

Report to: **Lead Members for Children's Services**

Date: **9 March 2015**

Title of the report: **Primary school reorganisation in Crowborough**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Purpose of Report: **To report on the findings of the recent consultation in respect of a proposal to amalgamate Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School in Crowborough and to seek Lead Member approval to publish statutory notices.**

Recommendation:

The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1. Authorise the publication of statutory notices in respect of a proposal to amalgamate Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School in Crowborough with effect from 1 September 2015; and**
 - 2. Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to amend the proposals prior to their publication if required.**
-

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's Policy for School Organisation sets out our ambition to address the relative underperformance at Key Stage 2 of junior schools compared with all-through primary schools by supporting infant and junior schools to form a federation or to amalgamate.
- 1.2 In line with the policy, on 8 December 2014 the Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness gave approval for the Council to undertake a period of consultation in respect of a proposal to amalgamate Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School in Crowborough. This report details the findings of the consultation and seeks approval to publish statutory notices in accordance with the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1 The consultation took place over an eight week period between 17 December 2014 and 11 February 2015. Approximately 1,175 consultation documents were distributed to interested parties including pupils, parents and carers, staff, the governing body, local schools and settings and the local community. The document was also made available on the Council's website. A full distribution list can be found as part of **Appendix A** to this report.
- 2.2 By the close of the consultation period, 100 replies had been received. This equates to a response rate of 8.5%. Of the 100 responses received:
 - 68 (68%) support the proposal
 - 6 (6%) neither agree nor disagree with the proposal
 - 26 (26%) do not support the proposal

2.3 The largest cohort of respondents were parents and carers, followed by members of staff. The breakdown of respondents is as follows:

- 0 (0%) was a pupil at either Whitehill Infant School or Herne Junior School
- 58 (58%) were parents/carers of children at Whitehill Infant School and/or Herne Junior School
- 25 (25%) were members of staff at Whitehill Infant School or Herne Junior School
- 1 (1%) was a member of the governing body
- 2 (2%) were members of the local community
- 6 (6%) classified themselves as 'other'
- 8 (8%) chose not to answer

2.4 Details of the comments and objections received during the consultation period can be found in **Appendix A**. In summary, respondents support the proposal because it would: bring greater continuity; enhance the development of the curriculum across the age range 4-11; remove the need for parents to have to apply for a place for their child at Year 3 and allow better sharing of resources. In contrast, respondents do not support the proposal because: both schools benefit from separate cultures and ethos, particularly as they are on separate sites; funding would be cut so both schools would suffer; the benefits of change can be achieved through federation not amalgamation; Whitehill would lose its friendly, nurturing ethos as part of a bigger school.

2.5 It is recognised that there may be some practical difficulties in bringing together schools which do not share the same site and some challenges around the loss of one lump sum from the budget formula. However, the Council and the governing body believe that the benefits of a single all-through school arrangement outweigh the benefits of having separate infant and junior schools and, for that reason, think it is appropriate to publish statutory notices in relation to the proposal.

2.6 If approved, the next stage of the consultation process would be to publish a statutory proposal. This would be achieved by publishing a notice in the local paper and at the entrance to each school and by posting the full proposal on the Council's website. It is anticipated that the statutory proposal would be published on 20 March 2015. Publication would activate a four week period of representation when interested parties can submit comments or objections to the proposal. Within two months of the end of the representation period the Council must determine the proposal taking account of the views of all those affected by the proposal or who have an interest in it. It is envisaged that the proposal would be determined by the Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness no later than 8 June 2015.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

3.1 In conclusion, the Council and the governing body believe that a change to the current organisation of Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School will build on the progress made since federation in September 2009 and lead to a sustained improvement in educational standards at Key Stage 2. The feedback received from the consultation period, which revealed that the majority of respondents support the proposal, has only strengthened that view. For this reason, the Lead Member is recommended to:

1. Authorise the publication of statutory notices in respect of a proposal to amalgamate Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School in Crowborough with effect from 1 September 2015, and
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to amend the proposals prior to their publication if required.

