

Appendix 4 – Bus Service Improvement Plan 2024

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Engagement and our equality duty

Whilst [the Gunning Principles](#) set out the rules for consulting ‘everyone’, additional requirements are in place to avoid discrimination and inequality.

Cheshire East Council is required to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Equality Act 2010 simplified previous anti-discrimination laws with a single piece of legislation. Within the Act, the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149) has three aims. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, by consciously thinking about equality when making decisions (such as in developing policy, delivering services and commissioning from others)
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, by removing disadvantages, meeting their specific needs, and encouraging their participation in public life
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not

The Equality Duty helps public bodies to deliver their overall objectives for public services, and as such should be approached as a positive opportunity to support good decision-making.

It encourages public bodies to understand how different people will be affected by their activities so that policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people’s needs. By understanding the effect of their activities on different people, and how inclusive public services can support and open up people’s opportunities, public bodies are better placed to deliver policies and services that are efficient and effective.

Complying with the Equality Duty may involve treating some people better than others, as far as this is allowed by discrimination law. For example, it may involve providing a service in a way which is appropriate for people who share a protected characteristic, such as providing computer training to all people to help them access information and services.

The Equality Act identifies nine 'protected characteristics' and makes it a legal requirement to make sure that people with these characteristics are protected from discrimination:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Applying the equality duty to engagement

If you are developing a new policy, strategy or programme you may need to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment. You may be able to ascertain the impact of your proposal on different characteristics through desk-based research and learning from similar programmes, but you also need to carry out some primary research and engagement. People with protected characteristics are often described as 'hard to reach' but you will find everyone can be reached – you just need to tailor your approach, so it is accessible for them.

Contacting the [Equality and Diversity mailbox](#) will help you to understand how you can gain insight as to the impacts of your proposals and will ensure that you help the Council to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Section 1 – Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure

Proposal Title	Bus Service Improvement Plan 2024
Date of Assessment	24/05/2024
Assessment Lead Officer Name	Chris Taylor
Directorate/Service	Highways and Transport
Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure.	<p>The bus network in Cheshire East plays a key role in providing access to jobs and services and connecting people and places. Buses are an essential component of an integrated transport network. They have a vital role in delivering key Council policy priorities for the economy, social cohesion, public health and environmental sustainability, including decarbonisation.</p> <p>The 2024 BSIP for Cheshire East includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) the bus vision – the shared vision for the borough, linked corporate strategic priorities and the Local Transport Plan (LTP). b) summary of the current offer to bus passengers – key facts and insights about current bus services and updated metrics for measuring progress against targets. c) outline of the improvements programme to 2024/25 – delivery programme for bus improvements within known funding envelope available from BSIP grants and all other budget sources. d) ambitions and proposals for 2025-2035 – the bus vision translated into specific ambitions and proposals for post-2025. e) targets, performance monitoring and reporting – summary of performance against 2021 BSIP targets. <p>Engagement to inform the 2024 BSIP has been carried out as part of the Enhanced Partnership (EP), including the operator working group (25 April), EP Forum (8 May) and EP Board (16 May) to seek the views of bus operators, service users, local businesses and town and parish councils. The plan also builds on themes identified as part of previous engagement with residents on the 2021 BSIP.</p>

The 2024 BSIP sets out a realistic and attractive plan which explains clearly what was delivered in 2023/24, what is programmed for delivery by the end of 2024/25, as well as setting out ambitions and proposals for the future up to 2030 (subject to funding).

The following themes are reflected in the 2024 BSIP:

- Bus network planning and improvements to bus services: service levels and network coverage.
- Bus priority: delivering faster and more reliable services on priority routes/corridors.
- Improvements to fares and ticketing – simpler and more affordable fares.
- Improvements to the bus passenger experience:
- Improved bus stops, bus stations and interchanges
- Improved bus information and network identity
- Accessibility, inclusiveness, personal safety and security
- Implementing the Bus Passenger Charter
- Improvements to the bus fleet.
- Longer term transformation of the network.

