Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

1. **Initial information** Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

    Our Future Council business case and transformation plan

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

    New project

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

    Both internal and external (employees, residents, communities, partners)

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

    Our Future Council is an extensive, whole council transformation programme. This initiative is a crucial component of our new council plan; for improving outcomes for our residents and our organisational efficiency and is vital for future financial resilience.

    Dorset Council aims to be financially resilient, sustainable, and excellent services for all, positioning us as a high-performing council through transformation. This transformation must also enhance our interactions with customers and improve our internal operations. Investing in and shaping our future operating model will also support and enable the delivery of the new Council Plan, which is underpinned by a new vision: "working together to create a fairer, more prosperous, and more sustainable Dorset".

    The business case and transformation plan set out the target operating model that the council propose to deliver over the next 4 years. This serves as the guide for transforming current operations to align with the strategic vision. There are six key layers that make up the future operating model and associated opportunities. The six layers are: Pre-front door, Front door, Commissioning and Procurement, Service Delivery, Enabling Services and Strategic Core.
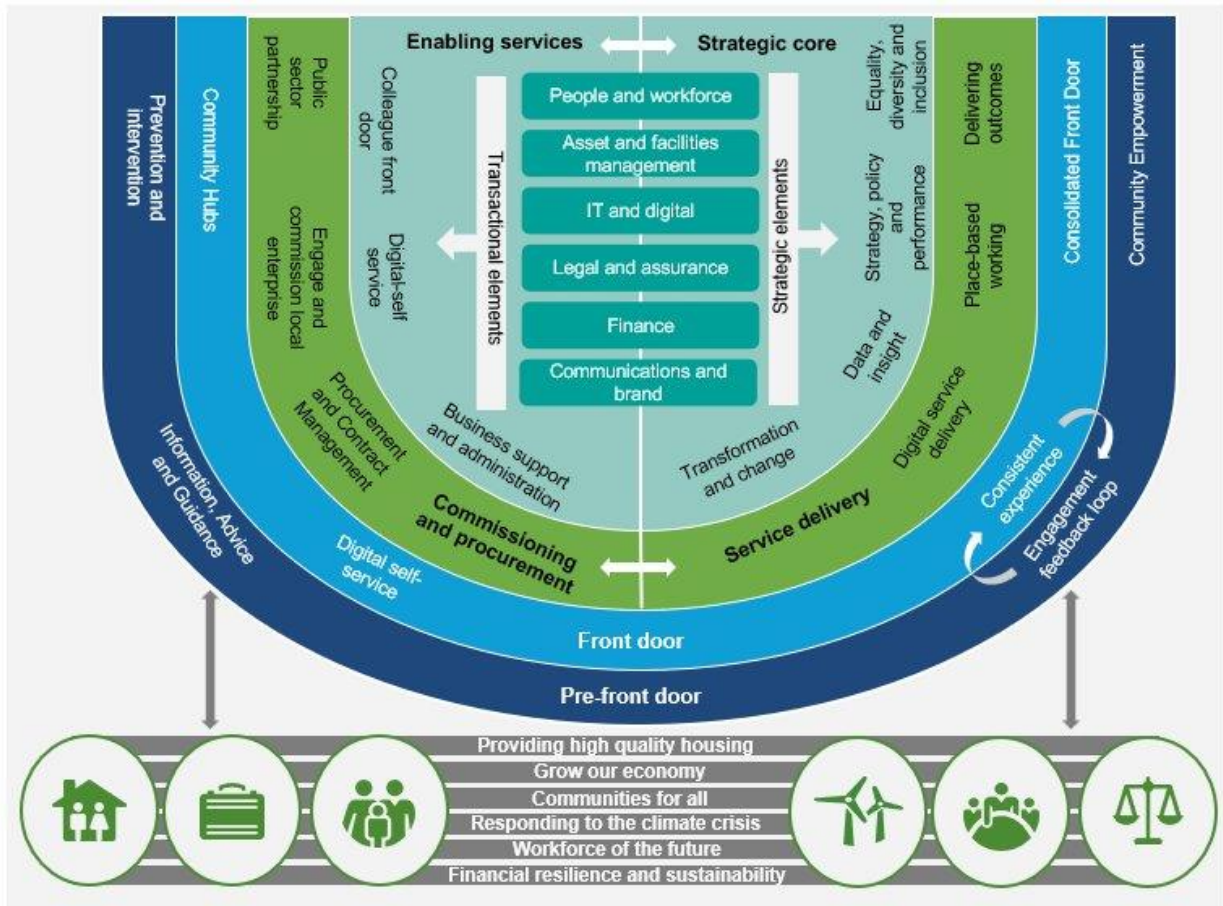
The future operating model has been developed to improve outcomes for residents, experiences for colleagues and the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation. The benefits of the future model are:

- residents will receive a more positive and consistent experience when engaging with the Council. They will be able to access a greater range of services through channels and at times that work for them. Council colleagues will have more data on them and their previous interactions with the Council to enable more effective outcomes and resolutions.
- colleagues will be enabled with the tools and skills they need to deliver effectively for residents. There will be greater clarity about roles and career pathways and more opportunities to work as one council.
- the new model will be more cost effective, enabling more efficient and effective ways of working. This will help address the council's current financial position in a more sustainable way.

This will be delivered across five programmes, which will be enabled by four workstreams:

- **Business management and ways of working:** The focus of this programme is on joining up our approach to managing the business of the council so we can provide consistent service levels using common technology solutions across the council. It seeks to make our ways of working attractive to employees and responsive to our customers.

- **Commissioning and procurement:** This programme is looking for ways we can streamline the way we commission and procure services and products across the council. It aims to make sure we get the best outcomes and value for money and ensure that our commissioning and procurement systems are robust, safe and adaptable so they can meet present and future demands. This reflects our Council Plan priority of "communities for all".

- **Customer experience:** This programme aims to make our service delivery to customers (residents, families, partners) more consistent, cost effective and responsive to changing needs. We will achieve this by adopting a whole-council approach and applying automation, artificial intelligence and other technology-led solutions where appropriate. Our future services will be designed with customers in mind, ensuring that customer insight, feedback, and user experience are embedded throughout. This includes further engagement and testing of future solutions with customers and community groups, supported by equality impact assessments.

