

Equality Impact Assessment - Statement of Licensing Policy

2026-31

Version number	DRAFT Version 6
Date last reviewed:	19/01/2026
Approved by:	John Newcombe
Date approved:	
Next review date:	19/01/2027
Saved as:	Equality Impact Assessment – Licensing Policy 2026-31

1. Management of the EqIA

The EqIA has been prepared by the Licensing Team. It has been prepared as part of the policy drafting process prior to circulation of the draft policy for a period of consultation. It will be reviewed directly following the consultation period close and updated with reference to any feedback from consultees which may have a bearing on the assessment. The assessment has been circulated as part of the report clearance process and updated accordingly.

2. Identification of policy aims, objectives and purpose

Licensing authorities are required by the Licensing Act 2003 to publish a Licensing Policy that they propose to apply when exercising their functions under the 2003 Act. The Statement must be published at least every five years and can be reviewed from “time to time” with any amended parts re-consulted upon.

The 2021-2026 Statement will be circulated for consultation for a period of twelve weeks.

The objective of the Licensing Policy is to inform interested parties of the principles the licensing authority proposes to apply when exercising its functions under the Licensing Act 2003. The authority must have regard to the promotion of the licensing objectives as set out in the Act:

- The Prevention of Crime and Disorder
- Public Safety
- The Prevention of Public Nuisance
- The Protection of Children from Harm

Licensable activities include:

- the retail sale of alcohol,
- the supply of alcohol in clubs,
- the provision of late night refreshment, and.
- the provision of regulated entertainment.

The Licensing Policy aims to align with the Council's policy priorities of “staying safe and well”, “unique environment” and “economic growth” as found in the Dorset Council's Plan 2024-2029 <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/your-council/about-your-council/dorset-council-plan/dorset-council-plan.aspx>

The Statement of Licensing Policy aims to align with other objectives of the council to;

- Protect young people from harm
- Balance the needs of businesses and local residents
- Encourage tourism and a vibrant, diverse night time economy
- Reduce alcohol misuse
- Reduce unnecessary regulation

3. Scope / focus of the EqlA

The Equalities Impact Assessment has attempted to assess the likely impact of the revised policy on persons living, visiting and working within the County.

There are 2003 licensed premises within the Dorset Council area; these currently consist of 1874 Premises Licences and 129 Club Certificates. These are located across the County with concentrations in the market towns. There are also 6456 Personal Licence Holders currently registered with Dorset as their home authority.

The Licensing Policy has scope to advance equality by promoting good relations and reduce inequality/protect vulnerable persons. The Statement supports a culture of openness where appropriate information can be accessed by all parties, hearings are generally held in public and enforcement is in line with the principles promoted within the enforcement concordat.

Partnership working and the exchange of information (within legal constraints) is also supported by the Policy. In this way we hope to promote understanding between those providing licensable activities and those potentially affected by them. As with applications under other legislation, we will seek to mediate between applicants and objectors and reach negotiated settlements wherever possible.

The following identifies how specific groups may be affected by the revised policy;

Class or socio- economic disadvantage

Low (positive impact)

Deprivation has a significant impact on health and wellbeing. The 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.

English Indices of Deprivation (2015), DCLG show

12,900 households are workless

There are ten areas (out of a total of 219) in Dorset within the top 20% most deprived nationally for multiple deprivation, down from 12 in 2010¹. Nine of these are within the former borough of Weymouth and Portland, one is in the former West Dorset District area.

46% of Dorset's population lives in rural areas. Barriers to housing and essential services are significant in Dorset reflecting rurality and distance from services. 66 Dorset neighbourhoods fall in the 20% most deprived nationally for this measure: in the former council areas, 21 are in West Dorset and 20 in North Dorset.