STUART GALLIMORE

Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Fiona Wright, Assistant Director, Schools, Youth and Inclusion Support

Tel No: 01273 01273 481231

Email: Fiona.wright@eastsussex.gov.uk

Local Members: Councillors Sylvia Tidy and Richard Stogdon

Supporting documents:

Appendix A – Analysis of consultation responses

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF WHITEHILL INFANT SCHOOL AND HERNE JUNIOR SCHOOL

ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

1. Background:

- 1.1 In line with our Policy for School Organisation, the Council undertook a period of consultation between 17 December 2014 and 11 February 2015 in respect of a proposal to amalgamate Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School in Crowborough with effect from 1 September 2015.
- 1.2 This report details the findings of the consultation, which was carried out in accordance with the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

2. Purpose of report:

- 2.1 The report is in two parts:
- Part 1: the consultation process
 - Part 2: analysis of consultation responses

3. Part 1: the consultation process:

- 3.1 Approximately one thousand one hundred and seventy five (1,175) consultation documents were distributed to interested parties including pupils, parents and carers, staff, the governing body, local schools and settings and the local community. The document was also made available on the Council's website. A full distribution list can be found in Table 1 below. The consultation document explained the proposal and provided a range of means to respond. These included: by freepost reply, online questionnaire or by emailing East Sussex County Council.

Table 1: Consultation distribution list

Organisation	No. of copies
Pupils & parents/carers at Whitehill and Herne	400
Staff at Whitehill and Herne	60
Governing Body at Whitehill and Herne	20
Spares for Whitehill and Herne main entrances	80
Local primary schools	210
Local secondary school	30
Local special school	30
ESCC Councillors	50
ESCC Chief Officers Management Team	5
ESCC Children's Services Senior Management Team	5
Charles Hendry MP	5
Wealden District Councillors	60
Crowborough Town Councillors	20
Diocese of Chichester (Church of England)	5
Diocese of Arundel and Brighton (Catholic)	5
Sussex Voluntary and Community Learning Consortium	10
Crowborough Library	50
Crowborough Children's Centre	30
Local Early Years settings	90
Trade Unions	1 copy each
Total	1,175

3.2 A range of consultation events were held to provide staff, governors, parents and carers and other interested parties with further information about the proposal. These included:

- A meeting with staff and their trade union representatives on 15 January 2015. The meeting was attended by the Acting Headteacher, members of the governing body and a representative from the Personnel Department at East Sussex County Council.
- A meeting with parents, carers and the local community on 15 January 2015. The meeting was facilitated by the Acting Headteacher, members of the governing body and the School Organisation Manager at East Sussex County Council. 16 members of the public and two members of staff attended the meeting.

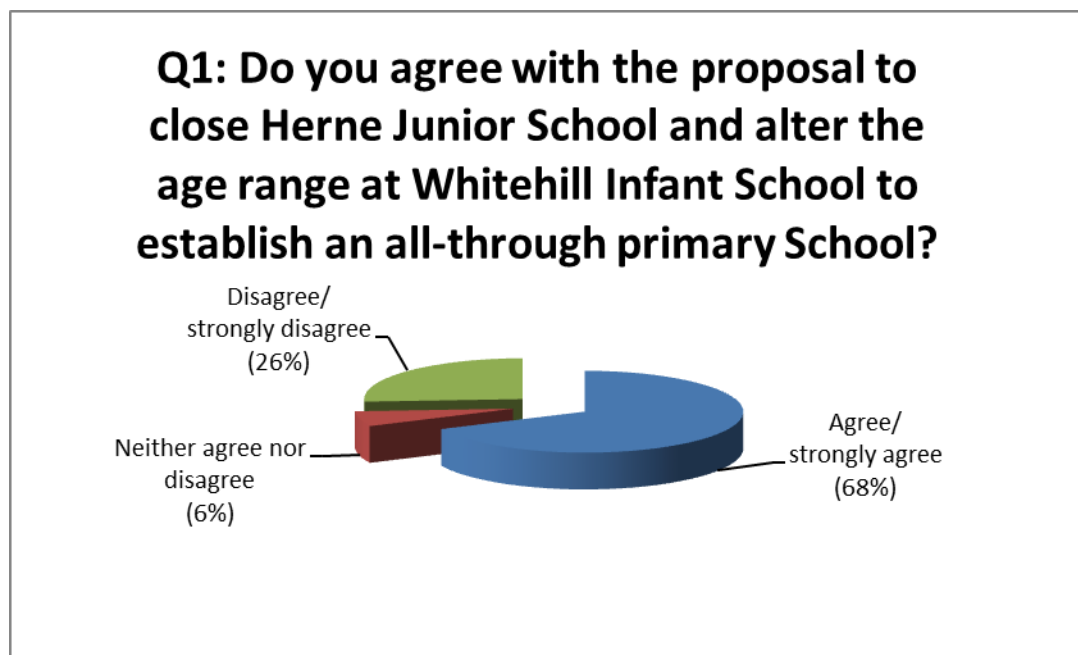
3.3 A copy of the consultation document can be found at the end of the report.

