



Appendix 8

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Template

Before completing the EQIA please have a look at the [Dorset Council style guide](#) and also use the [accessibility checker](#) to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to read.

Some key tips

- avoid tables and charts, if possible please provide raw data
- avoid pictures and maps if possible.
- avoid using bold, italics or colour to highlight or stress a point
- when using numbering or bullet points avoid using capitals at the beginning unless the name of something
- date format is dd month yyyy (1 June 2021)
- use clear and simple language
- where you need to use technical terms, abbreviations or acronyms, explain what they mean the first time you use them
- if using hyperlinks, make sure the link text describes where the link goes rather than 'click here' Please note equality impact assessments are published on the Dorset Council [website](#)

Before completing this form, please refer to the [supporting guidance](#). The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to consider the equality implications of your policy, strategy, project or service on different groups of people including employees of Dorset Council, residents and users of our services and to consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality.

Where further guidance is needed, please contact the Inclusion Champion or the [Diversity & Inclusion Officer](#).

1. Initial information

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

Dorset Cultural Strategy

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

New policy, project, strategy, project or service

Review of policy, project, strategy, project or service

Other (please explain)

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

Internal (employees only)

External (residents, communities, partners)

Both internal and external

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

This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) evaluates the Dorset Cultural Strategy to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all protected characteristic groups. The strategy aims to unite Dorset's cultural sector, align with council priorities, and deliver measurable outcomes across four key areas: Vibrant Places, Healthy Communities, Economic Development, and Environmental Action.

Aims and Objectives

The Dorset Cultural Strategy seeks to increase cultural engagement, improve mental health through cultural activities, boost economic impact, and enhance biodiversity. It involves 600 organisations and 4,000 workers benefiting 93% of Dorset's residents.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

The current cultural strategy expires in March 2026 and a new more up to date version is required. Cultural activity and programming is well placed in influencing

society's perceptions, raising awareness and promoting understanding about different protected characteristic groups.

Dorset Council's role within the delivery of cultural provision is that of enabler. The Council works closely with the voluntary and community sector, providing funding and support to organisations to deliver a high-quality service rather than directly operating theatres or galleries. It can influence how culture is delivered through funding, both revenue and one-off project grants, to ensure that providers deliver an inclusive and accessible service, prioritising communities with low engagement

Evidence gathering and engagement

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

Dorset Council Plan: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-council-plan-2024-to-2029> – informs all strands of the strategy, aligning the cultural sector with Dorset Council's broader objectives around housing, communities, economy and environment

Dorset Council Health and Wellbeing Strategy: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/health-and-wellbeing-strategy-2020-to-2023> - informs Healthy Communities, particularly around Creative Health activity

Dorset Library Strategy: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/dorset-library-strategy-progress-2024-2025> – informs Vibrant Places, particularly around spaces for cultural activity

Dorset Council Economic Growth Strategy: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/dorset-s-economic-growth-strategy-2025-to-2040> – informs Economic Development, particularly around market town development, employment and cultural tourism

NHS Dorset Joint Forward Plan: <https://nhsdorset.nhs.uk/voice/jointforwardplan/> - informs Healthy Communities, particularly around mental health and ageing well

Dorset Council Local Plan (draft): <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/dorset-council-local-plan-options-consultation-2025> - informs Vibrant Places and Economic Development particularly around capital infrastructure

Dorset Council Nature Recovery Strategy (draft): <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-s-local-nature-recovery-strategy> – informs Environmental Action, particularly around projects to increase public understanding of biodiversity

Dorset National Landscapes Management Plan (draft); <https://dorset-nl.org.uk/resources/draft-management-plan-2026-31/> - informs Vibrant Places and Environmental Action, particularly around activities in public space

Dorset Creative Health strategy (draft) – informs Healthy Communities, particularly around strategic resource for Creative Health

Destination Management Plan (draft) – informs Economic Development, particularly around cultural tourism

