



Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

1. Service Area/Directorate

Name of Head of Service for activity being assessed: Dawn Knight

Directorate: Children and Young People

Name of lead person for this activity: Dawn Knight

Individual(s) completing this assessment: Sandra Griffiths

Date assessment completed: 20/08/2026

2. What is being assessed

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

Commissioning and delivery of a Community Family Help service for children and families.

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

The proposal is to recommission the existing Early Help service as the Community Family Help Service, in line with the national Families First Partnership programme.

The service will provide earlier, coordinated whole-family support to children, young people and families who require a Family Help Assessment and multi-agency response. It will replace separate targeted early help and child in need pathways with a single Family Help offer, providing families with one assessment, one evolving plan and support coordinated by a named Family Help Lead Practitioner.

Support will be inclusive, accessible and responsive to individual and cultural needs. It will recognise the social, economic and health factors affecting family wellbeing and target resources proportionately towards families at greatest risk of poor outcomes.

Through coordinated partnership working, the service will seek to reduce inequalities in access, experience and outcomes, prevent needs escalating and reduce reliance on statutory intervention. Where appropriate, it will also support families to step down safely from children's social care intervention. This will provide continuity of support and enable families to build resilience, increase independence and achieve sustainable change.

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: |

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, e.g. demographic information, usage data, Census data, feedback, complaints, audits, research)

A priority within Herefordshire's County Plan (2024 to 2028) is to ensure that all children and young people have a great start in life and are healthy, safe, and inspired to be the best they can be.

To support this ambition, the Herefordshire Children and Young People Strategic Partnership's vision is for children and young people to:

- Feel included, valued, happy, healthy, and safe within their homes and communities.
- Have access to high-quality education, housing, sport, leisure, and play opportunities that support their physical, emotional, intellectual, and social development.
- Grow up in towns and villages that value children and young people and enable them to contribute to Herefordshire's future as a place where people want to live and work.

Herefordshire's Safeguarding Children Partnership promotes a ["Think Family" approach](#), recognising that a whole-system and community-wide response is required to ensure children and families receive the right support at the earliest opportunity, helping children to achieve positive outcomes and be well prepared for adulthood.

The national Families First Partnership (FFP) programme builds on this approach by reforming children's social care to provide earlier and more effective whole-family support, strengthen the use of family networks, and improve multi-agency child protection arrangements.

As part of this reform, children's services are moving towards a single and seamless Family Help model that brings together targeted early help and Child in Need support under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. The model aims to provide families with continuity of support through a single assessment, one evolving plan, and a named Family Help Lead Practitioner.

In line with the FFP programme, Herefordshire Council is establishing a single Family Help offer, replacing separate targeted early help and Child in Need pathways. Working with partners, Herefordshire Children's Services has developed a Family Help team of coordinators and family support workers who provide support to practitioners undertaking the Family Help Lead Practitioner role within universal and community settings.

The commissioned service forms part of this wider Family Help offer, providing practical family support to help families address emerging issues at an earlier stage, reduce the need for statutory intervention, and support children to remain safely within their family networks wherever possible.

The current contract expires on 31 March 2027, and a new provider will be identified through a competitive procurement process to deliver support to at least 180 families per year across Herefordshire.

Families accessing the service may experience a combination of disadvantage, including poverty, insecure housing, disability, poor health, caring responsibilities, domestic abuse, language barriers, digital exclusion and difficulties accessing services in rural areas. If support is not accessible or responsive to individual need, there is a risk that families may disengage, their needs may escalate and children may require statutory intervention.

The available evidence has informed requirements for accessible locations, flexible delivery, reasonable adjustments, interpreting and translation, alternative formats, culturally responsive practice and monitoring by protected characteristic, deprivation and rurality.

Given the rural nature of the county and the diverse needs of families accessing support, it is important that the future service is accessible, flexible and responsive to individual circumstances.

The service specification acknowledges the challenges of delivering a countywide service in a predominantly rural area. As part of the procurement process, providers will be required to set out how they will mitigate risks relating to accessibility, rurality, digital exclusion, language barriers and other barriers to engagement, ensuring support remains equitable and accessible to families across Herefordshire.

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

Extensive market engagement has been undertaken, which has included;

- A "Request for Information" issued via the council's electronic procurement portal, generated responses from eight providers
- An in-person market engagement / meet the buyer event was held in August; attended by six providers.

The information and feedback received from the engagement has supported the service specification.

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 equality Impact assessment identified potential barriers relating to rurality, transport, digital exclusion, disability, communication needs, cultural factors, caring responsibilities and the accessibility of service times and locations. Current service-level equality data and direct feedback from children and families are limited. These evidence gaps will be addressed through mobilisation planning and monitoring of access, experience and outcomes during the contract period.

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 procurement will include scored quality criteria on equality, diversity and inclusion, including reducing barriers to access, reasonable adjustments, culturally competent practice, and evidence of reducing disproportionality in outcomes.

Contract KPIs will include monitoring of access, experience and outcomes by protected characteristic, deprivation and rurality.

Although this decision may have a negative impact, we plan to mitigate this by:

- Providing flexible, countywide support, including community and home-based delivery where appropriate.
- Making reasonable adjustments and providing accessible information, interpreting and translation.
- Monitoring access, experience and outcomes, with action taken where inequalities are identified.