4. Part 2: analysis of consultation responses:

4.1 Question 1 asked respondents to indicate if they agreed with the proposal to close Herne Junior School and alter the age range at Whitehill Infant School to establish an all-through primary school. In all, 100 people responded to this question (a response rate of 8.5%). Of the 100 respondents:

- 68 (68%) support the proposal
- 6 (6%) neither agree nor disagree with the proposal
- 26 (26%) do not support the proposal

4.2 This can be illustrated in the chart below.



4.3 Question 2 asked respondents to give reasons for their answer to question 1 and/or any other options they thought the Council should consider. In summary, respondents support the proposal because they believe it would:

- bring greater continuity;
- enhance the development of the curriculum across the age range 4-11;
- remove the need for parents to have to apply for a place for their child at Year 3;
- allow better sharing of resources.

4.4 In contrast, respondents do not support the proposal because they believe :

- both schools benefit from separate cultures and ethos, particularly as they are on separate sites. This increases choice in the town.
- funding would be cut so both schools would suffer
- the benefits of change can be achieved through federation not amalgamation
- Whitehill would lose its friendly, nurturing ethos as part of a bigger school

4.5 Table 2 below provides a selection of comments received. A full list of comments is available for inspection.

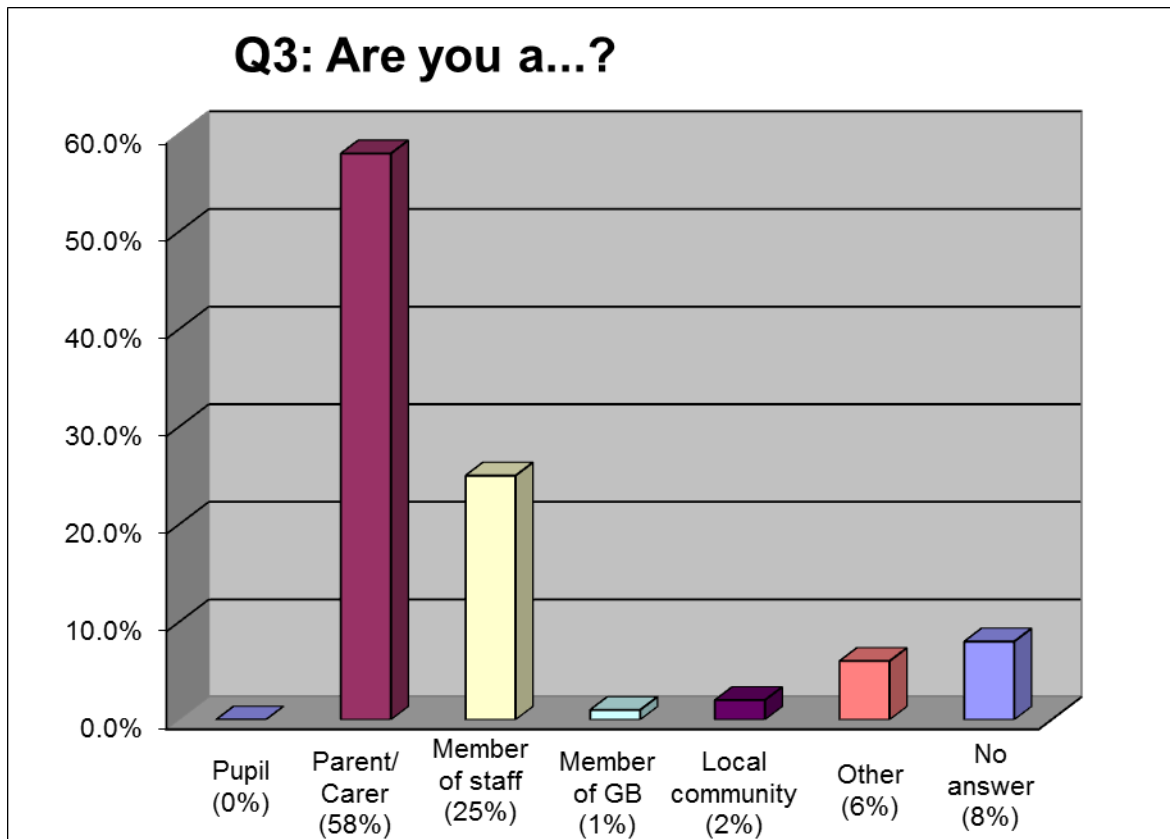
Table 2: Selection of comments received

Comment summary	
1	Continuity throughout, same aims, targets, values
2	It makes sense to join together as one school. It will make it much easier to follow for us as parents and children would automatically get a place at Herne.
3	I believe the two schools can be better led by two individual Headteachers whose speciality is either infant or junior (rather than both). Split management rarely works.
4	I chose Whitehill for my children knowing that it was a small, intimate school that I felt would be good for them to start their education. I don't like the thought of it becoming a three form entry throughout both schools as it would lose its friendly, nurturing ethos and become a bigger, busy environment for the children to cope with. Also Herne school at present don't have the capacity for this and therefore there would be a lot of upheaval in the future with building works etc making room for all the extra children which is extremely disruptive. Money will have to be shared over both sites rather than separate budgets for both Infant and Junior schools. Therefore I worry that my children will not have the same rich and varied opportunities that are open to them at present due to a reduced budget for a single all through school. In Whitehill, children are at present taught by teachers who have specifically chosen to teach in the Infants and have a great understanding of KS1 curriculum. I wouldn't want the merger to mean that a Year 1 child may be in the future taught by someone who was more experienced in KS2 just because there was a staff vacancy in that year group so a teacher would need to be deployed/moved to that year group. I believe the schools work well separately and that the transition between Year 2 and Year 3 could not have gone any better for my children. I feel there is no need, no reason for a merger between the two federated schools.
