

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Before completing this EqIA please ensure you have read the guidance on the intranet.

Initial Information

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Date assessment started:	10/11/2020
Date of completion:	30/03/2021
Version Number:	2.0

Part 1: Background Information

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Existing	
Changing, updating or revision	✓
New or proposed	
Other	

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Internal (employees only)	
External (residents, communities, partners)	✓
Both of the above	

What is the name of your policy, strategy, project or service being assessed?

St. Mary's School, Shaftesbury

What is the policy, strategy, project or service designed to do? (include the aims, purpose and intended outcomes of the policy)

Dorset Council undertook a public consultation over 6 weeks from February 2021- March 2021. The consultation identified that over 90% of consultees agreed with the preferred option to create a new school for children and young people of Dorset with SEND. A paper with recommendations to adopt the proposal will be presented to Dorset Council's Cabinet in April 2021.

Dorset Council published its SEND Capital Strategy 2020 – 2025
[Dorset SEND Capital Strategy 2020-2025](#)

A growing number of Dorset children and young people have SEND; approximately 3,000 children and young people supported by an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Dorset Council has a statutory duty to deliver educational provision for them. While most children with SEND can be supported in

mainstream schools, such as local primary and secondary schools, there are some children and young people who require more specialist support and provision.

Dorset is fortunate to have excellent special schools, however, we recognise there aren't currently enough places for all the children and young people who need them. Currently some pupils with SEND have to travel far, and even live their daily lives beyond Dorset as there is not enough educational provision closer to home.

This costs significantly more, as buying this external provision outside of our county is more expensive and of course travel costs are much higher too. This is why our preferred idea is to create a special school for approximately 280 children and young people, aged from 0-25 years, which would be the centrepiece of a wider intergenerational campus potentially offering educational and community facilities for Dorset children and adults. These proposals are part of our wider strategy to develop better education provision for Dorset children with SEND. This is in turn part of our wider strategy to provide the 'Best Education for All' Dorset children and young people, which is outlined in our Children's Plan 2020-23.

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/childrens-plan/childrensplan.aspx>

What is the background or context to the proposal?

Dorset Council has purchased the former St Mary's School site near Shaftesbury. Opportunities to secure a site with these educational facilities and land are very rare. Currently more than 250 Dorset children and young people with SEND are educated in expensive, independent provision, many far out of our county. This currently costs around £14 million a year.

Travelling far from Dorset is not good for our children and young people and we want more of our children to be educated closer to home. We purchased St Mary's School for £10.05 million, excluding taxes and fees, so it can become a resource for Dorset for generations to come. The site comprises 165,000 square feet of mixed-use accommodation set within grounds of 55 acres. It would cost considerably more, and take years, to build a facility like this to accommodate a SEND school or any of the other potential options from scratch.

The site at St Mary's has been purchased using money from Dorset Council's 2020/21 Capital Budget. The purchase forms part of the council's five year £145million capital programme which is financed through a combination of Government grants and money from the sale of assets. The use of the site is expected to save significant revenue expenditure that would otherwise be incurred by the council.

St. Mary's is currently a large, well-equipped school. It is set within large grounds and has extensive educational facilities. The buildings date from the early 20th century to the 21st century, however despite appearances, it is not a historic building.

There is a main school building, assembly hall, large canteen refectory, many classrooms and small study rooms, as well as science laboratories, an art block and studios. There is a music block built in 2003 with an auditorium, a language block built in 1990s, conference facilities, a junior school built in 2000, a medical centre and a library.

There is a drama school which was converted in 1995, a gymnasium and purpose-built sports hall developed in 1992 with changing rooms and an indoor swimming pool complex built in 2006. There is also extensive living accommodation (former boarding houses) built from 1990s and extended in 2011, staff houses, a chapel and more. Outside facilities include playing fields, sports pitches and woodlands.

Part 2: Gathering information

What sources of data, information, evidence and research was used to inform you about the people your proposal will have an impact on?

The council adopted a new SEND Capital and Sufficiency Strategy which sets out the forecast needs and demands of provision to support children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

A detailed financial and business case, based on best value, was put forward to Cabinet supporting the St Mary's proposal.

Whilst the creation of a school for children and young people with SEND, to better meet growing needs is Dorset Council's preferred option, we are open to considering the alternative uses for the site through this consultation. The council considered uses for the site such as:

- a centre for respite care offering a mixed-use of specialist care and accommodation
- a training and conferencing suite, by leasing to a third-party tenant to operate the site
- leasing the site to an independent SEN school provider to operate
- creating an innovation centre for a start-up business to promote businesses in the STEM sector

to date, the council does not feel that the other uses set out would achieve the same advantages as our preferred option and support the economic, efficient and effective delivery of council services.

A detailed consultation with the public and stakeholders to seek their opinions on the proposed use was undertaken over 6 weeks between February 2021-March 2021. It included opportunities to attend virtual "Townhall" & "Stakeholder" events, giving due regard to COVID-19 restrictions whilst promoting participation and engagement.

What did this data, information, evidence and research tell you?

The detailed analysis in the SEND Capital and Sufficiency Strategy, alongside the St Mary's Business Case, set out that the opportunity to undertake an invest to

save project that could reduce the cost of the Council's high needs block grant pressure from spend on independent specialist placements.

At present, the existing specialist provision in the Council area is at capacity with little room to expand. This means some of our children in most need of a specialist placement cannot get access to one.

We believe there are opportunities to create a campus of complementary facilities that could help some of our most vulnerable children, young people and adults.

One of the key attractions of the St Mary's site is the amount of space and accommodation and the number of buildings available. The site offers a tranquil and welcoming space. This campus might include early years' provision, residential care for some of our looked after children, outdoor education, provision for young people with SEND to prepare for independence and adulthood, and adult education.

Is further information needed to help inform this proposal?

The consultation informed the Cabinet paper recommending the proposal to establish a legal entity to deliver services for children & young people with SEND.

Part 3: Engagement and Consultation

What engagement or consultation has taken place as part of this proposal?

A 6-week public consultation on options and opportunities was undertaken between February 2021- March 2021. The consultation process also included virtual "Townhall" & "Stakeholder" events giving due regard to COVID-19 restrictions whilst promoting participation and engagement.

How will the outcome of consultation be fed back to those who you consulted with?

The St. Mary's Project Board and a cross-party Steering Group has reviewed consultation responses and report recommendations to the Dorset Council Senior Leadership Team (Chaired by the CEO) and Cabinet. A formal report on consultation will be undertaken once responses have been assessed and analysed.

Consultation feedback has be assessed by weighing up responses to the options, against the proposals taking into account but not be limited to the following:

- supports the delivery of council services to whom the Council owes a statutory duty (for example, education provision) having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness
- The efficient use of financial resources, in particular value for money
- Analysis of comparative need and demand in Dorset
- The public sector equality duty

- The extent to which any option will be consistent with adopted Dorset Council policy

Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment Guidance before completing this section.

Not every proposal will require an EqlA. If you decide that your proposal does **not** require an EqlA, it is important to show that you have given this adequate consideration. The data and research that you have used to inform you about the people who will be affected by the policy should enable you to make this decision and whether you need to continue with the EqlA.

Please tick the appropriate option:

An EqlA is required (please continue to Part 4 of this document)	✓
An EqlA is not required (please complete the box below)	

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require an EqlA because:

N/A

Name: Richard Belcher Job Title: Service Manager – Strategic Partnerships

Date: 30/03/2021

Part 4: Analysing the impact

Who does the service, strategy, policy, project or change impact?

- If your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option. Please cut and paste the template accordingly.

For each protected characteristic please choose from the following options:

- Please note in some cases more than one impact may apply – in this case please state all relevant options and explain in the ‘Please provide details’ box.

Positive Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Age:	<i>Positive Impact</i>
What age bracket does this affect?	0-25
Please provide details:	<p>The provision for children and young people for EHCPs is set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. The legislation sets out the council's responsibilities to put in place education provision for children and young people aged between 0 - 25.</p> <p>Reviewing and proposing additional provision for children and young people will have a positive benefit to the education and learning of children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>Dorset Council area population 378,508 with 89,573 aged 0-25, 2,800 children and young people have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with numbers growing annually.</p>

Disability: (including physical, mental, sensory and progressive conditions)	<i>Positive Impact</i>
Does this affect a specific disability group?	All
Please provide details:	<p>The strategy would allow for an increase in provision across a wide range of the different types of primary learning needs our children and young people have been identified with.</p> <p>Through targeting of an increase in our sufficiency, there would be a significant benefit to children and young people who would potentially have provision closer to their home.</p> <p>4,100 0-24yr olds have day to day activities limited; Census 2011(data is not available for the age group 0-25)</p>

Gender Reassignment & Gender Identity:	Neutral/Unclear
Please provide details:	<p>The gender identity of service users has no effect on the services delivered.</p> <p>Improved capacity of the provision/services that can be delivered/offered may increase the number of users and the likelihood of addressing the needs of this group.</p>

Pregnancy and maternity:	Neutral/Unclear
Please provide details:	Improved capacity of the provision/services that can be delivered/offered may increase the number of users and the likelihood of addressing the needs of this group.
Race and Ethnicity:	Neutral
Please provide details:	<p>The ethnicity of service users has no effect on the services delivered.</p> <p>Improved capacity of the provision/services that can be delivered/offered increases the number of users and the likelihood of addressing the needs of this group.</p> <p>In the Dorset Council area 95.6% are white British, 2.3% white Other, 0.8% mixed race, 0.9% Asian, 0.2% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, 0.2% other</p>
Religion or belief:	Neutral
Please provide details:	<p>St. Mary's was historically a religious institution. All consecrated artifacts & assets have been moved to a local Catholic Church.</p> <p>The structure of the Chapel remains on site and consideration will need to be given as to how it will be used in the future as plans develop over time. In the short term, there are no formal plans for how the Chapel will be used on the site and this will continue to be considered as part of the establishment of the school and wider use of the site.</p> <p>Dorset Council area; 65.1% Christian, 0.3% Buddhist, 0.1% Hindu, 0.1% Jewish, 0.3% Muslim, 0.0% Sikh, 0.5% other, 25.4% No religion</p>
Sexual orientation:	Neutral
Please provide details:	<p>The sexual orientation of service users has no effect on the services delivered.</p> <p>Improved capacity of the provision/services that can be delivered/offered increases the number of users and the likelihood of addressing the needs of this group.</p>

	<p>Training will be in place in order that staff respond in a sensitive and appropriate way to service users of different sexual orientations</p> <p>95.8% of Dorset Council area identify as straight or heterosexual, 1.0% identify as gay or lesbian, 0.4% identify as bisexual, 0.5% identify as other, 2.3% identify as don't know or refuse to say</p>
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Sex (consider both men and women):	Neutral
Please provide details:	<p>The sex of service users has no effect on the services delivered. Gender neutral services and facilities will be considered as part of the consultations.</p> <p>Improved capacity of the provision/services that can be delivered/offered increases the number of users and the likelihood of addressing the needs of this group.</p>

Marriage or civil partnership:	Neutral
Please provide details:	<p>The marital or partnership status of service users has no effect on the services delivered.</p> <p>Improved capacity of the provision/services that can be delivered/offered increases the number of users and the likelihood of addressing the needs of this group.</p> <p>In the Dorset Council area 165,398 or 54.2% of people are registered as married with 0.2% recorded as being in a registered same-sex civil partnership.</p>

Carers:	<i>Positive Impact</i>
Please provide details:	<p>Providing more provision for Dorset children and young people would enable carers to discharge their responsibility better. In addition, reducing where possible travel distances would lead to happier and more settled family life.</p>

Rural isolation:	Neutral
Please provide details:	<p>Sparsity of provision in Dorset presents an issue when it comes to enabling children and young people to have educational provision that meets their needs closer to home.</p> <p>Dorset children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans are able to access travel assistance in line with our policy to ensure they can access education, unless they live very close to it. Even then, children and young people who live close to a school are also entitled</p>

	<p>to travel assistance, for example if they cannot walk to it because they have special educational needs and or a disability.</p> <p>More details of who is entitled to travel assistance is available here: https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/sen-and-disability-local-offer/transport-support/school-transport/school-transport-for-reception-to-year-11-children-with-send.aspx</p>
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Single parent families:	Neutral
Please provide details:	<p>The challenges faced by some single parents where children and young people have unaddressed needs is disproportionate on other members of the family.</p> <p>In seeking to identify and provide additional, more local, space for children with disabilities and special needs the complexities of managing travel arrangements and unmet need should reduce for young people.</p>

Social & economic deprivation:	Neutral
Please provide details:	<p>The impact of unmet need or large travel distances for children with SEND is compounded by social or economic deprivation.</p> <p>In seeking to provide more spaces for young people the proposals if realised would bring better access to education for young people and reduce future economic deprivation.</p>

Armed Forces communities	Neutral
Please provide details:	<p>Improved capacity of the provision/services that can be delivered/offered increases the number of users and the likelihood of addressing the needs of this group.</p> <p>Raising the profile of the service is likely to engage people from a broader range of communities.</p>

Data Source: <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/your-council/equality-and-diversity/community-research-and-consultation/community-research-and-consultation.aspx>

The sexual orientation statistics are 2018 Experimental Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Population data is 2019 Mid-Year Estimates, ONS.

Religion and ethnicity stats are Census 2011.

Part 5: Action Plan

Provide actions for **positive**, **negative** and **unclear** impacts.

If you have identified any **negative** or **unclear** impacts, describe what adjustments will be made to remove or reduce the impacts, or if this is not possible provide justification for continuing with the proposal.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
All protected characteristics	<p>The EqIA will be reviewed as the new Entity to create the SEND School is established over the summer of 2021</p> <p>Dorset's Children and Young People's Plan identifies activities to improve outcomes for children and young people from 0-25.</p> <p>What's important to children and young people? (dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)</p>	St. Mary's Board	August 2021

EqIA Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA:	Richard Belcher	Date:	
Equality Lead:	Susan Ward-Rice	Date:	
Equality & Diversity Action Group Chair:	Dr David Bonner	Date:	