

## Annex 4 Equality Impacts of 2025-2026 Budget Proposals

The following report provides supplementary information for existing/revised growth or income budget items, or additional growth and income budget proposals for 2025/26. Annex 4.1 to this report provides an introduction and legal background to this budget equality report.

### Table of portfolio holders holding budget proposals with potential impact.

The Proposals are presented in two sections for each service area to reflect the following:

- a. Savings and income generation budget proposals
- b. New budget proposals

There is further section to reflect the following:

- c. Growth

### Budget proposals that note a potential positive or negative impact on people with protected characteristics.

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**Portfolio Holder: Cllr Alison Born**

<p><b>Adult Services Proposal:</b> Adult Social Care Commissioning</p> <p>The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:  <a href="https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/AS01%20Budget%20Proposal%20and%20EQIA%20Commissioning%202025-26_0.pdf">https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/AS01%20Budget%20Proposal%20and%20EQIA%20Commissioning%202025-26_0.pdf</a></p>											
<p><b>Precis:</b></p> <p>This proposal will be achieved through maximising the use of the Better Care Fund and Improved Better Care Fund to protect social care expenditure.</p>											
<p><b>2025-26 budget proposal statement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximise the Better Care Fund and Improved Better Care Fund through ongoing review to support protecting and developing adult social care expenditure.</li> </ul>											
<p><b>Considerations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is anticipated positive impact on people with protected characteristics as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working closely with internal and external stakeholders to ensure that Better Care Fund and Improved Better Care Fund is spent on service in line with local priorities.</li> <li>This should create a positive impact for people as Better Care Fund and Improved Better Care Fund will be invested to support better independence and support.</li> </ul> </li> <li>There is a risk of delays in publication of Better Care Fund planning guidance by DHSC.</li> </ul>											
<p><b>Recommendation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportionate equality analysis should be carried out as part of the review and implementation process</li> </ul>											
Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative											
Positive	✓										

**Proposal:** Technology Enabled Care

The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:

[https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/AS02%20Budget%20Proposal%20and%20EQIA%20Technology%202025-26\\_0.pdf](https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/AS02%20Budget%20Proposal%20and%20EQIA%20Technology%202025-26_0.pdf)

**Precis:**

This proposal will be achieved by using technology enabled care to reduce social care resource requirements. Technology enabled care products such as personal alarms and pendants, bed and chair sensors, pills dispensers and door sensors support people to undertake daily living tasks and enable independence.

**2025-26 budget proposal statement**

*‘This will make best use of social care resources to support better independence and support for people’.*

**Considerations:**

- There is anticipated positive impact on people with protected characteristics as:
  - Technology enabled care has been proven to better independence and support.
  - These are positive changes that will be managed within national frameworks and industry standards for technology enabled care.
- Risks of low take up of technology enabled care.

**Recommendation:**

- During implementation and through an ongoing review process proportionate equality analysis should be carried out as part of the review and implementation process.

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative											
Positive	✓										

**Proposal: Provider Services Income Opportunities**

The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/AS05%20Budget%20Proposal%20and%20EQIA%20Provider%20Servcies%20Income%20Opportunities%20final%202025-26%201.pdf>

**Precis:**

As a provider and an Extra Care Service the council has always offered a service to self-funders. This proposal seeks to increase the level of income generated from self-funders, placements commissioned by other local authorities and Integrated Care Board (ICB) by charging the actual cost of delivering care of Learning Disabilities Day Services, Community Resource Centres - Residential Care Homes

**2025-26 budget proposal statement:**

*'This proposal seeks to increase the level of income generated from placements made by other local authorities, placements commissioned by the ICB and self-funders by charging the actual cost of delivering care'.*

**Considerations:**

- Services users who have a package of care funded by ASC (1) will see no change as the financial assessment care charge is based on their income not on service delivery costs or fee levels.
- A 10% increase will be applied incrementally to self-funders.
- Risk of increase in complaints from existing service users and funders (self-funders and other local authorities/ICB).
- Risk of people giving notice and moving to other provision.

