

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL – EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM

Guidance here: [Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit \(cccusers.com\)](https://cccusers.com/Equality-Impact-Assessment-Toolkit)

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TITLE: CEC resident communications strategy 2022 - 2025

VERSION CONTROL

Date	Version	Author	Description of Changes
24-10-22	2.0	Michael Moore	Updated following public consultation on strategy

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL –EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1 Description: Fact finding (about your policy / service /

Department	Corporate Services		Lead officer responsible for assessment		Michael Moore	
Service	Communications and media		Other members of team undertaking assessment		N/A	
Date	24-10-22		Version 2.0			
Type of document (mark as appropriate)	Strategy ✓	Project	Function	Policy	Procedure	Service
Is this a new/ existing/ revision of an existing document (please mark as appropriate)	New ✓		Existing		Revision	
Title and subject of the impact assessment (include a brief description of the aims, outcomes, operational issues as appropriate and how it fits in with the wider aims of the organisation) Please attach a copy of the strategy/ plan/	<p align="center">CEC communications strategy for residents 2022 - 2025</p> <p>In January 2022 Corporate Policy Committee approved the development of a communications strategy for residents to address related corporate plan priority and actions. In July 2022, Corporate Policy Committee approved a draft strategy to go to public consultation.</p> <p>The strategy sets out the vision, aims and priorities for the council's news and public relations, and the promotion of key council services, policies, programmes and initiatives to residents.</p> <p>The principles of the draft strategy include that all council communications should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible • Inclusive • Useful, relevant and engaging • Evidence-based 					

<p>function/ policy/ procedure/ service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open and transparent • Value for money • Green <p>This strategy covers the council's vision, aims and priorities for the council's news and public relations, and the promotion of key council services, policies, programmes and initiatives to residents.</p> <p>It includes the vision: "People in Cheshire East are well-informed about their council and council services. "They are aware of council decisions and how to influence them."</p> <p>And the aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build engaged audiences from Cheshire East's diverse communities 2. Promote council priorities through a coordinated programme of activity 3. Be an effective voice which promotes Cheshire East's priorities, challenges and achievements 4. Build resilience to respond to new circumstances and emergencies <p>It works alongside other strategies and policies that cover the wider range of interactions between individual residents and the council, its officers and members. For example, the council's customer experience strategy sets out how we treat customers when they are trying to access our services - to provide the best possible experience for our customers, whoever they are and however they contact us.</p>
<p>Who are the main stakeholders, and have they been engaged with? (e.g. general public, employees, Councillors, partners, specific audiences, residents)</p>	<p>General public – A representative sample of residents was surveyed about their communications needs and preferences. Responses to the survey have been analysed and inform the strategy. Residents have also been consulted on the draft strategy.</p> <p>Councillors – The public consultation has been promoted to councillors. Councillors will have three opportunities in total to review and respond to the drafting of the strategy through the various stages of corporate policy committee decision making. It is anticipated that progress against the strategy will also be reported to the committee.</p> <p>Senior Officers – Corporate Leadership Team will have opportunities to shape the strategy through their meeting cycle. A wider cadre of senior managers are also consulted on the communications work programme throughout the year and agree, with the communications team, individual communications strategies and plans.</p> <p>Staff – Staff have been invited to respond to the consultation.</p> <p>Partners – Partners, including town and parish councils have been invited to respond to the consultation.</p>

Consultation/ involvement carried out.	YES ✓	NO
What consultation method(s) did you use?	<p>The draft Communications Strategy for Residents was subject to formal consultation between 21 September and 23 October 2022. The consultation was promoted on the council's website and through local media and social media. A survey questionnaire was available online and as a paper copy for postal responses. It was issued to the Digital Influence Panel and promoted in our local libraries. It was also promoted to Cheshire East Council staff, including managers, Cheshire East members and was sent to Town and Parish Councils.</p> <p>Prior to drafting the communications strategy for residents, a postal survey of a representative sample of Cheshire East residents was undertaken.</p>	

Stage 2 Initial Screening

Who is affected and what evidence have you considered to arrive at this analysis? (This may or may not include the stakeholders listed above)	<p>The communications strategy relates specifically to our work to communicate effectively with residents. Census and local population data provide a wealth of information regarding the varying demographic, socio-economic and geographic diversity of that population.</p> <p>We also have the findings of the survey and consultation itself.</p>
Who is intended to benefit and how	<p>One of the aims of the draft strategy is to establish "Engaged audiences from Cheshire East's diverse communities" and principles include that our communications with residents should be accessible and inclusive. The communications survey and consultation about the strategy itself helps us understand who may be under-served or seldom-heard by our current practice and identify ways we can improve equity and inclusiveness of our communications activity.</p> <p>This may mean specific work to reach and engage groups who identify with particular protected characteristics, live in particular areas, are in particular socio-economic groups and/or have limited access to or opportunity to use particular channels.</p>
Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups?	<p>Yes. A key outcome for this work is intended to expose inequalities in access to our communications. This means that some individuals and groups should benefit from improved access to communications from Cheshire East Council. This may include people who, for example, identify with particular protected characteristics, live in certain parts of the borough, or have limited access to digital communications.</p>

