

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:	Grant award to WCC for the provision of homelessness support services
Related EIAs:	EIA Number: EIA-HQ-25-B
EIA for Savings Programme:	No EIA - Adults Health & Care - Winchester Stage 2024/10/21
Service affected	Winchester Homelessness Support Services (Homelessness Support Services are also known as Social Inclusion services)
Description of the service/policy/project/project phase	Homelessness Support Services provide housing related support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Services support people with mental health support needs, substance use 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. 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 use, and access healthcare and other specialist services. The County Council currently funds support services for people living in Stage One supported accommodation (homeless hostels with support services onsite 24/7) and Stage Two supported accommodation (lower level of support for people with less complex support needs). On 14 October 2024, Cabinet made the decision to end

	<p>funding for Homelessness Support Services (also known as Social Inclusion Services) on 31 March 2026. There is no statutory requirement for the County Council to provide these services. The district, borough and city councils, as housing authorities, have statutory responsibilities for preventing and relieving homelessness and receive funding from central government for this purpose.</p>
New/changed service/policy/project	<p>In advance of the Cabinet decision, the support service provider for the Winchester Stage One service (West View House), served notice on their contract. This contract will end on 30 April 2025 and service will close eleven months in advance of the funding being withdrawn from other services across the rest of the county. The service provider is working with Winchester City Council to rehouse all current tenants and are working with partners and the local community to address any concerns. When West View House closes on 30 April 2025, Winchester City Council will be in an inequitable position in relation to the other district and borough councils, where services will continue until 31 March 2026. The recommendation is for a grant to Winchester City Council (WCC) of £83,000 for the provision of Homelessness Support Services in the Winchester area from 1 May 2025 to 31 March 2026, would enable WCC to support individuals with the most complex needs moving on from West View House during this transition period, in line with the other Hampshire District and Borough Councils.</p>

Engagement
<p>Between 8 January to 31 March 2024, the County Council invited residents and stakeholders across the county to provide their views on options to change and reduce some local services to help the Authority address a £132 million budget shortfall faced by April 2025 in the Future Services Consultation. One of the options included was the proposal to withdraw all County Council funding for Homelessness Support Services (around £2 million) on 31 March 2025. However, the decision taken by Cabinet was to withdraw all County Council funding for Homelessness Support Services on 31 March 2026.</p> <p>This consultation covered homelessness support services across the county so was not specific to the closure of the Winchester Stage One service, West View House. However, the responses below are therefore relevant to the early closure of West View House on 31 March 2025. The provider gave notice on their contract on 31 July 2024, after the consultation closed.</p> <p>The County Council are working closely with Winchester City Council to help identify alternative funding and explore options for alternative provision.</p> <p>4362 people across the county submitted a response to the consultation on this proposal. 206 respondents identified as current or previous users of services. 63 organisations responded. A further 31 unstructured responses (letters / emails) were received which included comments relating specifically to this proposal. 23 were from organisations.</p> <p>74% of overall responses were against the withdrawal of funding, compared to 16% in favour. Respondents were invited to add further comments to support their views via open-ended questions. These allowed people to expand on impacts they felt the proposed changes would cause.</p> <p>The main concern raised by respondents was that the proposal would lead to an increase in homelessness and the number of people sleeping on the streets. Respondents said that homeless people are vulnerable and need support and that the</p>

proposal would result in increased physical and mental health needs, an increase in substance use, increases in crime and anti-social behaviour and increases in deaths within the homeless population.

Further concerns were expressed regarding the impact that the proposal may have on other services, with an increased demand for mental health services, adult social care and emergency healthcare cited as examples. People raising these concerns also felt the proposal would lead to increased costs across the system longer term.

Respondents also highlighted the negative impacts of increased rough sleeping on local communities, town and city centres, and local businesses.

Equalities considerations - Impact Assessment

Age

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>AHC commissioned homelessness services support people aged between 18 and 64 and above, where this is the most appropriate service to meet their needs. In Hampshire, 2023/24 data shows that 662 people used AHC commissioned services across Hampshire and that a significant majority of service users (85%) are aged between 22 and 59 with 51% aged between 31 and 50.</p> <p>In West View House, 34 people aged between 22 and 59 used the service (89%) with 61% aged between 31 and 50.</p> <p>The service will currently provided through West View House supports adults aged 18+. Services work with people on an individual basis to produce individually tailored support plans which will prioritise needs and wants according to individual preference.</p>
Mitigation	

Disability

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>In the UK, approximately 24% of the population have a disability. In 2023/24, 32% of people using AHC commissioned services for homelessness were recorded as having a disability. In West View House the percentage of people who had a disability was 53%.</p> <p>Services are tailored to meeting the needs of individuals with a disability by linking closely with services such as the local GP, CMHT and Inclusion so that individuals can receive the support they need to access healthcare and other specialist services to address mental health, physical health and substance use issues during the transition period.</p>

The NHS provide a range of preventative and therapeutic services for people with mental health problems and work would be undertaken to increase awareness of the local offer and access routes in each area.