Every local transport authority needs to produce a 2024 BSIP to secure the release of DfT funding for 2024/25. BSIPs should be comprehensive and authoritative, whilst also being concise and accessible to the public. It is a requirement that the BSIP is made publicly available and published on the Council's website. A draft version of the BSIP refresh 2024 is attached as Appendix 1 to the 20 June 2024 committee report.

To support the delivery of BSIP proposals, DfT have allocated funding to local transport authorities. Cheshire East has been awarded a further round of BSIP+ funding (value £1,187,596) for 2024/25. In addition, in April 2024 BSIP phase 3 funding was confirmed (value £2,268,000).

Cheshire East Council therefore has a total BSIP allocation of £3,455,596 for the 2024/25 financial year.

Who is Affected?

All residents of Cheshire East may be impacted by the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership as any optimisation of the existing bus network would involve the review of routes and the efficiency of existing services.

These would include:

- The general public (including residents and visitors to the Borough);
- Cheshire East Council stakeholders;
- Public transport operators and staff;
- Local businesses/organisations;
- Schools and education establishments;
- Neighbouring local authorities;
- Governmental bodies (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnership);
- Statutory transport bodies (e.g. Department for Transport and Transport for the North).
- Partner organisations
- Town and Parish Councils;
- Umbrella organisations for people with specialist transport needs; such as:
 - AgeUK
 - Space4Autism
 - Disability Information Bureau (DIB)
 - Cheshire Centre for Independent living
 - Deafness Support Network
 - ADCA Medical Transport Service
 - Congleton Disabled Club
 - Care4CE
 - Leonard Cheshire Disability
 - The Stroke Association
- Transport interest groups; Such as:
 - Crewe & District Bus Users Group
 - Transition Wilmslow
 - Active Travel Congleton
 - Travel Cheshire
- Environmental groups

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPs <p>This list has been devised considering the current users of bus services across the borough who would be affected positively or negatively by service adjustments.</p>
<p>Links and impact on other services, strategies, functions or procedures.</p>	<p>Cheshire East’s corporate plan recognises the importance of the bus network in supporting key strategic objectives such as reducing air pollution, reducing carbon emissions, enabling housing and employment growth, improving quality of place and protecting the environment.</p> <p>The Local Transport Plan (2019-2024) outlines the role transport will play in supporting the long-term goals to improve the economy, protect the environment, improve health and wellbeing and the quality of place. The BSIP must reflect this framework, considering social, economic and environmental impacts of bus services across the borough.</p> <p>Depending on the service and network changes that are proposed through the BSIP, there may also be an impact upon home to school travel across the borough. Engagement is proposed with all groups to explore potential impacts prior to formal any scheme development and consultation commencing. This will ensure that any issues can be identified and mitigated prior to a formal consultation stage. When schemes are developed a second iteration of this EqIA will be developed outlining more specifically the impact of any service/network changes.</p>

<p>How does the service, service change, strategy, function or procedure help the Council meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty?</p>	<p>The Public Sector Equality Duty is a legal requirement contained within the Equality Act 2010 which requires public authorities and others carrying out public functions to have due regard to the need to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation • 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 <p>The above aims may be more relevant to some proposals than others, and they may be more relevant to some protected characteristics than others. However, it is advisable that the proposal be assessed against each of the above aims.</p> <p>Before any schemes are developed and implemented as a result of the BSIP, it is important that pre-consultation engagement takes place prior to any formal consultation. This provides better evidence as to how the council is fostering good relations and advancing equality of opportunity.</p> <p>Conducting public consultation exercise regarding any future proposals will ensure that any changes to the bus network will, where possible, not impact users who are considered to have protected characteristics.</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Section 2- Information – What do you know?