**Recommendation:**

- Complete a detailed Equality Impact Assessment as part of the process of implementing this new price change.

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative	✓										
Positive											

## New Budget Proposal

### Proposal: Review of Care Packages

The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:

[https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/AS04%20Budget%20Proposal%20and%20EQAI%20Reviews%202025-26\\_0.pdf](https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/AS04%20Budget%20Proposal%20and%20EQAI%20Reviews%202025-26_0.pdf)

### Precis:

The target operating model proposals include supporting more people to access the resources available in our communities using online portals that provide advice and information about access to adult social care. Alongside this we are enhancing our support to people who would provide to manage their own care through direct payments.

### 2025-26 budget proposal statement:

*'The Care Act eligibility proposals include an approach to reviews under the Care Act that ensure people's needs are being met, their outcomes are being achieved and that support when needed is provided in the most cost-effective way using least restrictive practices'*

### Considerations:

- The proposals ensure that Adult Social Care is meeting its statutory duties and do not go beyond the legal limits for Adult Social Care Support including the application of the National Frameworks for Continuing Health Care Funding, Section 117 funding for Mental Health Needs and the Joint funding policy for B&NEs.
- Adult Social Care need to ensure that all services provided to service users are adequate and proportionate to meet their assessed eligible care and support needs.
- Ensure that digital exclusion does not negatively impact on vulnerable people.
- Risk of increase in complaints, multiple changes for staff and pace of change. This may negatively impact on older and disabled people. Women are more likely to work in the sector and may be disadvantaged by these changes.

### Recommendation:

- Complete a detailed Equality Impact Assessment as part of the process to demonstrate consideration for people with protected characteristics.
- Carry out inclusive consultation.

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative		✓	✓						✓		
Positive	✓										

**Portfolio Holder: Cllr Paul May**

**Children and Young People Proposal: Reunifications**

The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:

[https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/CS02%20-%20EqIA%20Savings%20Nov%202024\\_0.pdf](https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/CS02%20-%20EqIA%20Savings%20Nov%202024_0.pdf)

**Precis:**

The savings will be delivered by an increase in family reunifications and step downs from residential placements.

The project is an expansion of existing work with higher targets to achieve before the end of the 24/25 financial year.

**2025-26 budget proposal statement:**

*All children within residential placements will be considered for reunification or step down. Any suitability criteria will be based on the availability of suitable placements or family reunification.*

*The team monitors outcomes to address disparities, supports providers to promote equality and inclusion, and is working towards a co-production model with parent carers.*

**Considerations:**

- By embedding equality at every stage of the process, the team ensures that children from all backgrounds receive high-quality, equitable support.
- A placement change cannot be made for a child or young person based on the ability to deliver savings for the Local Authority.
- Risk that reunification with family may be unsuccessful and result in a more expensive placement due to complexity of child/young persons need.
- Boys, teenagers, disabled and ethnic minority children and young people are disproportionately represented as children looked after.

**Recommendation:**

- Review and update the detailed Equality Impact Assessment as an ongoing process to consider the impact of decisions and service delivery for people with protected characteristics
- Continue to monitor the impact of reunifications, including the on-costs of intensive intervention by officers.

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative		✓	✓				✓		✓		✓
Positive	✓										

**Proposal: Specialist Commissioning Saving**

The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/CS03%20-%20EQIA%20Specialist%20Commissioning%20Saving.pdf>

**Precis:**

These savings will reduce reliance on high-cost placements, particularly out-of-area or unregulated provisions, promoting stability and better outcomes for children. However, achieving these savings requires a careful balance to ensure cost reductions do not compromise the quality, safety, or suitability of placements, which are essential for meeting the complex needs of Children Looked After.

**2025-26 budget proposal statement**

*'By focusing on value-driven commissioning and stronger collaboration with providers, these savings could enhance service efficiency while maintaining high standards of care'.*

**Considerations:**

- Risk that B&NES will not offer competitive or comparative prices and lose ability to deliver statutory duties.
- Not being able to find placements for Children Looked After.
- The team monitors outcomes to address disparities, supports providers to promote equality and inclusion, and is working towards a co-production model with parent carers.
- By embedding equality at every stage of the commissioning process, the team ensures that children from all backgrounds receive high-quality, equitable support.
- Boys, teenagers, disabled and ethnic minority children and young people are disproportionately represented as children looked after (see Reunifications proposal).