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 service will be for all families with children up to 18 years old. In acknowledging that young people may disengage if the support is too parent-focused, the support will be tailored to meet the whole family's needs, including using youth-friendly engagement methods.
Disability (consider attitudinal, physical, financial and social barriers, neurodiversity, learning disability, physical and sensory impairment)	☒	☐	☐	The service specification will set out the requirements around service access, and this will ensure services are delivered in locations that are accessible for disabled people and that respect privacy and confidentiality. The service will also be required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure the support follows neurodiverse- friendly practice and information is available in an easy read format.
Gender Reassignment (include gender identity, and consider privacy of data and harassment)	☐	☒	☐	Staff will be trained to work with trans people, and the issues that may affect them and their family.
Marriage & Civil Partnerships	☐	☒	☐	Provider will be expected to tailor interventions and both respect marriage and civil partnerships, and factor these into the person-centred support they deliver.
Pregnancy & Maternity (consider working arrangements, part-time working, infant caring responsibilities)	☐	☒	☐	Provider will be expected to deliver a tailored approach and ensure they offer flexibility around timing of meetings and or support. This includes ensuring any appointments or visits do not coincide with any medical appointments.
Race (including Travelling Communities and people of other nationalities)	☐	☒	☐	The provider will be required to ensure that it has effective and timely access to interpreting and translation services in order to meet the communication needs of those whose first language is not English. Provider will be expected to tailor interventions and both respect cultural diversity and factor these into the person-centred support they deliver.
Religion & Belief	☐	☒	☐	Provider will be expected to tailor interventions and both respect religion and belief, and factor these into the person-centred support they deliver. This includes ensuring meetings and or support being delivered are scheduled not to clash with any religious observations.
Sex (consider issues of safety, sexual violence, part-time work, and single-sex provision)	☐	☒	☐	In recognising some parents may be survivors of sexual and or domestic abuse, the provider will be required to deliver person-centred support that

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale
– especially in light of the legal definition of “sex”)				includes offering a choice of practitioner wherever possible.
Sexual Orientation	☐	☒	☐	Provider will be expected to tailor interventions and both respect sexual orientation and factor these into the person-centred support they deliver. The provider will be required to use inclusive language and have clear escalation routes for complaints.
Others: carers, care leavers, homeless, social/ economic deprivation (consider shift-patterns, caring responsibilities)	☒	☐	☐	This Family Help Service provides targeted support to vulnerable children and their families with complex needs requiring a Family Help Assessment (FHA), and multi-agency response. The service will focus on housing related support and family mediation. Tailored support packages, with an understanding of the housing market, will be developed to assist people supported in the community to maintain or secure suitable accommodation. Following referral (in the form of a Family Help Assessment) by the Council, the Provider will be required to ensure all families supported receive face to face support in line with the outcomes defined by the FHA and Families First Programme. This support aims to enable them to thrive, and build their resilience by providing effective, whole family support to prevent escalation into statutory services. Whilst the service is envisaged to offer staff cover as a minimum standard, between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, to enable people to access the service there must be flexibility to operate outside of these hours throughout Herefordshire including where required weekend, Family morning and/or evening delivery. The provider shall ensure that it is sensitive to each person’s needs and facilitate access to information in alternative formats as appropriate. The provider will ensure that written information about their services and how to obtain them is readily available.
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 challenge for Herefordshire Council and partner organisations as corporate parents is to maximise the potential of children and young people and give them all the best start in life. As reported in Growing up - Understanding Herefordshire, Herefordshire is home to around 33,800 young people aged under 18. Generally, Herefordshire is a good place to grow up: children here are happy and generally get a good education. However, this does not necessarily translate into social mobility, and growing up in one of England’s most rural counties presents issues of its own, including around physical access to services and consistently poor oral health compared to the rest of England. In addition, there is significant and persistent inequality and while, overall, child poverty is lower in Herefordshire than nationally, it is much higher in some areas of the county than others.

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale

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
Rural families may experience transport, digital or geographical barriers to accessing support.	Require a countywide delivery model, including community-based, home-based and blended support where appropriate. Monitor access and outcomes by locality and rurality.	Commissioning lead/provider	Before contract award, then quarterly
Children and young people may disengage if support is overly parent focused.	Require direct engagement with children and young people, age-appropriate communication and evidence that their views influence the family plan.	Provider	From mobilisation and throughout delivery
Disabled and neurodivergent family members may encounter communication, sensory, physical or procedural barriers.	Require individual accessibility planning, reasonable adjustments, alternative formats and monitoring of adjustment requests and outcomes.	Provider	From referral onwards
Families accessing the service may experience a combination of disadvantage, including poverty, insecure housing, disability, poor health, caring responsibilities, domestic abuse, language barriers, digital exclusion and difficulties accessing services in rural areas.	Require support to be accessible or responsive to individual need,	Provider	From referral onwards

7. Monitoring and review

How will you monitor these actions?

Contract monitoring will be undertaken at least every quarter, to ensure the contracted provider is compliant with all aspects of the relevant service specification. However, if parents, children or professionals raise any concerns, meetings will be convened outside of the contract monitor schedule. The contracted service provider will be required to regularly submit data on the service performance, which will form the main focus of the six monthly (minimum) monitoring meetings.

When will you review this EIA?

This EIA should be revisited regularly throughout the development, implementation and monitoring of the service.

An earlier review will be undertaken where monitoring identifies unequal access, experience or outcomes, or where complaints, service-user feedback or a material change to the service indicates a potential equality impact.

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

S Griffiths

Date signed

20/08/2026