

1. Who is completing the EqIA and why is it being done?

Title of service / proposal / project / strategy / procurement you are assessing	Free School Meals in Hertfordshire—an extended voucher/grant scheme for winter 2020/21.
Names of those involved in completing the EqIA	Felix Gilding—SEND Improvement Commissioning Manager, Children’s Services.
Head of Service or Business Manager	Sally Orr, Head of Family & Health Services Commissioning. CS Board sponsor: Simon Newland, Operations Director Education.
Team/Department	SEND commissioning, Family & Health Services Commissioning
Lead officer contact details	Email: Felix.gilding1@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Focus of EqIA – what are you assessing?	<p>The impact of a free school meals voucher/grant scheme for winter 2020/21, extending support coverage to the school holidays. This is a temporary measure to help support families facing financial hardship in light of Covid-19. The main outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The volume of families supported. - How successfully targeted the support is, ensuring help for those most in need. - Support for children to successfully attend school and realise their education outcomes. <p>The main reasons for these proposals is to help the county respond increasing levels of need amongst families in the poor economic climate inducted by the coronavirus pandemic. As this is part of the County Council’s Covid-19 response, this project would need to be mindful of other Covid-19 initiatives in Children’s Services and its partners—particularly on universal credit, free school meals and school attendance activity.</p>
Stakeholders	<p>Key stakeholders include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children and young people who live in Herts and attend a Herts school. - Parents and carers of Hertfordshire children and young people. - District and Borough councils who supporting families with housing and benefits. - County Councillors and their District/Borough counterparts. - Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Further Education settings. - Social work teams in Children’s Services and Adult Care Services.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hertfordshire's Money Advice Unit. - Voluntary sector partners: e.g. citizens advice bureau, food banks. <p>The most relevant protected characteristics are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Age. - Disability. - Race. - Carers. - Pregnancy & maternity.
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2. List of data sources used for this EqIA

Title and brief description	Date	Gaps in data
<p>Herts Insight deprivation analysis Providing an overview of deprivation metrics across the county. https://iao.blob.core.windows.net/publications/reports/7f0da506e64047899aa449fc5613d82a/E10000015.html#</p>	09/11/20	
<p>Children's Life Chances JSNA (2016) Provides an overview of factors affecting children's life outcomes and their prevalence in Hertfordshire. https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/jsna/jsna-documents/childrens-life-chances-jsna-july-2016.pdf</p>	09/11/20	
<p>Analysis of Free School Meals in Hertfordshire An overview of free school meals in Hertfordshire, especially the uptake by different ethnic backgrounds.</p>	09/11/20	
<p>Learning Disabilities JSNA (2019) Provides an overview of the prevalence of learning disabilities across all age groups in Hertfordshire and the health, educational and social challenges that individuals with learning disabilities face. https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/jsna/jsna-documents/learning-disabilities-jsna-2019.pdf</p>	09/11/20	

Maternal Health JSNA (2014) Provides an overview of maternal health and neonatal support in Hertfordshire. https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/jsna/jsna-documents/maternal-health-jsna-2014.pdf	09/11/20	
Carers UK—Caring behind closed doors: six months on Outlines the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on unpaid carers. file://hertsc.gov.uk/home/STEVENAGE/USERS/Felix%20Gilding1/caringbehindcloseddoorsoct20v6.pdf	09/11/20	