Seven neighbourhoods in Dorset fall into the top 20% nationally for income deprivation (up from five in 2010) - seven of these are in the former borough of Weymouth and Portland

Weymouth and Portland residence based weekly earnings are £503 per week compared with £571 in Great Britain (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2018), ONS (full time gross weekly earnings))

It is widely recognised that alcohol is a major contributor to disease and health inequality, disproportionately affecting persons of lower socio-economic status. Analysis of alcohol use and harm within the population of different socio-economic groups consistently shows that drinkers of lower socio-economic status are caused more harm than those of higher socio-economic status.

[https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanpub/PIIS2468-2667\(17\)30089-0.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanpub/PIIS2468-2667(17)30089-0.pdf)

The rapid proliferation of convenience stores and metro supermarkets has meant that, in the UK as a whole, access to pubs and bars has decreased by around 8%, whilst access to off trade alcohol has increased by over a third. Deprived postcode areas have around 3 times as many outlets selling alcohol within walking distance than the least deprived areas. Furthermore, cheap alcohol is easier to access now than at any other time in recent history.

<https://www.alcoholpolicy.net/2017/05/alcohol-availability-england-trends-patterns-policy.html>

The licensing policy aims to stem the rise of licensed premises within cumulative impact areas where there are already significant problems arising from alcohol use and dependency.

The policy also highlights the need for operators to not sell alcohol at below cost price or conduct any promotions which might be deemed irresponsible.

It is not however anticipated that the proposed policy will have a negative effect on the grounds of class or socio-economic disadvantage.

Age

Low (positive impact)

There are nearly 59,800 children (0-15) living in Dorset. This represents 15.9% of the total population and is lower than the 19.1% national average. The number of 0-15yr olds is expected to fall slightly over the next 25 years, continuing the trend in place since 2007.

There was also a net loss of 15-19 year olds from Dorset to other parts of the UK, with net gains mostly among those aged 30+

28% of Dorset's population is aged over 65

Over the period 2007-2017, the number aged 65+ grew by 22,500 – up by 27%.

<https://apps.geowessex.com/insights/AreaProfiles/UnitaryAuthority/dorset-council>

The protection of children from harm is a key licensing objective and relates to prevention of access to age restricted products such as alcohol by persons under 18.

Applicants are required to demonstrate how they will promote the four licensing objectives and the policy should therefore have a positive effect on the potential problems arising from consumption of alcohol by under 18's.

Actions and objectives are stated in the policy that will help protect vulnerable and young people and it is proposed to consult with head teachers of all schools within the Borough on the revised Licensing Policy.

There are a number of conditions suggested within the policy which can be offered up by applicants or applied by the Licensing Sub-Committee following representations which can assist with ensuring young people are prevented access to alcohol or adult entertainment, including Challenge 25 scheme, refusals books, staff training, notices and security etc.

It is not however anticipated that the proposed policy will have a negative effect on the grounds of age.

Disability

Low (positive impact)

According to 2011 Census data, 72,167 Dorset residents had a long-term health problem or disability, this means people whose day-to-day activities are limited a lot or a little by a disability or long term medical condition.

In the policy applicants are requested to have regard to the type of people that are likely to visit their premises in their application when identifying the steps they will take to promote the licensing objectives. Applicants will be expected to propose steps to ensure that the physical layout of the premises does not present any risks to 'vulnerable' people, some of whom may be disabled.

During inspections, officers will give advice relating to accessibility and refer any relevant details to planning if it is suspected there may be accessibility issues or a lack of planning permission.

It is not however anticipated that the proposed policy will have a negative effect on the grounds of disability.

Pregnancy and maternity

Low (positive impact)

Dorset has a lower number of births than deaths giving a net decline in natural population.

It is important to consider the impact of alcohol related harm on pregnant women and unborn children

It is not however anticipated that the proposed policy will have a negative effect on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity/paternity.

Race

Low (positive impact)

Dorset has much lower levels (4.4%) of Black and Minority ethnic (BME) residents than the country as a whole (19.5%)². The highest proportion of Dorset's BME population are classified as 'White Other' who make up approximately 41% of Dorset's BME population. This classification includes people who identify as white but who do not have UK national identity (English, Welsh Scottish, Northern Irish and British). An example would be Polish.

The Local Authority has established procedures for engaging with the diverse range of businesses within the Council area.

Consultation on the new Statement of Licensing Policy will be undertaken with statutory consultees, including representatives from the business community.

It is not however anticipated that the proposed policy will have a negative effect on the grounds of race.

Religion/belief

Low (positive impact)

2011 census data shows The five major non-Christian world religions Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism constitute 1% of Dorset's residents' religious beliefs

Dorset's main non-Christian religious groups are concentrated in Dorset's towns. Weymouth has just over 300 residents of Muslim faith. There are also concentrations around military establishments such as Blandford Camp where the Gurkhas and their families live who are predominantly Hindu in their religious belief.

<https://apps.geowessex.com/insights/Topics>

The Local Authority has established procedures for engaging with the diverse range of businesses within the borough.

Consultation on the new Statement of Licensing Policy will be undertaken with statutory consultees, including representatives from the business community.

It is not however anticipated that the proposed policy will have a negative effect on the grounds of race.

Sex (gender)

Low

Men at all ages are more likely to drink above the recommended limits than women. There are 105 females for every 100 males in Dorset.

Women will benefit from a better managed Night Time Economy (NTE) environment when the various approaches set out in the policy to restrict alcohol related violence are applied. Women are more severely harmed, emotionally and physically, in alcohol related violence in the NTE and in the home and any activities to lessen such violence are of benefit to women. Better managed premises also benefit women who have drunk harmful amounts of alcohol because such premises will put in place measures to promote a safe drinking environment which restricts serving to people who have consumed harmful levels of alcohol. They will also have procedures in place to assist vulnerable people leaving venues.

Better management of licensed venues will also benefit men who may be deterred from alcohol related violence. Men are more likely to commit crimes when under the influence of alcohol. Nearly a fifth (19%) of all adult binge drinkers reported committing an offence in the previous year compared with 6% of other regular drinkers and 3% of those who occasionally or never drank alcohol (Source: General Lifestyle Survey, 2011)
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/incomeandwealth/compendium/generallifestylesurvey/2013-03-07>

The revised Statement of Principles would have a neutral impact on the protected characteristic of Sex (gender).

Sexual Orientation and Transgender

Low

There is no data available on the spatial distribution of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and transsexual people in the area, and there are no obvious places of congregation of such groups equivalent to those elsewhere in the country. There are 1,866 people are living in a same sex relationship.

According to the Stonewall “LGBT in Britain Health Report” one in six LGBT people (16 per cent) said they drank alcohol almost every day over the last year. Frequency of alcohol consumption increases with age; a third of LGBT people aged 65+ (33 per cent) say they drink almost every day, compared to just seven per cent of LGBT people aged 18-24. One in five LGBT men (20 per cent) drank alcohol almost every day over the last year compared to 13 per cent of LGBT women and 11 per cent of non-binary people. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), one in ten adults in general (ten per cent) drink alcohol on five or more days in the week.

Future consultations could consider targeted engagement with LBGT+ communities.

The revised Statement of Principles would have a neutral impact on the protected characteristic of Sexual Orientation

Rural isolation

Low

It is important to ensure that regulatory frameworks (such as alcohol, entertainment, and taxi licensing) do not disproportionately disadvantage residents in sparsely populated areas. While rurality is not a direct “protected characteristic” under the Equality Act 2010, it is included in assessments as a socio-economic or geographical factor that intersects with age, disability, and income.

