



Equality Impact Assessment

What is an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and why does the County Council do them?

The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (PSED) is an obligation within the [Equality Act 2010](#) ("the Act"), which asks public authorities, like Hampshire County Council, to give 'due regard' to equality considerations, in particular to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

This includes assessing the impact of policies and practices on individuals and communities with a protected characteristic, as defined in the Act and some other specific groups. The County Council uses EIAs to ensure it has paid 'due regard' to equalities considerations when there are changes to a service or policy, a new project or certain decisions.

EIA author	Position & Department	Contact
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Title:	Proposed Reduction in Social Inclusion (homelessness) Services SP23 - April 22
Related EIAs:	EIA Number: EIA0206

EIA for Savings Programme:	Yes EIA - Adults Health & Care - Reduction in Social Inclusion (homelessness) Services SP23 - 2022/04/20
Service affected	Social inclusion services (homelessness support services)
Description of the service/policy/project/project phase	<p>Social inclusion services provide housing related support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Services support people with mental health support needs, substance misuse issues and those with a history of offending. Housing related support is defined as help that develops or sustains an individual's capacity to live independently in accommodation. This includes support to understand and manage the rights and responsibilities of their tenancy, manage debt and budget effectively, better manage physical health, mental health and substance misuse, and access healthcare, specialist services and Education, Training and Employment (ETE) opportunities. Hampshire County Council currently funds support services for 190 homeless people living in accommodation based (supported housing) schemes. The Council also funds community support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who have complex and multiple needs and require support to access or maintain accommodation. Approximately 200 people use community support services at any one time</p>
New/changed service/policy/project	<p>A reduction in the Adults' Health and Care budget available for these services resulting in fewer people being able to access support and an increased demand for homelessness services provided by district and borough councils. The statutory responsibility to prevent and relieve homelessness sits with the district and borough councils, however Adults Health and Care currently commission a range of accommodation based and community support services for people who are homeless. Whilst fewer people would be able to access the specialist services funded by Adults' Health and Care, these services would continue to be available for people who are homeless and may have eligible care and support needs as a result of mental health and/or substance misuse or other complex needs.</p>

Engagement

The County Council ran a consultation exercise over the Summer 2021 on a range of options for finding further budget savings including increasing Council Tax, using reserves and making changes to the way services are delivered, which may mean reducing or withdrawing certain services. The outcome of this consultation was presented to the County Council's Cabinet in October 2021 and Full Council in November 2021. This included agreement to pursue the option to reduce the Social Inclusion budget by £360,000.

The respondents to this consultation were not felt to be representative of the people affected by changes to services with fewer responses from those in lower income groups or who recognise that they use Adults Health and Care services. In addition, it was not possible to identify respondents to the consultation who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness. Following publication of the initial findings from the County Council's Serving Hampshire, Balancing the Budget consultation (2021-2023) there has been extensive engagement with district and borough councils, Public Health and health partners to review the future provision of these services and explore opportunities for pooled funding arrangements in recognition that these services cut across housing, social care and health needs. Engagement has also taken place with other key stakeholders including Hampshire Constabulary. This engagement resulted in partners agreeing a preferred way forward for the reduction of the funding. This included prioritising support in accommodation-based settings, and into those services that help the most vulnerable; and delivering outreach and community-based support in those areas where accommodation-based settings may not be available.

This proposal was subject to a 6 week public consultation period from 7th February 2022 to 21st March 2022. The consultation was widely promoted through a range of communication channels including emails to stakeholders, newsletters, social media posts, and press releases. The consultation Information Pack and Response Form were made available both digitally and in hard copy in standard and Easy Read formats, with other formats available on request. Unstructured responses could be submitted via email or letter.

509 responses were received to the consultation of which

- 473 were individual responses
- 27 were organisational responses
- 6 were from elected Members
- 33 individual responses were from current service users
- 16 individual responses were from former service users
- 90% of responses disagree with the proposal to reduce funding with 75% of responses strongly disagreeing. This disagreement was across all subgroups.
- 83% of responses highlighted an impact on those facing or experiencing poverty with a further 58% and 54% highlighting impacts on the protected characteristics of disability and age respectively.