3. Analysis and assessment: review of information, impact analysis and mitigating actions

Protected characteristic group	What do you know? What do people tell you?	What does this mean – what are the potential impacts of the proposal(s)?	What can you do?
Age	<p>That children and young people aged 16 and under are eligible for Free School Meals.</p> <p>That childhood deprivation has a significant impact on a child’s mental, emotional and educational development—significantly limiting lifelong outcomes.</p>	<p>That children and young people are at more risk to deprivation, in terms of its lifelong impact, than other age groups. Therefore, proposals will need to ensure that this group of users is sufficiently supported.</p>	<p>Mitigations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying children and young people who could most benefit from support via the free school meals register, engagement with school partners, assessing most at risk children known to social services. - Ensuring that the proposals have sufficient capacity to meet demand. - Ensuring that the proposals target the most deprived localities of children and enable access.
Disability	<p>That half of disabled families were not in a form of work or employment—having a significant financial impact.</p> <p>That children with learning disabilities are significantly more likely to live in poverty, which is associated with worse mental health in childhood. As of 2015, 31.4% of children and young people with SEN support with a learning disability were receiving free school meals. The figure is 35.6% for children and young people with a learning disability and an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).</p>	<p>That our winter support offer will need to be accessible for disabled families, in terms of how they become aware of the support offer and how they can physically access it. Covid-19 could have an additional safety impact for these groups’ ability to access support in the community, particularly if they are clinically vulnerable.</p>	<p>Mitigations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross-referencing the free schools meals list with our knowledge of which families have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and/or are clinically vulnerable. - Ensuring that all materials regarding the winter support offer are made accessible to new disability standards (e.g. adapted for the Local Offer). - Ensuring that frontline case workers and partners in the community are equipped to engage with disabled families and facilitate service access. - To ensure that support distribution methods are assessed in their accessibility for disabled families. - Potentially using SEN support and/or EHCPs to help us identify which children and young people may have the most needs in terms of deprivation.

Gender reassignment	No major links identified at this stage.		The position will be reviewed, and any identified mitigating actions will be taken forward in the Action Plan.
Pregnancy and maternity	Poor nutrition is a known risk factor for low birth weights in new-born children. It is associated with inhibited growth and cognitive development. As of 2011, Hertfordshire's low birth weight rate was 6.8% (below the national average of 7.4%). Note that this was slightly higher in East and North Herts than in Herts Valleys.	That the impact of deprivation and difficult access to healthy food can have a disproportionate impact on pregnant mothers, particularly their new-born children.	Mitigations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring that winter food voucher and grant schemes are made accessible for pregnant and expectant mothers. - Ensuring that allied professionals like Midwives and Health Visitors are aware of the service offer.
Race	That there is significant variation between ethnic groups on their access to Free School Meals: 65% are White British, followed by 4% Mixed background White & Black Caribbean, 3.7% Black African, 2.9% any other mixed background and 2.3% Pakistani. That race can also have an impact of employment opportunities, with 1/3 Black African families not being in employment.	That there are significant ethnic minorities who are eligible for free school meals, for whom English may not be their first language. That rate can also be a social determinant for employment opportunities, hence increasing the risk of deprivation.	Mitigations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring that materials promoting the winter support scheme are available in translation. - Close engagement with community groups representing different ethnic communities. - Ensuring that partners like schools and social workers are aware of the impact that racial inequality has on deprivation.
Religion or belief	No major links identified at this stage.		
Sex/Gender	There is currently a fairly even gender split amongst children and young people who are accessing free school meals (51% are male, 49% are female). However, particular risk factors linked to deprivation may be reported as	That sex and gender may impact the known prevalence of other deprivation risk factors. However, the current evidence does not suggest that overall there would be an uneven impact.	Mitigations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To keep the impact of gender under review as part of the scheme and to take forward any identified mitigations as part of the scheme's action plan.

	more gender specific. For instance, as of January 2018 14.7% of boys were receiving SEN support versus 8.2% of girls. Therefore, certain genders may be more likely to have other protected characteristics which increase the risk of deprivation.		
Sexual orientation	No major links identified so far.		Mitigations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To keep the potential impact of this protected characteristic under review and to take forward any mitigations that are identified.
Marriage and civil partnership	No major links identified so far.		Mitigations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To keep the potential impact of this protected characteristic under review and to take forward any mitigations that are identified.
Carers	National research by Carers UK has found that 81% of unpaid carers are providing more care since the coronavirus pandemic. Over a quarter of carers were found to be struggling to make ends meet, whilst 11% of carers have had to reduce their work hours.	That a significant minority of carers have been negatively impacted financially by the coronavirus pandemic, in tern increasing their risk of deprivation.	Mitigations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring that proposals are effectively communicated to Hertfordshire's carer support groups. - Ensuring that carers who are deemed most at risk are identified by social work teams and, if appropriate, contacted about the support that is on offer.
Other relevant groups Consider if there is a potential impact (positive or negative) on areas such as health and wellbeing, crime and disorder, Armed Forces community.	No other relevant groups have been identified at this time, however this will be kept constantly under review.		

