



Norfolk County Council

Children's Services budget proposals 2019 - 2020

Equality and rural assessments – findings and recommendations

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This assessment helps you to consider the impact of service changes on people with protected characteristics and in rural areas. The assessment can be updated at any time to inform service planning and commissioning.

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The purpose of equality and rural assessments

1. The purpose of equality and rural assessments is to enable elected members to consider the potential impact of decisions on different people and communities prior to decisions being taken. Mitigating actions can be developed if detrimental impact is identified.
2. It is not always possible to adopt the course of action that will best promote the needs of people with protected characteristics or people in rural areas. However, assessments enable informed decisions to be made, that take into account every opportunity to minimise disadvantage.

The Legal context

3. Public authorities have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to consider the implications of proposals on people with protected characteristics. The Act states that public bodies must pay due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act¹;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic² and people who do not share it³;
 - Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it⁴.
4. The full Act is available [here](#).

The assessment process

5. This assessment comprises three phases:
 - **Phase 1** – evidence is gathered on the proposal, to examine who might be affected and how. This includes reviewing the findings of related assessments and public consultation, contextual information about local populations and other relevant data. Where appropriate, public consultation takes place.
 - **Phase 2** – the results are analysed. The assessments are drafted, making sure that any potential impacts are fully assessed. If the evidence indicates that a proposal may have a detrimental impact on people with protected characteristics or in rural communities, mitigating actions are considered.
 - **Phase 3** – the findings are reported to service committees, to enable any impacts to be taken into account before a decision is made.

Children's Services 2019-2020 budget proposals

6. Children's Services Committee has put forward four budget proposals for 2019-2020:

	Title of proposal	Description
1.	More effective and efficient commissioning of mental health assessments	A review of our approach to the commissioning of mental health assessments has been undertaken and a more efficient approach has been identified. A change to practice that embeds assessment as part of the overall therapeutic care package with increasing collaboration between providers, resulting in better trained and supported staff, whilst reducing duplication. The proposal does not seek to reduce the amount of mental health assessments or treatment undertaken. Cost efficiencies will be delivered compared to the costs of commissioning separately for the assessment and the care provision, releasing financial resources for other purposes.
2.	Cost efficiencies delivered by strategic partnership and joint commissioning with Mental Health Services	By more effective coordination and partnership it will be possible to reduce management costs. A Strategic Partnership with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) has been established and are developing a more aligned and integrated care model. The joint commissioning and partnership working will look to identify shared cost efficiencies that have no negative impact upon services delivered; thus, releasing Council resources through avoiding unnecessary management costs.
3.	Move to best practice model of parenting assessments	Having reviewed best practice, it is proposed that the model of parenting assessments within care proceedings is amended. Practice reviewed elsewhere shows that not only will this achieve better outcomes, but there will also be cost efficiencies delivered. A new model will be developed that allows assessments to take place in community or family home settings, as opposed to always in specialist residential and overnight settings currently utilised. The new service model will deliver assessments within more natural contexts, providing a better way of assessing capacity, whilst offering a more positive experience for families. This model will reflect current best practice, whilst also being more cost effective by avoiding the cost of residential accommodation.
4.	Norfolk Futures Safer Children and Resilient Families Programme: Better outcomes for children and young people and reducing demand for services	<p>The Norfolk Futures Safe Children and Resilient Families programme is being developed with the aim of reducing the number of children that are having to be in care and to change the mix of care placements.</p> <p>Analysis of existing placement expenditure shows a comparatively high proportion of children placed in residential or other high costs care provision.</p> <p>The new provision includes an investment in semi-</p>

Title of proposal	Description
	<p>independent care for 16 and 17-year olds, the expansion of the in-house fostering service, the development of an enhanced fostering model for children and young people with more complex needs and the expansion of our boarding school placement model.</p> <p>We are also working to transform the system of safeguarding services such that it builds the resilience of families, intervenes earlier, provides intensive and effective interventions for families at the edge of care and supports children to return home from care wherever this is possible.</p> <p>In the short term we have a targeted focus on supporting children to return home from care safely and are changing the way we use resource panels to put interventions in place earlier and support families before they reach the point of crisis.</p> <p>In the medium term our strategic investments include moving capacity 'upstream' in an enhanced Front Door model and new edge of care services, enhancing the early help offer and we are making changes to the social work model to free up capacity for teams to do the direct work which can help families to address risks and avert the needs for children to come into care.</p> <p>The new service models that are being developed and implemented will achieve positive outcomes for children and families and reduced demand for services; ensuring that the right support is in the right place at the right time.</p>

Who is affected?

