

Equality Impact Analysis: Adult Social Care Strategy

Executive Summary

1. Introduction and background

An East Sussex Adult Social Care Strategy will be introduced in June 2023. The strategy outlines a holistic vision and long-term priorities for ASC. The strategy is informed by national and local strategies for social care, health and integration and aims to improve service provision, policies and the way adult social care is planned in East Sussex.

In terms of scope, the strategy is focused on delivering services to adults ordinarily resident in East Sussex who may have care and support needs as defined in the Care Act 2014.

Strategy objectives include:

- Meaningful engagement and involvement of local stakeholders in strategy development and delivery
- A clear local account of ASC in East Sussex
- A clear set of priorities for ASC in East Sussex, created with local people
- How ASCH and partners will achieve those local priorities
- How progress and impact will be measured

Six priorities for the strategy were identified and explored through the feedback and engagement process. These were:

1. Having the right support in the right place at the right time
2. Information and communication about care and support
3. Cost of living and cost of care, now and in the future
4. A suitable home
5. Personal connections with others
6. Group activities, hobbies and volunteering

2. 'We will' statements

At the core of the strategy are 15 'we will' statements that demonstrate what we will do to address the feedback we received, in line with the priorities above. The statements offer a clear direction of travel for local residents, staff and services and will be implemented through a strategy action plan which will be developed post launch, later this year.

1. Right support, right place, right time:

We will...

- 1.1 Build on our approach to personalised assessments and support, learning from residents' experiences so that people feel treated as individuals and experience their contact with adult social care as a two-way conversation between resident and worker.
- 1.2 Work with care and support providers to respond to workforce constraints, such as supporting organisations to be well-led and overcoming barriers to taking up training.
- 1.3 Build on the ways our staff enable residents to access timely support for physical, mental health and emotional wellbeing, including support beyond those services available from East Sussex County Council.
- 1.4 Help people through key changes at different stages of life, including helping people prepare for and navigate changes in later life and supporting young people to prepare for adulthood.

2. Information and communication about care and support

We will...

- 2.1 Use clear and inclusive language and alternative formats to explain to residents and partners what adult social care offers, including how and when to contact East Sussex County Council.
- 2.2 Find new ways to provide timely updates to people about the services they are getting, or have applied for, such as using digital tools and information generated automatically.
- 2.3 Make sure there are places in the community available to support people to get and return information about care and support services, including help with online financial assessments.

3. Cost of living and cost of care, now and in the future

We will...

- 3.1 Improve how staff and services direct people to financial information, advice and guidance, and identify people who are withdrawing from care because of financial barriers.
- 3.2 Improve how we support people around welfare benefits and debt management.

4. A suitable home

We will...

- 4.1 Co-ordinate the information, advice and support people receive to live in homes suitable for their needs by exploring different ways of working, improving access to equipment and testing new and innovative ways that modern technology can enable people to live independently.

4.2 Work with partners and residents to promote the safe accommodation and support available to people at risk of abuse using a range of channels and methods.

5. Personal connections

We will...

- 5.1 Bring services and communities together around neighbourhoods and/or groups of people with shared needs and interests to develop access to, and availability of, activities and other support aimed at addressing loneliness.
- 5.2 Work with social care providers to engage with and support unpaid carers, building on the tailored support available to connect groups of carers with shared needs and interests.

6. Group activities, hobbies and volunteering

We will...

- 6.1 Enable people to connect with communities, get active and live well by working together with residents and community organisations / groups to identify and develop inclusive and accessible activities.
- 6.2 Reduce barriers to people accessing volunteering, or barriers for service providers in hosting volunteers, including developing ways to promote volunteering around people's passions and hobbies.

3. Equality Impact Analysis

An Equality Impact Analysis (EqIA) was undertaken to analyse and assess how the strategy might impact differently on each of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, and on additional characteristics considered by ESCC. This document summarises the engagement and consultation which informed the EqIA, the impact of the strategy on each of the strands and the actions that will be taken to address that impact.

This impact analysis was informed by continuous engagement and involvement with various Engagement and Consultation Forums. Copy of full Equality Impact Analysis is available on request.

4. Engagement and consultation summary

The starting point for development of the strategy was to ask local residents, people of all ages, stages in life and different communities, who need care and support, their unpaid carers and families, what was important to them. This was followed by engagement with internal and external staff and decision-makers. Over 750 people gave us their views and thoughts via:

- Public engagement surveys
- Survey interviews
- Citizens Panel
- Focus groups and interviews
- Staff workshops
- Rights and reference groups related to the protected characteristics including the Autism Partnership Board, East Sussex Seniors Association, Inclusion Advisory Group, Disability Rights Reference Groups, and Communications and Involvement Steering Group.

The Citizens Panel and the Strategy Engagement Group both report to the Strategy Steering Group to inform engagement and direction of the strategy.

5. Summary of impact on strands

This section summarises the impact of the strategy on each of the equality strands in the EqIA, based on data and feedback. It is important to note that there will be intersectionality between the protected characteristics.

Age

Older people would value quicker access to services, increased face-to-face support and less reliance on written and digital communication. The strategy could have a negative impact on older people who are digitally excluded if there is an overreliance on digital communication to access or submit information. In response, we will ensure services and information are accessible in non-digital formats.

The development of the Life Transitions Service will advance opportunity for older people ('we will' statements 1.4 and 5.1).

Several strategy statements have the potential to help ASC reach out to young people and have a positive impact on the things that are important to them ('we will' statements 1.4, 2.1, 6.1 and 6.2). We will support young people by raising their awareness of ASC, helping them connect to others and to access group activities.