Key Impacts of Licensing on Rural Isolation

- Access to Services: Residents in rural communities with poor, intermittent internet connectivity may struggle to engage with online licensing consultations or virtual committee hearings, creating barriers to participation.
- Reduced Transportation Options: Limited public transport in rural areas means that licensing decisions—such as the locations of licensed venues or taxi availability—have a greater impact on mobility for older or disabled people compared to urban residents.
- Safety and Support: While urban areas face issues with high-density licensed premises, rural areas might suffer from a lack of, or distance from, safe transport and emergency services after hours.
- Economic Disadvantage: Rural areas often have lower income levels, and strict, expensive, or complex licensing processes can discourage small, community-run rural businesses, impacting local amenity.

Mitigation Strategies

- Hybrid/Flexible Consultation: Implementing both face-to-face and online options for consultations to account for digital exclusion.
- Accessible Information: Ensuring that notices and application materials are available in physical, accessible formats in local community hubs, not just online.
- Targeted Outreach: Ensuring that licensing teams actively reach out to rural parish councils and community groups during policy reviews.
- Adjusted Transport Regulations: Reviewing taxi licensing policies to ensure that rural areas have adequate access to vehicles, including wheelchair-accessible options.

Armed forces background

Low

Research suggests that the rate of Armed Forces veterans with mental health conditions could be as high as 10%, compared to around 3% for the general population (House of Commons Defence Committee, Mental Health and the Armed Forces, Part One: The scale of mental health issues. 11th report 2017 – 19) Alcohol harm can be a significant factor in veteran communities.

The council in partnership with Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Programme is working to ensure that the Armed Forces Community in Dorset has access to the services and assistance

it requires.

4. Relevant data, research and consultation

In addition to the data sources contained within the assessment above, all relevant parties and organisations situated and operating within the area will be consulted on the draft policy and any responses will be fully considered by the licensing authority and licensing committee.

This assessment will be updated following the consultation period. The consultation will include;

- A draft Policy available at Libraries, Local Service Centres and the offices of the Licensing Team
- Emails to all Councillors, Mayors, and MPs
- Internal consultation process to relevant officers and Corporate Management Teams
- Public notices in the Dorset Echo
- Public consultation advertised on the Council website
- Letters to Premises licence holders and other interested parties
- Responsible Authorities– including Dorset Police, Wiltshire and Dorset Fire Brigade
- Emails to BCP, East Devon, Wiltshire and Somerset Councils
- Letters to all Head teachers of schools and education establishments located within the Area
- Armed forces community

Assessment of Impact and outcomes

Protected characteristics	Issues taken from evidence	Judgement (positive	Recommendations
Class or socio-economic disadvantage	No adverse impact	Low (positive)	Please refer to report
Age	No adverse impact	Low (positive)	Please refer to report
Disability	No adverse impact	Low (positive)	Please refer to report
Pregnancy and maternity	No adverse impact	Low (positive)	Please refer to report
Race	No adverse impact	Low (positive)	Please refer to report
Religion / belief	No adverse impact	Low (positive)	Please refer to report
Sex (gender)	No adverse impact	Low	Please refer to report
Sexual orientation	No adverse impact	Low	Please refer to report
Transgender	No adverse impact	Low	Please refer to report
Rural isolation	No adverse impact	Low	Please refer to report
Armed forces background	No adverse impact	Low	Please refer to report

Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan for Licensing Policy 2019-24							
Issues identified and groups affected	Actions to be taken	Timescales of actions	Who is responsible for delivery	Intended outcomes	Performance measures	Reference to service or other plans	
No gap identified with regards to equalities and diversity and the revised Licensing Policy 2026-31	Will ensure premises are considering their own impact on vulnerable persons such as young persons or street drinkers Continued engagement with the trade to ensure the four licensing objectives are being adequately promoted	Draft Policy consultation period of at least 8 weeks	J Newcombe	Policy Adopted for use	N/A	Corporate Plan Enforcement Policy	

6. Formal agreement

Formal agreement date to be confirmed.

7. Publication of results

Date EqlA published on Council website (full or summary version).

8. Monitoring and review

Set dates and mechanism for monitoring and reviewing.