Age

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Services support people aged between 18 and 64 and above where this is the most appropriate service to meet their needs. Data shows that a significant majority of service users (97%) are aged between 18 and 60. Whilst there are variations around the county, the data shows a fairly even spread within the 18 and 60 age bracket. The available data does not show a marked variation in age between the users of the different types of services. 54% of responses to the consultation highlighted a potential impact on people related to age.</p> <p>Access to services following the proposed reduction in budget would not be prevented on the basis of age.</p>
Mitigation	

Disability

Impact on public	Negative - High
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>In an analysis of client need completed in April 2020, it was found that over 60% of clients have mental health issues and more than 80% have substance misuse issues. A significant number also have poor physical health resulting from long term substance misuse and unmet health needs due to issues accessing services.</p> <p>A significant number of client's receive Employment Support Allowance (ESA) because of illness or disability.</p> <p>Service providers have supplied evidence that they are working with more people with complex and multiple needs. People with complex needs have a combination of mental health and drug and alcohol problems and possibly additional issues such as a learning or physical disability and offending behaviour.</p>

The proposed changes to services may mean that this group find it more challenging to access and maintain accommodation. This may result in an increase in homelessness and street homelessness, and associated health problems such as substance misuse and mental health issues.

This concern was replicated within the public consultation responses with 58% of respondents highlighting that the proposals would impact those with a disability.

People who are homeless experience some of the worst health outcomes in England and die 30 years earlier than the general population. The average age of death for a man that is homeless is 47, and for a woman 43. Primary and secondary health services are difficult for homeless clients to access and intensive support is often required to enable clients to engage with services to ensure that health needs are met.

A reduction in services available for this client group may result in an increase in unmet health and social care needs and a subsequent increase in A&E attendance, hospital admissions, and demand for adult social care services.

Mitigation

There has been and will continue to be extensive engagement with district council and health partners to review the future provision of these services and explore opportunities for pooled funding arrangements in recognition that these services cut across housing, social care and health needs.

Any changes to services would ensure that provision focuses on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable clients with multiple and complex needs.

The County Council would ensure that anybody affected by the proposals that may have eligible care and support needs as defined by the Care Act 2014 can have their needs assessed by the County Council. Following assessment, they would be offered services to meet eligible needs or signposted to other community services.

People with substance misuse issues can access support through the specialist substance misuse services commissioned by the County Council. Services can offer support through outreach and in partnership with other organisations to increase the uptake of the service offer by harder to reach client groups

Where people seek homelessness prevention or relief support from district and borough councils, housing advisors can refer those with additional support needs to other County Council funded support services, including drug and alcohol services, Wellbeing Centres, and for assessment under the Care Act 2014.

Lastly, the County Council will be looking to work in partnership with the district and Borough Councils to establish local partnership groups to identify, prioritise and establish action plans for those most vulnerable within their districts.

Gender Reassignment

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	Access to services following the proposed reduction in budget would not be prevented on the basis of gender reassignment and available data regarding use of services does not indicate that this group will be impacted by changes in this provision.
Mitigation	

Pregnancy and Maternity

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	Access to services following the proposed reduction in budget would not be prevented on the basis of pregnancy or maternity and available data regarding use of services does not indicate that this group will be impacted by changes in this provision. Equalities data from 20/21 will be used to further understand the current use of services.
Mitigation	

Race

Impact on public	Neutral

Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	Access to services following the proposed reduction in budget would not be prevented on the basis of race. Equalities data from 20/21 will be used to further understand the current use of services.
Mitigation	

Religion or Belief

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	Access to services following the proposed reduction in budget would not be prevented on the basis of religion or belief. Equalities data from 20/21 will be used to further understand the current use of services.
Mitigation	

Sex

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	All Homelessness Support services commissioned by the county council are mixed gender. However available data shows a variation in use of the different types of service. The majority of people using accommodation-based services are male whilst the majority of people using community support are female, however service providers have noticed an increase in females accessing accommodation-based support.