Does it include making decisions based on individual characteristics, needs or circumstances?			Potentially yes, should the survey, consultation and ongoing strategic communications work suggest that certain groups are under-served by the way we communicate we may need to make decisions to make more effort to target specific groups and/or provide communications in different formats.					
Are relations between different groups or communities likely to be affected? (eg will it favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others?)			There is a risk that, if we make adjustments to accommodate the needs or preferences of certain groups, people from outside those groups may see this as making an unnecessary concession / discrimination – particularly if this is seen to incur additional expenditure or provide unfair advantage.					
Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality? Is there a history of unequal outcomes (do you have enough evidence to prove otherwise)?			Anecdotally, we hear that some groups find it harder to access communications from the council. We are also aware, through member engagement, surveying and consultation that some people are unable or choose not to use digital channels of communication. This may more frequently be older people, people with some types of disability, people living in more rural areas or in conditions of more deprivation.					
Is there an actual or potential negative impact on these specific characteristics? (Please tick)								
Age	Y	N	Marriage & civil partnership	Y	N	Religion & belief	Y	N
Disability	Y	N	Pregnancy & maternity	Y	N	Sex	Y	N
Gender reassignment	Y	N	Race	Y	N	Sexual orientation	Y	N

Stage 3 Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings? (quantitative and qualitative) Please provide additional information that you wish to include as appendices to this document, i.e., graphs, tables, charts	Level of Risk (High, Medium or Low)
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Age	While the reality is more complex and nuanced in many cases, it is still a reasonable assumption, borne out by some evidence (ref survey and consultation), that older people may not have access to, or choose to use, digital channels for communication. While many older people routinely use digital channels, there is evidence to suggest that older people are less likely to use them than other age groups.	High
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No evidence that marriage or civil partnership is a significant factor in people accessing, understanding and engaging with Cheshire East Council's communications. However, the full spectrum of marriage and civil partnership must be represented in our communications to ensure inclusivity.	Low
Religion	<p>People who practice religions other than Christianity, or practice no religion, may feel excluded when, on rare occasions, the council participates in civic or traditional events that link to Christian worship – for example, where the Mayor chooses to have a civic service, appoint a Mayor's chaplain and/or have prayers at council meetings – at this time, these are likely to be based in the Christian religion.</p> <p>We must also consider that different days, dates and times can have significance for different religions – so, the timing of events, for example, could inadvertently exclude certain groups by coinciding with religious observance.</p>	Medium
Disability	A number of disabilities may impact on the ability of people to access, understand or engage with the council's communications. This includes, visual impairment, hearing impairment and neuro disabilities, and also mobility issues, where, for example, access to an in-person event or physical communications asset is limited due to physical location and accessibility. Also, representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure inclusivity. We must use the correct terms when talking about disability.	High
Pregnancy and Maternity	No evidence that pregnancy and maternity is a significant factor in people accessing, understanding and engaging with Cheshire East Council's communications. However, pregnancy and maternity must be represented in our communications to ensure inclusivity.	Low
Sex	No evidence that sex is a significant factor in people accessing, understanding and engaging with Cheshire East Council's communications. However, representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure inclusivity.	Medium
Gender Reassignment	No evidence that gender reassignment is a significant factor in people accessing, understanding and engaging with Cheshire East Council's communications. However, representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure inclusivity. We must use the correct terms when talking about gender reassignment.	Low
Race	There are a number of factors and considerations relating to race, nationality and ethnicity and effective and equitable communications.	High

	<p>Language can be a significant consideration for some of our residents – 108 languages are spoken across Cheshire East and 3% of Cheshire East households have members for whom English is not the main language and, in half of these households, no members have English as their main language.</p> <p>However, other less obvious considerations can also inadvertently exclude people of different ethnicity or nationality – for example, where (both geographically and digitally) communications are made available.</p> <p>Representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure inclusivity. We must use the correct terms when talking about race, heritage and ethnicity.</p>	
Sexual Orientation	No evidence that sexual orientation is a significant factor in people accessing, understanding and engaging with Cheshire East Council's communications. However, representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure inclusivity. We must use the correct terms when talking about sexual orientation.	Medium

