Equalities Impact Assessment – Fastershire Broadband
Stage 3 Lot 2, 3 and 4

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1.   The Equality Duty and Key Impacts Areas

An equalities impact assessment is one tool that assists decision makers to comply with the public sector equality duty (PSED) set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The duty relates to different groups who share any of the "protected characteristics" of age, sex, pregnancy and maternity, disability, race, marriage and civil partnership, religion or belief, sexual orientation.

The Equality Act outlines that due regard involves:
▪ Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
▪ Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people.
▪ Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The equalities impact assessment will focus on the following characteristics where there will be the highest likely impact specifically relating to the risk of creating digital exclusion.

Age – older people are less likely to use the internet and less likely to have the skills set required to use the internet; young people's increasing requirement to use e-learning tools
Disability – disabled people less likely to use the internet
Rural – higher cost to deploy fibre broadband to rural areas leading to limited investment by commercial providers
Low income - cost of monthly subscription and connection charge a barrier to take up.

Geography in terms of rural isolation is not a protected characteristic, but is considered here due to the sparse spread of the population of Herefordshire; and low income due to Herefordshire's lower than average wage levels.

2.   Profile of the project

Fastershire is the project established by a partnership between Gloucestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council to overcome the market's failure to provide High Speed Broadband in hard to reach areas of both counties. It uses funding from central and local government to match private investment to create a fibre broadband network. BT won a contract in 2012 to provide the fibre network to reach 78% of premises in the eligible area of Herefordshire (eligible areas are those that a commercial provider has indicated they would not deploy to using their own investment). That

contract comes to an end in 2016 and the project is procuring for further stages to reach premises not included in the current deployment.

Fundamentally, Fastershire also aims to improve opportunities for citizens across the two counties to make use of digital connectivity whether supporting education and learning, accessing services, enhancing employment opportunities, supporting preventative health or addressing well-being by tackling isolation. Broadband connectivity also has a key role in the sustainability of rural communities by helping rurally based businesses to be viable and competitive as well as ensuring people living in rural communities have access to the same broadband services as those in more populated areas.

3.   Age Protected Characteristic

The office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes mid-year population estimates each summer (the 2014 figures released in June 2015). Based on this data the current estimate of the county's resident population is 187,200 – an increase of 1,100 people (0.6%) since mid-2013 figures were published.

As well as current population numbers it is worth considering long term age profile when planning service change. The table shows how numbers of people in three broad age groups are expected to change up to 2031:

Number and percentage of people in particular age groups

	Mid-year estimates		
	2001	**2014**	**2031**
0-15	34,000	31,400	32,700
	19.4%	16.9%	16.1%
16-29	23,500	28,200	26,100
	13,4%	15.1%	12.8%
30-44	36,700	31,400	33,600
	21%	16%	16.5%
45-64	47,000	52,700	49,300
	26.9%	28.2%	24.2%
65-84	29,700	37,300	50,300
	17%	19.9%	24.7%
85+	4,000	5,900	11,600
	2.3%	3.2%	5.7%
Total population	174,900	187,200	203,600)

Office for National Statistics mid-year estimates; 2011-based forecasts

Hereford City has a much younger profile, with relatively high proportion of young adults. Rural village and dispersed areas have relatively more people of older working and early retirement age. The market towns and other areas (which include larger villages) have a profile more similar to the county overall but with a relatively high proportion of elderly people. 60% of people aged 65+ and 54% of people aged 85+ live in rural areas. Kington is slightly different to the other towns with a lower proportion of 30-44 year olds but slightly higher 16-29 year olds.

Issue for Fastershire
- Older people are less likely to use the internet (see later)
- Increasingly education and learning opportunities are on-line affecting people of all ages but particularly those in education and training

4.   Disability Protected Characteristic

This characteristic is based on a person if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

For the 2011 census 18.7% of people said they had some form of limiting long term health problem or disability - this is similar to the national percentage and the 2001 census.