**Recommendation:**

- Review and update the detailed Equality Impact Assessment as an ongoing process to consider the impact of decisions and service delivery for people with protected characteristics.

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative		✓	✓				✓		✓		
Positive	✓										



**Portfolio Holder: Cllr Manda Rigby**

**Transport Proposal: Parking Reinvestment Fund (one-year only)**

The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/PS04%20Innovation%20Fund%20%20Parking%20Charges%20%202025-26.pdf>

**Precis:** Budget saving by not spending the Reinvestment Fund in Parking Services – one year only.

**2025-26 budget proposal statement**

*'No significant impact; however, non-essential maintenance and improvements of Parking assets, such as car parks, as well as developments which improve operational efficiency or customer experience may take longer to be identified, developed and implemented, subject to resource availability'.*

**Considerations:**

- The removal of this budget will delay investment in the improvement of car parks within Midsomer Norton and Radstock, where parking charges are to be introduced in January 2025.
- Vulnerable people such as older, younger, disabled, pregnant people may be at increased risks of harm if the car parks are not well maintained.
- Improvements to street lighting and CCTV coverage across car parks may be delayed resulting in night-time security risks for those who feel or are more vulnerable including women, LGBTQ+ community, ethnic minority people and older people.
- Wider implications for the economy as people may choose to go elsewhere.
- Schemes will progress where a clear case can be demonstrated and where resources exist

**Recommendation:**

- Review and update the detailed Equality Impact Assessment considering where people with protected characteristics may be more impacted than others (see below).
- Consider knock-on effects.

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Positive											

**Proposal: Parking Permit Charges Review**

The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/PS05%20On%20Street%20Parking%20Permit%20Charges%20EqIA%202025-26.pdf>

**Precis:**

Income generated from a review of the baseline charge for on street parking permits, including emissions-based resident parking permits.

**2025-26 budget proposal statement**

*‘An increase in the baseline charge for on-street parking permits from £100 to £120 for an annual permit, with corresponding increase across bands where permits charges are emission based’.*

**Considerations:**

- Socio-economic disadvantage, people on lower incomes are more likely to have older cars with higher emissions.
- Families with larger cars are likely to have higher emissions-based cars (ethnic minority groups, religion/belief, children and young people may all be impacted by increased costs.
- People on maternity/paternity leave may have reduced income and could be negatively impacted.
- Many disabled people do not have a blue badge but need ease of access to facilities, including health services, so could be impacted.
- Women may be disproportionality disadvantaged as there is national acknowledgment of gender pay gaps.
- May displace or disadvantage many people with protected characteristics into residential areas that are not covered by a resident parking scheme.
- Positive: Improved air quality for all residents.

**Recommendation:**

- Complete a detailed Equality Impact Assessment
- Determine whether people from particular groups are disproportionately more likely to benefit or not from this practice.
- Consider the cumulative impact regarding cost of access for residents particularly to the above-mentioned groups of people with protected characteristics.
- Consider knock-on effects.
- Carry out inclusive consultation.

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
Positive											

**Portfolio Holder: Cllr Tim Ball**

**Neighbourhood Services Proposal:** Green waste fees and charges uplift.  
 The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:  
<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/PS02%20Garden%20Waste%20Fees%20and%20Charges%20Uplift%20EqIA%20%20-%20November%202024.pdf>

**Precis:**  
 Increase garden waste fees to £70 per year as part of the fees and charges process.  
 Delivered by annual billing process for subscriber service.

