

## 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>	Co-ordinated Scheme and School Admissions Arrangements 2026-27
<b>Date of Assessment</b>	20/12/24
<b>Assessment Lead Officer Name</b>	Jo Bowkett – Team Manager – Admissions and Transport
<b>Directorate/Service</b>	Education, Strong Start and Integration
<b>Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure.</b>	Statutory Consultation which must take place at least every seven years. Co-ordination of school admissions. Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools where Cheshire East Council is the Admissions Authority.
<b>Who is Affected?</b>	<p>Children and Families.</p> <p>The Co-ordinated Scheme sets out how parents may apply for a school place. In line with digital first policy parents are encouraged to apply online through the Cheshire East website. This is accessible and there is information and advice available about admissions. The “Listen and Translate” feature makes this more accessible.</p> <p>Parents may also apply online, by telephone or by post. Hard copy parent booklets may be requested. There is no change to current processes proposed and these have worked successfully.</p> <p>The Admissions Arrangements set out the oversubscription criteria used for admissions to schools where Cheshire East is the Admissions Authority. This is compliant with the School Admissions code and only asks for information relevant to the school application. Cheshire East Council is not the admissions authority for any Faith or single sex schools so does not need to rely on any of the specific provisions relating to these schools in determining its arrangements.</p>

**Links and impact on other services, strategies, functions or procedures.**

School admissions is a statutory duty.

**How does the service, service change, strategy, function or procedure help the Council meet the requirements of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#)?**

Cheshire East's Co-ordinated scheme and Admissions Arrangements are in line with the [School admissions code 2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

1.8 Oversubscription criteria must be reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation. Admission authorities must ensure that their arrangements will not disadvantage unfairly, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with a disability or special educational needs, and that other policies around school uniform or school trips do not discourage parents from applying for a place for their child. Admission arrangements must include an effective, clear, and fair tiebreaker to decide between two applications that cannot otherwise be separated.

Cheshire East is a consultee on own Admission Authority's (e.g. Academies) Arrangements and co-ordinates applications for all schools save for two mainstream schools and special and independent schools. Schools are challenged if it is considered that a school may be taking into account a child's disability when considering whether to an offer a mainstream place. Where a child with an Education and Heath Care Plan names a school then the school is required to admit the pupil. There are specific exceptions with the School Admissions Code for Faith schools with a religious character and this is taken into account when considering proposed Admissions Arrangements for these schools.

**Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a [protected characteristic](#) and those who do not**

Cheshire East publishes clear accessible information on school admissions on its website which includes a Listen and Translate feature. Other options are available for parents such as the option to apply by telephone or post. Cheshire East collates all Admissions Arrangements into a composite prospectus which is published on the Cheshire East website. Cheshire East will challenge schools if proposed admissions arrangements do not appear to be compliant with the

	<p>School Admissions Code and refer schools to the <a href="#">Equality Act Advice Final.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a>.</p> <p>This ensures that all families have an equal opportunity to apply for a school place within Cheshire East whatever their circumstances.</p> <p><b>Foster good relations between people who share a <a href="#">protected characteristic</a> and those who do not</b></p> <p>Schools are encouraged to be inclusive and apply admissions arrangements fairly. Through the Co-ordinated Scheme Cheshire East has an overview of virtually all applications for school places within Cheshire East. This means that there is a consistent approach for main round applications, for example, where a parent has asked for a protected characteristic to be taken into account as a reason for late submission then this will be considered by a Panel who will consider all similar requests across Cheshire East so that there is parity and fairness. Having fair and non-discriminatory Admissions Arrangements supports the creation of diverse school communities.</p>
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## 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?
<b>Information you used</b>	<p>Consultation took place for 6 weeks between October and December 2024. Consultation was through specific targeted questions but there was opportunity for consultees to provide feedback on any issue relevant to the Co-ordinated Scheme or Admissions Arrangements. No changes that impact on equality proposed. Co-ordinated scheme and the Admissions Arrangements are compliant with the <a href="#">School admissions code - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a> . There were 89 responses in total which included different age groups, different genders and respondees who shared that they were limited by a health issue or disability. There were some comments about whether more Plain English could be used but we were satisfied that as legal documents some specific terms have</p>

	<p>to be used but this is mitigated by the fact that many parents won't need to directly refer to the Co-ordinated Scheme and Admissions Arrangements as they will find the information that they need in simpler language on the webpages and in the parent information booklets or can contact for specific advice.</p> <p>We receive approximately 12 000 school applications each year which suggests that parents can access the admissions process. We consider individually where there is a late application and analyse if there are reasons given relating to an inability to access the school admissions process.</p> <p>Where parents appeal, they may share reasons why they feel admissions arrangements are unfair or difficult to access. We receive small numbers of member and MP correspondence and complaints about admissions. These small numbers suggest that generally parents are happy with our arrangements. As part of this process, we are consulting and will consider any responses relating to equality and access before determining the arrangements.</p>
<b>Gaps in your Information</b>	We are hopeful that the volume of successful applications means that parents are able to access the admissions process and that support from schools, family hubs and different methods of application means that they can access help if needed.

