

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:	Early Words Together programme
Related EIAs:	None
EIA for Savings Programme:	No
Service affected	Best Start in Life Family hubs programme are required to improve the number of children achieving a good level of development for children in reception year by 2028. As part of the Best Start in life programme, Early Words Together has been selected as a new Home learning environment intervention for 3-4 years olds from the list of evidence based interventions supplied by the DfE.
Description of the service/policy/project/project phase	The National Literacy Trust Early Words Together programme is to be delivered as part of the Home Learning Environment (HLE) offer within the Best Start in Life Family Hubs, initially launching in the Leigh Park hub. If proof of concept is successful there is potential for this programme to be scaled up across additional Family hubs in Hampshire as they open. Hampshire County Council library service will deliver the Early Words Together programme in up to 10 hub sites in year 1, providing up to 5 courses , per year. Parents and carers of children aged 3-4 will be eligible for this targeted intervention. The proof of concept in the first

	<p>year will include: - Training for up to 10 designated library practitioners delivered by the National Literacy Trust (NLT) - programme delivery - Monitoring and evaluation of impact using questionnaires provided by the NLT for parents to complete with quantitative and qualitative information to measure parental confidence relating to the home learning environment, pre and post the 6 week course which will be returned back to the NLT to utilise in the end of year written report which will be shared with us. These questionnaires will have a privacy notice (created by adults services in HCC) attached to each one which will have parents name written on it to identify which parent the form relates to so that the questionnaires for each parent can be grouped together. The privacy notice will be detached and destroyed at the end of the course before the questionnaires are anonymously sent to the NLT. Professional referrals from health and early years settings will be required for children to access the intervention, to ensure that those children most at risk or identified with a speech and language delay are prioritised, however self-referrals may be considered if professional referral numbers are low. A Microsoft forms referral template will be developed which will collect the following personal information: 1. Name of parent 2. Name and Date of Birth of the child 3. Contact details- email/phone number of parent 4. Child's first language</p>
New/changed service/policy/project	HCC is not currently delivering the Early Words Together programme but plan to commence delivery in the financial year 26/27.

Engagement
Engagement has been undertaken with members of the Leigh Park implementation group. This consists of representatives from local organisations including early years providers, schools and voluntary organisations. A similar approach will be taken at other hubs as they are identified. In addition an Insights and Engagement Officer has been employed to work with each community.

Equalities considerations - Impact Assessment

Age

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	Public - this will have a positive impact on the communication development of a minimum of 24 children per year aged 3-4 years living in Leigh Park. This will be consistent with the role out of further hubs which will be located within areas of deprivation across Hampshire. These children identified with a speech and communication delay will be supported through early intervention with the aim of improving future educational outcomes and wellbeing.
Mitigation	

Disability

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Public - A minimum of 24 children identified with a speech and communication delay and/or special educational needs will be supported through early intervention with the aim of improving future educational outcomes and wellbeing. Practitioner tool kits and session plans can be easily adapted for children with special educational needs to ensure sessions are inclusive and accessible for all.</p> <p>Community buildings with accessible rooms will be selected where possible to accommodate children and parents/carers who may have additional health needs.</p> <p>A community Connector within the Family hub will be available to provide more bespoke support if required.</p>
Mitigation	

Gender Reassignment

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Public - This programme will be inclusive of all parents and children to be able to access the programme, with no data being collected on the gender during the referral process.</p> <p>A community Connector within the Family hub will be available to provide more bespoke support if required.</p>
Mitigation	

Pregnancy and Maternity

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Public - There is no cost to parents for attending this course with their child which is positive if parents are on maternity leave and therefore on lower incomes. Pregnant women and birthing partners or parents on maternity leave, who are attending with an older child aged 3-4 years will be welcomed and any reasonable adjustments will be made, for example the provision of a chair if sitting on the floor is uncomfortable or a comfortable space to feed their baby if needed.</p> <p>Locations which are accessible by a pushchair will also be selected where reasonably possible.</p>