NHS 10 Year Health Plan for England: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-term-plan/> - informs Healthy Communities, particularly around preventative care

Arts Council England, Let's Create Strategy: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create/strategy-2020-2030> – informs all elements of strategy, particularly on funding for arts organisations and projects

National Lottery Heritage Fund, Heritage 2033: <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/about/heritage-2033-our-10-year-strategy> – informs all elements of strategy, particularly on funding for heritage organisations and projects

Creative Industries Sector Plan: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industries-sector-plan> – informs Economic Development, particularly around growth of creative businesses

Department for Business and Trade, Industrial Strategy: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy> – informs Economic Development, particularly around creative industries sector

Historic England Corporate Plan 2023-26: <https://historicengland.org.uk/about/what-we-do/corporate-plan/> - informs Vibrant Places and Economic Development, particularly around capital infrastructure

National Trust, People and Nature Thriving Strategy: <https://docs.nationaltrust.org.uk/strategy-2025> – informs Environmental Action, particularly around cultural organisations improving biodiversity on their own sites

ONS Census: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/censusbasedstatisticsuk2021> – informs understanding of comparative demographics in Dorset

ONS Official Census and Labour Market: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket> – informs understanding of comparative cultural workers in Dorset

ONS UK Business: Activity, Size and Location (2024): <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/ukbusinessactivitysizeandlocation2024> – informs understanding of comparative number and scale of cultural businesses

DCMS Participation Survey: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/participation-survey> – informs understanding of comparative engagement in culture in Dorset

DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates Gross Value Added: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-and-digital-sector-gva-2022-provisional/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-gross-value-added-2022-provisional> – informs understanding of economic value of cultural sector nationally

Dorset Hall: <https://dorsethalls.net/> - informs Vibrant Places, particularly around spaces for cultural activity

Dorset Council: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/your-council/parish-and-town-councils/parishatoz> – informs Vibrant Places, particularly around understanding of local government

Great South West: <https://greatsouthwest.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/The-Creative-Industries-in-the-Great-South-West.pdf> – informs Economic Development, particularly around potential for growth aligned with neighbouring places

Historic England: <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-and-economy/visitor-economy/> - informs Economic Development, particularly around impact of heritage sector

Economic Impact of Rural Dorset's Visitor Economy 2023: https://assets.simpleviewinc.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1/clients/dorset/2023_In_fographic_The_Economic_Impact_of_Rural_Dorsets_Visitor_Economy_excluding_B_CP_Council_area_FINAL_14e783a3-07a5-48dd-9e26-b97980a26707.pdf – informs Vibrant Places and Economic Development, particularly understanding of rural impact

Local Government Association: <https://www.local.gov.uk/culture-led-regeneration-case-studies> – informs Vibrant Places and Economic Development, particularly around targeted cultural interventions

Dorset Council census insights: <https://gi.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/insights/topics/Topic/Population> – informs understanding of Dorset's demographics

Sport and Recreation Alliance: <https://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/f393c7e4-5096-499a-9723-60824b6629ac.pdf> – informs Healthy Communities, particularly around value of movement activity such as dance

National Centre for Creative Health: <https://ncch.org.uk/uploads/APPG-on-Creative-Health-Creativity-and-Children-and-Young-Peoples-Mental-Health.pdf> – informs Healthy Communities, particularly on value of culture to young people's mental health

The State of the Arts, University of Warwick: <https://www.campaignforthearts.org/reports/the-state-of-the-arts/> - informs understanding of national state of the cultural sector and its relative decline

National Centre for Creative Health: <https://ncch.org.uk/uploads/Creative-Health-at-a-Glance--Booklet.pdf> – informs Health Communities, particularly understanding of value of Creative Health interventions

7. What did this tell you?

Local context

The Dorset Council area of Dorset is home to 385,000 people in 170,000 households. It has one of the oldest demographics in the UK – 30% are over 65 (19% nationally) and the average age is 51 (40 nationally). Dorset has an old age dependency ratio of 537 (vs. 297 nationally), meaning there are 537 people aged 65+ for every 1,000 working-age adults.

