

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and our equality duty

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.

Whilst [the Gunning Principles](#) set out the rules for consulting with '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 Act identifies nine 'protected characteristics' and makes it a legal requirement to make sure that people with these characteristics are protected from discrimination:

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

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.

Please feel free to contact the [Equality and Diversity mailbox](#) who will try to help you to assess 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 a service, strategy, function or procedure

(Please delete the guidance in italics once you complete a section)

Proposal Title	Restaurant & Catering Service in Oakmere and Willowmere Extra Care Housing schemes
Date of Assessment	23 April 2025
Assessment Lead Officer Name and other officers involved	Sophie Middleton – Project Manager (Extra Care)
Directorate/ Service	People – Adults, Health and Integration
Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure.	<p>Following the closure of the Council’s school meals service, the in-house catering provision at Oakmere and Willowmere (which was managed and staffed by that service) also ceased. An interim hot meals delivery service, together with additional weekly activities was put in place pending a review of the provision.</p> <p>The catering service ended on 03 January 2025. The interim arrangements began on 06 January 2025 and were originally scheduled to finish at the end of May 2025. An extension to these arrangements is planned to ensure that hot meals can be provided to residents whilst a longer-term solution is sought.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the longer-term solution will be sustainable in-house catering. A report is currently being</p>

	prepared for Adults and Health Committee recommending approval to procure onsite sustainable catering services at both schemes.
Who is impacted?	<p>The majority of the people affected by a new sustainable extra care catering service will be scheme residents, all of whom are over 55. Currently, these residents can choose to order hot meals for delivery to the scheme dining room (Oakmere) or their apartments (Willowmere) via the interim arrangements put in place by the Council. These meals cost approximately £6.00 per two-course meal. If an in-house provider can be procured, the interim arrangements will cease and residents will be able to purchase meals from that provider to eat in the scheme dining room or in their apartments. Residents may choose to make alternative arrangements, either to the interim delivery service or to any new provision put in place.</p> <p>Staff and visitors to Oakmere and Willowmere do not have access to the hot meals delivery service, but would be able to purchase meals from an in-house catering and restaurant service.</p>
Links and impact on other services, strategies, functions or procedures.	<p>Cheshire East Plan 2025-29</p> <p>Commitment 2: Improving Health & Wellbeing</p> <p>2.1 Gap in health equalities is reduced across our diverse borough through a targeted approach.</p> <p>2.2 Improved independence, health and wellbeing through early intervention and prevention.</p> <p>2.6 Lasting solutions are delivered through strong and committed partnerships.</p> <p>Commitment 3: An effective and enabling council</p> <p>3.3 Innovative solutions are developed through a culture of collaboration across the council and with residents, businesses and partners.</p> <p>3.4 Service delivery and new ideas are shaped by consultation and engagement.</p>
How does the service, service change, strategy, function or procedure help the Council meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty?	<p>An in-house catering service would provide a safe space for residents and older people in the local community to gather and eat in a protected and sympathetic environment. This meets the Public Sector Equality Duty as it advances equality of opportunity between people who are protected characteristic and people who do not share it by removing disadvantages for the older age group.</p>

Section 2 - Information – What do you know?

<p>What do you know?</p>	<p>The average age of the people living in Oakmere and Willowmere is 81 years and 7 months, with the population of Willowmere being slightly older and Oakmere slightly younger. Oakmere residents range from 58 to 95 years old, whilst Willowmere's residents are aged between 61 and 99 years old.</p> <p>There are currently 56 people living in Oakmere (53 apartments) and the Council commissions care for 20 of these people. Of these 20 people with care packages, 2 have low care needs, 8 have medium care needs and 9 have high care needs.</p> <p>The situation in Willowmere is similar - 70 people live in the scheme (71 apartments) and the Council commissions care for 26 individuals. Of these 26, 9 have low needs, 10 have medium needs and 7 have high or very high needs.</p> <p>***</p> <p>It is the ambition of the Council to divert individuals who are considering moving into Accommodation with Care to Extra Care, and a thriving restaurant would make the schemes more attractive to people who can live independently with assistance.</p> <p>***</p> <p>Our data shows that the current take-up of hot meals is less than the number of people who used the restaurant service when it was based onsite. This may be partly due to the hot meal deliveries being restricted to scheme residents only (for logistical reasons), whereas the on-site catering used by scheme staff and the local community as well.</p> <p>Before closure, the restaurant service at Oakmere reported that they were preparing and selling 20-30 meals per day, whilst the hot meals provider has reported that they are delivering an average of approximately 7 meals per day. At Willowmere, the restaurant was selling between 30 and 40 meals per day, compared to approximately 17 meals delivered by the provider of the interim service.</p>
<p>Information you used to</p>	<p>A review of the catering provision was carried out and recommended procurement of an onsite catering provider.</p>

arrive at the decision	<p>Engagement with residents and the market was considered during this review.</p> <p>Building on previous engagement sessions, further resident engagement has taken place in February and May 2025. The February engagement was in the form of the PFI Annual Survey, which had a rate of return of 80% in Oakmere and 75% in Willowmere. Residents of both schemes expressed high satisfaction with the previous restaurant-based service and were very dissatisfied with the hot meal delivery service (which was new at the time). The preference for future provision was an onsite restaurant service, open daily.</p> <p>Response to the May 2025 drop-in sessions and survey were similar.</p> <p>In June 2025, soft market testing resulted in two responses who were both confident that a sustainable service could be provided with minimal support from the Council.</p>
Gaps in your Information	<p>The level of demand for the proposed new service is unknown. Whilst a significant number of May 2025 survey respondents indicated that they would use an onsite restaurant service, there is no guarantee that this usage would be realised.</p> <p>It is recognised that some support would be required from the Council to ensure a sustainable service. Should the procurement be approved, bidders will be asked to indicate the support they would require, up to the limit of the existing budget and decreasing year-on-year as the service establishes itself and grows. This will be an evaluated question.</p>

Section 3 - Information - What did people tell you?