People with substance misuse issues can access support through the specialist substance misuse services commissioned by HCC (Public Health). This service is open access and offers a range of interventions including clinical support, medical and prescribing support, one to one key worker structured support, group work, counselling, a range of recovery & support activities, harm reduction and blood borne virus vaccination and testing. Inclusion Hampshire also offer support to homeless people through outreach and in reach partnerships with other organisations to increase the uptake of the service offer by this group.

HCC Public Health commissioners are exploring options that would ensure that naloxone continues to be available to drug users who may be impacted by this proposal.

In addition to the core Inclusion service commissioned by HCC, the NHS has invested in additional Inclusion staff to work specifically across the Primary Care Networks, to ensure more accessible and personalised services are available to people with co-occurring substance misuse and mental health.

HCC are working closely with service providers and WCC to develop and support transitional plans to meet the needs of individuals.

Transition arrangements will ensure that all service users currently in social inclusion services would be offered an assessment by a practitioner and in future housing staff can continue to refer anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness for assessment for eligible care needs. Following assessment, where eligible care and support needs are identified, HCC would ensure that eligible needs are met.

The impact is therefore assessed as positive.

Mitigation

Gender Reassignment

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	In the UK, 0.5% of the population said their gender identity and sex registered at birth were different. 2023/24 data from AHC

	<p>commissioned homelessness services showed that 1% of people using community support services identified as transgender. 0% of people using support in accommodation based services.</p> <p>The service will be open to people of all protected characteristics but is not specifically tailored for transgender people. However, services work with people on an individual basis to produce individually tailored support plans which will prioritise needs and wants according to individual preference.</p> <p>There is no indication that there would be disproportionate impacts on individuals with this protected characteristic and so this is likely to be of neutral impact.</p>
Mitigation	

Pregnancy and Maternity

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The conception rate for women aged 15 to 44 years in 2021 was 71.5 per 1,000 women.</p> <p>There is no specific data held for the numbers of people using services who are pregnant but 20% of people using homelessness support services in accommodation-based services funded by the County Council are female. The service is open to people of all protected characteristics but not specifically tailored for pregnant people. Anyone who was pregnant would be assessed for appropriate support and accommodation services.</p>
Mitigation	

Race

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The Hampshire population is less diverse than England as a whole, with 92.6% of residents describing themselves as belonging to White ethnic groups compared to the national average of 81%. The diversity of the area's population is increasing, 7.4% of the population described themselves as of an ethnic background other than White in 2021, up from 5% in the previous census conducted in 2011.</p> <p>The service data for 2023/24 shows that 90% of people using services are White British which is representative of the Hampshire population but that the cohort is slightly more diverse.</p> <p>The service is open to people of all protected characteristics but not specifically tailored for different ethnicities. However, the service is tailored to individual need by working with people to produce individually tailored support plans which will prioritise needs and</p>

	wants according to individual preference. They will also link with/signpost to appropriate local/national groups and organisations as appropriate.
Mitigation	

Religion or Belief

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Census 2021 data reported slightly over half of Hampshire residents (51.5%) stated they had a religion, 42.8% no religion and 5.7% did not say. Christianity was the dominant religion with 47.8% of Hampshire residents reporting to be Christian. 1.1% reported Hindu as their religion, 0.9% Muslim and 0.8% Buddhist.</p> <p>The service data for 2023/24 showed that 17% identify as Christian (all denominations), 70% identify as having no religion, 7% not known. Less than 0.01% reported their religion each of the following: Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist.</p> <p>The service is open to people of all protected characteristics but not specifically tailored for different religions. However, the service is tailored to individual need by working with people to produce individually tailored support plans which will prioritise needs and wants according to individual preference. They will also link with/signpost to appropriate local/national groups and organisations as appropriate.</p>
Mitigation	

Sex

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The latest Census data shows that of all people identified as homeless, around two-thirds were male and one-third were female (67.1% males compared with 32.9% females). However, they have also noted that female numbers may have been missed in these statistical collections. In 2021, Shelter reported that 60% of all homeless adults living temporary accommodation in England were women, despite only making up 51% of the general population. However, The Connection at St Martin In The Fields reported that as few as 19% of the users of homelessness services are women in the UK - far below the total share of rough sleepers who are women. They report that</p>

