

Shropshire Council
Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA)
Stage One Screening Record 2024

A. Summary Sheet on Accountability and Actions

Name of proposed service change
Proposal to Cease the Empty Homes Function [Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Reference SC008]

Name of the officer carrying out the screening
Frances Darling, Head of Business and Consumer Protection

Decision, review, and monitoring

Decision	Yes	No
Initial (Stage One) ESHIA Only?	✓	
Proceed to Stage Two Full ESHIA or HIA (part two) Report?		✓

If completion of a Stage One screening assessment is an appropriate and proportionate action at this stage, please use the boxes above, and complete both part A and part B of of this template. If a Full or Stage Two report is required, please move on to full report stage once you have completed this initial screening assessment as a record of the considerations which you have given to this matter.

Actions to mitigate likely negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations
<p>The initial assessment ahead of public consultation indicates that the cessation of the Empty Homes dedicated officer function is likely to have a neutral to low negative impact for the Protected Characteristic groupings as set out in the Equality Act 2010. This also applies to those individuals and households who find themselves in circumstances where they may be considered to be vulnerable and at risk of social exclusion, such as households who present as homeless, veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families, care leavers and refugees. It is not anticipated that intersectionality across these groupings would change the overall impact.</p> <p>In terms of actions to mitigate the impact, the following priorities, which were previously agreed as part of the Empty Homes Strategy 2022-2025 and are focussed on helping to provide affordable housing to help meet housing need, will remain in place as part of future Homes & Communities work.</p>

- Explore opportunities for establishing an empty homes “purchase and repair” scheme
- Investigate options for the Council to introduce a social lettings agency, including opportunities with STAR Housing

The legislation and powers utilised by the officers who deliver the dedicated Empty Homes function are not unique to their role. There are other services across the Council including Building Control, Council Tax, Environmental Protection, Housing Enforcement, Planning and Private Sector Housing that can use these and other powers, to respond to the most serious community impacts that may affect equality and social inclusion as a result of medium to long-term empty homes. It is acknowledged that any response will only be reactive and will have to be balanced against the Council’s other mandatory statutory functions, with interventions implemented only in situations where the risk of harm reaches a very significant level.

Actions to mitigate likely negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change in terms of health and wellbeing considerations

The initial assessment indicates that the health and wellbeing impact for both individuals and the wider community are likely to be neutral to low negative.

The following enforcement powers provide mitigations to address the most severe health impacts that are likely to arise as a result of empty properties such as damp/mould/vermin, etc. Officers in Environmental Protection and Housing Enforcement already utilise these powers and will continue to do so in the most severe cases. The powers, as set out below, are also available to officers in Building Control, Council Tax, Planning and Private Sector Housing.

- Enforcement action to remove serious hazards, including placing a demolition order on a dwelling
- Serve notice to require owners to clear land of vermin, remove waste, deposits and accumulations likely to attract vermin
- Undertake any works necessary to prevent unauthorised entry or to prevent buildings from becoming a danger to the public (boarding up)
- Serve notices to abate statutory nuisance, which would include any accumulation or deposit that is prejudicial to health or a nuisance
- Require the owner of a property to make a ruinous or dilapidated property safe
- Take emergency action to make a dwelling safe
- Require the owner of a property to rectify a dwelling where it is adversely affecting the amenity of the area through disrepair
- Execute an urgent works notice to preserve unoccupied listed buildings; this is restricted to emergency repairs to keep a building wind and weatherproof and safe from collapse, or action to prevent vandalism or theft
- Serve notice on an owner to make satisfactory provisions for drainage where not currently in place, includes sewers, drains and rainwater pipes that are currently in disrepair or missing

- Serve notice requiring an owner to take steps to remedy unsightly land or the external appearance of a property where the amenity of a part of their area, or of an adjoining area, is adversely affected
- Enforcement measures to deal with filthy and verminous premises/articles
- Power to recover costs incurred through works in default by enabling the sale of a property to organisations committed to ensuring it is improved and occupied
- Community protection warnings/notices under anti-social behaviour legislation
- Enforced sales, compulsory purchase orders and empty dwelling management orders; there is currently a lack of expertise to effectively use these powers and hence it is unlikely they would be used other than in the most severe cases

There are wider health impacts that relate to the mental health of those who live immediately adjacent or in proximity to empty homes. An additional action to mitigate this impact will be to include a link on the Council's empty homes web pages directing those accessing the website to the Council's mental health information web pages ([Mental health and wellbeing | Shropshire Council](#)) in order to provide and signpost individuals to appropriate advice and support.

Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change in terms of equality, social inclusion, and health considerations

Feedback from community views, and views of groupings within the wider community, in regard to the proposed changes, will need to be taken into account in terms of reaching as fully informed a view at this point of the likely impact across groupings in Shropshire. The Council will then need to take a considered view around factoring this feedback into its decision-making processes and recording that it has done so.

There will need to be ongoing efforts to engage with people in the Protected Characteristic groupings, particularly where low levels of responses to public consultation have been received to date and where responses are limited to particular demographics.

The impact will be monitored as part of the scrutiny undertaken to deliver the Housing Strategy 2020-2025 and the remaining priority actions contained within the Empty Homes Strategy 2022-2025. The monitoring will be undertaken by the Council's Housing Executive Board and reported/discussed as part of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Briefing, both of which take place monthly.

As well as internal review and monitoring, the Council will continue to share learning and good practice with other local authorities, including neighbouring authorities and other rural unitary authorities.

Any customer feedback, including complaints, received through the Council's Customer Service Centre and/or the Feedback and Insight Team will be reviewed and considered as part of the ongoing work undertaken by Homes & Communities. Ongoing involvement with local Shropshire Council councillors and the Housing and Assets Portfolio Holder will provide opportunities for community engagement and further feedback.

Associated ESHIAs

The budget proposal in the MTFS, which sets out that the discretionary dedicated Empty Homes function will cease, aligns with the Healthy Organisation priority set out in [The Shropshire Plan](#) (TSP). The proposal supports the decisions that need to be made to ensure the Council is financially sustainable and that resources, including services and staff, are best aligned to TSP and to ensure the Council is better able to focus on and deliver its mandatory statutory functions.

- [Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25-2028/29 \(February 2024\)](#) (The link takes you to the MTFS document; the ESHIA is on pages 87 - 106.)

The Empty Homes function is not a mandatory statutory function; nevertheless, if the proposal in the MTFS to cease delivering the function is implemented, it will diminish the ability of the Homes & Communities teams to deliver the empty homes objectives/priorities that were previously agreed by the Council in the following strategies:

- [Shropshire Housing Strategy 2020-2025 \(December 2020\)](#)
- [Empty Homes Strategy 2022-2025 \(November 2022\)](#) (The link takes you to the Cabinet report; the ESHIA is at Appendix B towards the end of the document.)

Actions to mitigate likely negative impact, enhance positive impact, and review and monitor the overall impacts with regard to climate change impacts and with regard to economic and societal impacts

Climate change

By its very nature, the Empty Homes Strategy 2022-2025 seeks to reduce the impact on the environment as it aims to bring a wasted resource back into use as a home. The objectives and priority actions in the Strategy aim to move the Council's position from simply a framework that encourages owners to sell, rent or occupy their empty homes to one where there is a pathway/mechanism to force homeowners to take action on empty homes.

The cessation of the dedicated Empty Homes function will mean that the Council is unable to develop the enforcement pathway/mechanism, leaving only the basic framework described above.

As a result, whilst it remains unrealistic to establish the impact on climate change with any degree of certainty, it can reasonably be assumed that the cessation of the dedicated Empty Homes function will not improve the position and, therefore, the proposed change is likely to have a 'no effect' outcome on the climate change impacts listed below:

- energy and fuel consumption (buildings and/or travel)
- renewable energy generation
- carbon offsetting or mitigation, and
- climate change adaptation.

As the exploration of initiatives surrounding an empty homes "purchase and repair" scheme to deliver affordable housing and the investigation of options to introduce a social lettings agency will continue, these actions may lead to positive outcomes on some of the above climate change impacts in the future.

Economic and societal/wider community

The Council is not legally required to provide this function; it is discretionary and, therefore, the Council has a choice whether to fund its delivery.

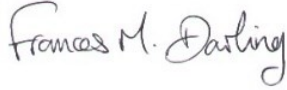
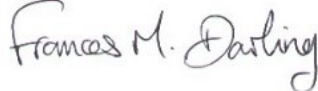


Ceasing the Empty Homes function to deliver the required £91,660 saving will see the permanent professional officer post being made redundant and the technical officer fixed-term post will not be renewed. It is anticipated that should the proposal to remove the dedicated Empty Homes posts be approved, there would also be a potential saving in relation to the associated management costs.

Empty homes are recognised as a wasted resource, depriving people of a home and contributing to the need for more housing. It is only when properties stay empty longer than six months without any obvious signs of renovation or rental that they become true empty homes. Whilst the majority are held empty for legitimate reasons, such as the progress of conveyancing for sale, or probate following the death of an owner, in the worst cases they can become a blight on local communities and may prevent investment in the area.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 contains measures that have allowed the Council to strengthen the existing empty homes premium so that dwellings unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for one year, rather than two, are now liable for the empty homes premium from April 2024. The Council has already applied this premium in Shropshire, which means that empty homes are now liable for 100% council tax premium when empty for more than one year but less than five years. This change is likely to drive certain homeowners to ensure empty homes are returned to use more readily; however, it is acknowledged that this will not be a panacea for all empty homes. The Council already applies premium increases of 200% and 300% when homes are empty for more than five years and more than ten years, respectively. Despite this significant financial cost

that is borne by homeowners, there remains (as at 31/03/2024) 192 empty properties that have been empty for over 5 years.

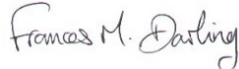
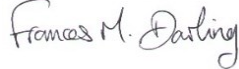
Scrutiny at Stage One screening stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
<i>Lead officer for the proposed service change</i> Frances Darling, Head of Business and Consumer Protection		23 April 2024
<i>Officer carrying out the screening</i> Frances Darling, Head of Business and Consumer Protection		23 April 2024
<i>Any other internal service area support*</i>		
<i>Any external support**</i> Lois Dale, Performance and Research Specialist: Rurality and Equalities Phillip Northfield, Public Health Development Officer	 	23 rd April 2024 18 April 2024

**This refers to other officers within the service area*

***This refers to support external to the service but within the Council, e.g, the Performance and Research Specialist for Rurality and Equalities, Public Health colleagues, the Feedback and Insight Team, performance data specialists, Climate Change specialists, etc.*

Sign off at Stage One screening stage

Name	Signatures	Date
<i>Lead officer's name</i> Frances Darling, Head of Business and Consumer Protection		23 April 2024
<i>Service manager's name</i> Frances Darling, Head of Business and Consumer Protection		23 April 2024

**This may either be the Head of Service or the lead officer*

B. Detailed Screening Assessment

Aims of the service change and description

Proposal

On the 29 February 2024, the Council's MTFs 2024/25 – 2028/29 was approved. The MTFs includes a proposal to save a total of £91,660 by the 31 March 2026 (£44,650 in 2024/25 and £47,010 in 2025/26) by ceasing to provide a dedicated Empty Homes function. The Council is not legally required to provide this function; it is discretionary and, therefore, the Council has a choice whether to fund its delivery.

The core function is currently delivered through two dedicated Empty Homes posts: 0.8 fte permanent professional officer post and 1.0 fte technical officer fixed term post. The contract for the fixed term post is due to end on 8 January 2025. A small proportion of other officers' time, estimated to be no more than 0.1 fte, provides support to and management of the function.

Ceasing the Empty Homes function to deliver the required £91,660 saving will see the permanent professional officer post being made redundant and the technical officer fixed-term post will not be renewed. It is anticipated that should the proposal to remove the dedicated Empty Homes posts be approved, there would also be a potential saving in relation to the associated management costs.

Empty homes are recognised as a wasted resource, depriving people of a home and contributing to the need for more housing. It is only when properties stay empty longer than six months without any obvious signs of renovation or rental that they become true empty homes. Whilst the majority are held empty for legitimate reasons, such as the progress of conveyancing for sale, or probate following the death of an owner, in the worst cases they can become a blight on local communities and may prevent investment in the area.

Impacts

The delivery of the Council's [Housing Strategy 2020 - 2025](#) and its associated [Empty Homes Strategy 2022 - 2025](#) will both be directly impacted by the Council's proposal to cease resourcing the dedicated Empty Homes function.

Further information on the development of these strategies can be found in the respective Cabinet reports on [18 January 2021 \(Agenda Item 8\)](#) and [30 November 2022 \(Agenda Item 89\)](#).

Housing Strategy 2020 - 2025

The key objectives under the Housing Strategy that will be impacted are:

- 4. To ensure people can access a mix of housing options within Shropshire's urban and rural landscape, that best meets their needs in terms of tenure, safety, size, type, design and location of housing.***

Specifically, the opportunities to:

- ensure empty properties are not detrimental to communities, in terms of risk, nuisance, or wasted resources; and
- to work with owners of empty properties, where necessary utilising available enforcement powers.

5. To minimise the environmental impact of existing housing stock and future housing development in the interest of climate change. Maximise resource efficiencies and to ensure optimum use of sustainable construction techniques.

Specifically, the opportunity to maximise the use of existing housing stock by reusing empty properties.

Empty Homes Strategy 2022 - 2025

All four of the objectives under the Empty Homes Strategy will be impacted. These are:

Objective 1: Maintain relevant, accurate and current information relating to empty homes in the area.

Objective 2: Bring empty homes back into use through encouragement, advice and assistance.

Objective 3: Where all other negotiation has failed, consider options for taking the appropriate enforcement action to ensure empty homes are brought back into use.

Objective 4: Raise awareness of the Empty Homes Strategy with residents, dwelling owners and town and parish councils.

The current position in respect of each priority for action, as previously agreed by Cabinet under the four objectives, are set out in **Table 1** below.

Table 1

Objective	Priority for Action	Current Position	Impact if Empty Homes Service Ceases
1	Introduce a web-based system to enable parish and town councils, community groups and residents to report empty dwellings	Web-based system not introduced; however, reports of empty homes are regularly received from town and parish councils	Web-based system would not be implemented; there will be no dedicated resource to respond to reports received
1	Continue to receive monthly update reports on residential empty dwellings from Council Tax	This has been undertaken and is currently ongoing	Would cease
1	Ensure all empty dwellings which are empty for over	This has been undertaken	Would cease

	twelve months have a completed scoring matrix	Scoring matrix – 355 (since Jan 2023)	
2	Contact owners of dwellings empty for over six months to establish reason why dwelling is empty, provide advice and initialise the completion of a scoring matrix.	This has been undertaken Contacts - 99 Visits - 456 (since Jan 2023)	Would cease
2	Explore opportunities for establishing an empty homes “purchase and repair” scheme	No progress	May be opportunities to progress as not wholly dependent on the dedicated Empty Homes officers
2	Investigate options for the Council to introduce a social lettings agency, including opportunities with STAR Housing	No progress	Will continue to be investigated as not wholly dependent on the dedicated Empty Homes officers
3	Establish an Enforced Sale Procedure	Partly progressed	Will not be progressed
3	Establish an Empty Dwelling Management Order procedure	No progress	Will not be progressed
3	Establish a Compulsory Purchase Order procedure	No progress	Will not be progressed
3	Ensure that the matrices for dwellings empty for over two years are kept up to date and dwellings prioritised for potential enforcement action	This has been undertaken	Would cease
4	Establish a media campaign to publicise the Empty Homes Strategy	Various media channels have been used to publicise the Strategy	Would cease

The fundamental impacts of ceasing to fund the dedicated Empty Homes Officers is that the Council will be unable to:

- take a proactive approach to bring empty homes back into use;
- risk assess empty homes using the scoring matrix; or
- respond to complaints regarding empty homes when there are no wider safety or public health issues.

Any response will only be reactive and will have to be balanced against the Council's other mandatory statutory functions, with interventions implemented only in situations where the risk of harm reaches a very significant level.