What did people tell you about your proposals?	<p>Resident Engagement - Feb 2025:</p> <p>Avantage Annual Survey. High rates of return. Approximately 96% of Oakmere respondents were satisfied with the previous (onsite restaurant) service whilst 88% of Willowmere respondents were satisfied with their onsite service. Satisfaction levels with the new hot meals delivery service were very low, although the service was very new at the time. Residents reported that lunch was the preferred</p>
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	<p>meal time, with hot meals being cooked onsite 7-days-a-week.</p> <p>Resident Engagement - May 2025: The Council asked residents to complete a further survey in May 2025. In both schemes, most residents supported the return on an onsite catering service. Most residents preferred 7-day opening and lunch was the preferred meal time. The overwhelming majority of residents preferred a service with a hot lunchtime meal and snacks available at other times of the day. Many residents referred to the importance of communal dining as a social event, with some saying how much they missed this aspect of the previous onsite restaurant service.</p> <p>Market Engagement - June 2025: Whilst neither of the respondents had direct extra care catering experience, both had relevant community-based experience. They identified key challenges including catering for diverse dietary needs, staffing, compliance and cost control. Both were confident that the service could be sustainable, provided that external customers could be accommodated and with a focus on efficiency, reducing waste and attracting customers by providing affordable meals.</p>
Details and dates of the consultation/s and/or engagement activities	<p>February 2025: Resident Survey (Avantage Annual Survey) Respondents: Oakmere – approx. 42 responses to survey, Willowmere – approx. 52 responses. Not all respondents answered every questions.</p> <p>May 2025: Drop-In Sessions and paper-based Survey Respondents: 31 responses received from each scheme. In Oakmere, 30 residents spoke to officers, while in Willowmere only four residents did this.</p> <p>June 2025: Market Engagement via The Chest Nine organisations reviewed the notification on The Chest, with two organisations completing the survey.</p>
Are there any gaps in consultation and engagement feedback?	<p>Considerable resident engagement has taken place.</p> <p>Market engagement has been more limited as only two responses were received.</p>

Section 4 - Review of information, consultation feedback and equality analysis

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? <i>Summary of information used to inform the proposal</i> <u>Refer to Section 2</u>	What did people tell you? <i>Summary of customer and/or staff feedback</i> <u>Refer to section 3</u>	What does this mean? <i>Impacts identified from the information and feedback (actual and potential).</i> <i>These can be either positive, negative or have no impact.</i>
Age	The majority of the people affected by the proposed new service will be scheme residents, all of whom are over 55.	Survey respondents were keen to emphasise the importance of hot, nutritious meals for older people as well as the importance of the restaurant as a community hub.	The proposed new service would have a positive impact as it would meet the need for hot, nutritious meals and because these would mainly be served in the restaurant, would meet the desire to bring internal and external communities together.
Disability	Some scheme residents may have a disability that may mean they are unable to shop for their food and/or prepare meals.	As above.	As above.
Gender reassignment	n/a		
Pregnancy and maternity	n/a		
Race/ethnicity	n/a		
Religion or belief	Some residents may have special diets because of their religion or beliefs.	Information not requested/ volunteered in surveys.	An onsite catering providing a face-to-face service should be able to be more flexible about meeting varied dietary requirements.

Sex	n/a		
Sexual orientation	n/a		
Marriage and civil partnership	n/a		

Section 5 - Review of information, consultation feedback and equality analysis

Mitigation	What can you do to mitigate any negative impacts or further enhance positive impacts?
<i>Please summarise the impacts listed in section 4 and what will be done to mitigate these impacts</i>	<p>Procurement of an onsite catering provider would have a positive impact because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would meet the need identified by residents and professionals for hot, nutritious meals to be available for residents and the local community • The meals would mainly be served in the restaurant, making meal times a social occasion where residents and visitors to the schemes could meet and socialise together. • An onsite provider would have the opportunity to get to know customers and their food preferences and be able to “flex” their offer to suit individuals and groups of customers, whether their preferences are medical, due to religion or beliefs, or personal choice. • Residents who are unable to leave the scheme or who are unable to cook, would be assured of a choice of hot meals and the possibility that they can purchase additional snacks/light meals to eat in their apartments outside of opening hours. <p>Considerable resident engagement has taken place, together with targeted market engagement. The draft catering services specification has been shaped by insights provided by both residents and participating providers, and has been designed to offer the provider sufficient flexibility ensure the long-term sustainability of their business throughout the contract period.</p>

Section 6 – Monitoring and review

Details of monitoring activities	Should procurement take place and a contract awarded to an onsite provider, monitoring will be via the contract monitoring regime (yet to be decided).
Date and responsible officer for the review of the EIA	Sophie Middleton, Project Manager (Extra Care) This EIA will be reviewed either if a decision is made not to procure a new service or if the proposed procurement is approved but fails.

Section 7 – Sign off

When you have completed your draft 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).

Name	Dan Coyne
Date	28.08.2025
Signature	<i>Daniel Coyne</i>

Once the EIA has been signed off, please forward a copy to the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion mailbox](#) for it to be published on the website.

For Transparency, we are committed to publishing all Equality Impact Assessments relating to public engagement.

Help and support - For support and advice please contact the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion mailbox](#)