

<p>Swindon Borough Council and NHS Swindon Diversity Impact Assessment for: Restructuring of Planning & Development Team in Children Services</p>
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1 What's it about?

The Planning & Development Team in the Access & Provision Directorate in Children Services has a range of statutory and discretionary responsibilities, including:

- School place planning
- Children Services capital programme commissioning
- Schools Asset Management Strategy and database
- Health & Safety Strategy
- PFI schools contract

The Team works closely with a number of partners, including schools, Capita, Swindon Commercial Services, Property Services and Planning. One of the key statutory responsibilities is ensuring that there is long-term school place planning carried out and additional school places are provided wherever required. This frequently involves consulting widely with the local community and parents about the provision of additional school places (including new schools) or, on occasions, the closure of schools with significant levels of surplus capacity. The work of the Team can, therefore, have a major impact on a local community and this can be the case in particular when it is necessary to close a school, as happened recently in Highworth (Northview Primary).

In relation to the Schools Asset Management Strategy, which is the focus of this proposal, this is important, although partly discretionary work. It involves working closely with schools to ensure effective and robust management of school buildings and sites so capital funding in particular is used appropriately. However, it also links to the statutory requirements around Health & Safety on school sites, which fall on both the Local Authority and Maintained schools (Community schools). This ensures that sites are safe for children, young people, staff and other site users.

2 Who's it for?

As indicated above, the focus of the DIA is the asset management responsibilities of the Planning & Development Team and, in particular, the need to achieve savings for 2012/13 by reducing the staffing level by one post (at present, two posts in particular deal with asset management responsibilities).

Asset management on school sites benefits all users of those sites. It links to Health & Safety responsibilities and the general legal requirement to ensure that all school sites are safe at all times. Effective asset management also benefits schools by ensuring that the limited available funding is used as effectively as possible and targets maintenance and improvement work that is essential, rather than necessarily desirable.

There may also be other groups or organisations that use school sites that could benefit from effective asset management. This could include pre-school playgroups, Children's Centres, sports facilities that may be available to the public outside schools hours and, similarly, community facilities available outside school hours, at weekends and in holiday periods.

The benefit of safe and well-managed school sites can have a particular equality impact on individuals and certain groups, for example:

- those pupils and other site users with special needs, including physical disabilities – this would be most pronounced on Special school sites. Schools are strongly advised of the need to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and ensure that the site and buildings is fully accessible for people with disabilities;
- physical security, so pupils feel safe and secure – there need to be effective security measures in place for the protection and safeguarding of pupils and other site users.

The role of the Planning & Development Team is also to manage a Borough-wide schools asset management database, which is web-based and enables details of school sites to be kept up to date. A Traded Service is provided to approximately 40 schools. Generally, the Team provides advice and support to schools in this area.

3 Impact

The role of the Planning & Development Team in schools asset management is diminishing as a result of Maintained schools converting to Academy status. All Secondary schools have converted or are in the process of doing so and a number of Primary schools have also become Academies. It is likely that further schools will convert to Academy status over the coming months and years. Academies are outside the Local Authority and are wholly responsible for asset management and Health & Safety (although safeguarding of all children and young people remains a statutory responsibility of the Group Director, Children). Nevertheless, a number of Academies do buy back the Traded Service on asset management referred to earlier.

The Local Authority continues to have a strategic role in asset management in the remaining Community schools and also has Health & Safety legal responsibilities.

The impact of reducing the staffing within the asset management aspect of the Team is that it could result in the end of the Traded Service but it would also reduce the capacity of the Team to advise remaining Community schools (or other Maintained schools) on asset management strategy and to continue to manage and maintain the database. Health & Safety is a particularly important area where continued vigilance and a positive Local Authority role will be required.

The impact of this this proposed change will, therefore, particularly affect and have an impact on Maintained Community schools. The Schools Forum at its meeting on 11 October 2011 was made aware of the financial pressures resulting from the reduced funding as a result of schools converting to Academy status. Asset management within the Local Authority was identified as one of the areas that would need to be reduced. (It should be noted that the Schools Forum includes a number of Head Teacher and Governor representatives, as well as several community representatives, including Trade Unions.)

If the proposal to reduce the staffing level by one post in the Planning & Development Team in the asset management area proceeds, then work will need to be reorganised, as far as that is possible, to enable the impact to be minimised. In addition, capacity in this area will need to be considered as part of the imminent Stronger Together restructuring. It may, for example, be possible to bring together similar areas from

across the Council. There will also need to be even closer working with the Council's Health, Safety & Wellbeing Team.

We believe therefore that this proposal has no adverse impact on the basis of age, sex, gender, religion, sexual orientation, maternity/pregnancy or civil partnership/marital status.

There is however a potential for adverse impact in particular on the basis of disability as the capacity of the Team will be reduced. This can be mitigated by targeting the resources of the Team to work with schools in the following ways:

- Those schools, such as Special schools, that have a significant group of vulnerable children on site, including those with disabilities
- Ensuring that schools continue to be made fully aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 (and other related legislation) ;
- Ensuring that schools are aware of the need for effective physical security measures to be in place;
- Continued advice and awareness raising generally about statutory responsibilities around Health & Safety.

4 So what?

There will be an ongoing need to consult schools in particular about the proposed reduction in the Local Authority's asset management strategic role and also to review whether or not it is possible to continue to provide a Traded Service in this area to schools and Academies.

There will be particular focus on trying to ensure that the Local Authority's legal responsibilities, particularly in relation to Health & Safety on Community school sites, continue to be met to ensure that children, young people, staff and other site users are safe at all times and that schools continue to treat both asset management and Health & Safety as high priorities.

A great deal of work has been undertaken with schools over recent years on both asset management and Health & Safety responsibilities in terms of training and policy development and implementation.

As well as working with the Schools Forum, there will need to be particularly close working with the Schools Asset Management & Safety Group that comprises Head Teachers and other representatives, including Trade Unions and Diocesan authorities. This Group will need to evaluate and assess the impact of these changes on a regular basis.

For the record

Name of person leading this DIA

*Chris Williams, Planning and
Development Manager*

Names of people involved in consideration of impact

Name of Director signing DIA

*Ian Bickerton, Director of Access and
Provision*

Date signed 21.10.11