- **Community partnership:** Working alongside communities, including town and parish councils and VCS organisations, to develop new models of service delivery that better meet local needs and help to prevent people reaching crisis point. Partnership working with statutory organisations including the NHS and Police is also vital to this approach

- **Strategic and enabling:** This programme is looking at the things we need to have in place to make better decisions and to work more effectively across the council. Its scope covers all aspects of technology and the way the council is organised.
  - target operating model development to describe the structure, processes and resources needed to support the council to deliver financially sustainable services into the future. This included equality, diversity and inclusion.
  - technology and data which refers to the overall design and structure of our IT systems, applications, and processes. It aims to document what we have now, what we need for the future and to map how we will move towards the technology set up we will need in future.

5. `Please provide the background to this proposal?

We will place Dorset's communities, customers, and employees at the heart of our transformative changes. By designing our organisation with their needs in mind and collaborating with our partners across Dorset, we will achieve the right outcomes. Crucially, we will do so with a relentless focus on cost-efficiency, ensuring that every decision and action contributes to delivering good services at a reduced cost. In an ever-changing world, it is important that the council reflects this changing environment and builds strong partnerships across Dorset and the regions, such as health partnerships and community and voluntary sector partnerships.
The full scope of the work is set out in the business case and transformation plan.

Designing future services with our customers in mind will enhance their current experiences. Through simple, well-designed, and easy-to-access services, we will drive sustainable change. This approach will enable our customers, who are able, to self-serve at a time and place convenient to them, while we maintain our commitment to supporting those who are vulnerable or do not have access or skills to digital tools, ensuring that assistance is available when they need it most.

It is important that transformation is not simply seen as inward looking. Transformation will allow the council to strengthen its relationships with businesses, residents, and the communities it serves. Through transformation, Dorset Council will better understand its place in the wider system[1], developing stronger partnerships, better utilising data to understand need, commission services more effectively and work closely with partner organisations and communities to ensure that solutions and where appropriate services are delivered at the right level to deliver the strongest outcomes for our residents.

Dorset Council employees are the heart of our current and future organisational design. As our council evolves, it will look and feel different to work in compared to today. Our transformation will include changing some of our workforce structures whilst investing to ensure they have the right skills to meet the future needs of the organisation. Our employees are important to us, and our goal is to involve everyone in shaping the outcomes and innovative ideas that best serve our residents, businesses, and communities.

The council has been transparent about its future vision of becoming a leaner organisation. A key aspect of this transformation is preparing our workforce for future skills and creating a sustainable, resilient council capable of continuous improvement.

Our research has considered our existing ways of working. This suggested that we currently operate as separate organisations within one council; where many of our traditional enabling or back-office services are fragmented and duplicated. To address this, we have co-designed a future operating model which will serve as a blueprint for how our council will function and deliver value to its stakeholders.

Approach to equality impact for the duration of the programme

Questions that this EqIA will address:
a) What are the potential impacts of the proposed changes on Dorset residents, particularly those protected under equality legislation and our local characteristics?
b) What are the potential impacts of the proposed changes on employees of Dorset Council, particularly those protected under equality legislation and our local characteristics?

This document is an overarching impact assessment that will be supported by multiple specific impact assessments for each change across the programme. The business case sets out change across five broad programmes and each programme will contain multiple projects that will deliver these changes over 3 years. The number of projects will be confirmed by March 2025.

Each project and or proposed restructure will be subject to a specific impact assessment related to that change. Further engagement will be undertaken at a detailed level to ensure the impact has been appropriately considered in advance of each change taking place.

---

[1] 'system' refers to the network of organisations, including local councils, healthcare providers, educational institutions, and other public, community and voluntary sector services, that work together to serve the community
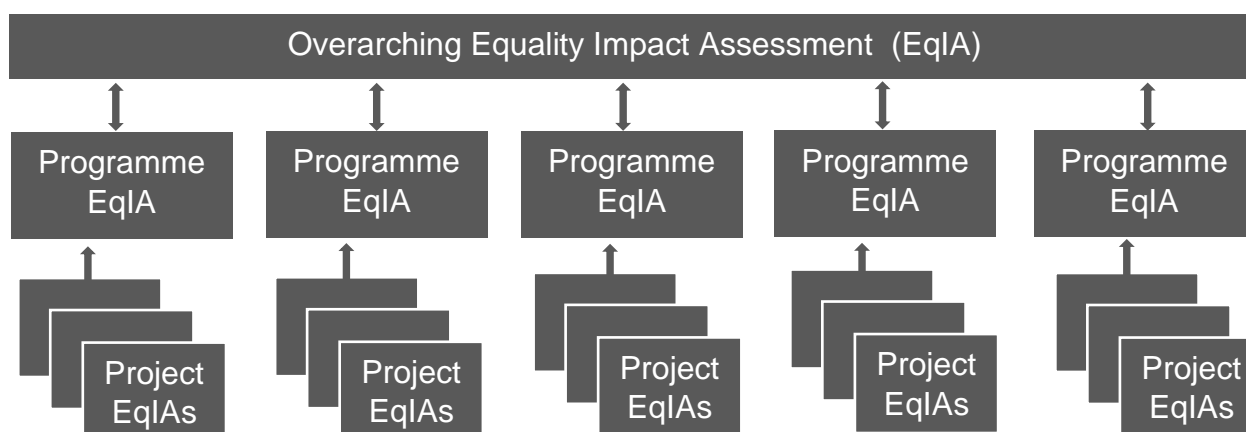
Evidence gathering and engagement

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

   All data tables are included in the appendices

   Appendix 1: resident data
   - Demographic data
   - Dorset Council deprivation data
   - Digital exclusion data
   - Resident survey data

   Appendix 2: employee data
   - Employee data

7. **What did this data tell you?**

   The data provided via these various sources shows that different communities live within the Dorset council area and work for Dorset Council. Both need to be considered when developing implementing the Our Future Council proposals for change and transformation in terms of why and how we provide services.

7.1 Census

   The census data tells us the following about our residents:

   - Nearly 5% of our residents are Armed forces veterans.
   - The largest proportion of residents are drawn from the age groupings 24 and under or 65+.
   - 9% of our residents are providing unpaid care.
   - Just over 19% of our residents have a disability.
   - Six per cent of our residents are from an ethnic minority.
   - Many of our residents (94.3%) have the same gender identity as registered at birth.

- Many of our residents (53.7%) are married, civil partnership, separated but still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership.
- Just over 8% of households are lone-parent families
- Our residents are mainly from the United Kingdom
- Just over 50% of our residents identify as being Christian.
- 46% of our residents live in areas of rural isolation
- Many residents (51.4%) identify as being female.
- 15.1% of our residents experience socio-economic deprivation

7.2 Deprivation

Deprivation has a significant impact on health and wellbeing. The data tells us that Dorset Council areas of deprivation are largely located in the most urban areas, in particular the former borough of Weymouth & Portland. But many of Dorset's rural communities could also be considered deprived in terms of barriers to housing and essential services.