	Whilst access to services following the proposed reduction in budget would not be prevented on the basis of sex, an impact may be identified if one element of service provision is reduced more than another.
Mitigation	

Sexual Orientation

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	Access to services following the proposed reduction in budget would not be prevented on the basis of sexual orientation. Equalities data from 20/21 will be used to further understand the current use of services.
Mitigation	

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	Access to services following the proposed reduction in budget would not be prevented on the basis of marriage/civil partnership. Equalities data from 20/21 will be used to further understand the current use of services.
Mitigation	

Poverty

Impact on public	Negative - High
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Available data shows that the majority of people using Homelessness Support services are in receipt of welfare benefits. Many clients come to the attention of services when they are facing eviction due to rent arrears.</p> <p>Homelessness Support services help people to access their full entitlement of benefits, attend appointments for benefit assessments and resolve issues with benefit claims. Service providers have reported an increase in the number of people requiring this type of support following the roll out of welfare reforms and increased sanctions. Services also help people budget on a low income, access debt advice and prioritise rent payments. Whilst alternative services are available, clients with complex needs often need support to engage with more mainstream service offers or are excluded from these services due to behaviour or substance misuse.</p> <p>For those recovering from homelessness, support to access training courses, voluntary work, education and employment is available. Pre-employment activities are provided to support vulnerable people who are not yet ready to engage with more mainstream employment support.</p> <p>The proposed changes would result in a reduction in the services available and may result in more people being unable to navigate the benefits system without support or being sanctioned. Subsequently, more people may become homeless as a result of non-payment of rent.</p> <p>The public consultation saw poverty as the highest area of concern for impact with 83% of respondents alluding to the impact a reduction in services would have to those living in poverty.</p>
Mitigation	<p>Any changes to services would ensure that provision focuses on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable clients with multiple and complex needs.</p>

Rurality

Impact on public	Negative - Medium
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Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Any reduction in community support may mean that people living in more rural areas could find it harder to access the support they need as most alternative services are in larger towns or cities. People who currently receive a visiting community support service may need to travel to get support from other services which they may not be able to do due to affordability or accessibility of public transport.</p> <p>26% of respondents to the consultation voiced concern that the proposed reduction in services would impact on those living rurally.</p>
Mitigation	<p>Any changes to services would ensure that provision focuses on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable clients with multiple and complex needs. These will usually be within an accommodation-based setting where they will be able to access the support they require. District and Borough authorities will be supported to establish locally based housing action groups to look at local services and support individuals to access services as appropriate.</p>

Geographical Impact:All Hampshire

Equality Statement

Additional information:

The vulnerability of some of the people who use services may mean that they do not seek or access the help they need to prevent homelessness. This could lead to an increase in homelessness, street homelessness, and anti-social behaviour with a subsequent increase in the number of people who require services from the District and Borough Councils.

In addition, the Governments stay on evictions during the pandemic ended in October 2021. District and Borough partners are already reporting a rise in evictions and enquiries, which may see increased demand for services meaning there is the potential for a higher number of people to be impacted by any changes to services.

However, lessons learned from changes to working practices as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic represent an opportunity for many organisations to collaborate and work more closely together. Alongside this, changes to substance misuse services now looking to co-locate within homelessness services, health clinics running from hostels and a tender for Mental Health Wellbeing hubs, present further opportunities for improved joint working

A housing and homelessness sub-group of the Hampshire safeguarding adults board has been established along with a homelessness workstream providing a key point of contact for partners involved with work on homelessness.

Hampshire intends to continue to build on these strong relationships to help ensure the risks highlighted above are mitigated through appropriate and timely signposting and support to access services for individuals and continued collaboration with other services.

Overview Statement:

Assessment to show that due regard has been given and that there is no requirement for a full EIA:

EIA reference number: 00243

Date of production of EIA for publication: 18/08/2022