Disability

Disabled people need buildings to be accessible and prompt information provision in a variety of accessible formats. Elements of the strategy could have a negative impact on people with visual impairments if there is an overreliance on using written communication methods ('we will' statements 2.2 and 4.1). The strategy could also negatively impact disabled people if community places used to enable face-to-face information exchange, are not accessible and if there is an overreliance on these spaces ('we will' statement 2.3). We will explore ways to make information and services accessible and to improve access to equipment and technology at home for disabled people. A strategy statement linked to improved access to equipment and

technology ('we will' statement 4.1) is expected to have a positive impact on disabled people who want to live in a suitable home that enables more independence.

Gender reassignment

Trans people reported isolation from the local community and trans and non-binary people reported unfair treatment, heteronormative assumptions and inappropriate questions from health professionals. These groups will benefit from actions to tackle loneliness and increasing inclusivity. Staff training ('we will' statement 1.2) will explore how our staff can be better trained in working with trans and non-binary people. We will explore ways to ensure inclusive language is used to explain what adult social care offers, and ways to identify and reduce loneliness for people from the LGBTQ+ community.

Race/ethnicity (including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers)

People from this group need helpful, accessible information about care and support and value community connections and relationships. This group, particularly those who do not have English as a first language, could benefit from the availability of information in a wide range of formats ('we will' statement 2.1). We will explore how Adult Social Care and Health can be made more accessible and how staff can be supported to know how and when to provide information in alternate formats and languages. We will also explore ways to make group activities culturally inclusive.

Religion or belief

None of the feedback we identified during the consultation raised any impacts on this characteristic. Work to help people identify activities to connect with communities, get active and live well ('we will' statement 6.1), could have positive impacts on this group to provide greater access and information to culturally inclusive activities. Staff training ('we will' statement 1.2) will include Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training and accommodating and responding to the needs of people from different religions.

Sex/gender

Survivors of domestic abuse highlight the importance of staff with specialist training, preventative services, tailored information as well as funding and advice to gain financial independence and a safe place to live. They also want opportunities to connect with others. People at risk due to domestic violence will benefit from strategy statements focused on promoting the safe accommodation and support available, improved advice and support for housing, improved financial advice, and attempts to identify and reduce isolation ('we will' statements 3.1, 4.1, 4.2, and 5.1).

Sexual orientation

None of the feedback we identified during the consultation raised any impacts on this characteristic. Work to bring services and communities together around people with shared needs and interests ('we will' statement 5.1 and 5.2) has the potential to help LGBTQ+ people to connect with others and address loneliness.

Impacts on community cohesion

Self-funders view service support and provision differently to those who are not self-funding and can feel disengaged from the information or support available through ASCH. A range of statements in the strategy will support self-funders, including clear messaging and awareness raising on what ASCH can and can't offer, and help to access equipment and services beyond those provided by ASCH. We will continue to seek better data about the number of self-funders in East Sussex and engage the Citizens Panel and other self-funders in the design and delivery of our strategy action plan, mitigating any specific negative impacts on self-funders that arise through service redesign.

Rurality

Some residents in rural areas experience digital exclusion and impeded access to services due to lack of accessible public transport. Work to ensure there are places in the community to enable face-to-face information exchange ('we will' statement 2.3) could negatively impact people in rural areas if there is an over-reliance on those places for face-to-face information exchange, and their proximity or transport links pose barriers to people in rural areas. In response, we will explore the impact of places for face-to-face information exchange on people living in rural areas and consider alternative options for them where feasible.

Carers

Carers would value prompt, proactive, joined-up and consistent services and clearer information. They also need help to reduce isolation. Several strategy statements will benefit unpaid carers including improved co-ordination of care and support, clearer information on what ASC offers and more timely updates ('we will' statements 1.3, 2.1 and 2.2). Clients and unpaid carers will also benefit from action to identify and reduce loneliness ('we will' statements 5.1 and 5.2).

Multiple disadvantage

People facing multiple disadvantage due to substance misuse would value prompt, joined-up care and information to prevent crises. Support with financial entitlement and budgeting was a particular concern. Access to appropriate accommodation with family support was a priority and making connections with others who understand or have similar experiences is important for this group. Those facing multiple disadvantage due to substance misuse, homelessness, and/or involvement with the criminal justice system told us they need specialist support, affordable, accessible activities and financing basic needs including food and keeping warm.

This group will benefit from strategy statements linked to increased co-ordination of care and support, financial advice and guidance, support finding suitable accommodation and support to make community connections ('we will' statements 1.3, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2 and 6.1).

Pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership

None of the feedback we identified during the consultation raised any impacts on these characteristics. ASC will continue to deliver services to these characteristics and ensure the strategy promotes inclusion of and positive impact on these characteristics where intersectionalities occur with other protected characteristics.

6. Action Plan

The following actions were identified as part of working on the EqIA. Some were identified through the EqIA form while others were identified as part of our commitment to EDI requirements in the implementation of the strategy:

1. Adapting our Listening To You survey to monitor the impact of the strategy.
2. Ongoing engagement and feedback from Citizens Panel beyond launch to ensure Strategy is achieving what it set out to.
3. Explore ways in which survey feedback from non-ASCH clients could be obtained with the help of independent sector providers, such as Healthwatch.
4. Develop better mechanisms of engaging with our seldom heard communities to ensure access to information or services required to meet their needs.
5. Improve the way key messages about adult social care are communicated to stakeholders including residents and partners, using clear and accessible language.
6. An action plan to implement the strategy 'we will' statements will be produced which takes account of and responds to any potential negative impacts raised in Section 5 of this report.