There are significant areas of deprivation, mostly in urban areas (mainly Weymouth and Portland) and in Bridport and the east of Dorset in Ferndown, Wimborne and Verwood. Nine Neighbourhoods fall into the top 20% nationally for income deprivation (up from 7 in 2015)

7.3 Digital exclusion

The percentage of residents that report having used the internet is in line with Local Government Inform figure for Dorset of 93.3% which provides some validation.

The rate of digital exclusion has reduced from 30% pre-pandemic and reflects the number of people who have some barrier, either skills, motivation, trust, deprivation which prevents them buying devices or having a broadband connection at home, poor local connectivity etc.

This figure comes from the highly regarded 2023 Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital index and is validated because it is very close to the low digital literacy score in Dorset Intelligence and Insight and Service (DiiS) which surveyed over 80,000 residents across the ICS. (There is no direct comparison figure from this year's Lloyds Bank report).

7.4 Resident survey

A summary of the resident survey results tells us the following:

- Men, respondents aged 16 to 54, respondents from the most deprived quintile and respondents from Dorset South were less likely to be satisfied with their local area as a place to live. Older people and women are more likely to be satisfied.
- Men, respondents aged 16 to 54, respondents from the most deprived quintile and respondents from Dorset South were less likely to be satisfied with the way Dorset Council runs things. Older people and Women are more likely to be satisfied.
- Respondents aged 16 to 34 and respondents from Dorset South and South East Dorset and ethnic minority and disabled respondents were less likely to agree that Dorset

Council provides value for money. Older people and Women are more likely to be satisfied.

- Respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds and lesbian, gay or bi respondents are least likely to feel they belong to their local area. Older people are more likely to feel they belong to their area

- Respondents aged 16-24 and 35 to 54, lesbian, gay and bi respondents and respondents from South East Dorset were less likely to think Dorset Council acts on the concerns of residents. Older residents feel that Dorset Council act on concerns of Dorset's residents

- Respondents from younger age groups, respondents from the deprived quintile and respondents from Dorset North, Dorset South and South East Dorset were less likely to think Dorset Council keeps residents informed. Older residents believe Dorset Council keeps them well informed

- Women, respondents aged 16 to 34, lesbian, gay or bi respondents and disabled respondent and those from Dorset South were less likely to feel safe when outside in their local area after dark.

- Respondents reporting a disability and those aged 35-53 trust the council the least. Older residents have greater trust in Dorset Council

Differences in what matters most by gender, age, ethnicity.

- Women were significantly more likely to have selected:
    - 'keeping vulnerable children and adults safe from harm'
    - 'providing rural bus services and transport'
    - 'supporting people to live fulfilling and independent lives'
    - 'providing libraries, museums, arts and culture'

- Men were more likely to have selected:
    - 'making sure roads and highways are in a good condition'
    - 'protecting Dorset's natural environment'
    - 'providing an effective planning process to manage development'

- White British respondents were more likely to have selected:
    - 'collecting household waste, recycling and cleaning streets'
    - 'making sure roads and highways are in a good condition'
    - 'protecting Dorset's natural environment'

- Other ethnic groups were more likely to have selected:
    - 'increasing the availability of affordable housing'
    - 'helping people have healthy lifestyles'
    - 'improving digital connectivity'

- Respondents aged 16-34 were more likely to have selected:
    - 'keeping vulnerable children and adults safe from harm'
    - 'increasing the availability of affordable housing'

- Respondents aged 75 and over were more likely to have selected:
    - 'providing rural bus services and transport'
    - 'working closely with communities and with the voluntary sector'

The residents' survey showed significant differences in perceptions and levels of satisfaction between residents in different parts of the Dorset Council area, which has directly informed the business case and the need to enhance the council's model for locality working.

7.5 Dorset Council employee data

This data tells us the following about Dorset Council employees:

- The majority of employees are aged 50-69 years at 29.8%
- The majority of employees are female (64.2%)
- 3.8% of employees have disclosed a disability with 43.1% having not declared whether they have a disability or prefer not to say
- Just over four percent of the workforce represent ethnic minorities (4.1%) and 61.4% are white British
- Many employees are married, in a civil partnership, separated but still legally married or in a civil partnership at 22.7%
- The majority of employees are from the United Kingdom (98.8%)
- Whilst a majority of employees haven't declared a religion or belief, the majority of those who did, have no religion (12.7%) or the Christian religion (11.7%). Buddhist and Muslim religion is observed by 0.2% of the workforce
- Just over a fifth of employees (21.9%) live within the most deprived areas of the Dorset Council boundary area
- Nearly forty percent of employees live within areas of rural isolation
- Almost two percent of the workforce are lesbian, gay, bisexual and other

Feedback from our employees tells us that morale at Dorset Council has improved over the last 5 years, and that employees are even more proud to work here than in 2020[2] and our eNPS score (an industry leading measure of employee satisfaction) was +1, again an improvement on 2020, and significantly better than the public sector average.

Further evidence of our positive work environment also comes from our most recent employee survey, which showed that most Dorset Council employees (86%) have a good time more than half of the time they are at work, and that for two thirds (66%) of our employees they have a good time at work the majority of the time.

---

[2] Employees positively rated the statement "I'm proud to work here" 7.1 out of 10 on average, compared to 6.5 in 2020.

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

This work undertaken to develop the Our Future Council business case has been complex and has required alignment to the development of the Council Plan and the council's budget setting process through autumn 2024.

This case for change is brought about as a result of political ambition and the focus of specific priorities for Dorset and the constraints of the local government finances.

The business case has been developed as a result of decisions taken and discussion with:

- All members through budget scrutiny cafes (18 October, 13 December 2024 , 6 January 2025)
- The Chief Executive, all Executive and Corporate Directors through workshops and development task groups for each programme and workstream (16 workshops across October and November)
- Heads of service and employees across the council (through weekly task groups for each developing priority area)
- Trade Unions through monthly meetings in place since January 2024
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer when providing feedback on the proposed impact assessment
- Breaking down Barriers Group March 2024
- Cabinet members on 19 November 2025
- Members of the Joint Overview Committee on 9 January 2025
- Corporate Director, Transformation, Customer & Cultural Services
- Head of Change
- Head of Human Resources
- All members of the People and Change workstream

The business case has also been informed by engagement and research from other sources of information including:

- Dorset Council employee opinion and feedback survey which closed in October 2023 following 2115 responses
- Focus groups, directorate and leadership team discussions to make 'sense' of the data and explore key themes
- Whole council activity analysis survey which resulted in a 40% response rate
- Gathered data and volumetrics from all parts of the organisation to establish our baseline upon which the business case has been developed

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

This draft EqIA will be further developed with trade union representatives, Employee Networks, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Reference Group.

