

## Appendix 5 – Bus Service Review 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

<b>Proposal Title</b>	Bus Service Review 2024
<b>Date of Assessment</b>	05/02/2024
<b>Assessment Lead Officer Name</b>	Chris Taylor
<b>Directorate/Service</b>	Highways and Transport
<b>Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure.</b>	<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, environmental sustainability, including decarbonisation.</p> <p>The local bus network is made up of 37 bus services, of which 21 services are fully supported by the Council (57%), 8 are partially supported by the Council (22%), such as evening journeys, and 8 services (22%) are fully commercial. The Council currently spends £2.5m supporting bus services which are not commercially viable but are deemed important and socially necessary.</p> <p>The last strategic bus service review was undertaken in 2017 and much has changed in that time. In 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic struck with significant impacts for passenger transport services and government published the National Bus Strategy in March 2021, which set out to rebuild bus patronage to 2019 levels and beyond.</p> <p>A methodology has been prepared based on an evidence-led approach which ensures our planning is informed and influenced by robust data and stakeholder consultation. The key tasks in the methodology are set out as an appendix to the Committee report, including the bus support criteria, performance data, accessibility mapping and gap analysis.</p> <p>It is proposed to carry out an 8 week consultation between May and June 2024 to seek the views of bus operators, service users, local businesses and residents. The Enhanced Partnership (EP) for buses has a key role to play in the bus service review.</p>

	<p>With supported bus contracts due to come to an end on 31st March 2025, there is a need to review the existing service provision to ensure retendered services offer value for money and the best possible coverage to serve residents of the borough with the right services in the right places. This bus service review will help to inform the process of retendering of services.</p> <p>In 2021, the Council was awarded £1.2m from the DfT Rural Mobility Fund to deliver a flexible, demand responsive transport (DRT) service in the south and west area of Nantwich – Go-Too was launched in October 2021 as a 3 year pilot project.</p> <p>As part of the bus service review, careful consideration will be given to the blend between fixed route and flexible transport services. There are many lessons learnt from the Go-Too pilot project which can be applied across the borough and there are clear opportunities to modernise the FlexiLink service and respond to consultation results from September 2023. These services will be included in the bus service review 2024 and associated consultation process.</p>
<p><b>Who is Affected?</b></p>	<p>At this stage the proposals are yet to be developed. A second iteration of this EqIA will be developed following the development of consultation proposals outlining all parties likely to be impacted by specific service adjustments.</p> <p>Prior to the development of these proposals, the below are likely to be affected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The general public (including residents and visitors to the Borough);</li> <li>• Cheshire East Council stakeholders;</li> <li>• Public transport operators and staff;</li> <li>• Local businesses/organisations;</li> <li>• Schools and education establishments;</li> <li>• Neighbouring local authorities;</li> <li>• Governmental bodies (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnership);</li> <li>• Statutory transport bodies (e.g. Department for Transport and Transport for the North).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner organisations</li> <li>• Town and Parish Councils;</li> <li>• Umbrella organisations for people with specialist transport needs; such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ AgeUK</li> <li>○ Space4Autism</li> <li>○ Disability Information Bureau (DIB)</li> <li>○ Cheshire Centre for Independent living</li> <li>○ Deafness Support Network</li> <li>○ ADCA Medical Transport Service</li> <li>○ Congleton Disabled Club</li> <li>○ Care4CE</li> <li>○ Leonard Cheshire Disability</li> <li>○ The Stroke Association</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Transport interest groups; Such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Crewe &amp; District Bus Users Group</li> <li>○ Transition Wilmslow</li> <li>○ Active Travel Congleton</li> <li>○ Travel Cheshire</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Environmental groups</li> <li>• MPs</li> </ul> <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><b>Links and impact on other services, strategies, functions or procedures.</b></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.</p>

The methodology used to undertake this network review must reflect this framework, considering social, economic and environmental impacts of bus services across the borough.

Cheshire East's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) sets out the ambition for the bus network to improve the speed, reliability and quality of public transport, to encourage more residents to choose bus, make fewer car journeys and contribute to carbon reduction.

Depending on the proposals put forward, there may also be an impact upon home to school travel across the borough. Pre-consultation engagement is proposed with all groups to explore potential impacts prior to formal consultation commencing. This will ensure that any issues can be identified and mitigated prior to the formal consultation stage. Once proposals have been developed a second iteration of this EqIA will be developed outlining more specifically the impact of any service changes on particular services.

