

# **Service and Community Impact Assessment (SCIA)**

## **Front Sheet:**

### **Directorate and Service Area:**

Children Education & Families  
School Organisation & Planning

### **What is being assessed:**

Ceasing to produce printed paper copies of admissions brochures ('Starting school' and 'Moving on').

### **Responsible owner / senior officer:**

Rebeca Matthews, Interim Deputy Director, Education and Early Intervention

### **Date of assessment:**

November 2015

### **Summary of judgement:**

The Council prints and distributes to schools, libraries and early years settings paper copies of a primary school and secondary school admissions brochure. These set out the admissions process, contain details of every school in Oxfordshire and contain an application form on which parents can list their preferred schools. Over the past few years the number of printed copies has been reduced but there were still 800 copies of 'Moving on' (for transfer to secondary school) and 1700 of 'Starting school' printed and distributed this year, 2,500 in total. The total production, printing and distribution costs amounted to £25,000.

The admissions brochures are also published as Pdf documents on the Council's public website which is accessible from personal computers and hand held devices as well as from schools' and libraries" computers. In addition, it is possible to apply on-line for school places. This has an added advantage over paper applications in that an automatic receipt of submission is generated and an automated notification of allocated school is sent on the same day that printed letters are sent out by second class post.

It is proposed that for school admissions from September 2017 onwards the Council will not produce printed versions of the admissions brochures i.e. the summer 2015 print run (for admissions in September 2016) of 2,500 will be the last. It will remain an option for parents, schools and other institutions to download Pdf versions of the brochures to print off hard copies for reference if they so wish.

## **Detail of Assessment:**

### **Purpose of assessment:**

This assessment has been undertaken to evaluate whether ceasing to produce paper copies of the admissions brochures may cause any negative impacts upon parents or carers with protected characteristics and to assess whether there would be detriment to overall efficiency of the school admissions process.

This assessment fulfils the Council's requirements under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 as set out below.

The impact of this budget option should be considered in conjunction with other savings options being proposed to ensure that no unintended adverse consequences arise from the cumulative effects of certain options being taken forward.

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ("the 2010 Act") imposes a duty on the Council to give due regard to three needs in exercising its functions. This proposal is such a function. The three needs are:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic, and those who do not.

Complying with section 149 may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but only to the extent that that does not amount to conduct which is otherwise unlawful under the new Act.

The need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages which are connected to a relevant protected characteristic and which are suffered by persons who share that characteristic,
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and which are different from the needs of other people, and
- encourage those who share a relevant characteristic to take part in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.
- take steps to meet the needs of disabled people which are different from the needs of people who are not disabled and include steps to take account of a person's disabilities.

The need to foster good relations between different groups involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership

## **Social Value**

Under the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012 the Council also has an obligation to consider how the procurement of services contracts with a life value of more than £173,934<sup>1</sup> might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the area affected by the proposed contract, and how it might act to secure this improvement. However, it is best practice to consider social value for all types of contracts, service delivery decisions and new/updated policies. In this context, 'policy' is a general term that could include a strategy, project or contract.

## **Context / Background:**

The Council needs to make significant reductions in its revenue expenditure. The printing of admissions brochures is controllable expenditure in that although it supports the discharge of a statutory duty, there is no requirement to provide information to parents about school admissions on paper. The Council has discretion over how it discharges the duty to make information available. The production, printing and distribution of admissions brochures are funded out of the Council's general revenue accounts and therefore any reduction in the amount spent would represent a genuine saving to the Council, contributing to reducing its net expenditure.

## **Proposals:**

It is proposed that from now onwards the principal medium through which information about school admissions will be made available to parents & carers will be the Council's public website i.e. no further printed copies will be produced. This will save the Council £25,000 per annum and will also have the coincidental benefit of saving some staff time involved in the physical production & distribution of brochures which can be deployed in dealing with applications for school places received during the summer.

<sup>11</sup> [EC Procurement Threshold for Services](#)

It will still be open to parents and carers to make telephone and e-mail enquiries about specific matters not covered by the material on the website.

## **Evidence / Intelligence:**

At the same time as the number of printed brochures has been reduced year on year the total number of applications has increased with a marked shift away from paper applications to on-line applications which now account for over 90%. The proportion of parents obtaining a place at their first preference school has remained broadly static whilst the absolute number has actually increased.

## **Alternatives considered / rejected:**

The acute pressure on the Council's finances means that all elements of controllable/discretionary expenditure have had to be considered for the identification of possible savings. A reduction in the number of printed copies was considered but this would yield relatively little saving from the printing cost due to the fixed cost of 'typesetting'. There would, however, have been a proportionate reduction in distribution costs.