This document is an initial impact assessment that will be supported by multiple specific impact assessments for each change across the programme. The business case sets out significant change across five broad programmes and each programme will contain multiple projects that will deliver these changes over 3 years.

Each project and or proposed restructure will be subject to a specific impact assessment related to that change. Further engagement will be undertaken at a detailed level to ensure the impact has been appropriately considered in advance of the change taking place.

Further input and evaluation will be sought for this assessment and for each individual assessment related to the projects across this 3 year programme. This is set out in the action plan.

10. Is an EQIA required?

Yes

11. 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	• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

11.1 Activities that will impact residents

The interactions that residents have with the council will change following the implementation of the target operating model. The intention is to provide customers with the choice to access the things they need at the right time, in the right place and in the right way for them.

This will include:
- Offer of more varied ways for customers to interact and transact with the council. For example. Online customer account, online forms, web based chat, online payments

and applications. In some cases the tools are already in place in some services, but not in others causing confusion and frustration in the current offer.

- This is intended to provide more choice for customer in how and when the communicate or transact with the council

- Removing instances whereby customers contact individual departments to meet their need. A consolidated contact centre will provide a response on behalf of multiple services.

- More problems will be addressed before they become issues through easier access to local resources and contacts. The council will be able to prevent some situations escalating to crisis more readily by providing more support in the community, near to where people need it. For example, more community hubs which offer personalised support and community connections.

- Empowering communities before formal interactions with the council enables residents to actively participate in shaping their environment and services.

- Digital self-service will provide a convenient, consistent and accessible entry point for residents to interact with the council quickly and efficiently. By offering a range of online services, the council can enhance accessibility and responsiveness, reduce wait times, and streamline the overall service delivery process.

- An improved central customer service will simplify process of finding and accessing information, reducing the need for residents to navigate multiple systems. This will help improve coordination among different service areas within the council so that they can help customers more effectively and easily.

The business case indicates that as a result of the changes, residents will experience more consistent interactions with the council, accessing a wider array of services through time and methods convenient to them.

11.2 Impact on employees

The council will be reshaping its operating model which will result in a reduction in employee headcount. The business case suggests that between 189 – 386 FTE could be impacted over 3 years dependant on the implementation decision taken by Cabinet on 28 January 2025. The decision will be based on three scenarios, the consequence of which will dictate the scale and pace of the changes for people.

This is expected to be implemented though the following, although at this time, it is unknown as to the scale of FTE changes in each category. As the work is progressed a further EqIA will be completed for each structural change business case.

Holding vacancies
- To minimise the impact of the new operating model and the budget considerations for 2025/2026 on the workforce, vacancies have been held to mitigate against potential redundancies.
- There will be an impact on the existing workforce as the work is either absorbed within existing teams and/or there will be a reduction in the service due to reduced capacity which may impact on interdependent services and/or residents.

- Directorate Leadership Teams have a governance process in place to review vacancies and assess any risks associated with holding these. On an exceptional basis, where the risk to services is considered too great, the Senior Leadership Team will consider a business case to fill the vacancy.
- Managers are required to work with teams to reset the balance of work, reducing activities where necessary, to ensure that the service can continue with reduced capacity.

Removing vacancies
- To meet 2025/2026 savings and work towards a reduced workforce as per the Target Operating Model, Directorate Leadership Teams will be required to consider what vacancies can be deleted.
- There will be an impact on the existing workforce as the work is either absorbed within existing teams and/or there will be a reduction in the service due to reduced capacity which may impact on interdependent services and/or residents.
- Managers are required to work with teams to reset the balance of work, reducing activities where necessary, to ensure that the service can continue with reduced capacity. Services may have to temporary scale up to respond to peaks in demand.

Temporary workforce (FT contracts/agency workers/interims)
- Whilst we transition towards a new Target Operating Model, there may be times we need to engage a temporary workforce which may include the use of fixed term contracts, agency and interims.
- The temporary nature of the engagement is aimed to reduce pressure on our permanent workforce in both capacity and prevent increased baseline costs whilst recognising that we are in a temporary transitional state.
- Decisions to engage a temporary workforce will be subject to Senior Leadership Team governance around staffing controls.

Redeployment/reskilling
- As we transition towards a new Target Operating Model, there will be a change in the types and numbers of posts required across the council. The council is committed to providing opportunities for redeployment and reskilling to help transition employees into new posts within the Target Operating Model / areas where it has been hard to recruit to specific posts or services and retaining the skills and talent within our current workforce wherever possible.
- The OFC programme will set the scene in terms of the Dorset Council workforce of the future and inform the skills and behaviours required within the new Target Operating Model. The People & Change Workstream will support the organisation through workforce planning to enable employee development aligned to the skills required under Dorset Council's new Target Operating Model and mitigating adverse impacts of organisational change through planning for re-training and redeployment.

Redundancy
- There is a recognition that the new Target Operating Model will require a significantly smaller workforce than currently in place within Dorset Council.
- Whilst every effort will be made to redeploy and upskill employees aligned to new opportunities or areas of skill shortages and natural turnover will help reduce the size of the current workforce, it is recognised that an outcome of the new Targeting Operating Model will be redundancies within the current workforce.

- Redundancies will be managed through the Change Management Toolkit and Redundancy Policy & Procedure. The People & Culture workstream will support the process through a consistent and transparent approach to communications, change management process and access to information and resources.

New ways of working
- The new Target Operating Model will require all employees to work differently maximising the efficiency gains from new technology such as automation, operating systems and artificial intelligence to remove transactional activity and replace this with higher added value work which will support the continuation of services to residents as well as job enrichment through officer impact on work of higher added value to our residents, businesses and visitors.
- The OFC programme will set the scene in terms of the Dorset Council workforce of the future and inform the skills and behaviours required within the new Target Operating Model. The People & Change Workstream will support the organisation through workforce planning to enable employee development aligned to the skills required under Dorset Council's new Target Operating Model.