5	We feel that as parents the proposed merger of the two schools currently federated would be beneficial. In terms of enhancing the development of the curriculum across the age span 4-11. The communication that is already excellent would continue to develop and make the transition to the junior phase easier and more cohesive for the children and their families. Resources and teaching requirements could be potentially used more effectively. The executive Head Teacher would be able to manage the teaching staff across the sites seamlessly, in order to meet the children's needs with the same management style across both sites this would enable and enhance the children, parents and staff experience as they would already know the children and their families within their care.
6	I can see that there will be a better spread of resources, hopefully better communication between the schools and better continuity for the children
7	It would be nice to think the children would not have the move of schools being so young still and settled at the Whitehill and to carry on through their junior years in the same setting, familiar faces etc
8	The outlined benefits of change are not relevant to proposed merger. These benefits can be achieved through a federation. The only benefit is that there will no longer be a requirement for parents to complete a form on transfer to Herne. The advantage to County is purely financial - there needs to be greater transparency as to real reasons for the amalgamation.
9	Funding will be cut, so both schools would suffer. I feel as schools on different sites it would be difficult for a head to keep good contact in both schools the lower losing out
10	The schools are on different sites. The head will find it impossible to work in two places at once. Herne Junior needs an onsite full time head teacher who tends to that school only
11	Improved continuity of care for students, currently it feels like there is a 'gap' between year two and year three for both students and parents. Integrating the schools would hopefully lead to consistency in expectations.
12	Staff would be able to provide continuity of education through foundation to end of KS2 without the false break at the end of KS1 as at present
13	I think the proposed amalgamation will create a better learning environment for our children leading to increased progress being made.
14	A good, common sense idea in general, slightly apprehensive about 1 head teacher split between 2 sites and being able to access them easily. But as a parent we just want the best possible education and positive atmosphere for our children. Also, will this all be seamless with a smaller budget?
15	I hope it doesn't affect the school funding. It will make sense not to have to apply to go to Herne. The school will need a strong experienced head to manage and oversee both sites.

