



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:	Younger years childcare provision
Related EIAs:	None

EIA for Savings Programme:	No
Service affected	The Childcare Development Team and Early Years Advisory Team who support the County Council in meeting its statutory obligations, ensuring there is accessible early years and childcare provision for eligible children.
Description of the service/policy/project/project phase	<p>The current universal and extended Early Years Education entitlement offers 15 hours to all to all 3 and 4 year olds, and some eligible 2 year olds that meet the criteria. Working families of 3 and 4 year olds can access an additional 15 extended hours, up to 30 hours funded childcare. The Council has a duty to secure sufficient childcare for working parents who meet eligibility criteria. Free Early Years Education in Hampshire is delivered through a mixed market of Ofsted registered Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) settings which include maintained nursery schools and nursery units of primary schools; private, voluntary, and independent (PVI) day nurseries; preschools; and registered childminders. The Childcare Development Service, Early Years Advisory Team and Early Years Inclusion service work together delivering a core offer of support to 1,293 early years providers (nurseries, preschools and childminders), and vulnerable children to ensure access to places and administer the free early years education funding.</p>
New/changed service/policy/project	<p>In the 2023 Spring Budget, the DfE announced the following extension to the childcare offer to support parents to return to work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From April 2024, working parents of 2 year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of free childcare per week. • From September 2024, working parents of 9 month to 2 year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of free childcare per week. • From September 2025, all eligible working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3 years will be able to access thirty free hours per week. • From September 2023, option for childcare providers to have a ratio of 1:5 for 2 year old children (currently 1:4). • From September 2023, increase in funding for childcare providers. Work is now underway to plan for these changes to ensure service and market readiness in accordance with guidance from the DfE.

Engagement

This is a government policy that the LA is required to deliver. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment outlines readiness of the market to deliver. Engagement is currently taking place with childcare providers to support them with the changes. A provider survey to understand their views on the Governments proposals was undertaken in November 2023, which had a 50% response rate. A consultation is currently taking place to seek their views on the funding proposals and is due to close at the end of January.

Equalities considerations - Impact Assessment

Age

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Positive
Rationale	The new government policy expands the current 30 hours entitlement to eligible working families/carers of children aged 9mths to 2 year olds. Families and carers will benefit from the extended free childcare offer if they currently use childcare or are planning to return to work. The childcare market is a mixed economy and some provision is for vulnerable families. The universal entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds to receive 15 hours free entitlement and low income families with eligible 2 year olds remains. The new government funding is to support children from working families.
Mitigation	

Disability

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	The new younger years funding supports all children from working families. The universal

	<p>early years entitlements continues for certain eligible families with low income and all children aged 3 and 4 year olds for 15 hours per week over 38 weeks. Provision is required to be inclusive and respond to children's emerging or identified disability and/or Special Education Needs. The current Disability Access Funds and Special Education Needs Inclusion funds are a requirement to be available to support children's learning outcomes in their chosen provider.</p> <p>Early Years Education and childcare provision should be accessible, flexible, inclusive, and provided through a range of settings to meet parental demand. Provision is required to meet statutory duties and responsibilities under the reforms in the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated regulations in relation to children in their care and children who may have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).</p>
Mitigation	

Gender Reassignment

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>There is no identified impact based on gender reassignment and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.</p>
Mitigation	

Pregnancy and Maternity

Impact on public	Positive

Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	Funding supports all working parents and carers. The expansion of the offer to eligible children from the age of 9 months to 2 years old will support families who may be considering returning to work following pregnancy and maternity/paternity leave.
Mitigation	

Race

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There is no identified impact based on race and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.
Mitigation	

Religion or Belief

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There is no identified impact based on religion or belief and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.
Mitigation	

Sex

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There is no identified impact based on sex and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.
Mitigation	

Sexual Orientation

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There is no identified impact based on sexual orientation and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.
Mitigation	

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	

	There is no identified impact based on marriage and civil partnership and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.
Mitigation	

Poverty

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The government's aim is that this funding for younger years will enable parents/carers to return to the workplace and financially support by alleviating a large portion of the costs of childcare. The younger years childcare funding links to employment of parents with the aim to fund childcare up to 30 hours free from September 2025 and 15 hours free from April 2024 and September 2025 for children aged from 9mths. This funding is also complemented by the current government's childcare choices tax free childcare options to support any additional childcare costs. The ambition is that by expanding the free childcare childcare places offer it will enable parents/carers to consider employment and training opportunities and move off of benefits.</p> <p>Should parents circumstances change i.e. work ceases there is a 12 week grace period (the same as the current extended entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds) allowing parents to find work in that period. Should that not be found then the child will be able to access universal entitlement or lower income place as a funded 2 year old if the eligiblity criteria is met.</p>
Mitigation	

Rurality

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	

	It is anticipated that families in rural areas will have access to the entitlement but may involve a level of travel and/or through use of registered childminders approved for the early years funding. The younger years funding does not extend to parents/carers that use nannies in the home.
Mitigation	

Geographical Impact:All Hampshire

Equality Statement

Additional information:

Further information on the extended childcare offer can be found here:[Free childcare](#)

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: 00559

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