

Equality Impact Assessment: *Consultation and Engagement Strategy*

The Equality Act 2010 includes a general duty which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

Authorities which fail to carry out equality impact assessments risk making poor and unfair decisions which may discriminate against particular groups and worsen inequality.

Committee name and date:	Report Title	Decisions being recommended:	People with protected characteristics potentially impacted by the decisions to be made:
Executive to recommend to Council 3 rd February 2026	Consultation and Engagement Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approval, by Council, of the adoption of the Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2025–2028, subject to the amendments set out in section 10.1 of this report.	As the strategy is designed to enable a diverse and representative voice in engagement work it is likely all groups will be affected to some degree

Committee name and date:	Report Title	Decisions being recommended:	People with protected characteristics potentially impacted by the decisions to be made:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of the recommended changes in response to survey feedback. Approval of an annual review of the strategy's effectiveness, including a summary of engagement outcomes and lessons learned. 	

Factors to consider in the assessment: For each of the groups below, an assessment has been made on whether the proposed decision will have a **positive, negative or neutral impact**. This is must be noted in the table below alongside brief details of why this conclusion has been reached and notes of any mitigation proposed. Where the impact is negative, a **high, medium or low assessment** is given. The assessment rates the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact –some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
Race and ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers; asylum seekers).	Positive	Medium	<p>2021 Census shows ~90% White with minority groups present. Whilst Gypsy & Traveler accommodation needs are assessed across Devon there may be barriers to engagement local issues.</p> <p>Language needs can affect participation. There may also be cultural barriers to engagement with authorities, as outlined in previous focus groups with Inclusive Exeter.</p> <p>The strategy emphasises inclusive methods to map and understand community need, working with volunteers and community partners, going to where people and communities are and recruiting community panels.</p> <p>There is also a recommendation in the report to strengthen the focus on accessibility</p>
Disability: as defined by the Equality Act – a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.	Positive (although negative where accessible formats / venues not available)	Medium	<p>Disabled people are disproportionately affected by digital exclusion and accessibility barriers, particularly where these intersect with other factors such as age and income.</p> <p>The strategy commits to inclusive engagement activities. However, the report recommends strengthening explicit reference to actions that improve accessibility.</p>
Sex	Positive	Medium	<p>There may be some risk of lower participation from certain groups, due to caring responsibilities, time constraints and 'after dark' safety concerns highlighted in the 2025 residents survey, (greater concern from women). The report recommends the strategy addresses these through explicit reference to flexible formats/times and engagement with VCSE advocate groups.</p>

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
Gender reassignment	Positive	Medium	Although the focus of the strategy on diverse and inclusive voices is likely to be positive, there may be some risks here around disclosure and anonymity, as well as language used in survey material. This is mitigated by the mixed method approach, (going to communities), and the safeguards around anonymity on the digital platform. Survey design is informed by national best practice and engagement with relevant local stakeholders
Religion and belief (includes no belief, some philosophical beliefs such as Buddhism and sects within religions).	Positive	Medium	<p>Exeter's 2021 Census data shows: about 40% Christian, 49% no religion, 2.2% Muslim, 0.5% Hindu, 0.5% Buddhist, 0.2% Jewish, 0.1% Sikh, and 0.7% other religions. Exeter is the most religiously diverse area in Devon, with a higher proportion of minority faiths and non-religious residents than the county average.</p> <p>The strategy is designed to ensure that engagement is inclusive of all religious and belief groups, recognising the diversity of faiths and philosophies in the city. By fostering good relations and advancing equality of opportunity, the strategy aims to remove barriers to participation for people of all faiths and beliefs, as well as those with no religious belief.</p>
Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual).	Positive	Medium	The strategy's emphasis on inclusive engagement and anonymous participation supports LGBTQ+ inclusion. Risks may exist around disclosure and language, mitigated by staff training, inclusive forms, and collaboration with LGBTQ+ groups.
Age (children and young people aged 0-24; adults aged 25-50; younger	Positive	High	Standard online survey methods highlights significant underrepresentation of the 16-24 age groups. The strategy

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
older people aged 51-75/80; older people 81+; frail older people; people living with age related conditions. The age categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs).			<p>addresses this through mixed methods, such as representative surveys, partnering with VCSE groups representing younger people.</p> <p>Digital exclusion research commissioned by Exeter City Council highlights that older age demographics are more likely to be excluded.</p> <p>The strategy offers a mixture methods of aimed proportionate and representative engagement which does not solely rely on the digital platform</p>
Pregnancy and maternity including new and breast feeding mothers	Positive	Medium	Pregnant women, new mothers, and breastfeeding mothers may face barriers to engagement, such as limited mobility, childcare responsibilities, and the need for accessible, child-friendly, and breastfeeding-friendly venues. Engagement with relevant VCE advocates. Accessible venues and timings will enable engagement
Marriage and civil partnership status	Neutral	Low	No evidence of significant impact. The strategy is unlikely to affect people differently based on marital or civil partnership status.

Actions identified that will mitigate any negative impacts and/or promote inclusion

- translated materials, community partners (e.g., Refugee Support Devon/CoLab/Wellbeing Exeter), targeted outreach to GRT communities, safe reporting routes.
- accessible venues (step-free, hearing loops), Easy Read, BSL/interpreters, multiple channels (online/offline), assisted digital, reasonable adjustments, inclusive surveys, and co-design with Disabled People's Organisations.
- safe spaces and timings, flexible formats and remote participation, gender-inclusive language.
- anonymous options, staff training, inclusive forms (name/pronouns), confidentiality, clear moderation practices.
- Maintain awareness of clashes with religious festivals, neutral venues, dietary needs, engage faith leaders.
- clear anti-harassment stance, anonymous participation options, inclusive language and imagery, work with LGBTQ+ groups.
- go-to-where-people-are, schools/colleges/University outreach, offline methods, daytime and evening options,

- flexible timing, child-friendly spaces, plain-language materials, translated information, build trust through VCSE partners, particularly advocates of different demographics with protected characteristics.

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