

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:	Countryside Access Plan 2025 to 2035
Related EIAs:	None
EIA for Savings Programme:	No
Service affected	Countryside access across the county of Hampshire especially to sites managed by Hampshire County Council. Countryside access in the document is defined as: Off-road paths: including the Rights of Way network, cycle tracks, towpaths. Green open spaces: including Local Nature Reserves, National Nature Reserves, Country Parks, National Parks. Blue open spaces: including coast, rivers and wetlands
Description of the service/policy/project/project phase	Hampshire County Council is required under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. This document fulfils that duty, considering not only Rights of Way but the broader Countryside Access Network. Within this requirement it is required to review the document every ten years. The 2015 plan has been reviewed and a new draft plan for 2025 has been consulted on and the report is seeking adoption in Autumn 2025.

New/changed service/policy/project	The draft plan looks to build on the work of the previous plan but include new areas of legislation, County Council strategy and existing and future needs of network users.
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Engagement
Engagement has occurred throughout the process with internal and external groups. The plan has also been through a 12 week public consultation period and notification in ten Hampshire local newspapers.

Equalities considerations - Impact Assessment

Age

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Positive
Rationale	The plan supports access for all age groups, including children such as education programmes at the Country Parks and older adults through increased physical changes to the network such as stiles to gates.
Mitigation	

Disability

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Positive
Rationale	The plan has a strong emphasis on accessibility, including digital mapping of accessible routes, removal of physical barriers, and inclusive design standards.
Mitigation	

Gender Reassignment

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	The plan focuses on access for all and commits to equity to all users of the network. No specific impact has been identified for this characteristic.
Mitigation	

Pregnancy and Maternity

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	The plan focuses on access for all and commits to equity to all users of the network. Improvements to path surfaces and removal of stiles benefit those with pushchairs or mobility needs.
Mitigation	

Race

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	The Plan acknowledges underrepresentation of ethnic minority groups and aims to address barriers through targeted engagement and mapping of underserved communities.
Mitigation	

Religion or Belief

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	The plan focuses on access for all and commits to equity to all users of the network. No specific impact has been identified for this characteristic.
Mitigation	

Sex

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	The plan focuses on access for all and commits to equity to all users of the network. No specific impact has been identified for this characteristic.
Mitigation	

Sexual Orientation

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	The plan focuses on access for all and commits to equity to all users of the network. No specific impact has been identified for this characteristic.
Mitigation	

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	The plan focuses on access for all and commits to equity to all users of the network. No specific impact has been identified for this characteristic.
Mitigation	

Poverty

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	The Plan promotes free, local access to green spaces, which supports low-income residents and reduces health inequalities.
Mitigation	

Rurality

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	Rural communities benefit from improved connectivity, strategic route planning, and support for local volunteer and parish-led initiatives.
Mitigation	

Geographical Impact:All Hampshire

Equality Statement

Additional information:

The draft Plan has been shaped through input from key stakeholders across the county. Its "New Areas of Focus" have been carefully integrated to ensure countryside access is inclusive and equitable for all. These priorities are underpinned by robust evidence and developed in collaboration with expert teams, including Public Health, to ensure they reflect current and future community needs.

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: 00926

Date of production of EIA for publication: 11/09/2025