94% of people in Dorset are White British (74% nationally). In line with national averages, 17.5% live with a disability. 80% of working aged people are in employment (75% nationally). 15% of working aged people are self-employed (13% nationally).

There are six Lower-layer Super Output Areas in lowest (most deprived) decile of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. This represents 11,500 people (3% of the population). Five of these are in Weymouth, one in Portland.

Dorset welcomes almost 13 million visitors to Dorset every year, with total visitor spend of £924 million. Tourism is highly seasonal with 51% of visits taking place June-September.

Dorset is predominantly rural. There are 152 persons per square mile (a fifth of national average). 53% of Dorset is an accredited National Landscape. It is home to England's only natural UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Jurassic Coast.

Dorset has 17 towns and over 300 villages. The largest town, Weymouth, is home to 53,000 people whilst the smaller, Beaminster, has just over 3,000.

As with other rural areas, Dorset is comparatively less well-served by public transport than urban areas, particularly in the north. Two train lines connect to London but connectivity within Dorset is a challenge with people reliant on cars.

Dorset Council is a unitary authority formed in 2019 from a merging of five Districts and the County Council. There are 17 Town Councils and 278 Parish Councils.

Dorset is part of the proposed Wessex devolution partnership with Somerset, Wiltshire, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Councils.

Dorset's Cultural Sector

There's a high level of engagement with culture in Dorset. 93% of people engage with the arts, 78% visit a heritage site, 45% visit a museum or gallery and 26% visit a public library. 79% of people use a car to travel to cultural experiences.

There are 660 arts, entertainment and recreation businesses in Dorset. The cultural sector employs 4,200 people (2,900 in creative, arts and entertainment; 1,300 in libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities). Nationally, 28% of people working in creative industries nationally are freelance – it is likely to be higher in Dorset due to the size of cultural organisations.

There are 32 museums in Dorset, 24 of which have Arts Council England accreditation. There are 22 National Trust and 12 English Heritage sites. Most towns in Dorset have a theatre, arts centres or public building that hosts live performance. There are over 25 public and private exhibition spaces across Dorset, including galleries in museums and arts centres. Dorset Art Weeks features 250 studios and galleries.

Dorset also celebrates performance in non-culture-specific spaces. There are 115 village halls with a mixed community and professional programme. Dorset has 385 pubs, many of which hold cultural events. Performances and public art also take place in temporary spaces – in town squares, village greens, gardens and large-scale festival sites. Each summer, Dorset welcomes over 100,000 visitors for music festivals. The community sector is strong, with radio stations, amateur dramatics and community choirs.

Dorset is a location for national and international film production with the Dorset Film Office managing licences for filming on the Dorset Council land and liaising with film companies.

Some elements of the cultural sector are supported directly with public funding. Dorset Council provides revenue funding totalling £486,000 to 28 organisations and awards additional funding to around 30 projects a year. Arts Council England is the largest single funder of culture in Dorset providing £4m in 2024-25 in regular funding (to six National Portfolio Organisations), project grants and strategic funds. The National Lottery Heritage Fund is the second largest single funder of culture, awarding £1.2m in 2024-25 to 9 projects. Most Town Councils and some Parish Councils provide funding for culture through a combination of project and regular funding.

There are 31 libraries in Dorset, of which 23 are run directly by Dorset Council with the remaining 8 run by the community. Libraries are community cultural hubs that play a key role in supporting children and young people's cultural engagement supporting Dorset Council's Best Start in Life strategy, Creative Health – including social prescribing – and digital inclusion.

Dorset's archives are managed by Dorset History Centre and contain 1,000 years of historical records. Dorset's archaeology is the most significant in the region. As the depository for the county, Dorset Museum and Art Gallery holds over 3 million objects, making up 70% of their collection.

Dorset's cultural sector provides opportunities for volunteering. The 28 revenue-funded organisations in Dorset alone work with 1,377 volunteers who contributed a combined 84,288 hours a year.

Despite being a distinct local authority area, many artists and organisations based in the Dorset Council area work in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) and vice versa. Creatives benefit from opportunities on both sides of the border. Audiences also travel from one to the other. BCP is home to larger venues such as Poole Lighthouse which includes a 1500-capacity Concert Hall and the Bournemouth International Centre which can host up to 10,000 people.

Similarly, creatives and producers at the edge of the Dorset Council area often work beyond the borders, with Southampton, Salisbury, Yeovil and Exeter, in particular, providing cultural opportunities.

The cultural sector overlaps with many other parts of society, particularly health and education. Dorset has delivered a joint Creative Health strategy with partners in health to increase the use and impact of cultural activity that improves health and wellbeing. Culture plays a key role in the development of young people. Many of Dorset's schools and colleges have excellent cultural facilities, some of which are used by professionals and community groups as well as students. Further education institution Coastland College specialises in courses for the cultural and creative industries, whilst Arts University Bournemouth (based in BCP) has a global reputation for its creative courses.

The cultural sector is supported by various regional and national sector-specific bodies covering museums, libraries, visual art, live music, outdoor arts and theatre. In Dorset, the museums are supported by South West Museum Development with a dedicated officer for the county of Dorset. Arts Development Company provides support to the rest of the sector, providing bespoke advice and training.

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

We've held public workshops for 80 people in Bridport, Wimborne and Sturminster Newton. We've held sector specific workshops with museums and Town Councils. We've run youth workshops with Coastland College in Weymouth (16-18) and with Buckland Newton Youth Group (10-16).

We've had ongoing consultation with a working group of Dorset Council culture and culture-related officers and another with leaders of Dorset Cultural organisations.

We've had one-to-one consultation meetings with Dorset Libraries, Dorset Council's Communities team, Dorset National Landscapes, Volunteer Centre Dorset, Business Growth Dorset, Dorset Archaeology, Arts Council England, Creative UK, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts University Bournemouth, NHS Dorset, Visit Dorset and Dorset Council Public Health.

We had an online consultation with 250 responses.

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 a EqlA because (provide details):

n/a

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.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Positive	The strategy targets both Children and Young People and older people. From early years engagement to professional training, Dorset will value cultural experience for children and young people. Opportunities for youth-focused and intergenerational activity will be encouraged. Culture will support Dorset Council's Best Start in Life strategy. Culture will be better embedded in education – through schools, informal learning, and community-based opportunities. Schools will be better connected to cultural providers, including promoting careers in the sector. Voices of young people will be heard and inform place-based cultural development. Older people are specifically recognised in the Healthy Communities priority, recognising the ageing demographic in Dorset and the opportunity for cultural activity to improve health and wellbeing.
Disability	Positive	The strategy supports people with disabilities, both through the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion universal theme and through improving access to venues through capital improvements, such as wheelchair access, facilities for people with visual or hearing impairments, and spaces that support people with neurodevelopmental conditions. Neurodevelopmental conditions include conditions that affect how the brain develops and processes information, such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Positive	The strategy supports gender identity through the Healthy Communities priority which develops inclusive activity in targeted places which brings communities together creating a universal offer. This offer will be accessible and welcoming.
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	This strategy is not specifically targeted at people who are married or in a civil partnership. Evidence from the ONS Census and the DCMS Participation Survey does not identify marital status as a factor affecting participation in cultural activity locally or nationally.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive	Venues for cultural activity will be accessible for pregnant women and provide spaces for those caring for young children. This could include daytime 'noisy' performances, space for prams and buggies and breakout rooms.
Race and Ethnicity	Positive	The strategy promotes inclusion for race and ethnicity through both the universal themes and through Healthy Communities, working with targeted groups and communities. This includes programming in venues and festivals, opportunities to work in the sector and communications to targeted groups.
Religion and belief	Neutral	This strategy is not specifically targeted at people with a particular religion or belief. Evidence from the ONS Census and the DCMS Participation Survey does not identify religion or belief as a significant barrier to cultural participation in Dorset or nationally.
Sex (consider men and women)	Positive	The strategy will particularly benefit men who don't normally engage with culture by working to improve lives of people with poor mental health. With suicide the biggest cause of death in men under 50 (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-call-for-evidence-on-mens-health), work will be undertaken to deliver cultural projects to address this. The strategy will also benefit women, particularly those with limited access to cultural activity such as new mothers (see Pregnancy and Maternity, above).
Sexual orientation	Positive	The strategy supports sexual orientation through the Healthy Communities priority and through the EDI theme which is one of four universal themes which run throughout all the work of the strategy. This includes programming activity of cultural sector and training in inclusive recruitment.
People with caring responsibilities	Neutral	This strategy is not specifically targeted at people with caring responsibilities. Evidence from the ONS Census and DCMS Participation Survey does not identify caring responsibilities as a primary barrier to cultural participation. However, some activity delivered through the Healthy Communities priority may indirectly benefit carers, particularly through