**2025-26 budget proposal statement**  
*‘Review of an existing service. Costs of running the garden waste service have been increasing.  
 National requirement to provide an optional garden waste service as part of the Environment Act 2021.  
 No scope for review. Rates proposed are in common with other authorities.’*

- Considerations:**
- Resident communications on website will advise the availability of a free tipping service at the household recycling centres for those who cannot afford subscription fees
  - This may have a detrimental impact on disabled, older people and those who are at socio-economic disadvantage meaning inequality in access to waste services.
  - Free access to 3 recycling centres for all B&NES residents.
  - Potential for increasing travel costs and adverse climate impact of increased vehicle movements when accessing the recycling centres.
  - Service team to monitor service usage patterns and subscriptions to determine any adverse impacts.
  - Home composting also available as an alternative option of disposing of garden waste.

- Recommendation:**
- Complete a detailed Equality Impact Assessment considering where people with protected characteristics may be more impacted than others.

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative		✓	✓			✓					✓
Positive											

## Growth

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Alison Born

<p><b>Proposal:</b> Contract Inflation Request</p> <p>The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:  <a href="https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/AG02%20Budget%20Proposal%20and%20EQIA%20Adults%20Services%20Inflation.pdf">https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/AG02%20Budget%20Proposal%20and%20EQIA%20Adults%20Services%20Inflation.pdf</a></p>												
<p><b>Precis:</b> The local authority commission placements and packages of care for people who have been assessed under the Care Act 2014 and have an eligible care and support need. This is the estimated inflation requirement to fund associated contracts.</p>												
<p><b>2025-26 budget proposal statement</b></p> <p><i>‘Adult Social Services have seen an increase in the need and complexity of the young people transitioning to adulthood and adults who have eligible social care needs; this alongside rising demand is having an impact on the service. These increased costs have been recognised as a regional and national issue by ADASS (The Association of Directors of Social Services)’.</i></p>												
<p><b>Considerations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Tenders for new contracts and frameworks will seek assurance from bidding organisations around their compliance to the Equality Act and will exclude those who do not provide this assurance from contracting with the local authority.</li> <li>➤ See detailed Equality Impact Assessment for the equalities profile of B&amp;NES adult services users.</li> <li>➤ There is currently no data held related to gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or religion or belief.</li> <li>➤ Adult service users could be placed at increased safeguarding risk if the budget growth request is not met.</li> <li>➤ The outcome could be a positive or negative impact, for people with protected characteristics, dependent on the decision.</li> </ul>												
<p><b>Recommendation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Complete a proportionate Equality Impact Assessment to identify where the proposal</li> <li>➤ Implement strategies to improve equality, diversity and inclusion across the service (EDI working group established).</li> <li>➤ Improve equality data collation of all protected characteristics.</li> <li>➤ Continue to embed equality analysis throughout service delivery.</li> </ul>												
Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic	
Negative		✓	✓				✓		✓			
Positive	✓											

**Portfolio Holder: Cllr Paul May**

**Proposal:** Budget Growth and Demographics

The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/CG01%20-%20CSC%20growth%20EqIA%202025.pdf>

**Precis:** Children's Services have assessed the existing budget growth and demographics assumptions and have revised this figure to reflect rising demand, increased costs in the market and national policy directives.

**2025-26 budget proposal statement**

*'Children's Services have seen an increase in the need and complexity of the children and young people who need to be accommodated and the increase cost of care in the market. This growth will enable the Local Authority to effectively discharge their statutory duties'.*

**Considerations:**

- This budget growth request recognises the additional growth required to ensure that the Local Authority has sufficient funding to effectively deliver statutory services to adults with eligible social care needs and to those with protected characteristics. (There could be a positive or negative impact dependent on the decision)
- The population of B&NES is projected to increase by 8% from 2018 to 2028,
- There is a predicted population growth in B&NES for over 65's, significantly for people aged between 75-84yrs and for people living with dementia.

**Recommendation:**

- Implement strategies to improve equality, diversity and inclusion across the service (EDI working group established).
- Continue to embed equality analysis throughout service delivery.

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative	✓										
Positive	✓										

**Proposal:** Children's Services Inflation

The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/CG03%20-%20EQIA%20Children%27s%20Services%20Inflation.pdf>

**Precis:** Children's Services have assessed the existing budget growth and demographics assumptions and have revised this figure to reflect rising demand, increased costs in the market and national policy directives.