Limiting long term health problem or disability (2011 census)

Persons	Herefordshire number	Herefordshire %	England and Wales %
All residents	183,477	100	100
People whose day to day activities are limited	34,364	18.7	17.9
People who consider their health to be bad	9,592	5.2	5.6
People who provide unpaid care	20,676	11.3	10.3
People whose day to day activities are:			
limited a lot	15,370	8.4	8.5
limited a little	18,994	10.4	9.4
not limited	149,113	81.3	82.1
People aged 16 to 64 whose day to day activities are:			
limited a lot	5,957	3.2	3.7
limited a little	8,398	4.6	4.7
not limited	98,591	53.7	56.3
Health:			
Very good health	83,874	45.7	47.1
Good health	64,494	35.2	34.1
Fair health	25,517	13.9	13.2
Bad health	7,441	4.1	4.3
Very bad health	2,151	1.2	1.3

It is also worth noting the level of unpaid care in the county. In March 2016, Herefordshire Carers' Support (HCS) had 4,993 carers registered, made up of 3,708 adult carers, 910 parent carers, 30 young adult carers and 345 young carers.

In the county approximately 2,400 people are in receipt of long term support from adults social care at any one time, 1,600 of who are supported in some way to live in their homes (the remaining 800 in permanent residential placements).

In terms of mental health, based on a report produced by Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (HCCG)[1], there were 1,403 children and young people presenting with mental health needs (under-18's in January 2013); and around 6,400 adults with long-term mental health problems across Herefordshire in the 2012/13 survey results. HCCG state average prevalence is 4.29%, slightly

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[1] Herefordshire Mental Health Needs Assessment, 2014

less than the national figure of 4.5%. Also, to note 12% of all deaths in Herefordshire have a mental health related diagnosis as a cause.

Issues for Fastershire:
- Disabled people less likely to use the internet (see later)
- Internet use / digital technologies have the potential to support access to health advice and services
- Digital social media is a tool to combat isolation, including for carers.

5.   Low income profile of Herefordshire

Low income is not a defined protected characteristic, but considered as part of this impact study as linked to the cost of internet connection and low income.

According to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) in 2015, the median weekly earnings for people who work in Herefordshire were £421.90, lower than those in the West Midlands region of £493.10 and England at £532.40.

At the time of the 2011 census the unemployment rate (as a proportion of those aged 16-64) unemployment in the county was 4% - lower than across England (6%) and the West Midlands (7%).

An estimated 260 Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) young people are not in training or economically active were known to the local authority in 2015. This equates to 4.5% of all 16-18 year olds resident in the county. The 2015 figures has risen slightly in 2016 to 266 young people, but has seen a decrease in previous years.

In Herefordshire 4,300 children (14%) under the age of 16 live in income deprived households. There are ten areas of the county where more than one out of every four children live in income deprivation – six of these areas fall in the most deprived in England, specific areas are in Leominster and South Hereford wards[2].

Another measure of low income is the number of free school meals (FSM) awarded – this is based on parents receiving a qualified welfare benefit. For Herefordshire one in ten children and young people have FSM compared to one in four in the UK. Also, Herefordshire has also seen an increase in the percentage of households experiencing fuel poverty (from 14.5% in 2011 to 16.4% in 2012) which is higher than the West Midlands and England[3].

Residents eligible for housing benefit at the current time is 13,000 – though this figure will flex up and down dependent on people's circumstances.

Issues for Fastershire:
- Some people will not be able to afford the internet connection so could lose out on the opportunities and services available digitally.
- Public subsidy is used to enable fibre broadband delivery across the county as the commercial providers will not use their own investment due to limited return.

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[2] Understanding Herefordshire, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2016
[3] Understanding Herefordshire, 2015

6.   Geography profile of Herefordshire

The following tables show the population spread across the county and age profile in different areas.

Population spread

Area	Mid-year estimates 2014	% of population 2014
Hereford (urban city and town)	60,000	32.1
Leominster (urban city and town)	11,900	6.4
Ross on Wye (urban city and town)	10,900	5.8
Ledbury (rural town and fringe)	9,800	5.2
Bromyard (rural town and fringe)	4,600	2.5
Kington (rural town and fringe in a sparse setting)	3,400	1.8
Other urban or town and fringe (e.g. Holmer, Credenhill)	7,200	3.8
Rural village and dispersed	79,400	42.4

Population of particular age living in different types of areas, mid -2014

Type of area	All ages %	Ages 65-84 %	Age 85+ %
Urban city and town (Hereford, Leominster and Ross)	47	39	46
Rural – town and fringe (Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Credenhill, Clehonger)	11	11	15
Rural – village and dispersed	42	30	39
Herefordshire county	100	100	100

Office of National Statistics. Figures rounded to the nearest 100; change calculated based on rounded figures.