7. The proposals will affect children and young people and their families in Norfolk, including those with protected characteristics and in rural areas; it will also affect staff:

People of all ages	YES
Disability (all disabilities and long-term health conditions, including but not limited to people with, for example, reduced mobility; Blind and visually impaired people; Deaf and hearing-impaired people; people with mental health issues; people who are neurodiverse (e.g. on the Autism spectrum); people with learning difficulties and people with dementia).	YES
Gender reassignment (e.g. people who identify as transgender)	YES
Marriage/civil partnerships	YES

Pregnancy & Maternity	YES
Race (different ethnic groups, including Gypsies and Travellers)	YES
Religion/belief (different faiths, including people with no religion or belief)	YES
Sex (i.e. men/women/intersex)	YES
Sexual orientation (e.g. lesbian, gay and bisexual people)	YES

Potential impact

8. Overall, as in previous years, Children's Services budget proposals for 2018/19 will impact on children and families – which is inevitable, because children and families constitute the majority of service users.
9. However, there is no evidence at this stage to indicate that these proposals will have any detrimental impact on children and families, or families in rural areas. The reasons why are explained below.

	Title of proposal	Impact
1.	More effective and efficient commissioning of mental health assessments	There is no evidence to indicate that this proposal would have any detrimental impact on people with protected characteristics or in rural areas. This is because no changes are proposed to assessment processes, eligibility of needs, service standards, quality or delivery.
2.	Cost efficiencies delivered by strategic partnership and joint commissioning with Mental Health Services	There is no evidence to indicate that this proposal would have any detrimental impact on people with protected characteristics or in rural areas. This is because no changes are proposed to assessment processes, eligibility of needs, service standards, quality or delivery.
3.	Move to best practice model of parenting assessments	<p>There is no evidence to indicate that this proposal would have any detrimental impact on children or families with protected characteristics or in rural areas. This is because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal seeks to strengthen and develop the current service model. It is intended to implement a new approach which is fair and transparent for all children and families to ensure equitable and consistent parenting assessments. • The proposal may lead to some changes in how assessments are delivered, or who delivers them, but these are not anticipated to have any significant impact on service users. This means that service users, including service users from rural areas, will not experience any changes in the quality or standards of the services they currently receive or be disadvantaged. They will continue to receive support relative to their needs. No changes are proposed to the

	Title of proposal	Impact
		<p>assessment process or eligibility of needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal will not lead to new or increased costs for service users. The provision for assessments to take place in community or family home settings, as opposed to always in specialist residential and overnight settings may reduce the amount of travel that a family has to undertake, saving on time as well as financially. This may be of particular benefit to disabled children and parents who may find travel more difficult. • The principles guiding design and delivery of the proposal will be child and family centred, which prioritises the independence, dignity and safety of children and families, and draws directly on the voices of children and their families to guide service design. • Opportunities for building greater levels of accessibility for disabled children and families into the design of services will be considered as part of the commissioning process.
4.	Norfolk Futures Safer Children and Resilient Families Programme: Better outcomes for children and young people and reducing demand for services	<p>There is no evidence to indicate that this proposal would have any detrimental impact on children or families with protected characteristics or in rural areas. This is because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal seeks to achieve better outcomes for children and young people and reduce demand for services. • The proposal may lead to some changes in how services are delivered, or who delivers them, but these are not anticipated to have any significant impact on service users. This means that service users, including service users from rural areas, will not experience any changes in the quality or standards of the services they currently receive or be disadvantaged. They will continue to receive support relative to their needs. No changes are proposed to the assessment process or eligibility of needs. • The proposal will not lead to new or increased costs for service users. • The principles guiding design and delivery of the proposal will be child and family centred, which prioritises the independence, dignity and safety of children and families, and draws directly on the voices of children and their families to guide service design. • Opportunities for building greater levels of accessibility for disabled children and families into the design of services will be considered as part of the commissioning process.

Accessibility considerations

10. Accessibility is a priority for Norfolk County Council. Norfolk has a higher than average number of disabled and older residents compared to other areas of the UK, and a growing number of disabled young people.
11. Proposals relating to business process re-engineering will take full opportunity to build accessibility considerations into service planning and design.
12. Proposals relating to contract review will also take full opportunity to build accessibility considerations into service design.

Human rights implications

13. Public authorities in the UK are required to act compatibly with the Human Rights Act 1998. There are no human rights issues arising from the proposals.

Recommended actions

	Action	Lead	Date
1.	If the proposals go ahead, monitor implementation, and, in the unlikely event that during implementation any equality impacts emerge, report these to Children's Services Committee for consideration.	Executive Director for Children's Services	From 1 April 2019
2.	HR Shared Service to continue to monitor whether staff with protected characteristics are disproportionately represented in redundancy or redeployment figures, and if so, take appropriate action.	Senior HR Consultant (Workforce Insight)	From 1 April 2019

¹ Prohibited conduct:

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have, or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a condition, rule, policy or practice in your organisation that applies to everyone disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

Harassment is "unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual".

Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

2 The protected characteristics are:

Age – e.g. a person belonging to a particular age or a range of ages (for example 18 to 30 year olds).

Disability - a person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender reassignment - the process of transitioning from one gender to another.

Marriage and civil partnership

Pregnancy and maternity

Race - refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Religion and belief - has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (such as Atheism).

Sex - a man or a woman.

Sexual orientation - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

3 The Act specifies that having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity might mean:

- Removing or minimizing disadvantages suffered by people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of others;
- Encouraging people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.

4 Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between people and communities involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to (a) tackle prejudice, and (b) promote understanding.