approach. Discrimination and harassment are often factors which contribute to family problems within particular community groups or those with protected characteristics. The services available to support families and young people affected by such experiences will be maintained. These will be included in some of the targeted work as an area affecting families.

5. Describe whether and how the proposal helps to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The proposed service is underpinned by the following principles:

- services are targeted to those in greatest need;
- services are proportionate to the level of need;
- to put children first and ensure that they are listened to;
- a service that is seamless and integrated;
- to support partners to provide universal services.

Equality of access to targeted services and to universal services will be assured. Targeting services may also enhance equality of opportunity for individuals and families who may be inhibited from attending centres open to all. This may be more likely for persons with one of the protected characteristics. Service users will be better able to choose how and where to receive a service and so better able to have their particular circumstances or needs accommodated.

6. Describe whether and how the proposal helps to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Early Help offer is intended to be used in the provision of social care services, and other services that impact on wider determinants or wellbeing such as health, education and housing. Enhancing equality of access in the way described in 5. Above should help reduce barriers between communities or groups with protected

characteristics and those who do not. As any perceptions of inequality reduce and as more tailored access to services increase it is hoped that this will reduce other barriers or perceived inequalities and help support local communities to come together more easily and to work together to find solutions to local issues.

7. What changes were made to the proposal as a result? If none, explain why.

Informal engagement sessions during the first week of February helped to inform the proposal and ensure we have representation from all stakeholders and groups who may be impacted by this proposal as part of the consultation.

The feedback from the consultation and the understanding of some of the benefits of targeted help has helped to reinforce the case for that approach. This is set out more fully in the consultation analysis report.

Changes have been made to the approach to supporting local groups responsive to local need. This is in part a response to the representations made which should also reinforce some of the benefits described above in relation to equality of opportunity and the breaking down of barriers or perceived inequality.

8. Explain how the impact will be monitored to make sure it continues to meet the equality duty owed to customers and say who will be responsible for this.

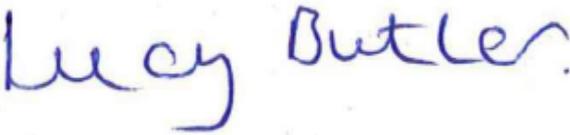
This will be monitored initially through the overall Early Help Redesign Project Plan under the responsibility of the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care.

The consultation responses have been evaluated to ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to have their say in helping shape the proposals.

The potential benefits for those with protected characteristics will be subject to evaluation in so far as the data is available. Every effort will be made to encourage those with protected characteristics to identify themselves so as to provide more valuable data on which to plan and monitor services.

User engagement will be evaluated once the new offer is in place annually through annual data analysis, user satisfaction survey and end of plan feedback.

To be signed by an Executive Director or Director to confirm that they have read and approved the content.

Name	 LUCY BUTLER	Date 24.06.2021
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