Another factor to consider is the availability of own transport – from the 2011 census 25.6% of households had no car or van.

In terms of geography the index of multiple deprivation[4] is a combined measure of the individual determinants of health and quality of life that can be viewed at a ward level. The county has affluent areas where residents enjoy good health and wellbeing outcomes, alongside areas which rank amongst the most deprived in England where residents have significantly poorer outcomes.

Based on the terminology and definition the most "deprived" areas of the county are in Hereford city and the market towns of Leominster, Ross-on-Wye and for the first time Bromyard. There are currently 12 LSOAs[5] in the county that are in the 25% most deprived nationally; four more than there were in 2010 - 'Leominster - Gateway', 'Hereford City centre', 'Courtyard' and 'Bromyard Central'. 'Golden Post - Newton Farm' remains the most deprived area in the county – the only LSOA[1] to be in the 10% most deprived nationally. The least deprived areas are in Hereford city and the surrounding rural area, Ross-on-Wye, and Ledbury.

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[4] The Indices of Deprivation 2015 provide a set of relative measures of deprivation across England, based on seven different domains of deprivation - (i) income; (ii) employment; (iii) education, skills & training; (iv) health & disability; (v) crime; (vi) barriers to housing and services and (vii) living environment

[5] LSOA refers to Local Super Output Area, representing a geographical area with a minimum size of 5000 residents and 2000 households, or an average population size of around 7,500. LSOAs improve the reporting of small area statistics.

Issues for Fastershire:

- A high percentage of older people who would benefit from being internet connected live in rural parts of the county
- People in rural and sparse areas, especially without a car, would benefit from accessing services electronically and eliminate the need to travel to sites and centres at a cost of time and money
- High areas of deprivation are based primarily in high population areas, which is easier and cheaper to deploy fibre due to the customer reach being closer to the structure

7. Profile of Digital Use

There is significant evidence to indicate that more people are using the internet:

- Since 2015, the number of disabled adults who had used the internet in the last 3 months has increased by 6.8% to 8.6 million in 2016
- 89.4% of men (22.8 million) and 86.4% of women (23.1 million) were recent internet users, up from 87.9% and 84.6% in 2015
- Women aged 75 and over, had seen the largest rise in recent internet use in 2016, up 169% from 2011
- 25% of disabled adults had never used the internet in 2016, down from 27.4% in 2015
- Economically inactive adults who had never used the internet or who used the internet more than 3 months ago has decreased by 13.3% since 2011.

However, there is evidence of barriers to use. In 2015, 86% of households (22.5 million) had an internet connection. This was up from 84% in 2014 and 57% in 2006. Of the 3.7 million households with no internet access, 53% of households reported that they didn't need it. 31% said they did not have the internet in their household due to a lack of computer skills.

Reasons for households not having internet access, 2015

	%
Don't need internet (not useful, not interesting, etc.)	53
Lack of skills	31
Equipment costs too high	14
Access costs too high (telephone, broadband subscription)	12
Have access to the internet elsewhere	7
Privacy or security concerns	5
Physical or sensorial disability	5
Other reason	14