Stage 4 Mitigation

Protected characteristics	Mitigating action <i>Once you have assessed the impact of a policy/service, it is important to identify options and alternatives to reduce or eliminate any negative impact. Options considered could be adapting the policy or service, changing the way in which it is implemented or introducing balancing measures to reduce any negative impact. When considering each option you should think about how it will reduce any negative impact, how it might impact on other groups and how it might impact on relationships between groups and overall issues around community cohesion. You should clearly demonstrate how you have considered various options and the impact of these. You must have a detailed rationale behind decisions and a justification for those alternatives that have not been accepted.</i>	How will this be monitored?	Officer responsible	Target date
Age	Accessibility: Use alternatives to digital channels where possible to enable access for those who cannot or choose not to use the, - e.g. local media. Cascade via ward member, town and parish council etc.	Through communications planning and	Head of communications	Ongoing

	<p>Inclusivity: Representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure inclusivity. We must use the correct terms when talking about age.</p>	evaluation process, and strategy review		
Marriage and Civil Partnership	<p>Accessibility: No impact in relation to accessibility based on marriage or civil partnership status has been identified.</p> <p>Inclusivity: Representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure inclusivity. We must use the correct terms when talking about marriage and civil partnership.</p>	Through communications planning and evaluation process, and strategy review	Head of communications	Ongoing
Religion	<p>Accessibility: We must consider that different days, dates and times can have significance for different religions – so, the timing of events, for example, could inadvertently exclude certain groups by coinciding with religious observance.</p> <p>Inclusivity: Representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure inclusivity. We must use the correct terms when talking about religion and belief.</p>	Through communications planning and evaluation process, and strategy review	Head of communications	Ongoing
Disability	<p>Accessibility: All digital communications must be accessible to assistive digital technologies. Plain English is preferred, with, in some cases, easy-read options being appropriate. We know that some disabilities correlate with limitations on access to digital channels, so non-digital, audio, verbal and/or visual alternatives may be required.</p> <p>Inclusivity: Representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure</p>	Through communications planning and evaluation process, and strategy review	Head of communications	Ongoing

	inclusivity. We must use the correct terms when talking about disabilities.			
Pregnancy and Maternity	<p>Accessibility: No impact in relation to accessibility of communications, based on pregnancy or maternity status has been identified.</p> <p>Inclusivity: Representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure inclusivity. We must use the correct terms when talking about pregnancy and maternity.</p>	Through communications planning and evaluation process, and strategy review	Head of communications	Ongoing
Sex	<p>Accessibility: No impact in relation to accessibility of communications, based on sex has been identified.</p> <p>Inclusivity: Representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure inclusivity. We must use the correct terms when talking about sex, sexual orientation, gender and gender reassignment.</p>	Through communications planning and evaluation process, and strategy review	Head of communications	Ongoing
Gender Reassignment	<p>Accessibility: No impact in relation to accessibility of communications, based on gender reassignment has been identified.</p> <p>Inclusivity: Representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure inclusivity. We must use the correct terms when talking about sex, sexual orientation, gender and gender reassignment.</p>	Through communications planning and evaluation process, and strategy review	Head of communications	Ongoing

Race	<p>Accessibility: An individual's race, ethnicity, heritage or culture may also correlate to language and preferred (or available) sources of information. Alternative language versions of communications must be considered and available on request. We must also build on community connections built through COVID-19 pandemic to ensure essential information reaches all ethnic and cultural groups effectively. Ward members, town and parish council and other community leaders have a role to play.</p> <p>Inclusivity: Representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure inclusivity. We must use the correct terms when talking about race, culture, heritage and ethnicity.</p>	Through communications planning and evaluation process, and strategy review	Head of communications	Ongoing
Sexual Orientation	<p>Accessibility: No impact in relation to accessibility of communications, based on sexual orientation has been identified.</p> <p>Inclusivity: Representation in our communications must be balanced and not stereotypical to ensure inclusivity. We must use the correct terms when talking about sex, sexual orientation, gender and gender reassignment.</p>	Through communications planning and evaluation process, and strategy review	Head of communications	Ongoing

5. Review and Conclusion

Summary: provide a brief overview including impact, changes, improvement, any gaps in evidence and additional data that is needed

Specific actions to be taken to reduce, justify or remove any adverse impacts	How will this be monitored?	Officer responsible	Target date
Equality accessibility and inclusivity to be built into all future communications plans	Through communications planning and evaluation process, and strategy review	Head of communications	Ongoing
Easy read training for members of the communications team	Communications service workforce development plan	Head of communications	Ongoing
Digital accessibility training for members of the communications team	Communications service workforce development plan	Head of communications	Ongoing
Please provide details and link to full action plan for actions	N/A		
When will this assessment be reviewed?	Assessment will be reviewed as progress against the strategy is reviewed (this is subject to committee approval)		
Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?	Equality impact Assessments may need to be undertaken for individual communications projects.		
Lead officer sign off	Michael Moore	Date	24-10-22
Head of service sign off	Michael Moore	Date	24-10-22

Please publish this completed EIA form on the relevant section of the Cheshire East website

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