

Equality Impact Assessment

Relating to: Growing Great Futures – Gloucestershire parent led opportunities (GPLO)

Date: April 2012

Introduction

This Impact Assessment supports the County Council in meeting its legal obligations under the **Public Sector Equality Duty**, now contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Duty ensures that public bodies have due regard to the statutory needs referred to in section 149 when exercising their functions.

Section 149 provides that in exercising its functions an authority must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and others who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and others who do not share it involves having due regard (in particular) to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it; and
- encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it involves having due regard (in particular) to the need to tackle prejudice and to promote understanding.

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled person's disabilities.

Compliance with the duties in section 149 may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but not if that would itself involve conduct which is made unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

The protected characteristics to which the duty applies are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, also marriage and civil partnership but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

Having **due regard to** means consciously thinking about the statutory needs as part of the process of decision making, when the proposals are still at a formative stage, and before a decision is reached. This means that consideration of those equality issues must influence the decisions reached by public bodies. The Equality Duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind.

Indirect discrimination occurs where a condition criterion or practice is applied which would put people with one of the protected characteristics at a disadvantage, and the imposition of that condition, criterion or practice is not a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, i.e. it cannot be objectively justified.

It is important to understand and consider how different people will be affected by the decisions the Council makes, so that policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people's needs.

This assessment will help you think about the potential impact your proposals will have on all sections of the community. Recognising these impacts early on in the process of developing policies will assist good decision making and ensure that the County Council delivers services appropriate to people's needs. Remember that the Equality Duty involves having due regard to the needs to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, as well as to eliminate discrimination and other conduct which is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

1. Person responsible for undertaking this assessment:

Name: Lin Sergeant	Telephone: 01452 426917
Service: Commissioning Team	E-mail: lin.sergeant@gloucestershire.gov.uk

2. Name and brief description of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function: (indicate whether new or revised)

Growing Great Futures – Gloucestershire parent led opportunities (GPLO) is a **new** service which would be commissioned to a suitable provider following appropriate procurement guidance. The potential provider would be contracted to run the service for two years from October 2012 to September 2014

It follows Sure Start Statutory Guidance for children's centres that local authorities must ensure that children's centre' service development decisions are guided by Partnership Advisory Board and that membership should include parents and prospective parents. In addition the DFE published 'Supporting Families in the Foundation Years' in 2011, bringing together Government thinking about early intervention. Section 4 puts Parents and families at the heart of services believing that parents and families should be able to shape services and that families and communities should have a strong voice in the running of children's centres.

The contract would provide support to help parents become more involved in the running of children's centre services, under a two-year contract with an extra £100,000 in the first year and £50,000 in the second year.

3. Briefly describe its aims and expected outcomes

This service aims to provide a county-wide provision which would:

- Support parents to take responsibility for the development and the delivery of their children's centre services and local community early years services.
- Support the early year's workforce to support parents to take responsibility for the development and the delivery of their children's centre services and local community early years services.

4. Describe how this policy will impact on the Council's duty to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

Identify what particular groups of people will be affected by this policy.

The purpose of the service would impact positively on the Council's duty in all three areas. The service would affect, specifically two groups:

- Parents and carers of young children
- Early Years workforce

The successful provider would ensure that parents are enabled to shape, design and develop services which meet the needs of families with young children.

The successful provider would develop the workforce to enable a culture where parents and families voice is at the heart of service delivery and they have a variety of opportunities to shape and deliver services run by children's centres.

5. Provide details of the evidence you have gathered in making this assessment, including data sources, consultation undertaken and the outcome/s of this.

Between 20th July and 30th September 2011, Parents and professionals across Gloucestershire, were invited to take part in a county wide consultation to inform a review of children's centre services. Two different opportunities were provided for both parents and professionals, parents contributed through

- On line SNAP Survey
- Focus groups held at 16 different events

The consultation and particularly the online consultation proved to be powerful tool which provided a whole range of useful information to inform the future. In total we received on line responses from 1206 people and 227 people joined focus groups.

What did parents tell us?

We asked around 1000 parents and carers about their children's centre.
There were 952 online responses from parents and 108 parents joined focus groups.

High numbers of parents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- Parents as volunteers supporting other parents (759)
- Parents engaged in further training or development (652)
- Parents co-ordinate groups and activities that help other people (649)
- Parents on Governing Bodies/Management committees (641)
- Parents get involved in devising and delivering services for other parents (580)
- Parents becoming researchers identifying what is needed in a centre and reviewing quality of what is on offer (580)
- Parent to parent interviews identifying strengths and weaknesses of services (519)

Parents also supported the following actions:

- Training parents as volunteers to run some of the services (575)
- Support for parents to run services (453)

Overall:

- 61% of parents said they wanted to be involved in delivering children's centre services.
- 78% of parents said they wanted to co-ordinate groups and activities to help others

However:

- Only 32% of professionals believe that parents co-ordinating groups and activities would have a positive impact
- 37% of professionals believe that parents involved in devising and delivering services would have a positive impact

The idea of parents taking a more active role in supporting the delivery of children's centre services was very popular. Over half of parents surveyed felt there was a role for them to begin to run services for themselves. Further work to support professionals to develop a culture where parents are more involved in management and delivery is included within the tender.

