

Appendix One

Equality Impact Assessment / Equality Analysis

Item name	Details
Title of service or policy	Commissioning/Contracts
Name of directorate and service	Commissioning – Start Well
Name and role of officers completing the EIA	Ian Tomlinson
Date of assessment	24 th September 2025

Equality Impact Assessment (or ‘Equality Analysis’) is a process of systematically analysing a new or existing policy or service to identify what impact or likely impact it will have on different groups within the community. The main aim is to identify any discriminatory or negative consequences for a particular group or sector of the community, and also to identify areas where equality can be better promoted. Equality impact Assessments (EIAs) can be carried out in relation to services provided to customers and residents as well as employment policies/strategies that relate to staffing matters.

This toolkit has been developed to use as a framework when carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) or Equality Analysis. **Not all sections will be relevant – so leave blank any that are not applicable.** It is intended that this is used as a working document throughout the process, and a final version will be published on the Council’s website.

1.1 Identify the aims of the policy or service and how it is implemented

Key questions	Answers / notes
<p>1.1 Briefly describe purpose of the service/policy e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How the service/policy is delivered and by whom ● If responsibility for its implementation is shared with other departments or organisations ● Intended outcomes 	<p>Adoption West is a company wholly owned and limited by guarantee of the six local authorities, established in March 2019 to deliver specified statutory adoption services on their behalf.</p> <p>The current arrangements come to an end in February 2027. The partners recently commissioned an external review of the progress to date, alongside a consideration of alternative RAA models to assist in determining the best approach to service provision, beyond the expiry of the current arrangements. The review concluded that the further development of Adoption West, consolidating and building upon the progress to date, represents the best option for service provision beyond February 2027, providing opportunities to innovate, as well as</p>

	<p>addressing the pressures and challenges that are evident in the adoption system both regionally and nationally.</p> <p>.</p>
<p>1.2 Provide brief details of the scope of the policy or service being reviewed, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is it a new service/policy or review of an existing one? ● Is it a national requirement?). ● How much room for review is there? 	<p>Background</p> <p>Adoption has been an integral feature of statutory arrangements for children’s services for over 100 yrs¹. Over that time its function and prominence within service provision has been subject to considerable change, reflecting the profound social and political changes in wider society. There is a considerable body of evidence that adoption can be a highly effective permanence option for children who are looked after. Successive governments have placed an emphasis on the importance of adoption, with this unlikely to change in the immediate future. It is arguably the most profound form of state intervention in a child’s life, underscored by profound ethical considerations, requiring the highest standards of practice and management oversight.</p> <p>In June 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) published ‘Regionalising Adoption’ which set out proposals for local authorities to deliver adoption services through Regional Adoption Agencies (hereafter referred to as ‘RAAs’)². The stated aims were to speed up the process of matching (children and adoptive families) and markedly improve the life chances of neglected children, improve adopter recruitment and support, while also reducing costs. Subsequently, ‘Adoption: A Vision for Change (March 2016) further developed the proposals, with the Education and</p>

² Regionalising Adoption DfE (June 2015)

Adoption Act 2016 containing a reserve power to require local authorities to transfer their adoption services into regional arrangements.

In 2015, the DfE agreed an expression of interest from a collaboration of South West local authorities and funded the process to establish a partnership, to be called the Adoption West Regional Adoption Agency. The law firm Bevan Brittan were appointed in early 2016 to support the mobilisation process and, after due consideration of a range of delivery options, it was decided to establish Adoption West as a company wholly owned and limited by guarantee of the six local authorities (below), to deliver specified statutory adoption services on their behalf:

- Bath and North East Somerset Council (BANES)
- City Council of Bristol
- Gloucestershire County Council
- North Somerset Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- Wiltshire Council

Adoption West (hereafter referred to as 'AW') commenced on 1 March 2019, initially for three years, with the option for a further five-year extension. The option to extend was activated in 2022 and runs until the end of February 2027. While there is a broad consensus amongst the participating local authority lead officers that Adoption West provides the optimal solution for the continuation of adoption service provision beyond March 2027, it was acknowledged that any final decision must be evidence led, including the consideration of alternative delivery models for adoption services within a regionalised delivery framework.

	Based on the experience gained in establishing AW, it was also recognised that the review process would need to commence during 2025 to allow sufficient time for any significant change. This change could include a new delivery model or the further development of AW, to be completed ahead of the February 2027 deadline, while minimising disruption for families, children and staff.
1.3 Do the aims of this policy link to or conflict with any other policies of the Council?	No

2. Consideration of available data, research and information

Key questions	Data, research and information that you can refer to
2.1 What equalities training have staff received to enable them to understand the needs of our diverse community?	All staff have completed the equalities training via the Learning Pool. Social work qualifications also include elements of equalities training. Sari run bespoke training within B&NES.
2.2 What is the equalities profile of service users?	<p>The equalities profile of Children Looked After in Bath and North East Somerset reflects national and regional trends.</p> <p>Key aspects include:</p> <p>1. Demographics: The majority of adopted in B&NES are white British, aligning with the overall population profile of the area. However, children from minority ethnic backgrounds are proportionally overrepresented, as seen across England.</p>