Internet Access - Households and Individuals 2015, Office for National Statistics, 6 August 2015
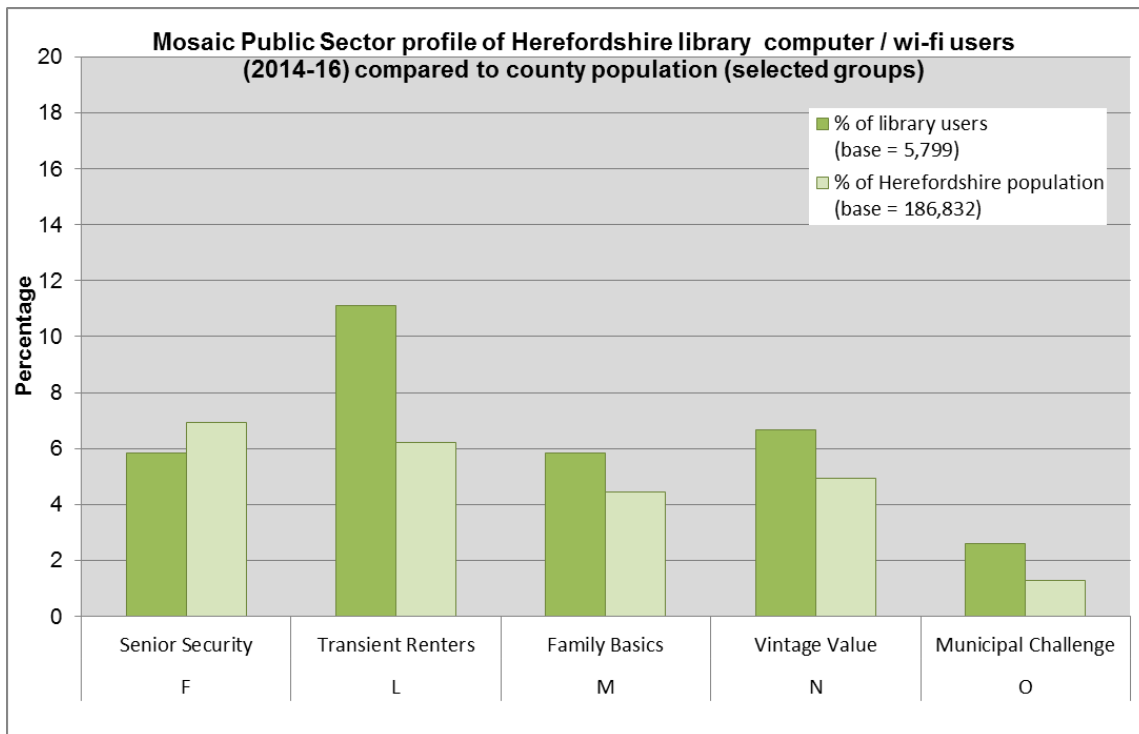
There are two key sources of data that give an understanding of who is not using the internet.

Mosaic Public Sector is a customer segmentation tool that classifies households and postcodes into one of 15 groups based on the *likelihoods* of the people living in them to have particular characteristics. It is unlikely that a household in a particular group will have every characteristic typical to that group, but it gives additional insight into likely preference and behaviours that are not available elsewhere. The mosaic profiling also illustrates the demographic groups considered less likely to use the internet in the county. This is illustrated below:

	Herefordshire Households no.	Herefordshire %	UK households %
N: Vintage value	4,300	5.2%	6.8%
M: Family basics	4,000	4.8%	7.2%
O: Municipal challenge	1,500	1.8%	6.5%
F: Senior security	6,400	7.7%	8.5%
Total	16,200	19.4%	29.0%

In total, these groups comprise 16,200 Herefordshire households – a fifth of all households in the county (19.3%). This is relatively low by national comparison: 29% of UK households are in one of these four groups. With the exception of "senior security" the groups represent those expected to be on lower income equating to 9,800 households.

Also using the Mosaic profiling the table below illustrates people who users of the free to use public access computers and wifi in the county's libraries. This is an indication of people who are interested in computer / internet use, but may not have the resources for their own connection and equipment.

The **Office of National Statistics** (ONS) study of internet use found in 2015 87.9% of adults have used the internet in the last 3 months, over three quarters of adults in Great Britain used the internet every day, or almost every day (78%, 23.1 million); and 66% of adults had accessed the internet using a mobile phone[6].

Herefordshire's use levels are slightly below the overall UK percentage as the table below shows and compares to other areas in the West Midlands.

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[6] Internet Access – Households and Individuals 2015, Office for National Statistics, 6 August 2015

Percentage of recent and lapsed internet users/internet non-users, by geographical location

	Ever used %	Never used %
	2016	**2016**
UK (*persons aged 16 years and over*)	87.9	12.0
West Midlands	85.7	14.1
County of Herefordshire	**82.2**	**17.8**
Worcestershire	87.3	12.4
Warwickshire	90.8	9.0
Telford and Wrekin	93.6	6.4
Shropshire CC	82.7	17.3
Stoke-on-Trent	87.7	12.3
Staffordshire CC	83.1	16.8
Birmingham	87.3	12.3
Solihull	82.2	17.8
Coventry	89.5	10.5
Dudley and Sandwell	82.5	17.3
Walsall and Wolverhampton	82.1	17.8

Internet Users 2016, Office for National Statistics, 20 May 2016

The research also shows that certain protected characteristics are less likely to use the internet. This is particularly based on age – whilst almost all adults 16-44 years have used the internet recently (in the last three months), older aged people have consistently shown the lowest rates of use with only 4 in 10 adults over the age of 75 using the internet regularly (this corresponds with the Mosaic Public Sector findings).