Impacts on who or what?	Residents/ Employees	Choose impact	How
Age	Residents	Positive	We anticipate a positive impact for some residents who may currently find it confusing to find and speak to the right person at the council. The central contact centre will be able to respond to more enquiries on more varied activities/subjects managed by the council. This means that residents will not need to contact multiple departments to get the help they need. Use of more advanced technology and artificial intelligence will enable residents to access information in alternative formats more quickly and easily e.g easy read, large print etc
	Residents	Negative	The inaccurate perception that the council might only provide help and advice through digital channels may mean that some people feel excluded. This can be mitigated through targeted communications about all the different ways that residents can get the help they need including the continuation of face to face and telephony support. This will be explored and shaped further through engagement with communities.
	Employees	Negative	We anticipate that some employees may find it difficult to change ways of working including new technology and tools. Some people who are not as experienced in using digital processes may require additional time and support to learn how to use new systems and tools.

Impacts on who or what?	Residents/ Employees	Choose impact	How
			To mitigate this, we will provide additional training, time and support to employees to help them navigate new systems and processes. This will be a similar approach to that implemented when the council rolled out Microsoft Officer 365.
	Employees	Positive	Employees who are experienced in using modern digital and technology will find it easier to use than existing tools and systems. These individuals, through education and through working in other organisations already have the skills in using, developing and advancing digital, ways of working and tools. This will provide them with capacity, resilience: reducing pressure of backlogs, demand and frustrated customers.
Disability	Residents	Positive	Use of technology will improve and enable information in alternative formats e.g. easy read, braille to be more easily and consistently available. Automated tools will enable tools to be linked to a customer account and available at a time and day that suits the customer rather than being limited to current opening hours. We are committed to ensure that we meet legal and industry standards for each new technology specification e.g. customer relationship management system. The evaluation panel for any procurement will include a member of the team who has good understanding of accessibility guidelines. Individuals with certain disabilities may still find the use of a digital process challenging, however other individuals with certain disabilities may find a digital process more accessible than a mediated one. For this reason the council will continue to maintain both a digital and mediated process so that customers can transact with us in a way that suits them and their individual needs.
	Employees	Positive	We are committed to ensure that we meet legal and industry standards for each new technology specification e.g. customer relationship management system. Some employees with a disability may require additional time and support to learn how to use new systems and tools. Training and additional time for learning would mitigate any potential impact. This will include development of

Impacts on who or what?	Residents/ Employees	Choose impact	How
			reasonable adjustment passports in line with council policy. Employees who are neurodivergent and other disabilities will benefit from the adoption of new tools in the organisation. This is evidence from research[3] supporting the positive wellbeing and cognitive benefits that AI and digital tools provide in supporting key work tasks. This includes searching for files, analysing information, providing meeting tools, reading tools, interpretation and translation.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Residents	Positive	All residents will be able to make a choice from more options in the way they access the things they need – as a time, place and way that best suits their individual circumstances. The implementation of any new system will take into consideration how people identify.
	Employees	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic.
Marriage or civil partnership	Residents	Neutral	All residents will be able to make a choice from more options in the way they access the things they need – as a time, place and way that best suits their individual circumstances.
	Employees	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic.
Pregnancy and maternity	Residents	Neutral	All residents will be able to make a choice from more options in the way they access the things they need – as a time, place and way that best suits their individual circumstances.
	Employees	Positive	Following recent legislation employees who have recently been on maternity or adoption leave, or who have advised they will be taking or are currently on family leave have additional protection against redundancy. People returning from extended leave, such as parental leave, may encounter issues if left to use a system that is new to them without support. This can be addressed by ensuring the appropriate support processes are in place and effective return to work plans are managed.
Race and Ethnicity	Residents	Positive	Use of technology will improve and enable information in alternative formats and languages to be more easily and consistently

---

[3] [How AI is Empowering Neurodiversity in The Workplace](#)

Impacts on who or what?	Residents/ Employees	Choose impact	How
			available. Automated tools will enable translation to be available at a time and day that suits the customer rather than being limited to current opening hours.
	Employees	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic.
Religion and belief	Residents	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic. All residents will continue to make a choice from more options in the way they access the things they need – as a time, place and way that best suits their individual circumstances.
	Employees	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic.
Sex (consider men and women)	Residents	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic. All residents will continue to make a choice from more options in the way they access the things they need – as a time, place and way that best suits their individual circumstances.
	Employees	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic.
Sexual orientation	Residents	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic. All residents will continue to make a choice from more options in the way they access the things they need – as a time, place and way that best suits their individual circumstances.
	Employees	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic.
People with caring responsibilities	Residents	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic. All residents will be able to make a choice from more options in the way they access the things they need – as a time, place and way that best suits their individual circumstances.
	Employees	Neutral	Should employees find it difficult to change ways of working due to caring responsibilities including changes in working pattern, new technology and tools, the council's policy will

Impacts on who or what?	Residents/ Employees	Choose impact	How
			remain for the provision of flexible working requests. We can also provide additional training, time and support to employees to help them navigate new systems and processes.
Rural isolation	Residents	Neutral	If an individual does not have internet connection, changing to a digital process could negatively impact as they may not be able to access services online. However, evidence suggests that 95% Dorset residents have used the internet, and therefore this is unlikely. Rural isolation is focussing on people living in rurally isolated areas, as a result they may experience digital exclusion. Dorset Council acknowledges that 25% of the population experience digital exclusion. However, face to face and telephone contact and support will remain, such as customer services offer in local libraries or family hubs. Therefore, this group will continue to access services in the way they do now including a mediated customer service offer. The inaccurate perception that the council might only provide help and advice through digital channels may mean that some people feel excluded. This can be mitigated through targeted communications and working with community groups about all the different ways that residents can get the help they need including the continuation of face to face and telephony support.
	Employees	Negative	Potential for negative impact if centre of duty is changed to either centralise an offer or devolve to better align customer offer to integrated community hubs. This is compounded by poor public transport provision in some rural areas. This can be potentially mitigated through flexible working arrangements.
Socio-economic deprivation	Residents	Neutral	If an individual does not have internet connection or devices changing to a digital process could negatively impact as they may not be able to access services online. In the unlikely event this did happen, the mediated process will remain so they will still be able to access council services as they currently do. The inaccurate perception that the council might only provide help and advice through digital channels may mean that some people

Impacts on who or what?	Residents/ Employees	Choose impact	How
			feel excluded. This can be mitigated through targeted communications about all the different ways that residents can get the help they need including the continuation of face to face and telephony support.
	Employees	Neutral	As an employee, any equipment required to complete a role is provided. E.g. computer, phone, uniform There will be no change to the requirement for employees to travel to an office to complete their tasks. Potential for negative impact if centre of duty is changed to either centralise an offer or devolve to better align customer offer to integrated community hubs.
Single parents	Residents	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic. All residents will continue to make a choice from more options in the way they access the things they need – as a time, place and way that best suits their individual circumstances.
	Employees	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic.
Armed forces communities	Residents	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic. All residents will continue to make a choice from more options in the way they access the things they need – as a time, place and way that best suits their individual circumstances.
	Employees	Neutral	There is currently no evidence to suggest that this change will impact this protected characteristic.