**2025-26 budget proposal statement:**

*“Children's Services have seen an increase in the need and complexity of the children and young people who need to be accommodated and the increase cost of care in the market. This growth will enable the Local Authority to effectively discharge their statutory duties”.*

**Considerations:**

- We have seen an increase in the need and complexity of the children and young people who need to be accommodated and the increase cost of care in the market. These increased costs have been recognised as a regional and national issue by ADCS (The association of Directors of Children’s Service) and the DFE (Department of Education).
- See detailed Equality Impact Assessment for the equalities profile of children and young people in B&NES.
- Children and Young People could be placed at increased safeguarding risk if the budget growth request is not met.
- The outcome could be a positive or negative impact, for people with protected characteristics, dependent on the decision.

**Recommendation:**

- Continue to embed equality analysis throughout service delivery.

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative	✓										
Positive	✓										

**Proposal: SEND Staffing**

The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/CG02%20-%20EIA%20OFSTED%20SEND%20Staffing%20Nov%2024.pdf>

**Precis:** Recruit additional staff to support the team with increased levels of demand for statutory assessment and higher caseloads.

**2025-26 budget proposal statement:**

*‘This growth request is to increase the staffing in the statutory SEND team. The council is responsible for the statutory assessment of all children who may have special educational needs and disabilities.*

*The outcome intended is to increase capacity and increase the council's compliance with the timescale for the completion of these assessments. Currently, the council only completes 24% of all assessments within the set timescale of 20 weeks. Increased staffing should improve our compliance’.*

**Considerations:**

- See detailed Equality Impact Assessment for the equalities profile of children and young people with an Educational and Health Care Plan (EHCP) in B&NES.
- Children and Young People could be placed at increased safeguarding risk if the budget growth request is not met.
- The outcome could be a positive or negative impact, for people with protected characteristics, dependent on the decision.

**Recommendation:**

- Continue to embed equality analysis throughout service delivery.

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative	✓										
Positive	✓										

**Proposal:** Home to School Transport Growth and Savings

The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/PG03%20HTST%20Budget%20Proposal%20EqIA%202025-26%20.pdf>

**Precis:**

Cost pressures remain in the home to school transport service and as such the budget needs rebasing. However, work to in-house delivery is intended to reduce reliance on a challenging external marketplace, and in turn reduce costs. Both growth and invest to save proposals have been included in the budget papers.

**2025-26 budget proposal statement**

*‘Aim to achieve all eligible children be provided with appropriate Travel arrangements.’*

**Considerations:**

- Funding is required to prevent the transport being cancelled resulting in eligible children not be provided transport to school which will be a breach of the Council Statutory Duty.
- Some services will be delivered internally, reducing reliance on external providers.
- Continuing to recruit drivers to enable increase of in-house provision, recruitment has proven problematic due to onboarding times compared to the private sector.
- High risk of vulnerable children missing education if transport is not provided

**Recommendation:**

- Review and update the detailed Equality Impact Assessment as an ongoing process to consider the impact of decisions and service delivery for children and young people with protected characteristics.

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative											
Positive		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



**Portfolio Holder: Cllr Mark Elliott**

**Proposal: Artificial Intelligence**

The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/RG02%20EqIA%20Artificial%20Intelligence.pdf>

**Precis:** B&NES is piloting the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in internal and resident-facing services, including:

- AI summarisation of meetings and phone calls.
- AI web bot answering queries like “When is my next recycling pickup?”
- AI creation of draft documents from multiple sources.

The intended outcome is to enhance service quality for residents and increase staff efficiency.

**2025-26 budget proposal statement**

*‘Introducing AI capabilities to improve resident facing services’.*

**Considerations:**

- B&NES council is new to AI use.
- There is anticipation that AI will offer wide ranging improvements in communication means and accessibility options for all residents, visitors and staff.
- It is already known that the following improved inclusive options will be available at point of contact:
  - *Verbal to written word transcription*
  - *A wide range of translated languages.*
  - *Web bots to support people who find using the telephone difficult or expensive or are unavailable or unviable to use.*
  - *Documentation creation and summarisation from multiple sources.*
- Although there will be many anticipated benefits there should be careful consideration of people experiencing digital exclusion.
- Consideration of individual staff needs when implementing new systems and strategies.

**Recommendation:**

- Complete a detailed Equality Impact Assessment and ongoing equality analysis to identify positive and negative impact to residents, visitors and workforce.
- Carry out inclusive consultation

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative		✓	✓								✓
Positive	✓										

**Proposal:** Unified Communications

The published Equality Impact Assessment is available to view on the link below:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/RG03%20-%20EqIA%20Unified%20Communications.pdf>

**Precis:** This is a replacement of the existing ‘legacy’ telephony and contact centre systems with a modern cloud solution.

**2025-26 budget proposal statement**

*‘Replacement service, modernising our telephone and communications’.*

**Considerations:**

- Gaps identified for digital inclusion including access to multiple languages including sign language. This project will provide improved accessibility when contacting the council.
- There is anticipation that this project will offer wide ranging improvements in communication means and accessibility options for all residents, visitors and staff
- Pilot web bots are already in place on the B&NES website for limited services, these are already demonstrating a high volume of use and initial feedback has been positive
- Options of phone calls will still be available for people that prefer this
- Consideration of support required of individual staff needs when implementing new systems and strategies.

**Recommendation:**

- Complete a detailed Equality Impact Assessment and ongoing equality analysis to identify positive and negative impact to residents, visitors and workforce.
- Carry out inclusive consultation

Impacts	All	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage & civil partnership	Pregnancy & maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	Socio economic
Negative		✓	✓								✓
Positive	✓										

## **Additional Protected Characteristics as adopted by B&NES:**

The Equality Act does not cover armed forces community. However, the Armed Forces Bill (which came in on 22 Nov 2022) introduces a requirement to pay 'due regard' to make sure the Armed Forces Community are not disadvantaged when accessing public services.

The Equality Act does not cover care experienced people. B&NES adopted this group as a protected characteristic in March 2024 alongside over 80 other Local Authorities. Although we have data for care leavers and children/young people who are currently in the care of B&NES we do not have wider data on disadvantage experienced through being in care.

These additional Protected Characteristics are not evident on this report any significant positive or negative impacts would have been made clear.

## **Appendix 1**

### **1 Briefing note for elected members on equality in financial decision making**

- a. The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against an individual because of certain personal characteristics ('protected characteristics').
- b. The Act requires that equality issues are considered by public bodies as part of decision making, especially where services are reduced or redesigned.
- c. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires us to have due regard of the need to:
  - eliminate discrimination,
  - advance equality of opportunity and
  - foster good relations between different people.
- d. The questions below are intended to assist PDS panels to scrutinise the proposals from an equality perspective.

### **2 For each new draft proposal**

- a. Are panel members clear that this proposal has been considered from an equality perspective?
- b. Do we know what the impact will be on the most vulnerable people?
- c. Are there any potential unintended impacts or "knock-on" effects and consequences - e.g. on partners, residents or other services?
- d. Have we consulted people and listened to what they have told us about this?
- e. During the implementation of the proposal – how will we continue to check for unintended effects on particular groups of people?
- f. Will there be room for discretion if during the implementation we discover that the change of service disproportionately disadvantages some people?
- g. Considering all the proposals together, what will the cumulative impact be, and will adverse impacts fall disproportionately on specific protected groups?
- h. What have we learnt about equality impacts following the implementation of last years' proposals?

### **3 What course of action does the EqlA suggest? Is it justifiable?**

- a. There are four possible outcomes of an EqlA, more than one may apply to a single proposal:
  - *No major change required*: no potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to advance equality have been taken.
  - *Adjustments to mitigate the issues identified*: will the proposed adjustments remove the barriers identified?
  - *Continue despite having identified some potential for adverse impacts or missed opportunities to advance equality*: the justification should be included in the assessment and should be in line with the duty to have 'due regard'. For the most important relevant policies, compelling reasons will be needed. You should consider whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact.
  - *Stop and rethink*: when an assessment shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination