

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Template

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Leisure Service provision across East Dorset (Wimborne, Verwood, Ferndown, Colehill, West Moors, West Parley)

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

Strategy

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

External

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre (QELC) in Wimborne, Dorset is owned by the Queen Elizabeth School Foundation Trustees and managed by Initio Learning Trust since 1st September 2019. The leisure facilities were previously managed by Dorset Council under a Dual Use Management Agreement until 31st March 2024. This model allowed the school full use of the facilities between 8am and 5pm with the community being able to use a gym, dance studios and the swimming pools within school break times and then fully outside of these times and through holiday periods.

On 1 March 2022 Cabinet gave approval to withdraw from the joint use agreement on 31 March 2024, agreeing to £880,567 towards conditional works as part of the exit agreement. The reason for this was the council was subsidising the leisure facilities by approximately £550,000 pa. This equated to over 33% of the overall leisure centres budget for the whole of the Dorset Council area during the financial year 2023-24.

The leisure facilities are now being managed by the school and are available for school and community group/club use. In light of the recent petition to full council on 18th July 2024 regarding the decision to withdraw from the management this EqIA considers the impact of this change of operation on the wider community. This is also being discussed at Cabinet on 10 September 2024.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

As part of its wider Leisure Review which is currently in a draft stage awaiting steer from the new administration, Dorset Council is committed to help create strong, healthy communities. The council's aims are to support communities to be active, to increase people's healthy life expectancy and reduce health inequalities between areas. Leisure facilities will play a significant role in providing opportunities for all

ages to lead a more physically active lifestyle, alongside the council's greenspaces, Rights of Way, country parks and outdoor education centres.

At the Council meeting on 18 July 2024, members agreed to bring a report to Cabinet to review the decision to withdraw from the dual use management agreement at Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre on 31 March 2024. The reason for this was that Dorset Council was subsidising the leisure facilities by approximately £550,000 pa.

The land and leisure centre at Queen Elizabeth School are under the ownership of the Queen Elizabeth School Foundation Trustees (QUEST) and managed under the umbrella of Initio Learning Trust. The Council which managed Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre (QELC) on the school site subsidised the leisure facilities by approximately £550,000 pa. This equated to over 33% during the last financial year 2023-24 of the overall leisure centres budget for the whole of the Dorset council area.

There is a good level of alternative provision within the effective catchment area with eight public leisure facilities within a 10-mile radius/20-minute drive of QELC, with three being owned by the Council. Five of the sites, BH Live Corfe Mullen, The Junction Broadstone, Ferndown Leisure Centre, Blandford Leisure Centre and Canford School all offer swimming pools operate a GP referral (GPR) scheme, offer public pay as you go sessions, and provide a good range of accessible facilities and programmes to meet the needs of the community. Transport links to those sites are good with both road access and bus routes potentially better than access to QELC.

Under the dual use agreement, the council were required to leave the facilities in a good condition. Dorset Council has contributed £880,567 towards site and facility improvements to enable the continuation of school and community club usage. Funding has also been provided by the council to deliver Aqua therapy at Blandford Leisure Centre, given that this is no longer available at QELC.

The outdoor pitches, netball/tennis courts, athletic facilities and smaller school hall/dance studio are now available for club/group hire and school use, and the school are continuing to provide access to male and female changing rooms within the centre.

The school had stated it is their intention within the two weekly meetings between Intio Trust and Dorset Council held up to the exit on 31st March 2024 to make the swimming pool available for school and community club/group use once the improvement works have been completed. The school further stated on a recent tour (06/08/24) of the facilities with ward cllrs and the leader that there is not currently a great deal of demand, via emails and calls they have received into the school for the main sports hall, although the QE pupils continue to make use of this facility as well as the school fitness suite. Options for sports hall community use are being kept open. These include access to the climbing wall, badminton courts and general hall bookings.

Further to the previous EqIA actions identified in 2022 Dorset Council and Intio Trust have resurfaced the astro, painted the courts to make sure groups and clubs can continue to use the outdoor facilities. Local clubs utilising the indoor facilities have

moved whether temporarily or permanently to other sites one being Wagtails Swim Club who currently use Ferndown Leisure Centre until Oct 24.