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

It is identified that there is potential for this programme to have some impacts on some protected characteristic groups, either negatively or positively.

Overall, the impact **on residents** is:

- Age: Some individuals may find online systems challenging, but the organisation will continue to offer in-person and services by phone, ensuring no negative impact. Positive impact from the use of technology which will improve organisations ability to provide information and data in alternative formats and languages. Perception that the council

may only offer digital contact tools may cause a negative impact if not mitigated by targeted communications.

- Disability: Positive impact from the use of technology which will enable information to be more easily and consistently provided in alternative formats.
- Gender identity: Positive impact on gender identity and reassignment through recognition in technology and tools of how people identify. Currently no evidence to suggest any impact on marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, religion, belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- Caring Responsibilities: No negative impacts identified for individuals with caring responsibilities.
- Pregnancy and maternity: Positive impact following recent legislation change. Employees who have recently been on maternity or adoption leave, or who have advised they will be taking or are currently on family leave have additional protection against redundancy.
- People returning from extended leave, such as parental leave, may encounter issues if left to use a system that is new to them without support. This can be addressed by ensuring the appropriate support processes are in place and effective return to work plans are managed.
- Race and ethnicity: Positive impact from the use of technology which will improve organisations ability to provide information and data in alternative formats and languages.
- Rural Isolation: Neutral impact reflected in that whilst a lack of internet access could pose challenges, the majority of Dorset residents are connected, and mediated processes will continue to be available and used where required or preferred
- Socio-economic deprivation: A neutral impact similar to rural isolation in that those without internet access may face difficulties, but the organisation will maintain mediated options to be used where they are required or preferred.
- Single Parents and Armed Forces Communities: No current evidence of impact on these groups.
- All solutions will need to be inclusive, maintaining options for those who may face challenges with digital processes.

Overall, the impact **on employees** is:

- Age: Some individuals may find online systems challenging, particularly those who are less experienced with using digital systems. Positive impact on those who are experienced in using digital tools as these will quickly enhance their ways of working, providing them with capacity and resilience.
- Disability: Positive impact from the use of technology and generative AI which will enable information to be more easily and consistently provided in alternative formats, help with completion of tasks, streamlining activity.
- Pregnancy and maternity: A positive impact in line with recent legislation to provide additional protection for this group against redundancy. When returning from extended leave, such as parental leave, may encounter issues if left without support. This can be addressed by ensuring the appropriate support processes are in place.
- Rural Isolation and Socio-economic: Potential for negative impact if centre of duty is changed to either centralise an offer or devolve to better align customer offer to integrated community hubs. This is compounded by poor public transport provision in

some rural areas. This can be potentially mitigated through flexible working arrangements.

- Gender identity: No current evidence suggests any impact on gender reassignment, identity, marriage, civil partnership, religion, belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- Race and Ethnicity, Single Parents, Caring Responsibilities and Armed Forces Communities: No current evidence of impact on these groups.
- It is recognised that residents may experience a reduction in service in the transition of service delivery and people change. However, across all groups, we also anticipate that changes to ways of working will provide benefits; will reduce manual and duplicative tasks supporting individuals to concentrate time on value added activity, strategic and specialist tasks increasing capacity, productivity and resilience.

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
Finalisation of this overarching impact assessment	Draft EqIA to be further developed with trade union representatives, all Employee Networks, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Reference Group	Head of Change	End March 2025
Accessibility of future solutions	Commitment for all programme EqIAs on proposed solutions to score accessibility as part of the supplier evaluation process. The evaluation panel should include a representative who has good understanding of the accessibility guidelines that we must conform to.	Head of Change Programme Managers for each OFC programme	In line with procurement activities during 2025 to 2028
Protected characteristic data	This EqIA will be kept up to date with relevant employee and resident data Socio-economic and rural isolation data concerning council employees should be updated to include a breakdown by Directorate/Service.	Head of HR	Ongoing
Legal partnership data	The baseline concerning employee legal partnership should be updated to reflect more recent data	Head of HR	Mid February 2025
Employee establishment data	The establishment baseline should be managed and maintained to ensure consistent and informed oversight	Head of HR and Head of Strategic Finance	Ongoing
Inaccurate perception that help is only available through digital tools	Targeted communications about all the different ways that residents can get the help they need including the continuation of face to face and telephony support.	Head of Strategic Communications Head of Change	Ongoing

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Learning new ways of working and operating new systems and processes	Provide additional training, time and support to employees to help them navigate new systems and processes. Particularly those who express having less digital experience, those returning from extended leave and those with a disability.	Head of Organisational Development Learning & Development Lead	Ongoing
Digital skills for employees	Continue to extend the workplace digital champions network to best support employees with the use of digital tool by their nominated team digital champion.	Head of Change User Adoption Lead	Ongoing
Digital skills for residents	Continue to deliver the digital skills service to residents, targeting those in protected groups including older and disabled residents	Programme Manager, Skills and Adoption	Ongoing
Change fatigue	Some employees may experience process or structural change within a short period of time or previously experiencing it. Analysis should be undertaken to identify these groups and additional information and support provided	People and Change workstream	Initially by end March 2025 and then ongoing
Continued assessment across all programmes and projects	List of all projects to be confirmed by end February 2025. Following which, the plan for completion of EqIAs in line with delivery milestones will be developed. Each project and or proposed restructure will be subject to a specific impact assessment related to that change.	Head of Change	Initially February 2025 and then as per plan

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Nina Coakley

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Nina Coakley, Heather Williamson, Claire Leech, Nicky O'Shea, Dave Cooke

Date of completion: 10/01/25

Version Number: 0.1

EqIA review date: 28/02/25

Equality Lead Sign Off: 14/01/25

Next Steps:
- the EqIA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement 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](#)

Appendix 1: Resident data

Demographic data[4]

Tables 1 to 14 share national and local protected characteristic data, which is based on the census 2021.

