



## Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer

**Organisation prepared for**

**Somerset County Council**

**Version**

**1**

**Date Completed**

**09/01/2023**

### Description of what is being impact assessed

#### Development of Local Community Networks (LCNs) across Somerset

On 1st April 2023 a new unitary Somerset Council will replace Somerset County Council and the four district councils (Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton, and South Somerset). The creation of LCN areas across Somerset is a commitment in the unitary business case, aimed at strengthening local engagement and leadership. On 16 November 2022, the Executive endorsed the establishment of LCNs as a vehicle for bringing together and focussing the community development and engagement activity in the new Council.

The paper to Executive that this EIA supports asks Members to agree the following purpose and initial roles for LCNs:

***Purpose:***

*To be the focus for the new Council for community engagement and development, within an ethos of partnership working at a local level; looking to improve outcomes for residents through establishing strong connections between Somerset Council, our communities and our partners.*

***Initial Roles:***

- Be a forum for community voice, engagement and influence
- Be a means for enhancing participation in democracy and local decision making
- Enhance collaboration by bringing together at a local level, representatives from partner organisations, town, City and parish councils, community groups and residents
- Identify evidence-based community priorities; across Economic, Social and Environmental issues
- Create plans to reflect how the priorities will be addressed

- Identify and secure resource opportunities for local projects

The implementation of LCNs will help the new Somerset Council stay close to and over time develop a strong understanding of our diverse communities and be responsive to their needs. LCNs are intended to be inclusive and representative, and so their creation should have a generally positive impact on protected groups. LCNs provide an opportunity to work with communities to address inequalities by ensuring that data, insight and intelligence underpins decision making. However, careful consideration needs to be given how different protected groups will be able to access and engage with LCNs, and how any potential barriers or challenges can be addressed.

In addition to the establishment of LCNs themselves, there is a commitment to ensuring that there is at least one point within each LCN area where people can access Somerset Council services. The achievement of this commitment is a product within tranche 2 of the LGR Programme. Initial mapping and gap analysis of contact points has already started and will be completed once Executive have confirmed the LCN areas.

It is important to note that LCNs are still in development and therefore this EIA is necessarily high level. As their operating arrangements become further developed and refined post Vesting Day, further EIAs will need to be undertaken. At this stage, there are three key aspects for consideration:

- Physical access to LCNs – to meetings, engagement activities and information
- Digital access to LCNs – to meetings, engagement activities, and information
- Representation, voice and influence within LCNs

## Evidence

**What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups?** Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#), should be detailed here

A consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken in September and October 2022 regarding potential areas for LCNs, which asked stakeholders to provide feedback on three potential proposals. The development of these proposals was informed by consideration of:

- ONS data to demonstrate the population sizes of each LCN within each of the three proposed options
- Indices of multiple deprivation (IMD)

- School catchment areas
- Travel to work areas
- Parish, City and Town Council areas
- Electoral divisions
- Primary care networks

The aim of considering and overlaying these data sets was to develop proposals that sought to reflect functional communities in Somerset.

The findings from the consultation indicated a desire for there to be more rather than few LCN areas, reflecting the need for them to be locally relevant to communities, and reducing potential barriers to participation such as the need to travel significant distances.

**Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups?** If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

The consultation and engagement exercise was open to any interested individual or group. Responses were received from a wide range individuals, city, towns and parishes, VCFSE partners and other stakeholders including the police, health and county and district colleagues.

The primarily qualitative nature of the consultation means that it is not possible to correlate responses with particular protected groups, however it did seek views on potential barriers to participation in LCNs, which have provided lines for further enquiry. The most frequently selected or referenced potential barriers included time, money, need to travel, uncertainty about relevance of LCNs.

Further development of LCNs will need to include more detailed consideration of the impacts on protected groups.

## Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Physical access to LCNs</b> Some people, due to age, or ability linked to age, may not hold driving licences and therefore alternatives such as public transport would be required for in person access to meetings. The proposal for 18 LCN areas (as opposed for example to having ten areas, which was one of the options considered) will go some way to reduce the need to travel significant distances and helping ensure that meetings are locally accessible. Other mitigations include selecting accessible meeting venues that are on public transport routes, sharing transport or conducting outreach activity.         </li> <li> <b>Digital access to LCNs</b> Digital solutions, including hybrid meetings and recordings of meetings will help mitigate the need for travel. Each LCN will have a digital presence, e.g. a dedicated website, to support engagement and information sharing. It is possible that lack of digital skills may make it difficult for some age groups to access meetings and information digitally. However, it should be noted that this is an assumption that will need further exploration. Access to digital support could be provided by LCN staff and partner organisations.         </li> <li> <b>Representation and influence</b> – One of the main objectives of LCNs is to ensure that all of our communities have a voice. Overcoming physical and digital access barriers are not the only         </li> </ul>	□	☒	□

	<p>consideration. It is essential that the priorities that LCNs agree are informed by representation from and qualitative and quantitative data relating to all protected groups.</p>			
<p><b>Disability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p><b>Physical Access to LCNs</b> - Some people may not hold driving licences due to disability, and therefore alternatives such as public transport would be required for in person access to meetings. The proposal for 18 LCN areas (as opposed for example to having ten areas, which was one of the options considered) will go some way to reduce the need to travel significant distances and helping ensure that meetings are locally accessible. Other mitigations include selecting accessible meeting venues that are, where feasible, on public transport routes, sharing transport or conducting outreach activity.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Digital Access to LCNs</b> Digital solutions including hybrid meetings and recording of meetings will help mitigate the need for travel. Each LCN will have a digital presence, e.g. a dedicated website, to support engagement and information sharing. It is possible that some disabilities may make it difficult for some people to access meetings and information digitally. However, it should be noted that this is an assumption that will need further exploration. Access to digital support could be provided by LCN staff and partner organisations.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Representation and influence</b> – One of the main objectives of LCNs is to ensure that all of our communities have a voice. Overcoming physical and digital access barriers are not the only considerations. It is essential that the priorities that LCNs agree are informed by representation from and qualitative and quantitative data relating to all protected groups.</p> </li> </ul>	<p>□</p>	<p>⊗</p>	<p>□</p>

<p><b>Gender reassignment</b></p>	<p>Having considered this Protected Characteristic, we do not foresee any disproportionate positive or negative impact on this group in relation to <b>physical or digital access and engagement</b> with LCNs.</p> <p><b>Representation and influence</b> – One of the main objectives of LCNs is to ensure that all of our communities have a voice. Overcoming physical and digital access barriers are not the only considerations. It is essential that the priorities that LCNs agree are informed by representation from and qualitative and quantitative data relating to all protected groups.</p>	□	⊗	□
<p><b>Marriage and civil partnership</b></p>	<p>Having considered this Protected Characteristic, we do not foresee any disproportionate positive or negative impact on this group in relation to <b>physical or digital access and engagement</b> with LCNs.</p> <p><b>Representation and influence</b> – One of the main objectives of LCNs is to ensure that all of our communities have a voice. Overcoming physical and digital access barriers are not the only considerations. It is essential that the priorities that LCNs agree are informed by representation from and qualitative and quantitative data relating to all protected groups.</p>	□	⊗	□
<p><b>Pregnancy and maternity</b></p>	<p>Having considered this Protected Characteristic, we do not foresee any disproportionate positive or negative impact on this group in relation to <b>physical or digital access and engagement</b> with LCNs.</p> <p><b>Representation and influence</b> – One of the main objectives of LCNs is to ensure that all of our communities have a voice. Overcoming physical and digital access barriers are not the only considerations. It is essential that the priorities that LCNs agree are informed by representation from and qualitative and quantitative data relating to all protected groups.</p>	□	⊗	□