	<p>2. Gender: There is a higher number of boys in care compared to girls, a trend consistent with national statistics.</p> <p>3. Age Distribution: Most children being adopted are aged under 4.</p>
<p>2.3 Are there any recent customer satisfaction surveys to refer to? What were the results? Are there any gaps? Or differences in experience/outcomes?</p>	No
<p>2.4 What engagement or consultation has been undertaken as part of this EIA and with whom? What were the results?</p>	N/A as above
<p>2.5 If you are planning to undertake any consultation in the future regarding this service or policy, how will you include equalities considerations within this?</p>	N/A

3. Assessment of impact: 'Equality analysis'

Based upon any data you have considered, or the results of consultation or research, use the spaces below to demonstrate you have analysed how the service or policy:

- Meets any particular needs of equalities groups or could help promote equality in some way.
- Could have a negative or adverse impact for any of the equality's groups

Key questions	Examples of what the service has done to promote equality	Examples of actual or potential negative or adverse impact and what steps have been or could be taken to address this
3.1 Issues relating to all groups and protected characteristics	<p>Adoption West promotes equality for groups with protected characteristics by ensuring services are inclusive, accessible, and responsive to diverse needs.</p> <p>This includes conducting Equality Impact Assessments, designing culturally appropriate and tailored services, and removing barriers to access.</p> <p>The team monitors outcomes to address disparities, supports providers to promote equality and inclusion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Embed equality, diversity, and inclusion objectives in RAA commissioning and workforce plans.• Collect and analyse data on adopter and child characteristics to identify and address disproportionality.• Establish an Equality Champion or advisory group within the RAA to monitor progress.• Include lived experience voices (adopters and adoptees) from diverse backgrounds in service design and review.

	By embedding equality at every stage of the adoption process, AW ensures that children from all backgrounds receive high-quality, equitable support.	
3.2 Sex – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on women and men.	In relation to sex, AW promotes equality by ensuring that services are designed to meet the specific needs of both boys and girls while addressing any disparities in outcomes.	Mitigation / Positive Actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include diverse case studies showing a range of family types. • Train staff on bias and inclusive practice in family assessment. • Ensure equality of opportunity in access to preparation courses and support groups.
3.3 Pregnancy and maternity	<p>In relation to pregnancy and maternity, the AW promotes equality by ensuring services support services do not affect mothers who are pregnant.</p> <p>Services are designed to reduce stigma, ensure equitable access to resources, and provide safe accommodation where needed.</p>	Mitigation / Positive Actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer flexibility around timing of assessments and matching processes. • Ensure maternity or paternity status does not negatively affect eligibility or prioritisation.

<p>3.4 Gender reassignment – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on transgender people</p>	<p>In relation to gender reassignment, AW promotes equality by ensuring services are inclusive, supportive, and responsive to the needs of transgender and non-binary young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use inclusive language in all forms and communications. • Review assessment procedures to remove unnecessary gendered assumptions. • Provide guidance for staff on supporting trans and non-binary adopters sensitively and legally.
<p>3.5 Disability – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on disabled people (ensure consideration of physical, sensory and mental health needs/differences)</p>	<p>In relation to disability, AW promotes equality by ensuring that services are accessible, inclusive, and tailored to meet the diverse needs of disabled children and young people.</p> <p>In addition, there is commissioned services for short breaks for disabled children, residential and in the community.</p> <p>Parents/carers have access to free independent support and advice through SENDIAS: https://livewell.bathnes.gov.uk/special-educational-need-or-disability-send/sendias-bathnes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure recruitment materials and websites meet accessibility standards. • Offer flexible assessment processes (e.g. home visits, accessible venues, or online options). • Strengthen links with health, education, and SEND services for post-adoption support. • Promote adoption by disabled people by highlighting inclusive role models and case studies.