Opportunity to advance equality of opportunity and/or foster good relations

These proposals offer the Local Authority a significant opportunity to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations at scale across the county of Hertfordshire. The EQIA has identified that deprivation and its link to accessing food has a major impact for a range of protected characteristics. Initial evidence suggests that this has only been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, a comprehensive programme of free school meal voucher and/or winter grant support allows these inequalities to be mitigated.

Conclusion of your analysis and assessment

OUTCOME AND NEXT STEPS	SUMMARY
<p>i. No equality impacts identified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- No major change required to proposal	
<p>ii. Minimal equality impacts identified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Adverse impacts have been identified, but have been objectively justified (provided you do not unlawfully discriminate)- Ensure decision makers consider the cumulative effect of how a number of decisions impact on equality- No major change required to proposal	<p>Adverse impacts have been identified insofar as the need to ensure that the proposal if effectively executed to meet the needs of a range of protected characteristics. This will therefore necessitate a multi-layered approach to ensure service accessibility and the greatest positive impact reducing inequality linked to deprivation.</p>
<p>iii. Potential equality impacts identified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Take 'mitigating action' to change the original policy/proposal, remove barriers or better advance equality- Set out clear actions in the action plan in section 4.	
<p>iv. Major equality impacts identified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The adverse effects are not justified, cannot be mitigated or show unlawful discrimination- You must stop and remove the policy [you should consult with Legal Services]- Ensure decision makers understand the equality impact	

4. Prioritised Action Plan

Impact identified and group(s) affected	Action planned	Expected outcome	Measure of success	Lead officer and timeframe
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing research & cohort data analysis. - Identifying children and young people who could most benefit from support via the free school meals register, engagement with school partners, assessing most at risk children known to social services. - Ensuring that the proposals have sufficient capacity to meet demand. - Ensuring that the proposals target the most deprived localities of children and enable access. 	Improved access for children and young people in the most deprived households.	The number of children and young people in this cohort who are supported.	To be in place at service offer launch (mid-December 2020).
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross-referencing the free schools meals list with our knowledge of which families have SEND and/or are clinically vulnerable. - Ensuring that all materials regarding the winter support offer are made accessible to new disability standards (e.g. adapted for the Local Offer). - Ensuring that frontline case workers and partners in the community are equipped to engage with disabled families and facilitate service access. - To ensure that support distribution methods are assessed in their accessibility for disabled families. - Potentially using SEN support and/or EHCPs to help us identify which children and young people may have the most needs in terms of deprivation. 	Improved access to the support offer for children, young people and adults who are disabled.	<p>The proportion of children and young people receiving free school meals and on an EHCP who are supported.</p> <p>The proportion of service users who are disabled.</p>	To be in place at service offer launch (mid-December 2020).

Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing research & cohort data analysis. - Ensuring that materials promoting the winter support scheme are available in translation. - Close engagement with community groups representing different ethnic communities. - Ensuring that partners like schools and social workers are aware of the impact that racial inequality has on deprivation. 	That children, young people and families from a range of ethnic backgrounds are able to successfully access the support offer.	That a broad range and high volume of different ethnic groups are able to access the support offer.	To be in place at service offer launch (mid-December 2020).
Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing research & cohort data analysis. - Ensuring that proposals are effectively communicated to Hertfordshire's carer support groups. - Ensuring that carers who are deemed most at risk are identified by social work teams and, if appropriate, contacted about the support that is on offer. 	That parent carers facing financial deprivation are able to access the support offer.	The number of parent carers who are able to access the support offer, especially those in challenging financial circumstances.	To be in place at service offer launch (mid-December 2020).
Pregnancy & maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing research & cohort data analysis. - Ensuring that winter food voucher and grant schemes are made accessible for pregnant and expectant mothers. - Ensuring that allied professionals like Midwives and Health Visitors are aware of the service offer. 	That pregnant and expectant mothers are able to access the support offer.	That pregnant and expectant mothers facing financial hardship are able to access the support offer.	To be in place at service offer launch (mid-December 2020).

This EqIA has been signed off by:

Lead Equality Impact Assessment officer: Felix Gilding

Date: 09/11/2020

Head of Service or Business Manager:

Date:

Review date: