

Equality Impact Assessment Form

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| 1- Policy details | |
| Name of policy | Expanding Community Based Support for Early Years Children with Additional Needs |
| Department and service | Children and Family Services, Early Years Inclusion and Childcare Service |
| Who has been involved in completing the Equality Impact Assessment? | Olivia Dale, Head of Service Education Strategy and Transformation |
| Contact numbers | 01163050287 |
| Date of completion | 10 th October 2025 |

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| 2- Objectives and background of policy or practice change | |
| <p>Use this section to describe the policy or practice change What is the purpose, expected outcomes and rationale? Include the background information and context</p> | |
| What is the proposal? | <p>The proposal, subject to Cabinets approval to consult, is providing increased levels of inclusion support and funding for Early Years children with SEND so that they can access mainstream provisions across the county. This would remove the reliance on accessing one of the four specialist nurseries across the county, which in turn are disadvantaging children outside of these districts. A move to this model, would lead to specialist nurseries no longer being required, and additional funding would be made available for children in mainstream nurseries by creating an additional inclusion funding band at £10 per hour. This would increase equity of provision regardless of need and/or where the child lives.</p> |
| What change and impact is intended by the proposal? | |

What is the rationale for this proposal?

As a Local Authority, we are relatively unique in still having specialist nurseries, as many local authorities within our region and further do not have access to specialist provisions for non-statutory school age children. This is evidenced by children accessing Leicestershire’s specialist nurseries from other neighbouring authorities.

Leicestershire currently has 4 specialist nurseries, 1 maintained nursery across two sites and 2 specialist provisions within existing private day nurseries. Specialist nurseries are not evenly spread geographically and there are insufficient places available to meet the needs of all children. A high proportion of specialist nursery children are not from local communities, which not only has travel cost implications, but it also makes it difficult to make ties within their local communities and as such children and families are not embedding a sense of belonging and all the enrichment we know comes from this.

There are also concerns that the children accessing the specialist nurseries are not offered their full funded entitlement (12 hours over 2 days as compared to 30 hours in mainstream provision) and not offered year-round provision options, that working parents of children attending mainstream provisions are often offered. The limited availability and flexibility of specialist provisions creates a lack of equity in accessing FEEE to suit parental need, compared to mainstream provisions.

Currently and historically, once a child has secured a specialist nursery place it creates an expectation that future specialist educational provision is always required, regardless of whether issues such as developmental delay can be addressed without the need for escalation to statutory services. This has significant cost implications on the High Needs Budget.

3- Evidence gathered on equality implications - Data and engagement

What evidence about potential equality impacts is already available?

This could come from research, service analysis, questionnaires, and engagement with protected characteristics groups

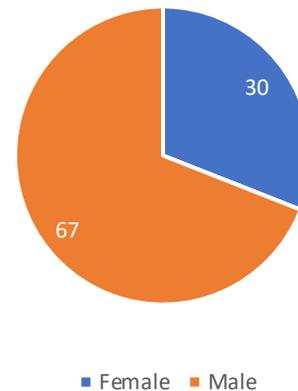
What equalities information or data has been gathered so far?

What does it show?

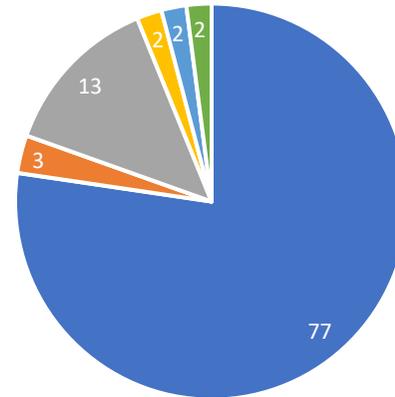
The following data is for the children accessing the Specialist Nurseries in July 2025. This data is not static data, however cohorts will always be 2-5 year old children with Special Educational Needs.

| Setting | FTE places | Children accessing | | | | |
|--------------------|------------|--------------------|-----|--------------------|-----|-------|
| | | 2yr | 3ry | 4yr | 5yr | Total |
| Menphys, Wigston | 21 | 6 | 19 | 15 (-2 school age) | 6 | 46 |
| Menphys, Sketchley | 24 | 4 | 24 | 21 (-1 school age) | 3 | 52 |
| Beacon | 6 | 0 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 13 |
| Oasis | 8 | 0 | 8 | 7 (-1 school age) | 0 | 15 |

% Gender Split of Current Cohort at Specialist Nurseries



% Ethnicity of Current Cohort at Specialsit Nurseries



- White
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- Asian or Asian British
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- Other ethnic group
- Refused

What engagement has been undertaken so far?

No engagement has been undertaken due to the nature of the proposal.

What does it show?