<p>3.6 Age – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on different age groups</p>	<p>In relation to age, AW promotes equality by ensuring that services are tailored to meet the developmental and emotional needs of children and young people across all age groups. However, the age of most children being adopted is under four.</p> <p>Engaging with children and young people of different ages ensures their specific needs and voices inform service design and delivery.</p>	<p>Mitigation / Positive Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train staff to challenge age-based stereotypes in assessment and matching. • Emphasise experience, resilience, and support networks over age in suitability assessments. • Offer flexible post-adoption support packages regardless of adopter age.
<p>3.7 Race – identify the impact/potential impact on across different ethnic groups</p>	<p>In relation to race, AW promotes equality by ensuring services are culturally sensitive and address the specific needs of children and young people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds.</p> <p>Collaboration with culturally competent providers and community organisations ensures children feel valued and supported in their heritage, while also combating discrimination or bias within service delivery.</p>	<p>Mitigation / Positive Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted recruitment campaigns to attract adopters from underrepresented ethnic communities. • Partnerships with community and faith organisations to build trust and awareness. • Cultural competence training for all staff involved in assessment and matching.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance to ensure cultural identity and heritage are prioritised in matching decisions and ongoing support.
<p>3.8 Sexual orientation – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, questioning people</p>	<p>In relation to sexual orientation, AW promotes equality by ensuring services are inclusive and affirming for children and young people of all sexual orientations.</p> <p>Services are designed to address challenges such as discrimination, stigma, or mental health concerns that may disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with LGBTQ+ adoption networks (e.g. New Family Social). Ensure policies, imagery, and language in materials are explicitly inclusive. Provide staff training on LGBTQ+ awareness and unconscious bias. Monitor adopter diversity data to ensure equitable outcomes.
<p>3.9 Marriage and civil partnership – does the policy/strategy treat married and civil partnered people equally?</p>	<p>In relation to marriage and civil partnerships, the children's commissioning team promotes equality by ensuring that services are inclusive and sensitive to the diverse family structures and legal partnerships that children and young people may encounter. This includes recognising the role of married or civilly partnered carers, such as foster carers or adoptive parents,</p>	<p>Mitigation / Positive Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review matching policies to ensure they are relationship-status neutral. Communicate clearly that single and unmarried adopters are equally valued.

	<p>in providing stable and nurturing environments.</p> <p>The team ensures that commissioned services do not discriminate based on marital or partnership status and that all families are treated equitably.</p>	
<p>3.10 Religion/belief – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on people of different religious/faith groups and also upon those with no religion.</p>	<p>In relation to religion and belief AW will respect the impact of children's religious beliefs, placing them with appropriate parents.</p>	<p>Mitigation / Positive Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate questions about religion, belief, and spiritual practices into adopter assessments and matching criteria. • Provide adopters with training on supporting children's religious identity and respecting birth family beliefs. • Ensure availability of placements that can accommodate dietary, worship, and cultural observance needs.
<p>3.11 Socio-economically disadvantaged* – identify the impact on people who are disadvantaged due to factors like family background, educational attainment, neighbourhood,</p>		

<p>employment status can influence life chances</p> <p>(this is not a legal requirement but is a local priority).</p>		
<p>3.12 Rural communities* identify the impact / potential impact on people living in rural communities</p>	<p>In relation to rural communities, AW promotes equality by ensuring that services are accessible and responsive to the unique challenges faced by children and young people living in rural areas.</p> <p>This includes addressing issues such as geographical isolation, limited local resources, and travel barriers to accessing services, such as education, healthcare, and social care support.</p> <p>Monitoring and addressing the impact of rural isolation on well-being and service access is key to ensuring equality for children from these communities.</p>	
<p>3.13 Armed Forces Community ** serving members; reservists; veterans and their families, including the bereaved. Public services are required</p>	<p>Learning from colleagues working across B&NES and Wiltshire is drawn upon when required.</p>	

by law to pay due regard to the Armed Forces Community when developing policy, procedures and making decisions, particularly in the areas of public housing, education and healthcare (to remove disadvantage and consider special provision).		
<p>3.14 Care Experienced ***</p> <p>This working definition is currently under review and therefore subject to change:</p> <p>In B&NES, you are 'care-experienced' if you spent any time in your childhood in Local Authority care, living away from your parent(s) for example, you were adopted, lived in residential, foster care, kinship care, or a special guardianship arrangement.</p>	<p>In relation to care experience, AW promotes equality by ensuring that the unique needs of care-experienced young people are fully addressed.</p> <p>AW would support care-experienced people are not disadvantaged by their background, offering services that promote well-being and opportunities for personal development.</p>	

*There is no requirement within the public sector duty of the Equality Act to consider groups who may be disadvantaged due to socio economic status, or because of living in a rural area. However, these are significant issues within B&NES and have therefore been included here.

** 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.

4. Bath and North East Somerset Council

Equality Impact Assessment Improvement Plan

Please list actions that you plan to take as a result of this assessment/analysis. These actions should be based upon the analysis of data and engagement, any gaps in the data you have identified, and any steps you will be taking to address any negative impacts or remove barriers. The actions need to be built into your service planning framework. Actions/targets should be measurable, achievable, realistic and time framed.

Issues identified	Actions required	Progress milestones	Officer responsible	By when
It is a statutory duty to be part of a Regional Adoption Agency	New contract needs to be agreed and in place by February 2027	Single member agreement by December 2025 New contact signed by not later than November 2026	Ian Tomlinson	November 26

5. Sign off and publishing

Once you have completed this form, it needs to be 'approved' by your Divisional Director or their nominated officer. Following this sign off, send a copy to the Equalities Team (equality@bathnes.gov.uk), who will publish it on the Council's website. Keep a copy for your own records.

Signed off by: Jean Kelly

(Divisional Director or nominated senior officer)

Date: 10th October 2025