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<p><b>How does the service, service change, strategy, function or procedure help the Council meet the requirements of the <a href="#">Public Sector Equality Duty</a>?</b></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"> <li>• Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation</li> <li>• Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a <a href="#">protected characteristic</a> and those who do not</li> <li>• Foster good relations between people who share a <a href="#">protected characteristic</a> and those who do not</li> </ul> <p>The above aims may be more relevant to some proposals than others, and they may be more relevant to some <a href="#">protected characteristics</a> than others. However, it is advisable that the proposal be assessed against each of the above aims.</p> <p>Ensuring pre-consultation engagement takes place prior to a formal consultation will provide better evidence as to how the council is fostering good relations and advancing equality of opportunity.</p> <p>Conducting a bus service review and public consultation exercise will ensure that any changes to the supported bus network will, where possible, not impact users who are considered to have protected characteristics.</p>
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## Section 2- Information – What do you know?

<b>What do you know?</b>	<b>What information (qualitative and quantitative) and/or research have you used to commission/change/decommission the service, strategy, function, or procedure?</b>
<b>Information you used</b>	<p>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 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 Bus Service Review and consultation 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>Proposals will be developed in collaboration with groups that represent those who share one or more protected characteristic. This will be undertaken to support the 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>
<b>Gaps in your Information</b>	<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. The 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 proposals have been developed/refined and available for discussion.</p>

### 3. What did people tell you?

<b>What did people tell you</b>	<b>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?</b>
<b>Details and dates of the consultation/s and/or</b>	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 help build improved relationships with the Council. This engagement will also allow for the impact of proposals to be understood early and mitigation to be built into the proposals.



<b>engagement activities</b>	<p>Consultation and engagement are yet to be undertaken. Future iterations of the EqIA will be developed following the development of service alterations/proposals.</p> <p>At this stage a period of consultation is planned to run for 8 weeks during May and June 2024.</p>
<b>Gaps in consultation and engagement feedback</b>	<p>At this stage a list of key stakeholders has been drawn up and engagement will be ongoing throughout the process of option development and following development of a preferred approach through public consultation. 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

<b>Protected characteristics groups from the <a href="#">Equality Act 2010</a></b>	<b>What do you know?</b> Summary of information used to inform the proposal	<b>What did people tell you?</b> Summary of customer and/or staff feedback	<b>What does this mean?</b> Impacts identified from the information and feedback (actual and potential). These can be either positive, negative or have no impact.
<b>Age</b>	<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 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</i></p>	<p><i>Pre-consultation 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 proposals)</i></p>

	<i>proportion of their trips using public transport modes (22%).</i>		
<b>Disability</b>	<i>Any alterations to services as a result of the review 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 adults. Adults with disabilities made a greater proportion of their travel by bus 7% compared with 5% for adults without disabilities.</i>	<i>Pre-consultation engagement with groups representing disabled 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 proposals)</i>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	No information reviewed at present	<i>Engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</i>	
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	No information reviewed at present	<i>Engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</i>	
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>	No information reviewed at present	<i>Engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</i>	
<b>Religion or belief</b>	No information reviewed at present	<i>Engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</i>	

<b>Sex</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>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%).</p>	<p>Pre-consultation engagement with groups representing female travellers will be undertaken, as well as contact with more general bus user groups.</p> <p>Formal engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.</p>	Potential Negative (but depending on proposals)
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	No information reviewed at present	Engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.	
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	No information reviewed at present	Engagement and consultation yet to be undertaken.	

## 5. Justification, Mitigation and Actions

<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>What can you do?</b>
<p>Please provide justification for the proposal if negative impacts have been identified?</p> <p>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>Actions to mitigate any negative impacts or further enhance positive impacts</p> <p>Engagement with old, young and disabled groups will be undertaken at the pre-consultation stage to understand the likely impact of bus service changes and dependence on bus services at present. This will enable mitigations to be built into the proposals prior to consultation.</p>

Please include details of how positive impacts could be further enhanced, if possible?	
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## 6. Monitoring and Review -

<b>Monitoring and review</b>	<b>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</b>
<b>Details of monitoring activities</b>	<p>Any service changes as a result of the bus service review 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.</p> <p>This monitoring will also evaluate information on whether actions to mitigate negative impacts have achieved their desired outcome.</p>
<b>Date and responsible officer for the review of the EIA</b>	Richard Hibbert, 27/02/2024

## 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.

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

## 8. Help and Support

For support and advice please contact [EqualityandInclusion@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:EqualityandInclusion@cheshireeast.gov.uk)