	A community Connector within the Family hub will be available to provide more bespoke support if required.
Mitigation	

Race

Impact on public	Negative - Low
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Public - Parents and children from any race will be invited to access the programme. The referral form asks if English is the primary language spoken at home, to establish the most appropriate support to meet the needs of the family where there are other language needs. Data from the Hampshire JSNA informs us that 2.1% of residents living in Havant said English was not their main language against the England average of 9.2% and 0.3% of total residents in Havant cannot speak English very well or at all. Microsoft Power BI There may be more tailored support for families where English is the second language delivered by Speech and Language Therapy services.</p> <p>A community Connector within the Family hub will be available to provide more bespoke support if required.</p>
Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of books in other languages • Consideration of the use of interpreters to support the programme delivery.

Religion or Belief

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Public - Parents and children from any religion will be able to access the programme, flexibility to attend will be considered when a programme may overlap with religious days/festivals. Efforts will be made to ensure that Individuals feel welcome and comfortable to attend wearing clothing that meets their religious and cultural beliefs. Food is not included within this programme, therefore no consideration is required for religion and dietary needs.</p> <p>A community Connector within the Family hub will be available to provide insight into individual requirements and tailor support as required.</p>
Mitigation	

Sex

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	Public - Parents and children of any sex will be able to access this programme, this information is not collected on the referral form from professionals. The parents will all have children aged 3-4 years, requiring support with communication development and therefore it is hoped that they will be able to associate with others in the group like themselves. Parents will be able to speak to the Facilitators in private if required.
Mitigation	

Sexual Orientation

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	Public - Parents and children from any sexual orientation will be able to access this programme, this information is not collected on the referral form from professionals. The parents will all have children aged 3-4 years, requiring support with communication development and therefore it is hoped that they will be able to associate with others in the group like themselves. Parents will be able to speak to the Facilitators in private if required.
Mitigation	

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	Public - Parents of any marital status will have equal access to attend the programme with their child.
Mitigation	

Poverty

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	Public - The Early Words Together programme will be delivered within the Best Start Family hubs which will be located in areas of deprivation. The Best Start programme uses the 2025 Income Deprivation affecting Children Index (IDACI) score which identified Havant as having 9 Lower Super Output Areas in the most deprived

	<p>areas, this informed the decision for Leigh Park Family Hub to be the first location. The IDACI index score will be used to determine the location of further hubs across Hampshire.</p> <p>The aim will be to improve communication development for children living in poverty which in turn will support future health and educational outcomes. Central locations which have good access to public transport will be preferably identified, however in some instances families may face travel costs and journeys of varying lengths to access.</p> <p>This is part of a national best start in life programme where we have a target to increase a good level of development of children by 9% by 2028.</p>
Mitigation	

Rurality

Impact on public	Negative - Low
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Public - The Early Words Together programme will be delivered within the Best Start Family hubs which will be located in areas of deprivation. Central locations which have good access to public transport may be most likely to be identified, which may impact the ease of travel for families living in more rural communities, however due to the central locations, routes for public transport will hopefully be available.</p> <p>A community Connector within the Family hub will be available to provide insight into individual requirements and tailor support as required.</p>
Mitigation	Hub and spoke models are being considered to improve access in more rural locations.

Geographical Impact:All Hampshire

Equality Statement

Additional information:

The proposed service is part of the national Best Start in Life programme, delivered by a programme board within Hampshire. Up to 30 Family Hubs will expand in different locations across the county as they open. It has not yet been confirmed which locations these will be in to date, other than Leigh Park. A local implementation group is being used to set up each hub which brings in local stakeholders who know their local community and tailor the hub to meet local need.

This programme has been identified to be the best fit in Hampshire to meet the need of the targeted population following a comprehensive scoping and mapping exercise by the Best Start programme team.

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: 01090

Date of production of EIA for publication: 05/03/2026