



Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

1. Service Area/Directorate

Name of Head of Service for activity being assessed: Quentin Mee

Directorate: CYP

Name of lead person for this activity: Liz Farr

Individual(s) completing this assessment: Quentin Mee

Date assessment completed: 16/07/2026

2. What is being assessed

Activity being assessed (eg. policy, procedure, budget, service redesign, strategy etc.)

The activity being assessed is the approval of a capital programme funded by £5.362m High Needs Provision Capital Grant 2025–2027 and £3.8m Special and Alternative Provision Free School Alternative Places Grant. The programme will provide the governance framework to support additional SEND capacity through expansion of existing provision, mainstream support bases, and the acquisition, assembly, adaptation or refurbishment of suitable land and/or buildings.

What is the aim, purpose, or intended outcome of this activity?

The aim of the programme is to increase the availability of suitable local SEND provision in Herefordshire. It will support additional capacity through expansion of existing provision, mainstream support bases, and the acquisition, assembly, adaptation or refurbishment of suitable land and/or buildings.

The intended outcome is for more children and young people with SEND to access suitable education closer to home, where appropriate to their needs, and to reduce reliance on higher-cost independent, non-maintained or out-of-county placements where possible.

Who will be affected by the development and implementation of this activity?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☒ Service users | ☐ Visitors to the county |
| ☒ Communities | ☒ Carers |
| ☒ Children | ☐ Patients |
| ☐ All staff | ☐ All part-time staff |
| ☐ Staff at a particular location | ☒ Other: parents and families of children and young people with SEND; schools and academy trusts; council services; children in care, care leavers and care-experienced young people where they also have SEND. |

Is this:

- ☐ Review of an existing activity/policy
- ☒ New activity/policy
- ☐ Planning to withdraw or reduce a service, activity or presence?

3. Background information and findings

What information and evidence have you reviewed to help inform this assessment? (name your sources, eg. demographic information, usage data, Census data, feedback, complaints, audits, research)

This assessment has been informed by the council's SEND sufficiency planning, the current decision report, and the previous High Needs Provision Capital Grant decision of 8 November 2024. The previous report identified increasing demand for SEND and AP places, increased reliance on independent non-maintained special school placements and independent or unregistered alternative provision, and limited local specialist capacity.

The assessment has also considered the Herefordshire Education Strategy 2024–2029, the Herefordshire SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2023–2026, Department for Education correspondence confirming withdrawal of the planned Herefordshire special free school and the award of £3.8m alternative places funding, and relevant national policy including *Every Child Achieving and Thriving* and the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan.

These sources identify the need for sufficient local SEND provision, improved mainstream inclusion, earlier intervention, access to high-quality specialist provision where required, and capital investment to create or improve SEND places.

Summary of engagement or consultation undertaken (eg. who you've engaged with, and how, or why do you believe this is not required)

No separate public consultation has been undertaken on the approval of this specific capital programme at this stage. The decision seeks approval for a programme budget and delivery framework, rather than approval for individual named schemes, changes to admissions arrangements, prescribed alterations or specific site acquisitions.

However, the programme has been informed by existing engagement and co-production undertaken through Herefordshire's SEND and AP strategic planning. The SEND and AP Strategy 2023–2026 was developed using shared information and experience from children, young people, families, parents and carers, practitioners and partner organisations, including feedback through surveys, face-to-face conversations, polls and other feedback routes.

The strategy also reflects feedback from Parent Carer Voice Herefordshire, SENDIASS and Healthwatch, including themes around listening to family views, improving navigation of SEND processes, quicker diagnosis and improved access to services. The previous High Needs Provision Capital Grant report also recorded member engagement on related capital proposals.

As individual schemes are developed, further engagement or consultation will be undertaken where required. This may include engagement with schools, academy trusts, parents and carers, children and young people, local communities, council services and other partners.

Summary of relevant findings (it is possible that you will have gaps in your evidence. You must decide whether you need to fill in the gaps now, and if it is feasible to do so. It might be that collecting robust information forms part of your action plan below)

The evidence reviewed indicates that the programme is likely to have a positive equality impact, particularly for children and young people with SEND, many of whom will fall within the protected characteristic of disability under the Equality Act 2010.

The programme is intended to increase local SEND capacity, strengthen mainstream inclusion, support the development of mainstream support bases, and improve access to suitable provision closer to home where this is appropriate to the needs of the child or young person.

The main positive impacts are expected to relate to disability, age, carers, children in care, care leavers, care-experienced children and young people, and families affected by social or economic disadvantage. Increasing local provision may reduce barriers associated with long travel distances, out-of-county placements, and limited access to suitable provision within Herefordshire.

Potential equality risks may arise at scheme level. These include the accessibility and suitability of accommodation, transport implications, impact on existing pupils and staff, disruption during capital works, the suitability of provision for different SEND cohorts, and the need to ensure that children, young people and families are appropriately engaged when proposals directly affect them.