### 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 engagement activities</b>	<p>Consultation took place between October and December in line with paragraph 1.45-48 of the School Admissions Code. This was organised through the Cheshire East Consultation team and shared with schools, neighbouring local authorities, parents and residents.</p> <p>1.45 When changes are proposed to admission arrangements, all admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements (including any supplementary information form) that will apply for admission applications</p>

	<p>the following school year. Where the admission arrangements have not changed from the previous year there is no requirement to consult, subject to the requirement that admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements at least once every 7 years, even if there have been no changes during that period.</p> <p>1.46 Consultation must last for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year.</p> <p>1.47 Admission authorities must consult with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen;</li> <li>b) other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions;</li> <li>c) all other admission authorities within the relevant area (except that primary schools need not consult secondary schools);</li> <li>d) whichever of the governing body and the local authority is not the admission authority;</li> <li>e) any adjoining neighbouring local authorities where the admission authority is the local authority; and</li> <li>f) in the case of schools designated with a religious character, the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination.</li> </ul> <p>1.48 For the duration of the consultation period, the admission authority must publish a copy of their full proposed admission arrangements (including the proposed PAN) on the school’s website or its own website (in the case of a local authority) together with details of where comments may be sent and the areas on which comments are not sought<sup>41</sup>. Admission authorities must also send, upon request, a copy of the proposed admission arrangements to any of the persons or bodies listed above inviting comment. Failure to consult effectively may be grounds for subsequent complaints and appeals.</p>
<p><b>Gaps in consultation and</b></p>	<p>We received 89 responses which is considerably more than the 11 responses received last time an admissions consultation was conducted. We are happy with the level of response and that they included a range of people.</p>

<b>engagement feedback</b>	
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#### 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>Parents of 4 year olds have the right under the School Admissions Code to defer their child's start to school or to attend part time.</p> <p>Parents of summer born children may decide to send their child to school a year later and request that they are admitted into Reception.</p> <p>Parents of all children may request that their child is admitted out of cohort.</p>	79% of responses agreed that the process for requests for admissions outside a child's chronological age group was fair and reasonable.	Positive – the majority of responders were happy with the process proposed so no changes are proposed.
<b>Disability</b>	Ensuring that information about admissions is accessible so that a parent's disability is not a barrier to making a school application for their child.	23% of the responders reported having a health issue / disability and there were no specific comments raising any concerns about disability.	Positive- no concerns expressed about disability .

	<p>Sometimes schools may wrongly believe that they can take into account a child or parent's disability when considering a mainstream school application.</p> <p>Where a child has an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) naming a school then the child must be admitted.</p>		
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Within Cheshire East there are only two single sex schools which are their own admission authorities and the rest of the schools are co-educational.	No specific responses were raised around gender.	No impact
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>			No impact
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>	As required by the School Admissions Code no information relating to race or ethnicity are include in school application forms and this does not form part of any decision to offer or refuse a school place.	There was one comment about considering those with less understanding of English. Generally though the majority felt that the Admissions Arrangements were fair and they were able to understand them and no concerns were raised on this issue.	Positive – only one concern raised.
<b>Religion or belief</b>	For most schools this is not taken into account. Faith Schools with a religious character they may request a supplementary information form and	There were no specific comments about Faith or Religion.	Positive

	take into account a child's religion and include this in their oversubscription criteria. This does not stop any parent expressing a preference for the school.		
<b>Sex</b>	Within Cheshire East there are only two single sex schools which are their own admission authorities and the rest of the schools are co-educational.		No impact
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Information on sexual orientation is not requested and does not form part of the admissions process.		No impact
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	No information is requested regarding the marital / civil partnership of parents and this does not form part of a decision to offer or refuse a place.		No impact

## 5. Justification, Mitigation and Actions

<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>What can you do?</b> Actions to mitigate any negative impacts or further enhance positive impacts
<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>	There are not believed to be any negative impacts.

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>The consultation survey included optional questions which may identify protected characteristics of respondents.</p> <p>The consultation survey included a question about whether the Co-ordinated Scheme and Admissions Arrangements are considered fair.</p> <p>Any equality issues have been considered in this review before determining the Co-ordinated Scheme and Admissions Arrangements.</p>
<b>Date and responsible officer for the review of the EIA</b>	7 January 2025 – Sally Ashworth

## 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>Sally Ashworth</b>
<b>Signature</b>	S. Ashworth
<b>Date</b>	14.01.25

## 8. Help and Support

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