<p><b>Race and ethnicity</b></p>	<p>Having considered this Protected Characteristic, we do not foresee any disproportionate positive or negative impact on this group in relation to <b>physical or digital access and engagement</b> with LCNs.</p> <p><b>Representation and influence</b> – One of the main objectives of LCNs is to ensure that all of our communities have a voice. Overcoming physical and digital access barriers are not the only considerations. It is essential that the priorities that LCNs agree are informed by representation from and qualitative and quantitative data relating to all protected groups.</p>	□	⊗	□
<p><b>Religion or belief</b></p>	<p>Having considered this Protected Characteristic, we do not foresee any disproportionate positive or negative impact on this group in relation to <b>physical or digital access and engagement</b> with LCNs. Consideration will need to be given to venues for meetings, in terms of inclusiveness for people of all religions and beliefs.</p> <p><b>Representation and influence</b> – One of the main objectives of LCNs is to ensure that all of our communities have a voice. Overcoming physical and digital access barriers are not the only considerations. It is essential that the priorities that LCNs agree are informed by representation from and qualitative and quantitative data relating to all protected groups.</p>	□	⊗	□
<p><b>Sex</b></p>	<p>Having considered this Protected Characteristic, we do not foresee any disproportionate positive or negative impact on this group in relation to physical or digital access and engagement with LCNs.</p> <p><b>Representation and influence</b> – One of the main objectives of LCNs is to ensure that all of our communities have a voice. Overcoming physical and digital access barriers are not the only considerations. It is essential that the priorities that LCNs agree are informed by representation from and qualitative and quantitative data relating to all protected groups.</p>	□	⊗	□

<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<p>Having considered this Protected Characteristic, we do not foresee any disproportionate positive or negative impact on this group in relation to <b>physical or digital access and engagement</b> with LCNs.</p> <p><b>Representation and influence</b> – One of the main objectives of LCNs is to ensure that all of our communities have a voice. Overcoming physical and digital access barriers are not the only considerations. It is essential that the priorities that LCNs agree are informed by representation from and qualitative and quantitative data relating to all protected groups.</p>	□	⊗	□
<b>Other, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</b>	<p>Having considered this Protected Characteristic, we do not foresee any disproportionate positive or negative impact on this group in relation to <b>physical or digital access and engagement</b> with LCNs.</p> <p><b>Representation and influence</b> – One of the main objectives of LCNs is to ensure that all of our communities have a voice. Overcoming physical and digital access barriers are not the only considerations. It is essential that the priorities that LCNs agree are informed by representation from and qualitative and quantitative data relating to all protected groups.</p>	□	⊗	□
<b>Negative outcomes action plan</b>				
Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.				
<b>Action taken/to be taken</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>How will it be monitored?</b>	<b>Action complete</b>
Progress the aim for all main meetings and supporting communications channels and information to be accessible digitally. Undertake initial audit, gap analysis and plan to address any gaps.	By July 2023	LCN Manager		□



LCN-related in person meetings to be held in accessible venues, ideally on public transport routes where feasible	2023	LCN Manager		<input type="checkbox"/>
Further exploration of potential barriers to participation with representatives of particular protected groups, along with consideration of mitigations	2023/2024	LCN Manager		<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete mapping and gap analysis of contact points within each LCN area	By July 2023	LCN Manager		<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide training and awareness to Chairs of LCNs in relation to the Equalities Duty and Protected Characteristics	2023	LCN Manager with Equalities Manager		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>

**If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.**

<b>Completed by:</b>	<b>LCN Development Team</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>9 January 2023</b>
<b>Signed off by:</b>	<b>Sara Skirton / Jan Stafford</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>9 January 2023</b>
<b>Equality Lead/Manager sign off date:</b>	<b>Tom Rutland 10 January 2023</b>
<b>To be reviewed by: (officer name)</b>	
<b>Review date:</b>	