The EIA will therefore need to be reviewed and updated as individual schemes are developed and as more detailed information becomes available on sites, cohorts, design, delivery, access, transport and operational arrangements.

4. The Public Sector Equality Duty

Will this activity have a positive, neutral or negative impact on our duty to:

Equality Duty	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation?	☒	☐	☐
Advance equality of opportunity between different groups?	☒	☐	☐
Foster good relations between different groups?	☒	☐	☐

Explain your rationale here, and include any ways in which you could strengthen the capacity of this activity to promote equality (remember to add anything relevant into your action planning below)

The programme is expected to have a positive impact on the council's Public Sector Equality Duty. It directly supports children and young people with SEND, many of whom will fall within the protected characteristic of disability under the Equality Act 2010.

By increasing suitable local provision and strengthening inclusive practice in mainstream schools, the programme is intended to help remove barriers to education, improve access to appropriate support and advance equality of opportunity.

The programme may also foster good relations by supporting more children and young people with SEND to be educated within local schools and communities where appropriate, and by helping mainstream settings respond to a wider range of need.

Potential equality risks will need to be managed at scheme level, including accessibility, suitability of accommodation, transport, disruption, safeguarding and engagement with affected schools, families and communities. The EIA will therefore be reviewed and updated as individual schemes are developed.

5. The impact of this activity

Consider the potential impact of this activity on each of the equality groups outlined below and explain your rationale. Please note it is possible for the potential impact to be both positive and negative within the same equality group. Remember to consider the impact on staff and service users (current and potential) and partner organisations. It may be useful to include data within these sections if you know the diversity make-up of the people likely to be affected.

Equality Group	Potential <u>positive</u> impact	Potential <u>neutral</u> impact	Potential <u>negative</u> impact	Rationale
Age (include safeguarding, consent and child welfare)	☒	☐	☐	The programme is expected to have a positive impact on children and young people aged 0–25 with SEND by increasing the availability of suitable local education provision and supporting earlier intervention. The programme is particularly relevant to school-age children and young people who require additional support within mainstream settings or specialist provision. The Herefordshire SEND and AP Strategy applies to children and young people aged 0–25 with SEND and sets out an ambition that needs are identified and assessed effectively, support is provided at the right time, and children and young people feel valued, visible and included. Safeguarding, child welfare, suitability of accommodation, and the impact on existing pupils will need to be considered at scheme level. Individual projects will be reviewed as they are developed to ensure they are appropriate for the age, phase and needs of the intended cohort.

Equality Group	Potential <u>positive</u> impact	Potential <u>neutral</u> impact	Potential <u>negative</u> impact	Rationale
Disability (consider attitudinal, physical, financial and social barriers, neuro-diversity, learning disability, physical and sensory impairment)	☒	☐	☒	The programme is expected to have a significant positive impact for children and young people with SEND, many of whom will fall within the protected characteristic of disability under the Equality Act 2010. The purpose of the programme is to increase local SEND capacity, strengthen inclusion in mainstream schools, support the development of mainstream support bases, and improve access to suitable local provision where this is appropriate to need. This aligns with the Herefordshire Education Strategy 2024–2029, which commits to sufficient educational places for all, including those with SEND, and to improving access to education to promote equality of opportunity and inclusion. It also aligns with national reform direction, including investment in accessible buildings, special school places and inclusion bases in mainstream settings. A potential negative impact could arise if individual schemes are not designed appropriately for the intended SEND cohort, or if accessibility, sensory needs, safeguarding, transport, dignity or inclusion are not fully considered. These risks will be mitigated through feasibility, design, accessibility assessment, engagement and scheme-level review.
Gender Reassignment (include gender identity, and consider privacy of data and harassment)	☐	☒	☐	No specific differential impact has been identified at programme approval stage. Individual schemes should ensure accommodation and operational arrangements are inclusive, safe and respectful for all pupils.
Marriage & Civil Partnerships	☐	☒	☐	No specific differential impact has been identified in relation to marriage and civil partnership. The programme is focused on children and young people with SEND and the capital infrastructure required to support education provision.
Pregnancy & Maternity (consider working arrangements, part-time working, infant caring responsibilities)	☐	☒	☐	No specific differential impact has been identified at programme approval stage. Where individual schemes affect school sites, consideration should be given to pregnant staff, parents/carers with infants, accessibility and caring responsibilities during engagement, construction and operational planning.
Race (including Travelling Communities and people of other nationalities)	☐	☒	☐	No specific differential impact has been identified at programme approval stage. Where engagement or consultation is required, information should be accessible and proportionate, including consideration of language, literacy, cultural accessibility and non-digital routes where appropriate.
Religion & Belief	☐	☒	☐	No specific differential impact has been identified at programme approval stage. Individual schemes should consider dignity, privacy, dietary arrangements, prayer/reflection space or engagement timing where relevant.
Sex (consider issues of safety, sexual violence, part-time)	☐	☒	☐	No specific differential impact has been identified at programme approval stage. Scheme-level planning