There is significant appetite from parents to be much more involved in delivering services. Given the level of difference in perception about parent's ability and willingness to become involved some practitioners will need to develop significant skills and knowledge in order to support and eventually work alongside parents as partner providers of services. In some children's centres this culture is beginning to develop.

6. Is this Policy affected by, or will it have an impact on other Meeting the Challenge proposals? Yes/No. (If yes, please specify relevant project and indicate how it is affected).

It is not anticipated that this project would have an impact on other Meeting the Challenge proposals; however, during the second phase of the project the providers are expected to identify and work with local parents and communities who are interested in running local early years and family services for themselves.

7. Where any particular group is affected differently by the policy in either a negative or a positive way, if you identify a negative impact, explain what actions you have undertaken or you plan to undertake, including consideration of any alternative proposals, to lessen or negate this impact.

	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Evidence	Mitigating actions where a negative impact has been identified	How will the mitigating action be monitored/evaluated, including who will be responsible for monitoring.
Age		√		The current children's centre service is inclusive for all parents of all children under 5. The service requires the provider to work with a range of targeted groups which include teenage parents or teenage parents to be. The consultation provided evidence that parents from the following age bands took part in the survey.		

				<p>2.4% <i>Under 20 years</i> 19.2% <i>20-25 years</i> 22.9% <i>26-30 years</i> 41.6% <i>31-40 years</i> 12.4% <i>Over 40 years</i></p>		
Disability (indicate different impacts on different types of disability)		√		<p>The service would target families where parents or children have disability, removing barriers to participation and access to experiences for all families communities and social groups. This would include the development of parents as practitioner researchers and evaluators; volunteers - parents as peer supporters; parent-led services and opportunities for parents to manage local early years services.</p>		
Gender reassignment			√	<p>The current children's centre service is inclusive for all parents of all children under 5.</p>		
Marriage & civil partnership			√	<p>We do not anticipate any impact either positively or negatively This service aims to provide opportunities for parents to engage at all levels.</p>		
Pregnancy & maternity		√		<p>Children's Centres provide a range of services for parents to be and post natal care. These include availability of health visitor and midwifery provision based at some centres. Parents accessing these provisions</p>		

				will also be encouraged to engage with the service.		
Race (including Gypsy & Traveller)			√	We do not anticipate any impact either positively or negatively		
Religion or Belief			√	We do not anticipate any impact either positively or negatively		
Sex		√		The consultation provided evidence that more female parents took part in the survey. This may offer some opportunities not currently available to females with young families to become involved in shaping developing and managing services. 9.3% <i>Male</i> 86.0% <i>Female</i>		
Sexual Orientation			√	We do not anticipate any impact either positively or negatively		
Indirect Discrimination			√	We do not anticipate any impact either positively or negatively		
Other groups: e.g. rural isolation, long term unemployed, health inequality, carers		√		This service aims to provide a voice to families who are seldom heard and ensure they have opportunities to shape how provision is delivered. This would include disadvantaged parents with young children		
Socio-economically		√		The service would include		

deprived groups				opportunities for volunteering and training to gain skills such as governance, management, financial, confidentiality and how to work in an inclusive way. These are valuable skills to support with finding employment.		
Community Cohesion	<p>Provide details of any ways in which the proposed activity would promote equality in the community between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and how it would promote good relations between such groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there equality between those who will and won't benefit from the proposal? • Are there strong relationships between groups and communities in the area affected and will the proposed action promote positive relationships? • Does the proposal bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other? 			<p>This service specifically targets the engagement of parents at all levels and developing the skills of the workforce to ensure they provide opportunities to build strong relationships with parents.</p> <p>By engaging parents at a number of levels and ensuring their voice shapes provision. It would allow strong and cohesive communities whose confidence and skills would include running provision that better meets their needs. This would allow children's centres to focus their workforce to provide support to those with the greatest needs and build their confidence to participate in governance, volunteering, peer supporting and managing provision.</p>		

Declaration

Version: January 2012. Updated May 2012

We are satisfied that an Assessment has been carried out and where a negative impact has been identified, actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact where possible.

Where the impact on equalities of the policy or proposals is very significant, and mitigating actions do not sufficiently lessen the impact, or mitigating actions cannot be identified, we have considered whether to go ahead with the original proposal at all, or whether to reformulate it.

We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the County Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment.

Completed by: *H. Hartley* Date: *23/5/12*

Role: *Head Commissioner Families*

Countersigned by Head of Service: *Linda Owen* Date: *23/5/12*

Name of relevant Portfolio Holder/Cabinet Member: *PAUL McLAIR*

I confirm that I have examined and understood the potential impact of the proposal and confirm that I have had due regard to the needs set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

Paul Gray Portfolio Holder/Cabinet Member

Date: *23rd May '12*