4.6 Question 3 asked 'Are you a...?' Of the 100 respondents:

- 0 (0%) were pupils at Whitehill Infant School or Herne Junior School
- 58 (58%) were parents/carers of children at Whitehill and/or Herne
- 25 (25%) were members of staff at either Whitehill or Herne
- 1 (1%) was a member of the governing body
- 2 (2%) were members of the local community
- 6 (6%) classified themselves as 'other'
- 8 (8%) chose not to answer

4.7 The chart below illustrates the breakdown:



4.8 Of the 58 parents and carers who responded, 46 (79%) support the proposal, while eight (14%) do not. Four (7%) do not have a view either way.

4.9 In total, 25 members of staff and one governor responded, of which nine (35%) support the proposal, 15 (58%) do not and two (7%) neither agree nor disagree.

4.10 Two members of the local community responded, both of whom (100%) agree with the proposal.

4.11 The six people who responded under the heading 'other' included a Town Councillor, the Vice Chair of Governors at a local school and a grandparent of children at both schools. Four (67%) support the proposal while two (33%) do not.

4.12 Of the eight respondents who chose not to answer question 3, seven (88%) support the proposal and one (12%) does not.

4.13 'About you' questions. We collect this information to ensure that we are seeking the views of everyone in our community and to demonstrate that we are complying with relevant diversity and equalities legislation. The responses to the 'About you' questions are available for inspection.



December 2014

Have your say on a proposal to bring Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School together to create an all-through primary school

The consultation runs from 17 December 2014 to 11 February 2015.



What is the proposal?

The proposal is to create an all-through primary school from 1 September 2015 by bringing together Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School. The all-through primary school would admit up to 60 pupils a year and have a capacity of 420 places.

It is important to note that all pupils attending Whitehill Infant School or Herne Junior School at the time of change would automatically become part of the all-through primary school.

The all-through primary school would have a single governing body and a single headteacher who would be responsible for the effective education of all children throughout their time at the school. This consultation document is for pupils, parents and carers, staff, governors, the local community and other interested parties. East Sussex County Council will consider all views put forward during the consultation before it decides whether to continue with the proposal. We welcome your views on this proposal.

What is the background to this proposal?

Whitehill Infant School federated with Herne Junior School on 1 September 2009; the schools share the same governing body.

The local authority and the governing body believe that a change to the current organisation of Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School will build on the progress made since federation in September 2009 and lead to a sustained improvement in educational standards at Key Stage 2.

What are the benefits of change?

The local authority and the governing body believe the benefits of a single all-through primary school arrangement outweigh the benefits of having separate infant and junior schools. The benefits include:

- Greater continuity in teaching, pupil care and development under a single headteacher and teaching staff
- Greater continuity in planning the curriculum across the stages of education so that pupils make the best possible progress in learning
- The school could provide a greater range of professional development opportunities for teachers. This could include the appointment of curriculum coordinators with the time to oversee the effective development and teaching of individual subjects across the whole 4-11 age range
- Greater flexibility that a 4-11 school has in organising classes, deploying teachers and support staff and using resources, including buildings, more effectively
- Closer contact with parents over a longer period of time and covering the full span of the children's primary education
- Practical advantages for parents e.g. same staff development days, the same school policies relating to home links, uniform, codes of conduct
- Transfer to a different school environment after three years or less of schooling might be seen as an unnecessary disruption to pupils' sense of security and well-being. A positive feature of 4-11 schools is the social interaction between younger and older pupils
- Separate admissions applications at age seven will not be necessary and any uncertainty about transfer between the schools would be removed
- Build on progress since the federation was set up in September 2009

How would the all-through primary school be established?

To establish one all-through primary school, we propose to close Herne Junior School on 31 August 2015 and alter the age range at Whitehill Infant School from 4-7 years to 4-11 years from 1 September 2015. The school would continue to operate across the existing infant and junior school sites.