What do you know?	What information (qualitative and quantitative) and/or research have you used to commission/change/decommission the service, strategy, function, or procedure?
Information you used	Patronage data for the Council’s supported bus network reveals that a significant number of passengers use concessionary passes. As of February 2024, this equates to over 24,000 passengers which is 36% of total travellers on supported bus services. This data is informed by regular passenger number updates that are received from bus operators of these services. These

	<p>concessionary pass holders are likely to have one or multiple protected characteristics, including disabilities and being of young or old age.</p> <p>Bus services across Cheshire East are available to all people and therefore any service changes as a result of the BSIP have the potential to impact others with protected characteristics including gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religious or faith groups, sex and sexual orientation.</p> <p>Schemes generated as a result of the BSIP will be developed in collaboration with groups that represent those who share one or more protected characteristic. This will be undertaken to support any future consultation activity and ensure proposals are robust.</p> <p>Once proposals have been developed, the direct impact of any service alterations upon protected groups will be explored in greater detail and presented in future iterations of this EqIA.</p>
<p>Gaps in your Information</p>	<p>There is a higher incidence of bus use amongst young people, older people, people with disabilities and women. We therefore anticipate that any alterations to services will disproportionately impact on these population groups. Currently data regarding certain protected groups and bus utilisation is sparse. Future public consultation provides an opportunity to have greater engagement with these groups to ensure any proposals consider the potential impact and potential mitigation measures. This will be undertaken once schemes are developed as a result of the BSIP.</p>

3. What did people tell you?

<p>What did people tell you</p>	<p>What consultation and engagement activities have you already undertaken and what did people tell you? Is there any feedback from other local and/or external regional/national consultations that could be included in your assessment?</p>
<p>Details and dates of the</p>	<p>Following scheme development as a result of the BSIP, and identification of service/network changes, pre-consultation engagement will be used to understand what the impacts of change could be for users (in particular those with protected characteristics) and to</p>

consultation/s and/or engagement activities	<p>help build improved relationships with the Council. This engagement will also allow for the impact of Enhanced Partnership Schemes (EP Schemes) to be understood early and mitigation to be built into any future proposals.</p> <p>Consultation and engagement are yet to be undertaken. Future iterations of the EqIA will be developed following the development of EP Schemes as a result of the BSIP.</p>
Gaps in consultation and engagement feedback	<p>At this stage a list of key stakeholders has been drawn up and engagement will be ongoing throughout the process of BSIP development and future scheme implementation. This engagement will be undertaken through email and telephone correspondence as well as focus group sessions with interested stakeholders.</p>

4. Review of information, consultation feedback and equality analysis

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of information used to inform the proposal	What did people tell you? Summary of customer and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from the information and feedback (actual and potential). These can be either positive, negative or have no impact.
Age	<p><i>Young People – can be vulnerable to social exclusion through reliance on public transport, walking & cycling. Personal security and the cost of public transport can be a barrier. Also, the desire to access public transport during evenings / weekends where availability is less.</i></p> <p><i>Elderly – reliant on public transport and can face particular challenges relating to physical access to public transport. Also fear of crime can be a barrier</i></p> <p><i>A key market for bus services across Cheshire East are both residents of old and young age. Within Cheshire East there are over 40,000 young people and 80,000 people of retirement age (Census, 2021).</i></p> <p><i>Alterations may result in services operating in a different way, which</i></p>	<p><i>Engagement with groups representing old and young travellers will be undertaken, as well as contact with more general bus user groups.</i></p> <p><i>Formal engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</i></p>	<p><i>Potential Negative (but depending on future network change)</i></p>

	<p><i>may have a disproportionate impact on older people and young people.</i></p> <p><i>UK Statistics (Age UK) show that those aged 70-84 are the most likely to use the bus at least weekly (61.2% do so), followed by those aged 85+ (57.1%, whilst people aged 60-69 are least likely to use the bus weekly (39.3%).</i></p> <p><i>Alternatively, UK statistics (National Travel Survey 2022) show that those aged 17 to 20 made up the highest proportion of their trips using public transport modes (22%).</i></p>		
<p>Disability</p>	<p><i>Disabled people can face particular challenges relating to physical access to public transport. Access to transport information is a potential barrier restricting, for instance, deaf and visually impaired people. Access to disabled parking can also be a challenge.</i></p> <p><i>Any alterations to services as a result of the BSIP may adversely impact on disabled transport users. Disability and accessibility statistics for England demonstrate that disabled adults appear to rely more on the bus than non-disabled</i></p>	<p><i>Engagement with groups representing disabled travellers will be undertaken, as well as contact with more general bus user groups.</i></p> <p><i>Formal engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</i></p>	<p><i>Potential Negative (but depending on future network change)</i></p>

