

Bristol City Council Equality Impact Assessment Form

(Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this form)



Name of proposal	School Attendance Strategy
Directorate and Service Area	ACE - Education
Name of Lead Officer	Fiona Lightwood

Step 1: What is the proposal?

Please explain your proposal in Plain English, avoiding acronyms and jargon. This section should explain how the proposal will impact service users, staff and/or the wider community.

1.1 What is the proposal?

The proposal is to have a city-wide multiagency School Attendance Strategy which outlines our plan to embed a whole system approach to improving attendance across the city. See Draft Attendance Strategy and appendices attached.

Step 2: What information do we have?

Decisions must be evidence-based, and involve people with protected characteristics that could be affected. Please use this section to demonstrate understanding of who could be affected by the proposal.

2.1 What data or evidence is there which tells us who is, or could be affected?

Please note, the data detailed below is taken from the Department for Education (DfE) data for 2016/17.

The DfE School Attendance Data shows us that Bristol's school attendance is below National Average for all Primary, Secondary and Special School pupils, including pupils with protected characteristics.

- Primary Attendance: National 96.0%, Bristol 95.5%,
- Secondary Attendance: National 94.6%, Bristol 93.7%
- Special Attendance: National 90.3%, Bristol 88.4%

The Attendance Strategy covers all Bristol pupils.

Some pupils with protected characteristics have lower attendance than the Bristol average. This includes:

Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND):

- Primary SEN Support 93.8%
- Primary EHCP* 93.0%
- Secondary SEN Support 91.3%
- Secondary EHCP 91.9%

Pupils from some BME groups including:

- Gypsy Roma (Primary 91.3%, Secondary 88.6%)
- Traveller of Irish Heritage (Primary 73.6%, Secondary 71.8%)
- Bangladeshi (attendance is lower than Bristol average at Primary phase - 94.3%, but higher than Bristol average at secondary phase - 94.8%)
- Pakistani pupils (attendance is lower than Bristol average at Primary phase at 93.6%, but the gap narrows to 0.2% at secondary phase 93.5%).

*EHCP – Education Health and Care Plan

2.2 Who is missing? Are there any gaps in the data?

Less national data is available for pupils who attend Alternative Learning Providers. However, we do have Bristol data for this cohort.

2.3 How have we involved, or will we involve, communities and groups that could be affected?

Between January and July 2018 we consulted with Primary, Secondary, Special Schools and Alternative Learning Providers (ALPs). We consulted with other council departments, teams and colleagues including: the 0-25 Integrated Service (including Special Educational Needs colleagues); the HOPE Virtual School for Children in Care; the Equalities Team; the ALP Team; the Educational Psychology Service; the Gypsy Roma Traveller Co-ordinator; the Education Welfare Service; the Safeguarding in Education Team; the Youth Offending Team; Families in Focus; Children’s Social Care and local councillors. We consulted with voluntary agencies including services for pupils and parents with substance misuse issues and mental health and wellbeing needs. One of our local councillors with a particular remit for equality issues raised the school attendance agenda with some community groups within the East/Central area of the city.

We sought views on the barriers to school attendance and gathered

information on, and examples of, existing good practice. We shared earlier versions of the draft Attendance Strategy and Attendance Charter and made amendments based on feedback from various groups.

We conducted a piece of research on pupils' views on school attendance which involved pupils from three secondary schools, one in each of the three Bristol localities.

As part of the formal consultation process we will be calling on schools, Alternative Learning Providers, other professionals and others to share the draft Strategy and Charter with communities to encourage feedback from all areas of the city, and in particular from those with protected characteristics.

Step 3: Who might the proposal impact?

Analysis of impacts on people with protected characteristics must be rigorous. Please demonstrate your analysis of any impacts in this section, referring to all of the equalities groups as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

3.1 Does the proposal have any potentially adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics?

No. The purpose of the Attendance Strategy is to increase school attendance across the City. The strategy recognises that school attendance is everyone's responsibility and that there is a multiplicity of reasons why children may not attend school. The strategy outlines the importance of agencies working together, and with children and families to address the barriers which can prevent children from attending school.

The strategy recognises that a one-size fits all approach to addressing school attendance is unacceptable, and would also be ineffective, and that a nuanced approach is needed. This involves considering each child and family's situation separately; and in particular, considering any additional support or consideration that may be needed for children or carers, including those with protected characteristics.

3.2 Can these impacts be mitigated or justified? If so, how?

Not applicable – see above.

3.3 Does the proposal create any benefits for people with protected characteristics?

Yes. Attendance data shows that pupils with some protected characteristics can often have poorer attendance than their peers. We also know that children of parents with some protected characteristics can also have poorer attendance than their peers, not least if the pupils are Young Carers.

Data shows a strong link between attendance and attainment. As we increase our support to enable children to attend school more regularly, including the children mentioned above, this in turn will increase the life chances and prospects for these pupils.

We know that pupils may not attend school due to bullying and harassment, this can include pupils with protected characteristics, for example, those who identify as LGBT+. This strategy will take those issues into account too.

Attending school regularly can also be a protective factor for children and young people. School attendance can be crucial in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including keeping children safe. Absence from school can be an indicator of risk; and poor school attendance is a recurring theme in Serious Case Reviews. Any child or young person may be at risk of harm, regardless of their family background or other circumstances.

3.4 Can they be maximised? If so, how?

By ensuring these pupils are identified as 'priority groups' within the focus of the strategy.

Step 4: So what?

The Equality Impact Assessment must be able to influence the proposal and decision. This section asks how your understanding of impacts on people with protected characteristics has influenced your proposal, and how the findings of your Equality Impact Assessment can be measured going forward.

4.1 How has the equality impact assessment informed or changed the proposal?

We have identified the need to use schools, and others, such as relevant professionals, local councillors and community leaders and representatives, to support the publicity of the Attendance Strategy Consultation process. This will help to ensure we reach as many affected individuals and groups as possible, and in particular, those with protected characteristics. We will also seek the assistance of relevant groups in facilitating feedback, where additional support is required.

4.2 What actions have been identified going forward?

Raise the profile of the Attendance Strategy at the Attendance Summit on 9 October 2018. With the advice and guidance of Equality colleagues, including the Council's Equalities Officer, pursue appropriate channels to publicise the consultation, including to those with protected characteristics.

4.3 How will the impact of your proposal and actions be measured moving forward?

The Attendance Strategy Formal Consultation period will run for six weeks, from 9 October to 19 November 2018 and this Equality Impact Assessment will be updated once the consultation has finished.

Once the Attendance Strategy moves into its post-consultation phase, the expectation will be for the work that sits underneath the strategy (some of which has already started) to gain momentum; and that over time, the impact will be measured through the Performance Indicators set out in the strategy.

Service Director Sign-Off:



Date: 11/10/2018

Equalities Officer Sign Off:

Cherene Whitfield

Date: 10 October 2018