Also difference in use between genders is higher in older age. Though there is little difference in the rates of internet use between men and women in all age groups under 65 years of age - though the largest rise in recent internet use are women aged 75 and over.

Recent and lapsed internet users and internet non-users, by age group and sex

Age	2016	Used in the last 3 months %	Not-used over 3 months %	Never used
All*	Men	89.4	1.7	8.7
	Women	86.4	1.9	11.6
16-24	Men	99.0	0.2	0.4
	Women	99.4	0.2	0.2
25-34	Men	98.8	0.5	0.4
	Women	99.1	0.4	0.4
35-44	Men	98.1	0.6	1.1
	Women	98.3	0.4	1.2
45-54	Men	95.0	1.5	3.3
	Women	94.9	1.2	3.7
55-64	Men	88.2	2.6	9.1
	Women	88.3	2.7	8.8
65-74	Men	75.8	4.1	20.0
	Women	72.5	4.6	22.8
75+	Men	46.7	4.5	48.8
	Women	32.6	5.0	62.2

*Internet Users 2016, Office for National Statistics, 20 May 2016 - Persons aged 16 years and over

Recent internet use increased for economic inactive and retired adults - retired category of economic activity has increased by 19.1% since 2011, followed by the economically inactive category increasing by 13.5%.

Disabled people are less likely to use the internet with a quarter of disabled adults having never used the internet (2016). There were 0.5 million disabled adults who had last used the internet over 3 months ago. In 2016, 97.3% of disabled adults aged 16 to 24 years were recent internet users, compared with 99.4% who were not disabled. Of disabled adults aged 75 years and over, 30.8% were recent internet users, compared with 48.1% who were not disabled.

Additionally in recent consultation relating to changes in services for Customer Services and Libraries, users were asked what is important in terms of use of customer services and library – 37% said free wifi and public access to PCs. Users when asked what else would you like to be able to use or do 33% of respondents stated IT courses including internet training (third most important behind courses and classes and information advice and signposting).

Also respondents who attend a library or customer service centre very regularly are more likely to do the following tasks compared to those using it less frequently:
- Use the public access computers
- Use the Wi-Fi
- Pay a bill or access a council service
- Research

As regards non-users of Customer Services and Libraries 74% knew about computers at the libraries but didn't need them, with 62% knowing about the wifi but again did not need to use it. Focus group feedback suggests people would use the PCs for job seeking if available.

8.   Summary and recommendations

This equalities impact assessment evaluates the potential affects of service change on the protected characteristics. A person could face a combination of characteristics which would have an escalating effect, as well as characteristics affecting people at different stages of their lives. In terms of internet use combined factors are based on older age, older age women, low income and disability.

Also connectivity to fibre is not the only barrier to use, with training, awareness and fear over safety also barriers.

Recommendations

Barrier to use: access to infrastructure as some people remain unable to access faster fibre broadband speeds.
Recommendation - continue with the roll out of fibre broadband to all households that need it to ensure equal access of availability.

Barrier to use: older age people are not as familiar with the technology as younger people who have grown up with accessing digital services.
Recommendation - encourage take up by older people through courses and classes, including as a social activity and promote the advantages of connectivity.

Barrier to use by cost: the monthly subscription and IT hardware is a barrier for people to be able to connect to the internet.
Recommendation: that free wifi continues to be available including in the network of libraries where the free to use public access PCs and wifi is available.

Barrier to accessing services: as more services are available on-line access to the council's offer is easy to use.
Recommendation: that services provided by the council are easy to access and navigate on the local authority webpages.

Barriers to take up: that people are encouraged to take advantage of the investment made in the broadband network to sustain communities in rural areas and to support individuals with finance, employment opportunities, education and training and accessing services.
Communities: self-run community schemes operate with support (financial and advice) from the local authority to encourage take up across age and ability range.