Evidence gathering and engagement

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

6.1 Pre-Exit

- Public and staff consultation
- Stat maps (postcode analysis)
- Leisure Budgets
- Playing Pitch Strategy
- Governing Bodies (England Hockey, Swim England)
- Dorset Council Plan
- Alternative provision analysis

6.2 Post Exit

- Sport England
- Alternative provision analysis
- Public consultation

7. What did this tell you?

Whilst the swimming pool has remained in an operational condition, it is currently closed for school and club usage. Dorset Council exited with the pool in full operation and it was the school that determined they will stop swimming provision whilst making a decision on what they intend to offer as far as booking for this area. The pool air handling and roof works are being looked at by the school and being worked towards a fix but that would not stop the pool from being used. Funds had been provided by the council to address this. The school highlighted that they already operate another local school (Colehill First School) pool that has community club/group use and is hired out to a local swim school. They have said that making the pool available for a swim school may be something that they consider for QELC.

The school have stated during the visit of the council by ward cllrs and the leader that there is not currently a great deal of demand for the main sports hall, although the QE pupils continue to make use of this facility as well as the school fitness suite. Options for sports hall community use are being kept open.

There is a good level of alternative provision within the effective catchment area with eight public leisure facilities within a 10-mile radius/20-minute drive of QELC, with three being owned by the council. Sport England define an effective catchment as the distance travelled by around 75 - 80% of users. This is by far a greater level of leisure provision than in most areas of Dorset. A review of these facilities confirm that they all operate a GP referral scheme, offer pay as you go public access, and provide a good range of accessible facilities and programmes to meet the needs of everyone within the community.

A subsidy has also been provided by the council to deliver Aqua therapy at Blandford Leisure Centre, given that this is no longer available at QELC to meet a recognised need. A swim group for those with disabilities who were based at QELC have now moved to Ferndown Leisure Centre, whilst the QE pool is closed for refurbishment. The council understands sessions have been booked at Ferndown until October 2024.

The public consultation in 2021 which received 1799 responses told us the main activities undertaken at QE Leisure Centre by individual users are swimming, exercise classes, court or astro pitch sports and climbing. With an out-of-town location and a lack of public transport it is unsurprising that 82.8% of QELC users travelled by car from postcodes ranging across and outside of the Wimborne area to include Colehill, Canford, Hampreston, Blandford, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

When asked what other local sports facilities you use or have you used, 51.1% of those responding to this question selected one or more other sites.

The school confirmed that the outdoor pitches, netball/tennis courts, athletic facilities and smaller school hall/dance studio were available for club/group hire and school use, and they were providing access to male and female changing rooms within the centre since the termination of the dual usage agreement.

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

8.1. Post Exit

Post withdrawal we have continued to speak to local leisure centres who are able to support displaced users. We have provided advice and support through signposting to Livewell Dorset and Leisure's own internal Health and Activity Service. We have received a number of enquires and feedback and have continued to actively support the Wimborne community by taking each of those questions on a case-by-case basis signposting to the relevant class, centre or information required. Examples of this include a resident who has living in Blandford but choose to use QELC, she was put in touch with the leisure centre in Blandford. GPR clients being seen at other sites such as BH Live Corfe Mullen and The Hub in Verwood. This support will continue over the coming weeks and months.

8.2 Pre-Exit

Prior to the withdrawal the consultation received 1,799 responses were received: two thirds (64.6%) said they were users of the QE Leisure Centre; 22.1% were parents/carers of (19%), or pupils (3.1%), of QE school. 3.4% were organisations, with a further 12.7% responding as members of clubs. 1.3% were members of staff and 0.3% representing Town/Parish councils. 17% stated that they were non-users of the leisure centre. 'Other' users included previous/ex-users, parent of a future student, ex-pupil, or teacher/staff member of QE. About a third of respondents said they were members of QE.

Members of clubs came from a wide range of organisations such as Wimborne Wayfarers Hockey Club, Wimborne Athletics Club, Wimborne Wagtails, Poole Netball League, and the Wimborne Manta Rays Swimming Club.

Outside of the consultation local and parish councils were consulted as well as QE School, local clubs and organisations associated with QE Leisure Centre, associated governing bodies and Public Health Dorset/Active Dorset/Livewell Dorset.