4- Benefits, concerns and mitigating action

Please specify if any individuals or community groups who identify with any of the '[protected characteristics](#)' may **potentially** be affected by the policy and describe any benefits and concerns including any barriers. Use this section to demonstrate how risks would be mitigated for each affected group. If a group will not be affected by the proposal please state so.

| Group | What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups? | What are the concerns identified and how will these affect those from the following groups? | How will the known concerns be mitigated? |
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| Age | Children 2-5years old with SEND will access appropriate support within their communities, enabling a sense of belonging. They will be able to attend a nursery and access their full entitlement at a time to suit them and their families. | The proposal is ringfenced around Early Education and as such does not consider support for provisions for children aged over 5. | Children over 5 with SEND in Leicestershire can seek support where eligible from Children and Family Services. |
| Disability | Children 2-5years old with SEND will access appropriate support within their communities, enabling a sense of belonging. They will be able to attend a nursery and access their full entitlement at a time to suit them and their families. | The proposal focusses on support for children 2-5 years old with SEND. There is a risk through this proposal that parents do not feel confident to access mainstream provision or provider do not feel confident or financial able to support children with complex needs. | The Early Years SEND Service will be able to support providers through intensive packages with additionality of staff. There is also an increased funding offer to providers to assist with staff increases to meet the needs of all the children within Leicestershire. This should increase confidence within both providers and parents. |
| Race | A higher proportion of children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire | None identified. | Not required. |

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| | are White British compared to other ethnicities (aligned with national trends) who are likely to experience a higher negative impact of the proposal as a result. | | |
| Sex | A higher proportion of boys than girls are identified with SEND in Leicestershire (aligned with national trends) who are likely to experience a higher negative impact of the proposal as a result. | None identified. | Not required. |
| Gender Reassignment | No direct impact identified | None identified. | Not required. |
| Marriage and Civil Partnership | No direct impact identified | None identified. | Not required. |
| Sexual Orientation | No direct impact identified | None identified. | Not required. |
| Pregnancy and Maternity | No direct impact identified | None identified. | Not required. |
| Religion or Belief | No direct impact identified | None identified. | Not required. |
| Armed Forces (including veterans) | No direct impact identified | None identified. | Not required. |
| People with lived care experience | No direct impact identified | None identified. | Not required. |
| Other groups: e.g., rural isolation, deprivation, health | No direct impact identified | None identified. | Not required. |

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| inequality, carers, asylum seeker and refugee communities, looked after children, deprived or disadvantaged communities | | | |
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| 5- Action Plan | | | |
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| Produce a framework to outline how identified risks/concerns identified in section 4 will be mitigated. | | | |
| What action is planned? | Who is responsible for the action? | Timescale | Expected outcome |
| Seek approval to consult on the proposal | Early Years Inclusion and Childcare Service | Cabinet – 18/11/25 | Ensuring priorities are agreed with elected members prior to wider consultation. |
| Public consultation on the proposal following approval to consult by Cabinet | Early Years Inclusion and Childcare Service | December-February 2025 | Feedback on proposal through consultation to ensure all parental and professional voice and opinion is sought and heard and feeds into decision post consultation, including how we support a vulnerable cohort. |
| Following consultation, if agreed, ensure there is an adequate transition period for children currently accessing specialist nurseries | Early Years Inclusion and Childcare Service | March 2026-April 2027 | Due to the timescales and current attendance at specialist nurseries, majority of children will move onto school provision in September 2026. This is a planned mitigation to reduce disruption for this cohort. As the children accessing specialist |

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| | | | nurseries changes throughout the year, a full analysis of those that will be affected will need to be understood and carefully planned with families and providers. |
| Following consultation, if agreed, ensure there is clear communication with mainstream providers to deliver clarity on the additional inclusion funding band (increased) and Early Years SEND Service delivery model to provide intensive support in transitioning all children with complex needs into the mainstream settings. | Early Years Inclusion and Childcare Service | March 2026-April 2027 | Ensure training needs are understood and any gaps in skills filled by the LA service through training and direct support. Recruit additional Inclusion Practitioners to offer direct support to mainstream providers. Roll out an increased Inclusion Funding band to enable mainstream providers to support children with complex needs. |

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| 6- Approval Process | |
| Departmental Equalities Group | Agreed electronically by Chair of C&FS DEG on 27/12/25 noting the EIA indicates a positive overall impact. |
| Corporate Policy Team | The Equality Impact Assessment indicates an overall positive impact. It sets out the proposal and intention to consult clearly. There is good data about the current cohort of children accessing the specialist provision. It could say more about how the consultation will take place, |

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| | <p>particularly engaging with parents. Could also note that the normal process would be for the EIA to be considered by the Departmental Equalities Group. It is further recommended to continuously monitor throughout implementation. Any emerging impacts should be promptly identified and addressed as they arise.</p> |
| <p>Sign off by the Senior Responsible Officer for the Project.</p> | |

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