## **Impact Assessment:**

Identify any potential impacts of the policy or proposed service change on the population as a whole, or on particular groups. It might be helpful to think about the largest impacts or the key parts of the policy or proposed service change first, identifying any risks and actions, before thinking in more detail about particular groups, staff, other Council services, providers etc.

It is worth remembering that 'impact' can mean many things, and can be positive as well as negative. It could for example relate to access to services, the health and wellbeing of individuals or communities, the sustainability of supplier business models, or the training needs of staff.

We assess the impact of decisions on any relevant community, but with particular emphasis on:

- Groups that share the nine protected characteristics
  - age
  - disability
  - gender reassignment
  - pregnancy and maternity
  - race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
  - religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
  - sex
  - sexual orientation
  - marriage and civil partnership
- Rural communities

- Areas of deprivation

We also assess the impact on:

- Staff
- Other council services
- Other providers of council services
- Any other element which is relevant to the policy or proposed service change
- How it might improve the economic, social, and environmental of the area affected by the contract if the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies

For every community or group that you identify a potential impact you should discuss this in detail, using evidence (from data, consultation etc.) where possible to support your judgements. You should then highlight specific risks and any mitigating actions you will take to either lessen the impact, or to address any gaps in understanding you have identified.

If you have not identified an impact on particular groups, staff, other Council services, providers etc. you should indicate this to demonstrate you have considered it.

### **Impact on Individuals and Communities:**

#### **Impact on groups with protected characteristics, rural communities and areas of deprivation**

The main impact of ceasing to produce printed brochures is likely to be felt in those communities where deprivation means that parents and carers do not own the technology necessary to access information on-line. Some disabilities may also make it more difficult to access information on line than in paper format.

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
Disadvantaged parents and carers unable to access the information they need to make on time applications for school places.	<p>Continue to send reminder letters advising of the need and timetable to apply for school places.</p> <p>Encourage schools to provide support to parents and help them apply for school places, including through making their own IT equipment available to use. Information will remain accessible through computers in libraries and other public buildings.</p> <p>Through the take up of funded places for disadvantaged two year olds identify those parents at risk of not being able to</p>

	engage with the admissions process and offer advice via the Family Information Service.
Disabled parents and carers may find online information less accessible than that printed on paper.	Encourage schools to provide support to parents and help them apply for school places, including through making their own IT equipment available to use. Continue to provide help and advice over the 'phone.

### **Impact on Staff:**

It would only be if the lack of printed admissions brochures led to a large increase in the numbers of late applications that there would be a discernible impact on workload.

Risks	Mitigations
Increased workload created by more late applications.	<p>Continue to send reminder letters advising of the need and timetable to apply for school places.</p> <p>Encourage schools to provide support to parents and help them apply for school places, including through making their own IT equipment available to use. Information will remain accessible through computers in libraries and other public buildings.</p> <p>Through the take up of funded places for disadvantaged two year olds identify those parents at risk of not being able to engage with the admissions process and offer advice via the Family Information Service.</p>

### **Impact on other Council services:**

Libraries (and schools) could see more parents and carers asking for assistance and/or to use their IT facilities which would, on balance, be a positive development as it would increase engagement with otherwise hard to reach families.

Risks	Mitigations
Loss of work for the County Print Unit	<p>Communication with print unit so they are aware of reduction in work and can plan accordingly.</p> <p>Increased printing of bulk letters e.g.</p>

	reminders to apply for school places and school place allocation letters (currently printed on County Hall machines).
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## Impact on providers:

Risks	Mitigations
Increased demand on schools to support parents and help them apply for school places, including through making their own IT equipment available to use.	<p>Over 90% of applications are already online, so increase in demand likely to be small</p> <p>Continue to send reminder letters advising of the need and timetable to apply for school places.</p> <p>Information will remain accessible through computers in libraries and other public buildings.</p> <p>Through the take up of funded places for disadvantaged two year olds identify those parents at risk of not being able to engage with the admissions process and offer advice via the Family Information Service.</p> <p>Continue to provide help and advice over the 'phone.</p>

## Social Value

***If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area.***

**How might the proposal improve the economic well-being of the relevant area?**

**How might the proposal improve the environmental well-being of the relevant area?**

[Redacted]

**Action plan:**

Action	By When	Person responsible
Monitor proportion of forecast applications received on time.	November (secondary applications) and January (primary) each year.	Neil Darlington, Service Manager Admissions & Transport
Monitor geographic patterns of on time application to identify any specific detrimental impacts	November (secondary applications) and January (primary) each year.	Neil Darlington, Service Manager Admissions & Transport

**Monitoring and review:****Person responsible for assessment:**

Version	Date	Notes (e.g. Initial draft, amended following consultation)
v.1	November 2015	Initial draft