Who makes the final decision and when?

The Council is the decision maker for this proposal. This is not a referendum but all of the views expressed during the consultation period together with other sources of information will be used to inform the decision.

Following consideration of the consultation responses we could choose to:

- stop the process - in this case the separate infant and junior schools would remain as a federation under a single governing body.
- continue with the proposal - we would publish Statutory Notices for the proposal in the local newspaper, possibly in March 2015, after which a further period of consultation (the representation period) would follow. We have a duty to make a final decision on the proposal within two months of the end of the representation period. In this instance, a decision would probably be taken in June 2015.

Who is being consulted?

We are consulting with pupils, parents and carers, the governing body, staff, other local schools and trade unions. We are also consulting with a wide range of other groups including the District Council, the local MP, the Church of England and Catholic dioceses and the wider local community.

How do I have my say?

This consultation runs until 11 February 2015.

You can give your views by:

- completing the attached questionnaire and returning it by freepost in the envelope provided
- completing the online questionnaire at: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/yourcouncil/consultation
- emailing the County Council at School.Consultations@eastsussex.gov.uk

Consultation – Response Form

Our proposal is to bring Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School together as one all-through primary school from 1 September 2015.

We welcome your views on this proposal. Please fill in this response form and return it to the address below no later than **11 February 2015**.

Q1. Do you agree with the proposal to close Herne Junior School and alter the age range at Whitehill Infant School to establish an all-through primary school?

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neither agree or disagree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

Q2. If you wish, please give your main reasons for your answer to Q1 above, and/ or any other options you think the Council should consider:

Q3. Are you a...?

- Pupil at Whitehill Infant School or Herne Junior School
 Parent/carer of a child at Whitehill Infant School and/ or Herne Junior School
 Member of staff at either Whitehill Infant School or Herne Junior School
 Member of the governing body
 Member of the local community
 Other (please say) _____

Once completed, please tear off this page along the perforation, fold and return it in the window envelope provided by **11 February 2015** to the address below.

Please ensure that the address is clearly visible in the window of the envelope.
You don't need a stamp.

Primary Consultation (Crowborough)
FREEPOST RTRL-KETS-SHBU
County Hall
St Anne's Crescent
Lewes BN7 1UE

About you...

We want to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and equally and that no one gets left out. That's why we ask you these questions. We won't share the information you give us with anyone else. We will only use it to help us make decisions and make our services better.

If you would rather not answer any of these questions, you don't have to.

Q4. Are you.....? Male Female Prefer not to say

Q5. How old are you?

Q6. What is your postcode?

Q7. Which of these ethnic backgrounds do you feel you belong to? (Your ethnic background is about lots of things like where your family comes from and the language you speak.)

White	Mixed	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British
<input type="checkbox"/> British	<input type="checkbox"/> White & Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/> Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean
<input type="checkbox"/> Irish	<input type="checkbox"/> White & Black African	<input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/> African
<input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy/Roma	<input type="checkbox"/> White & Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/> Other*
<input type="checkbox"/> Irish Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/> Other*	<input type="checkbox"/> Other*	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other*	<input type="checkbox"/> Arab	<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say

*Other Ethnic Group if your ethnic group was not specified in the list please describe your ethnic group:

Q8. Would you say that you have a disability? (A disability is if you have a problem or illness to do with your mind or body and it makes it hard for you to do everyday things.)

- Yes No Prefer not to say

Q8a. If you answered yes to Q8, please tell us what problems you face. You may have more than one type, so please select all that apply. If none of these apply to you please select other and give brief details.

- A disability to do with your body (like problems walking, moving, getting around...)
 Problems with hearing or seeing
 Having a bad illness for a long time (like cancer, epilepsy, HIV or another serious sickness)
 Mental health problems (This is a problem to do with your mind and the way you feel. For example, if you feel upset, worried or angry a lot)
 Learning difficulties
 I do not want to say
 Something else, please specify

Q9. Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion or belief?

- Yes No Prefer not to say

Q9a. If you answered yes to Q9 which one?

- Christian Hindu Muslim Any other religion, please specify
 Buddhist Jewish Sikh

Thank you for providing this information