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No

Is an EQIA required?

Not every proposal will need an EqlA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqlA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqlA, please answer the following question:

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require an EqlA because (provide details):

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.
- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different [protected characteristics](#).

Key to impacts

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.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Neutral	Initio Trust have kept the dry facilities open (sports hall, dance studios, gym, changing, outdoor courts and astro) for the pupils of the school and local community clubs and groups. The pool is temporarily closed whilst the school decide on how they will run/book sessions. During this time clubs are accessing other providers in the East Dorset area.
	Negative	If the School decides not to open the pool to the local swimming club after the current works are being undertaken, it is likely to have a negative impact.
Disability	Neutral	The local swimming club and users have temporarily moved to Ferndown Leisure Centre whilst pool works at QELC are completed. Gym and aerobic users are utilising other providers such as BH Live in Corfe Mullen and Ferndown Leisure who have both seen a rise in their user numbers.
	Negative	If the School decides not to open the pool to the local swimming club after the current works are being undertaken, it is likely to have a negative impact.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral	Sport for all within the East Dorset community is available and there remains a very good choice of provision.
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	Sport for all within the East Dorset community is available and there remains a very good choice of provision.
Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral	Sport for all within the East Dorset community is available and there remains a very good choice of provision.
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral	Sport for all within the East Dorset community is available and there remains a very good choice of provision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Religion and belief	Neutral	Sport for all within the East Dorset community is available and there remains a very good choice of provision.
Sex (consider men and women)	Neutral	Funds agreed as part of the exit agreement have been used to make sure provision has been improved for use, i.e. outside courts and astro pitch.
Sexual orientation	Neutral	Sport for all within the East Dorset community is available and there remains a very good choice of provision.
People with caring responsibilities	Neutral	We believe there is adequate provision in the local catchment area for resident with caring responsibilities to access. We continue to talk to Forward Carers and our leisure centres both internally and externally managed regarding supporting a carers card for use across Dorset.
Rural isolation	Neutral	Sport for all within the East Dorset community is available and there remains a very good choice of provision, which is supported by good transport links.
Socio-economic deprivation	Neutral	Sport for all within the East Dorset community is available and there remains a very good choice of affordable provision.
Armed forces communities	Neutral	Sport for all within the East Dorset community is available and there remains a very good choice of provision.

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

All of the impacts, within the how section is an update from the last EqIA 14/01/2022, from works between Dorset Council and Initio Trust all areas of concern have been evaluated and acted upon. Outdoor provision has been improved with the relaying of the carpet on the astro and the tennis and netball courts being repainted. Inside the leisure centre an agreement was made with Intio as part of the exit that monies would be left £604.407 for the Trust to complete the works that Dorset Council could not complete by 31st March It became clear from liaising with local centres on their provision for the effected groups such as disability and people with caring

responsibilities that there is a very good choice of alternative provision for all within the essential catchment area. Currently the Trust are still to decide of their model of operation for the swimming pool which remains closed. Should the Trust decide to keep the pool closed this will have a negative impact on potentially the forementioned Wagtails disability group currently using Ferndown Leisure Centre. It is their understanding that they will be returning to QELC in October but should that not happen their sessions would need to continue at Ferndown or perhaps at Initio Trust's other swimming pool in Colehill.

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Community access to QELC	Continue to liaise with Initio Learning Trust to identify ways to maximise the availability of leisure facilities to include the sports hall and swimming pool usage for community groups and organisations or until a decision is made by Initio Trust as to their direction of travel	Darren Spreadbury/Paul Rutter	31/12/24
Carers	We continue to talk to Forward Carers and our leisure centres both internally and externally managed regarding supporting a carers card for use across Dorset.	Darren Spreadbury	31/12/24

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Paul Rutter

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Darren Spreadbury

Date of completion:22/08/2024

Version Number: 3

EqIA review date: On-going

Equality Lead Sign Off:James Palfreman-Kay – 22/08/24

Next Steps:

- the EqIA will be reviewed by Business Intelligence & Performance and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.
- EqIA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to [Diversity and Inclusion Officer](#)