Table 1: Proportion of Armed forces veterans, census 2021

Armed forces veterans	Dorset council area residents 16+
Previously served in regular UK armed forces	4.9%
Previously served in reserve UK armed forces	0.4%
Previously served in both regular and reserve UK armed forces	0.3%

Table 2: Proportion of Dorset residents by age, census 2021

Age	Dorset council area (all residents)
24 and under	23.2%
25-39	14.1%
40-49	10.7%
50-59	14.9%
60-64	7.6%
65-74	15.1%
75+	14.4%

Table 3: Proportion of Dorset residents providing unpaid care, census 2021

Carers	Dorset council area (all residents, 5+)
Providing unpaid care	9.36%

Table 4: Proportion of Dorset residents by disability, census 2021,

Disability	Dorset council area (all residents in households)
Disclosed disability	19.3%
No disability	80.7%

Table 5: Proportion of Dorset residents by ethnicity, census 2021[5]

---

[4] There is no pregnancy or maternity data provided because it is not provided by the 2021 census or suitable information being available.

[5] We are following the guidance by the government concerning ethnicity, which states the term ethnic minorities should be used to refer to all ethnic groups except the white British group.

Ethnic minorities	Dorset council (all residents)
Arab	0.1%
Asian	1.1%
Black	0.3%
Mixed	1.2%
Other	0.3%
White: Gypsy/ Irish Traveller	0.2%
White: Irish	0.5%
White: Other	2.5%
Ethnic minorities	6.1%
White: British	93.9%

Table 6: Proportion of Dorset residents by gender identity, census 2021[6]

Gender identity	Dorset council area residents 16+
Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth	94.34%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given	0.09%
Trans woman	0.07%
Trans man	0.05%
Non-binary	0.04%
All other gender identities	0.03%
Not answered	5.38%

Table 7: Proportion of Dorset residents by legal partnership status, census 2021

Legal partner status	Dorset council area residents 16+
Divorced or civil partnership dissolved	10.8%
Married, civil partnership, separated but still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership	53.7%
Single, never married and never registered a civil partnership	27.4%
Widowed or surviving civil partnership partner	8.2%

Table 8: Proportion of Dorset residents that are lone parents, census 2021

Lone parent	Dorset council area (all residents in households)
Single family households that are a lone parent family	8.1%

[6] The Office for National Statistics has confirmed this data set is 'official statistics in development.' This reflects their innovative nature and the evolving understanding of measuring gender identity, along with the uncertainty associated with these estimates.

Table 9: Proportion of Dorset residents by nationality, census 2021

Nationality	Dorset council area (all residents)
United Kingdom	96.8%
European countries	2.3%
Non-European countries	0.9%

Table 10: Proportion of Dorset residents by religion and belief, census 2021

Religion and Belief	Dorset council area (all residents)
Buddhist	0.4%
Hindu	0.2%
Jewish	0.1%
Muslim	0.4%
Sikh	<0.0%
Other	0.6%
Christian	51.6%
No religion	40.1%
Not declared	6.5%

Table 11: Proportion of Dorset residents who live in areas of rural isolation[7]

Rural isolation	Dorset council area (all residents)
Residents	46.0%

Table 12: Proportion of Dorset residents by sex, census 2021

Sex	Dorset council area (all residents)
Female	51.4%
Male	48.6%

Table 13: Proportion of Dorset residents by sexual orientation, census 2021

Sexual orientation	Dorset council area (residents 16+)
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Other	2.2%
Heterosexual	90.6%
Did not answer	7.2%

Table 14: Socio-economic deprivation within Dorset Council area, census 2021

---

[7] 3 This data is based on Mid Year Estimates from 2018 - this is due to the Indices of Deprivation being released in 2019 which have current not been updated. Sources are 2018 MYE ONS; ID2019 Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Govt.

Socio-economic deprivation	Dorset council area (households
Households	15.1%

Deprivation Data

Deprivation has a significant impact on health and wellbeing.

Table 15: Rural isolation

Rural isolation	Percentage
Dorset population living in rural areas	46% [8]

Table 16: Deprivation

Deprivation	Number of areas
Areas of Dorset in most deprived nationally	11 areas

Source: Dorset Council deprivation topic data

Digital exclusion data

The percentage of residents that report having used the internet is in line with Local Government Inform figure for Dorset of 93.3% which provides some validation.

Table 17: Digital exclusion

Digital exclusion	Dorset council residents
Percentage of resident that have used the internet at all either for work at home or in other places.	95% [9]
Percentage of residents that are digitally excluded	25% [10]

Dorset Council Residents Survey 2023

The residents' survey provides insight into residents' perceptions of where they live and the council and its services. The findings are statistically representative of the population of the Dorset Council area.

- 2,461 respondents completed the survey
- Resident surveys were previously conducted in 2019, 2020 and 2021
- Respondents were asked to complete demographic questions about age, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, disability, religion and belief, and sexual orientation.

Tables below share response data of the 2023 resident's survey, with diversity groups highlighted where they indicated less satisfaction than as a whole.

Table 18: Satisfaction with Dorset as a place to live.

[8] Dorset Council deprivation topic data
[9] Dorset council residents survey 2023/24
[10] 2023 Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital index

Satisfaction with Dorset as a place to live	% Satisfied
All respondents	**85.0%**
Disabled respondents	80.2%
Ethnic minority respondents	81.0%
LGB or other respondents	70.1%
Age 16 – 34	82.1%
Age 35-54	80.7%
Males	82.4%

Each of these diversity groups had less satisfaction than respondents as a whole

Table 19: Satisfaction with the way Dorset Council runs things

Satisfaction with the way Dorset Council runs things?	% Satisfied
All respondents	**58.5%**
Disabled respondents	54.8%
LGB or other respondents	46.6%
Age 16-34	49.5%
Males	54.3%

Each of these diversity groups had less satisfaction than respondents as a whole.

Table 20: Value for money

Do you think Dorset Council provides value for money?	% Satisfied
All respondents	**34.5%**
Disabled respondents	31.7%
Ethnic minority respondents	28.9%
Age 16 to 34	29.1%

Each of these diversity groups had less satisfaction than respondents as a whole.