	<p>many women also avoid homelessness services as they are typically viewed as male-dominated spaces which can feel unsafe.</p> <p>In line with these statistics, in Hampshire, 20% of people using homelessness support services in accommodation-based services funded by the County Council are female.</p> <p>Services are open to people of all protected characteristics but not specifically tailored for women. The grant will be used to provide community based support which could potentially benefit women using these services. Services will work with women to produce individually tailored support plans which will prioritise needs and wants according to individual preference. They will also link with/signpost to appropriate local/national groups and organisations as appropriate.</p> <p>The impact has been assessed as neutral.</p>
Mitigation	

Sexual Orientation

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>In the 2021 Census, 91.3% of Hampshire residents identified as 'Straight or Heterosexual'. 1.1% identified as 'Bisexual', 0.3% identified as 'All other sexual orientations' and 6.2% did not answer.</p> <p>For 2023/24, the service data showed 88% people using services identify as heterosexual, 4% bisexual, 2% gay man, 1% pansexual, 6% declined to answer/not known.</p> <p>The service is open to people of all protected characteristics but not specifically tailored to different sexual orientations, it is therefore concluded that the impact on this protected characteristic would be neutral.</p>
Mitigation	

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Census 2021 data reported that slightly over half of Hampshire residents (50.9%) were married, 30.7% never married and never registered a civil partnership, 9.7% divorced and 6.6% widowed or a surviving partner from a civil partnership.</p> <p>Whilst no quantitative data is available to assess this impact, there is no indication that there would be disproportionate impacts on</p>

	individuals with this protected characteristic. It is therefore concluded that the impact on this protected characteristic would be neutral.
Mitigation	

Poverty

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>In 2022, around 11 million people in the UK were living in relative poverty, with that number increasing to 14.4 million when housing costs were considered. Crisis states that there are social causes of housing insecurity and homelessness, such as a lack of affordable housing, poverty and unemployment; and life events which push people into homelessness. People in low paid jobs, living in poverty and poor quality or insecure housing are more likely to experience homelessness.</p> <p>Hampshire is among the least deprived authorities in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019, although there are pockets within Hampshire that fall within the most as well as the least deprived areas in the country. However, research by Shelter showed that 2,896 people in Hampshire were homeless in 2021.</p> <p>Most people using homelessness support services are in receipt of welfare benefits or have no income. Again, the grant will enable services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, to engage with more mainstream service offers where they may otherwise be excluded from these services due to behaviour or substance use. Winchester City Council (who refer into current services) are able to signpost people to alternative services that can assist with applications for welfare benefits and offer help to manage debt. This may include specialist local voluntary services or Citizens Advice.</p> <p>People who find it difficult to access support from mainstream services may need to access support for financial issues from the wider network of homelessness support services available in their area. This may include support services funded by Winchester City Council or other local voluntary sector services who offer support services to homeless people.</p> <p>The impact on people living in poverty has been assessed as positive.</p>
Mitigation	

Rurality

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	In 2022, it was estimated that approximately 15% of the UK population live in rural areas. Although more people experiencing

	<p>homelessness are living in urban areas, in 2022, the University of Southampton reported that homelessness has increased in rural communities.</p> <p>The services will be provided in a predominantly urban areas but support people in rural areas too. The impact has been assessed as neutral.</p>
Mitigation	

Geographical Impact: Winchester

Equality Statement

Additional information:

Whilst other sources of support are available, the vulnerability of some of the people who use services may mean that they do not access or engage with the services that may help them to address the issues that may have contributed to them becoming homeless or may be putting their accommodation at risk.

Winchester City Council will enable them to prioritise visiting support services for people who are most at risk and unable to travel to receive this support.

HCC will continue to develop the Connect to Support Hampshire information and advice pages and community directory as a tool to support the identification of appropriate support services.

The County Council will work with Winchester City Council, service providers and other organisations to help identify alternative funding and alternative provision but providing the grant will enable people with the most complex needs moving on from West View House to be supported, whether they stay in the city or move on to more rural areas of the district and will support people with the most complex needs moving on from West View House during the transition period, from 1 May 2025 to 31 March 2026.

The grant will be monitored through regular discussions with Winchester City Council.

Overview Statement:

A summary assessment to show that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been paid, which is undertaken when a full EIA is not needed:

EIA reference number: 00719

Date of production of EIA for publication: 20/12/2024