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale
work, and single-sex provision – especially in light of the legal definition of “sex”)				should consider safeguarding, privacy, toilets/changing facilities, dignity, supervision and cohort-specific requirements.
Sexual Orientation	☐	☒	☐	No specific differential impact has been identified at programme approval stage. Individual schemes should ensure provision is inclusive, safe and respectful for all pupils, and that school-level policies address bullying, harassment and belonging.
Others: carers, care leavers, homeless, social/ economic deprivation (consider shift-patterns, caring responsibilities)	☒	☐	☐	The programme is expected to have a positive impact for families and carers of children and young people with SEND by improving the availability of suitable local provision and potentially reducing the need for some children and young people to travel longer distances or attend provision outside Herefordshire. The programme may also positively affect children in care, care leavers and care-experienced young people where they have SEND. Improving local, suitable and inclusive provision supports stability, access to education and the council’s corporate parenting responsibilities. The SEND and AP Strategy identifies the importance of children and young people’s voices being heard, receiving the right help at the right time, and feeling valued, visible and included. Families affected by social or economic disadvantage may also benefit where local provision reduces travel burdens, improves access to support, or helps children remain connected to local schools and communities.
Health Inequalities (any preventable, unfair & unjust differences in health status between groups, populations or individuals that arise from unequal distribution of social, environmental & economic conditions)	☒	☐	☐	The programme is expected to have a positive impact on health inequalities where it improves access to suitable education, reduces travel demands, supports inclusion, and enables earlier intervention for children and young people with SEND. The Herefordshire SEND and AP Strategy recognises that improving timely support and assessment is important, including where children and young people have experienced delays in accessing services such as community therapies or speech and language therapy. The impact will depend on how individual schemes are developed. Scheme-level planning should consider accessibility, transport, emotional wellbeing, sensory needs, physical accessibility, outdoor space, and links with wider education, health and care support.

Where a negative impact on any of the equality groups is realised after the implementation of the activity, the activity lead will seek to minimise the impact and carry out a full review of this EIA.

6. Action planning

What actions will you take as a result of this impact assessment? (you will need to include actions to mitigate any potential negative impacts)

Potential negative impact	What action will be taken	Who will lead	Timeframe
Individual schemes may not fully meet the needs of the intended SEND cohort if accessibility, sensory needs, safeguarding, dignity, curriculum delivery, outdoor space or operational requirements are not considered early enough.	Each scheme will be subject to feasibility and design review, including consideration of accessibility, suitability, safeguarding, dignity, sensory needs, curriculum requirements, outdoor space, transport and operational deliverability. Education, SEND, property and school/trust representatives will be involved as appropriate.	Head of Educational Development, with Property Services, SEND service leads and school/trust representatives	At feasibility, design and business case stage for each scheme
Children, young people, families, existing pupils, staff or local communities may be affected by disruption, changes to provision, site works, travel arrangements or changes in site use.	Scheme-level delivery plans will include appropriate engagement or consultation, communication, safeguarding, health and safety, phasing, transport consideration and disruption management. Where statutory consultation, planning, school organisation processes, academy trust approval or further governance are required, these will be followed before implementation.	Head of Educational Development, Capital Programme Lead, school/trust leaders and Communications where required	As individual schemes are developed and before works or changes are implemented
Equality impacts may change as the programme develops because this is a programme-level EIA and individual schemes, sites and cohorts are not yet fully confirmed.	The EIA will be reviewed and updated as individual schemes are developed and more information becomes available about sites, cohorts, design, access, transport and operational arrangements. Scheme-specific equality considerations will be recorded where required, and any adverse impacts will be mitigated through feasibility, design, engagement, delivery and operational planning.	Head of Educational Development	Ongoing throughout programme delivery and before approval of significant individual schemes

7. Monitoring and review

How will you monitor these actions?

The equality impact of the programme will be monitored through education capital programme governance and scheme-level development processes.

As this is a programme-level EIA, it will be reviewed as individual schemes are developed and more information becomes available about sites, cohorts, design, accessibility, transport, operational arrangements and engagement feedback.

Equality considerations will be reviewed at key stages, including scheme identification, feasibility, design, engagement or consultation, procurement, delivery and implementation. Scheme-specific equality impacts will be recorded where required, and any adverse impacts will be mitigated through feasibility, design, engagement, delivery and operational planning.

The Head of Educational Development will be responsible for ensuring that equality considerations continue to be reviewed throughout programme delivery.

When will you review this EIA?

This EIA will be reviewed as individual schemes are developed, before approval of any significant scheme, where there is a material change to programme scope, or where an adverse equality impact is identified.

8. Equality Statement

- All public bodies have a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to give due regard to how they can improve society and promote equality in every aspect of their day-to-day business. This means that they must consider, and keep reviewing, how they are promoting equality in decision-making, policies, services, procurement, staff recruitment and management.
- Herefordshire Council will challenge discrimination, promote equality, respect human rights, and design and implement services, policies and measures that meet the diverse needs of our population, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others.

Signature of person completing EIA

Quentin Mee

Date signed

16/07/2026