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		projects supporting people living with conditions such as Alzheimer's disease or Parkinson's disease.
Rural isolation	Positive	The strategy identifies a need for a rich cultural offer throughout Dorset through the Vibrant Places priority. This includes targeted activity in places with less culture and ensuring strategic plans exist to increase cultural activity.
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive	The strategy aims to address socio-economic deprecation by growing the cultural sector and its impact, creating more employment opportunities. It also aims to reduce barriers to accessing culture. As cultural activity is often more prevalent in affluent communities, by increasing cultural activity in across Dorset, this strategy will benefit those in socio-economic deprivation.
Single parents	Neutral	This strategy isn't targeted specifically at single parents though there may be activity through the Vibrant Places stand that benefits this group by increasing activity across Dorset. This would lead to more activity happening closer to where someone lives, reducing travel time and making cultural activity more accessible for single parents.
Armed forces communities	Neutral	This strategy isn't targeted at armed forces communities though there may be activity that benefits this group through the Vibrant Places strand in identifying places with less activity than others. Were a targeted place to be an area in which armed forces communities lived, this would lead to an increase in activity available for that community.

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

This strategy has a positive impact for age, disability, gender reassignment/gender identity, pregnancy/maternity, race/ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, rural isolation and socio-economic deprivation.

The cultural programme will work with targeted communities, particularly those marginalised from parts Dorset's cultural offer. It will provide new activity to increase access to culture.

Spaces for cultural activity will be improved to welcome more people and reduce or remove barriers to access.

Opportunities to take part in culture will be enhanced, with people able to benefit from cultural activity which improves their health and wellbeing.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is one of four Universal Themes of the strategy. This means it informs every element of the strategy and is a major consideration in decisions around funding and investment for culture.

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
Ensure that the strategy remains live and that actions are focused to address inequality in accessing culture	Set up effective governance structure, meeting quarterly	Dorset Council/external cultural development	May 2026
	Review outputs on an annual basis aligned with EDI universal theme	Dorset Council/external cultural development	November 2026
	Ensure Equality, Access and Inclusion are the main topic of discussion at least once a year	Dorset Council/external cultural development	March 2027
Ensure there is evidence of the impact of cultural activity on targeted groups	Annual impact report case studies	Dorset Council/external cultural development	March 2027
	Monitoring information of organisations in receipt of Dorset Council funding	Dorset Council/external cultural development	May 2027

Sign Off: James Palfreman-Kay

Officer completing this EqIA: Darren Spreadbury & Arts Development Company

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: As Above

Date of completion: 10/03/2026

Version Number: 1

EqlA review date: 10/03/2027

Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palfreman-Kay

Next Steps:

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

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