	<i>adults. Adults with disabilities made a greater proportion of their travel by bus 7% compared with 5% for adults without disabilities.</i>		
Gender reassignment	No information reviewed at present	<i>Engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</i>	
Pregnancy and maternity	No information reviewed at present	<i>Engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</i>	
Race/ethnicity	No information reviewed at present	<i>Engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</i>	
Religion or belief	No information reviewed at present	<i>Engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</i>	
Sex	<i>Nationally public bus services are generally used more by women than by men – consequently any alteration to bus service provision may have a greater effect on women. A study by TfL revealed that within the UK women are more likely to use the bus at least once a week (64%) than men (57%).</i>	<i>Engagement with groups representing female travellers will be undertaken, as well as contact with more general bus user groups. Formal engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</i>	<i>Potential Negative (but depending on future network change)</i>
Sexual orientation	No information reviewed at present	<i>Engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</i>	

Marriage and civil partnership	No information reviewed at present	<i>Engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</i>	
---------------------------------------	------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------	--

5. Justification, Mitigation and Actions

Mitigation	What can you do? Actions to mitigate any negative impacts or further enhance positive impacts
<p>Please provide justification for the proposal if negative impacts have been identified? Are there any actions that could be undertaken to mitigate, reduce or remove negative impacts?</p> <p>Have all available options been explored? Please include details of alternative options and why they couldn't be considered?</p> <p>Please include details of how positive impacts could be further enhanced, if possible?</p>	<p>Engagement with old, young and disabled groups will be undertaken at the prior to network adjustments and future consultation events to understand the likely impact of bus service changes and dependence on bus services at present. This will enable mitigations to be built into any proposals prior to consultation.</p> <p>Within the BSIP and EP documents there is ambition to make bus services more appealing and available for residents within Cheshire East. There is a desire for fares to be cheaper, services to be more frequent and comfortable. These measures will be put in place to increase patronage and as a result existing bus users (including the young and old who make up a significant proportion of current bus users) will benefit from these service enhancements.</p> <p>The BSIP and EP Scheme document propose to enhance vehicle and bus stop accessibility (which is critical to anyone with a physical impairment) in a bid to draw more passengers to local services. Similarly more accessible information is proposed in an easy to read/understand format which will benefit passengers with visual, hearing and physical disabilities as well as all other customer groups.</p>

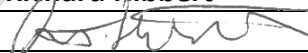
6. Monitoring and Review -

Monitoring and review	How will the impact of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure be monitored? How will actions to mitigate negative impacts be monitored? Date for review of the EIA
Details of monitoring activities	Any service and network changes as a result of the BSIP will be subject to performance monitoring (in terms of patronage by time of day and day of week), analysis of complaints post scheme implementation, and equality monitoring data through passenger surveys and transport focus' Your Passenger Journey Survey. This monitoring will also evaluate information on whether actions to mitigate negative impacts have achieved their desired outcome.
Date and responsible officer for the review of the EIA	

7. Sign Off

When you have completed your EIA, it should be sent to the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Mailbox](#) for review. If your EIA is approved, it must then be signed off by a senior manager within your Department (Head of Service or above).

Once the EIA has been signed off, please forward a copy to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer to be published on the website. For Transparency, we are committed to publishing all Equality Impact Assessments relating to public engagement.

Name	Richard Hibbert
Signature	
Date	28 May 2024

8. Help and Support

For support and advice please contact EqualityandInclusion@cheshireeast.gov.uk