Table 21: Local area

How strongly do you feel you belong to your local area?	% Very or Fairly Strongly
All respondents	**73.6%**
Disabled respondents	67.7%
LGB or other respondents	59.1%
Ethnic minority respondents	48.8%
Age 16 to 34	65.9%
Age 35-54	67.7%

Each of these diversity groups had less satisfaction than respondents as a whole.

Table 22: Local area after dark

How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in your local area after dark?	% Very or fairly safe

All respondents	68%
Disabled respondents	53%
LGB or other respondents	47%
Women	64%
Age 16 - 34	59%

Each of these diversity groups had less satisfaction than respondents as a whole.

Table 23: Acting on concerns

To what extent do you think Dorset Council acts on the concerns of local residents?	% A great deal or fair amount
All respondents	54.5%
LGB or other respondents	40.8%
Age 16 - 34	42.5%
Age 35 -54	48.6%

Each of these diversity groups had less satisfaction than respondents as a whole.

Table 24: Trust

How much do you trust Dorset Council?	% Trust
All respondents	53.9%
Disability	49.3%
Age 35 - 54	47.7%

Each of these diversity groups had less satisfaction than respondents as a whole.

Table 25: Keeping residents informed

Overall how well informed do you think Dorset Council keeps residents about the services and benefits it provides?	% Well Informed
All Respondents	54.5%
LGB and Other	40.5%
Age 16 - 34	42.5%

Each of these diversity groups had less satisfaction than respondents as a whole.

Table 26: Ethnic minority background relationships
By getting on well together, we mean treating each other with respect.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together?	% agree or disagree
Agree	51.7%
Disagree	6%

None of the diversity groups had statistically less satisfaction than respondents as a whole.

Table 27: Residents pulling together

To what extent would you agree or disagree that people in this local area pull together to improve the area?	% feel pull together
All respondents	**56.9%**
Disability	49.3%
LGB or other respondents	30.9%
Age 16-34	46.6%

Each of these diversity groups had less satisfaction than respondents as a whole.

Table 28: Recommending Dorset as a place to live

To what extent would you recommend Dorset as a place to live?	% Recommend
All respondents	**95.6%**
LGB or other respondents	79.2%

Each of these diversity groups had less satisfaction than respondents as a whole.

Table 29: Dorset as a place to study

To what extent would you recommend Dorset as a place to study?	% Recommend
All respondents	**61.2%**
Disabled Respondents	57.4%
75+ Residents	56.2%

Each of these diversity groups had less satisfaction than respondents as a whole.

Table 30: Recommending Dorset as a place to live

To what extent would you recommend Dorset as a place to visit?	% Recommend
All respondents	**95.7%**
Ethnic Minority Respondents	92.2%
LGB or other respondents	88.6%
Age 16 - 34	89.0%

Each of these diversity groups had less satisfaction than respondents as a whole.

Table 31: Recommending Dorset as a place to work

To what extent would you recommend Dorset as a place to work?	% Recommend
All respondents	**69.5%**
Disabled Respondents	64.3%
Ethnic minority respondents	53.1%
Age 16 - 34	62.3%

Each of these diversity groups had less satisfaction than respondents as a whole.

Appendix 2: Employee data

Dorset Council employee data

Armed forces veterans

The council has not historically collected this data from employees however, this has now changed, and new employees are asked this information.

Table 1: Proportion of employees by age

Age	Dorset Council employees
24 and under	4.3%
25-39	25.3%
40-49	23.2%
50-59	29.8%
60-64	11.8%
65+	5.7%

Source: HR employee data at 6 January 2025

Carers

The council does not collect this data from employees. However, the council does support a carers employee network and at March 2024, 53 employees had joined.

Table 2: Proportion of Dorset employees by disability

Disability	Dorset Council employees
Disclosed disability	3.8%
Not Disabled	53.1%
Preferred Not to Say	5.8%
Not Declared	37.3%

Additionally, as at March 2024, 100 employees were members of the Disability Employee Network.

Source: HR employee data at 6 January 2025

Table 3: Ethnicity

Ethnic minorities	Dorset Council employees
White British	61.4%
Ethnic Minorities	4.1%
Not declared	34.5%

Source: HR employee data at 6 January 2025

Gender identity

Dorset Council has not historically asked employees this question. It has started to be collected from summer 2024 so a part year data of new recruits only is available.

Table 4: Legal partnership

Legal partner status	Dorset Council employees
Domestic partnership	0.1%
Divorced or civil partnership dissolved	2.2%
Married, civil partnership, separated but still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership	22.7%
Single, never married and never registered a civil partnership	5.9%
Widowed or surviving civil partnership partner	0.4%
Not declared	68.7%

Source: HR employee data at March 2024

Lone / single parents

Dorset Council does not collect this data from employees.

Table 5: Proportion of employees by nationality

Nationality	Dorset Council employees
United Kingdom	98.8%
European countries	0.8%
Non-European countries	0.4%

Source: HR employee data at 6 March 2024

Table 6: Religion and belief

Religion and Belief	Dorset Council employees
Buddhist	0.1%
Hindu	0.0%
Jewish	0.0%
Muslim	0.1%
Sikh	0.0%
Other	0.9%
Christian	11.7%

Religion and Belief	Dorset Council employees
No religion	12.7%
Not declared	74.5%

Source: HR employee data at 6 January 2025

Table 7: Socio-economic deprivation[11]

Socio-economic deprivation	Dorset Council employees
Employees living in the most deprived areas within the Dorset Council area	21.9%

Source: HR employee data at 6 January 2025

Table 8: Proportion of employees who live in areas of rural isolation[12]

Rural isolation	Dorset Council employees
Employees living within areas of rural isolation within the Dorset Council area	39.2%

Source: HR employee data at 6 January 2025

Table 9: Proportion of employees by sex

Sex	Dorset Council employees
Female	64.2%
Male	35.8%

Source: HR employee data at 6 January 2025

Table 10: Proportion of employees by sexual orientation

Sexual orientation	Dorset Council employees
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Other	1.9%
Heterosexual	44.0%
Did not answer	54.1%

Source: HR employee data at 6 January 2025

---

[11] These are employees who live in areas of Dorset Council which are most likely (Highest 20% in Dorset) to meet the criteria for our socio-economic deprivation measure. We have drawn on socio-economic status as defined by the Office for National Statistics. The figures cannot be precise as the Census does not go to postcode level.

[12] These represent employees of Dorset Council who live within areas in Dorset Council defined as Geographically access to services deprived nationally. This data is based on the Indices of Deprivation released in 2019.