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change

- Owners of empty homes in Shropshire
- Residents, particularly those living in the vicinity of empty homes in Shropshire
- Public generally, including those looking for a home in Shropshire
- Local businesses involved in the building/house renovation sector, including landlords
- Housing Associations
- All Shropshire Council councillors
- Members of Parliament for Shropshire
- Town and Parish Councils in Shropshire
- Shropshire VCSA
- Neighbouring local authorities
- Other rural unitary authorities
- Local landed estate owners

Evidence used for screening of the service change

The Housing Strategy 2020-2025 states that in 2020 it was estimated there were more than 1,700 empty properties in Shropshire and of these, approximately 600 had been empty for at least 2 years. As at the end of March 2024, based on Council Tax data, the overall number of empty properties has increased to 2,004 and the number empty for at least 2 years has reduced to 550.

Whilst it is known that there are long-term empty properties that persistently remain on the list, it is also clear there is an ongoing turnover; this means as existing empty properties are returned to use, others become empty. From the increasing number of overall empty properties, it is evident that more are becoming empty than are being returned to use; nevertheless, it is encouraging that the data also indicates the number of longer-term empty properties has slowly reduced.

It is known from the work of the Empty Homes Officers that the reduction in the number of those empty homes that have been empty for at least 2 years cannot wholly be attributed to the work of the Empty Homes officers. Nevertheless, in the previous 3 years, 87 homes (an average of 29 per year) have been brought back into use as a result of direct interventions by the Empty Homes Officers. This is across all empty homes and not only those that have been empty for at least 2 years. It is also known that other properties have been brought back into use through non-Council related interventions. On this basis, it is reasonable to presume that whilst removing the dedicated empty homes resource is likely to mean the number of empty homes will not decrease, it also remains a reasonable assumption that a proportion will continue to be brought back into use.

Operational data collated by the Empty Homes Officer since January 2023 is as follows:

- Empty homes assessed using the priority scoring matrix* - 328; 4 high, 55 medium, 269 standard
- Contacts made with homeowners - 99
- Visits to empty properties - 456

*See Appendix II of the Empty Homes Strategy 2022-2025

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Complaints/requests for advice	76	48	111

The rise in complaints/requests for advice about empty homes is an indicator that the dedicated resource that has enabled a proactive approach (scoring/contacts/visits) to be taken in respect of getting empty homes back into use is likely to increase the level of engagement with homeowners and residents in localities where empty homes exist. It is, therefore, reasonable to presume that ceasing to fund the current dedicated empty homes resource, will have the opposing effect and any traction gained in the previous 12 months will reduce and eventually disappear. Nevertheless, there is also evidence that empty homes are returned to use without Council intervention and consequently it can reasonably be presumed that this will continue even if the dedicated empty homes resource is removed.

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change

A public consultation will be undertaken for a period of a month from 24 April 2024 to 26 May 2024 and will be published on the Council's website for general access by the public and all other stakeholders. Direct contact, by email, will be made with the following:

- Housing Associations
- All Shropshire Council councillors
- Members of Parliament for Shropshire
- Town and Parish Councils in Shropshire
- Shropshire VCSA
- Neighbouring local authorities
- Other rural unitary authorities
- Rural Services Network (RSN)
- County Councils Network (CCN)
- Local landed estate owners

Initial equality impact assessment by grouping (Initial health impact assessment is included below this table)

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have on a group, through stating this in the relevant column.

Please state if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact) and add any extra notes that you think might be helpful for readers.

Protected Characteristic groupings and other groupings locally identified in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Stage Two ESHIA required</i>	High positive impact <i>Stage One ESHIA required</i>	Medium positive or negative impact <i>Stage One ESHIA required</i>	Low positive, negative, or neutral impact (please specify) <i>Stage One ESHIA required</i>
<u>Age</u> (please include children, young people, young people leaving care, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group e.g., a child or young person for whom there are safeguarding concerns e.g., an older person with a disability)				Neutral to low negative
<u>Disability</u> (please include cancer; HIV/AIDS; learning disabilities; mental health conditions and syndromes; multiple sclerosis; neurodiverse conditions such as autism; hidden disabilities such as Crohn's disease; physical and/or sensory disabilities or impairments)				Neutral to low negative
<u>Gender re-assignment</u> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral to low negative
<u>Marriage and Civil Partnership</u> (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral to low negative
<u>Pregnancy and Maternity</u> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral to low negative
<u>Race</u> (please include ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller)				Neutral to low negative

<u>Religion or Belief</u> (please include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Nonconformists; Rastafarianism; Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, Veganism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)				Neutral to low negative
<u>Sex</u> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral to low negative
<u>Sexual Orientation</u> (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral to low negative
<u>Other: Social Inclusion</u> (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; households in poverty or on low incomes; people for whom there are safeguarding concerns; people you consider to be vulnerable; people with health inequalities; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities)				Neutral to low negative
<u>Other: Veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families</u>				Neutral to low negative
<u>Other: Young people leaving care</u>				Neutral to low negative

Initial health and wellbeing impact assessment by category

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have with regard to health and wellbeing, through stating this in the relevant column.

Please state if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact) and add any extra notes that you think might be helpful for readers.

Health and wellbeing: individuals and communities in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Part Two HIA required</i>	High positive impact	Medium positive or negative impact	Low positive negative or neutral impact (please specify)
Will the proposal have a <i>direct impact</i> on an individual's health, mental health and wellbeing?				Neutral to low negative

<p>For example, would it cause ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation?</p> <p>.</p>				
<p>Will the proposal indirectly impact an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing?</p> <p>For example, will it affect their ability to be physically active, choose healthy food, reduce drinking and smoking?</p> <p>.</p>				Neutral to low negative
<p>Will the policy have a direct impact on the community - social, economic and environmental living conditions that would impact health?</p> <p>For example, would it affect housing, transport, child development, education, employment opportunities, availability of green space or climate change mitigation?</p> <p>.</p>				Neutral to low negative
<p>Will there be a likely change in demand for or access to health and social care services?</p> <p>For example: Primary Care, Hospital Care, Community Services, Mental Health, Local Authority services including Social Services?</p> <p>.</p>				Neutral

Guidance Notes

1. Legal Context

It is a legal requirement for local authorities to assess the equality and human rights impact of changes proposed or made to services. It is up to us as an authority to decide what form our equality impact assessment may take. By way of illustration, some local authorities focus more overtly upon human rights; some include safeguarding.

It is about what is considered to be needed in a local authority's area, in line with local factors such as demography and strategic objectives as well as with the national legislative imperatives.

Carrying out these impact assessments helps us as a public authority to ensure that, as far as possible, we are taking actions to meet the general equality duty placed on us by the Equality Act 2010, and to thus demonstrate that the three equality aims are integral to our decision making processes.

These are: eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations.

These screening assessments for any proposed service change go to Cabinet as part of the committee report, or occasionally direct to Full Council, unless they are ones to do with Licensing, in which case they go to Strategic Licensing Committee.

Service areas would ordinarily carry out a screening assessment, or Stage One equality impact assessment. This enables energies to be focussed on review and monitoring and ongoing evidence collection about the positive or negative impacts of a service change upon groupings in the community, and for any adjustments to be considered and made accordingly.

These screening assessments are recommended to be undertaken at timely points in the development and implementation of the proposed service change.

For example, a Stage One ESHIA would be a recommended course of action before a consultation. This would draw upon the evidence available at that time, and identify the target audiences, and assess at that initial stage what the likely impact of the service change could be across the national Protected Characteristic groupings and our additional local categories. This ESHIA would set out intended actions to engage with the groupings, particularly those who are historically less likely to engage in public consultation eg young people, as otherwise we would not know their specific needs.

A second Stage One ESHIA would then be carried out after the consultation, to say what the feedback was, to set out changes proposed as a result of the feedback, and to say where responses were low and what the plans are to engage with groupings who did not really respond. This ESHIA would also draw more upon actions to review impacts in order to mitigate the negative and accentuate the positive.

Meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty through carrying out these ESHIAs is very much about using them as an opportunity to demonstrate ongoing engagement across groupings and to thus visibly show we are taking what is called 'due regard' of the needs of people in Protected Characteristic groupings.

If the screening indicates that there are likely to be high negative impacts for groupings within the community, the service area would need to take advice on whether or not to carry out a full report, or Stage Two assessment. This is resource

intensive but will enable more evidence to be collected that will help the service area to reach an informed opinion.

In practice, Stage Two or Full Screening Assessments have only been recommended twice since 2014, as the ongoing mitigation of negative equality impacts should serve to keep them below the threshold for triggering a Full Screening Assessment. The expectation is that Full Screening Assessments in regard to Health Impacts may occasionally need to be undertaken, but this would be very much the exception rather than the rule.

2. Council Wide and Service Area Policy and Practice on Equality, Social Inclusion and Health

This involves taking an equality and social inclusion approach in planning changes to services, policies, or procedures, including those that may be required by Government. The decisions that you make when you are planning a service change need to be recorded, to demonstrate that you have thought about the possible equality impacts on communities and to show openness and transparency in your decision-making processes.

This is where Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessments (ESHIA) come in. Where you carry out an ESHIA in your service area, this provides an opportunity to show:

- What evidence you have drawn upon to help you to recommend a strategy or policy or a course of action to Cabinet or to Strategic Licensing Committee.
- What target groups and audiences you have worked with to date.
- What actions you will take in order to mitigate any likely negative impact upon a group or groupings, and enhance any likely positive effects for a group or groupings; and
- What actions you are planning to monitor and review the impact of your planned service change.

The formal template is there not only to help the service area but also to act as a stand-alone for a member of the public to read. The approach helps to identify whether or not any new or significant changes to services, including policies, procedures, functions, or projects, may have an adverse impact on a particular group of people, and whether the human rights of individuals may be affected.

There are nine Protected Characteristic groupings defined in the Equality Act 2010. The full list of groupings is: Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion or Belief; Sex; and Sexual Orientation.

There is also intersectionality between these. Eg a young person with a disability would be in the groupings of Age and Disability, and if they described themselves as having a faith they would then also be in the grouping of Religion or Belief. We demonstrate equal treatment to people who are in these groups and to people who are not, through having what is termed 'due regard' to their needs and views when

developing and implementing policy and strategy and when commissioning, procuring, arranging, or delivering services.

For the individuals and groupings who may be affected, ask yourself what impact do you think is likely and what actions will you currently anticipate taking, to mitigate or enhance likely impact of the service change? If you are reducing a service, for example, there may be further use you could make of awareness raising through social media and other channels to reach more people who may be affected.

Social inclusion is then a wider additional local category we use in Shropshire, in order to help us to go beyond the equality legislation in also considering impacts for individuals and households with regard to the circumstances in which they may find themselves across their life stages. This could be households on low incomes, or households facing challenges in accessing services, such as households in rural areas, and veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families, or people that we might consider to be vulnerable, such as young people leaving care or refugee families.

Please note that the armed forces are now a grouping to whom we are required to give due regard under recent Armed Forces legislation, although in practice we have been doing so for a number of years now.

We are now also identifying care leavers as a distinct separate local grouping due to their circumstances as vulnerable individuals.

When you are not carrying out an ESHIA, you still need to demonstrate and record that you have considered equality in your decision-making processes. It is up to you what format you choose. -You could use a checklist, an explanatory note, or a document setting out our expectations of standards of behaviour, for contractors to read and sign. It may well not be something that is in the public domain like an ESHIA, but you should still be ready for it to be made available.

Both the approaches sit with a manager, and the manager has to make the call, and record the decision made on behalf of the Council.

Carry out an ESHIA:

- If you are building or reconfiguring a building.
- If you are planning to reduce or remove or reconfigure a service.
- If you are consulting on a policy or a strategy.
- If you are bringing in a change to a process or procedure that involves other stakeholders and the wider community as well as particular groupings

Carry out and record your equality and social inclusion approach:

- If you are setting out how you expect a contractor to behave with regard to equality, where you are commissioning a service or product from them.
- If you are setting out the standards of behaviour that we expect from people who work with vulnerable groupings, such as taxi drivers that we license.

- If you are planning consultation and engagement activity, where we need to collect equality data in ways that will be proportionate and non-intrusive as well as meaningful for the purposes of the consultation itself.
- If you are looking at services provided by others that help the community, where we need to demonstrate a community leadership approach

3. Council wide and service area policy and practice on health and wellbeing

This is a relatively new area to record within our overall assessments of impacts, for which we are asking service area leads to consider health and wellbeing impacts, and to look at these in the context of direct and indirect impacts for individuals and for communities.

A better understanding across the Council of these impacts will also better enable the Public Health colleagues to prioritise activities to reduce health inequalities in ways that are evidence based and that link effectively with equality impact considerations and climate change mitigation.

Health in All Policies – Health Impact Assessment

Health in All Policies is an upstream approach for health and wellbeing promotion and prevention, and to reduce health inequalities. The Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is the supporting mechanism

- Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is the technical name for a process that considers the wider effects of local policies, strategies and initiatives and how they, in turn, may affect people's health and wellbeing.
- Health Impact Assessment is a means of assessing both the positive and negative health impacts of a policy. It is also a means of developing good evidence-based policy and strategy using a structured process to review the impact.
- A Health Impact Assessment seeks to determine how to maximise health benefits and reduce health inequalities. It identifies any unintended health consequences. These consequences may support policy and strategy or may lead to suggestions for improvements.
- An agreed framework will set out a clear pathway through which a policy or strategy can be assessed and impacts with outcomes identified. It also sets out the support mechanisms for maximising health benefits.

The embedding of a Health in All Policies approach will support Shropshire Council through evidence-based practice and a whole systems approach, in achieving our corporate and partnership strategic priorities. This will assist the Council and partners in promoting, enabling and sustaining the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities whilst reducing health inequalities.

Individuals

Will the proposal have a *direct impact* on health, mental health and wellbeing?

For example, would it cause ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation?

Will the proposal directly affect an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing?

This could include the following: their ability to be physically active e.g., being able to use a cycle route; to access food more easily; to change lifestyle in ways that are of positive impact for their health.

An example of this could be that you may be involved in proposals for the establishment of safer walking and cycling routes (e.g., green highways), and changes to public transport that could encourage people away from car usage. and increase the number of journeys that they make on public transport, by foot or on bicycle or scooter. This could improve lives.

Will the proposal *indirectly impact* an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing?

This could include the following: their ability to access local facilities e.g., to access food more easily, or to access a means of mobility to local services and amenities? (e.g. change to bus route)

Similarly to the above, an example of this could be that you may be involved in proposals for the establishment of safer walking and cycling routes (e.g. pedestrianisation of town centres), and changes to public transport that could encourage people away from car usage, and increase the number of journeys that they make on public transport, by foot or on bicycle or scooter. This could improve their health and well being.

Communities

Will the proposal directly or indirectly affect the physical health, mental health, and wellbeing of the wider community?

A *direct impact* could include either the causing of ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation, or the promotion of better health.

An example of this could be that safer walking and cycling routes could help the wider community, as more people across groupings may be encouraged to walk more, and as there will be reductions in emission leading to better air quality.

An *indirect impact* could mean that a service change could indirectly affect living and working conditions and therefore the health and well being of the wider community.

An example of this could be: an increase in the availability of warm homes would improve the quality of the housing offer in Shropshire and reduce the costs for households of having a warm home in Shropshire. Often a health promoting approach also supports our agenda to reduce the level of Carbon Dioxide emissions and to reduce the impact of climate change.

Please record whether at this stage you consider the proposed service change to have a direct or an indirect impact upon communities.

Demand

Will there be a change in demand for or access to health, local authority and social care services?

For example: Primary Care, Hospital Care, Community Services, Mental Health and Social Services?

An example of this could be: a new housing development in an area would affect demand for primary care and local authority facilities and services in that location and surrounding areas. If the housing development does not factor in consideration of availability of green space and safety within the public realm, further down the line there could be an increased demand upon health and social care services as a result of the lack of opportunities for physical recreation, and reluctance of some groupings to venture outside if they do not perceive it to be safe.

For further advice: please contact

Lois Dale via email lois.dale@shropshire.gov.uk, or

Phil Northfield via email Phillip.Northfield@shropshire.gov.uk