

Equality Impact Assessment Template

A. Information about the policy

Policy title	The Best start in Life Strategy
Lead officer (name and role)	Becky Bateman Head of Early years and Childcare
Date of assessment (dd/mm/yyyy)	16.6.2026
Summary of the policy	<p>Reading's Best Start in Life Strategy focuses on early help, joined-up services and removing barriers to support, especially for families who need it most. Strong integrated pathways—midwifery, early years, health visiting, Family Hubs and voluntary and community partners—provide wraparound support from pregnancy to school entry. Through improved early intervention, targeted support, strengthened early years provision and high-quality Family Hubs, Reading is committed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting children's development from birth • improving Good Level of Development (GLD) outcomes for all children • ensuring more children thrive by the time they enter Reception • enabling every child to have the strongest possible start in life

B. Initial assessment

	Assessment
<p>PSED Aim 1 (unlawful behaviour):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could your policy lead to direct or indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010? 	<p>The policy is not expected to lead to direct or indirect discrimination, harassment, or victimisation under the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>The strategy is explicitly designed to be inclusive, accessible, and family-centred, supporting all families in Reading. It focuses on improving access to services and o the policy will affect access to services and participation, but in a positive way, with the intention of reducing inequalities.</p> <p>Key impacts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to integrated services (e.g. Family Hubs, health visiting, early years support), designed to be inclusive, local, place-based and accessible. • Targeted outreach and early intervention for families facing the

	<p>greatest challenges, including those affected by poverty, poor housing, or other adversities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced support for children with SEND and neurodivergence, including earlier identification and intervention. Focus on closing development gaps which are already evident in early childhood and linked to deprivation.
<p>PSED Aim 2 (equal opportunities):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could your policy affect how service users or employees access services or participate in activities relevant to your policy area? Could it impact people with particular protected characteristics who have a disproportionately low level of access to services, participation in public life, or other activities? Could it create or worsen disadvantages and inequalities in your community? Could it remove or minimise disadvantages and inequalities in your community? 	<p>Protected characteristics most positively affected include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability (SEND and neurodiversity support) Race and ethnicity (through inclusive, accessible services and outreach) Sex and pregnancy/maternity (perinatal support) Socio-economic disadvantage (local characteristic) <p>Locally defined characteristics also supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience of care (targeting vulnerable families and children in care) Armed forces community (via universal access routes, though not explicitly targeted) <p>Potential risks (to be mitigated):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unequal uptake of services among some groups (e.g. marginalised communities) Access barriers (e.g. language, digital exclusion, cultural barriers) Outcomes for all children and families, with additional targeted support for those experiencing disadvantage, which is consistent with lawful positive action.
<p>PSED Aim 3 (good relations):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could your policy affect how people perceive or interact with others? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategy is expected to have a positive impact on community cohesion and understanding.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could it help tackle prejudice and promote understanding between people with different protected characteristics? • Could it lead to prejudice, community tensions, conflicts, isolation, or segregation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategy promotes inclusive, respectful, and trauma-informed services that recognise diverse family needs. It has been co-produced with families, communities and partners, helping ensure different voices are represented. • By improving early support and reducing disadvantage, it contributes to long-term social inclusion and reduced inequality, which are key drivers of cohesion. • If not implemented equitably, perceived inequalities in service access could lead to dissatisfaction or reduced trust
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C. Full assessment

i. Impact on protected characteristics

Protected characteristic	Expected impact	Evidence
Age	Positive – Focus on the first 1,001 days improves early childhood outcomes and life chances.	Strategy prioritises early intervention in infancy and early childhood, where inequalities first emerge and have lifelong impact.
Disability	Strong positive – Improved early identification and support for children with SEND and neurodivergence.	Specific priority on earlier identification of SEND and access to integrated support services.
Gender reassignment	Neutral to positive – No specific targeted actions, but inclusive, non-discriminatory service design benefits all groups.	Services described as inclusive, respectful, and accessible to all families.
Pregnancy and maternity	Strong positive – Core focus on perinatal health, parenting support, and early support for families.	Priority on strengthening perinatal and early health support for mothers, babies, and families.
Race	Positive – Outreach and accessible services expected to improve access for ethnically diverse communities.	Emphasis on inclusive, accessible, community-based services and targeted outreach to families facing adversity.
Religion or belief	Neutral to positive – No direct targeting, but inclusive and community-based	Co-production with communities and inclusive

	approach supports diverse needs.	principles support culturally appropriate services.
Sex	Positive – Support offered to both mothers and fathers, promoting equitable parenting support.	Services include support for “mums and dads-to-be” and family-centred approaches.
Sexual orientation	Neutral to positive – Inclusive family approach supports diverse family structures.	Strategy designed to be inclusive and welcoming to all families.
Marriage and civil partnership	Neutral – No specific differential impacts identified.	Universal access to services regardless of marital status.
Membership of the armed forces community*	Neutral to positive – Access to universal and targeted services available to all families, including mobile or transient populations.	No specific targeting, but inclusive Family Hub model improves accessibility
Socio-economic disadvantage*	Strong positive – Significant focus on reducing inequality linked to poverty and deprivation.	Outreach to families facing adversity, including support with housing, debt, and wider determinants of health.
Experience of care*	Positive – Additional support for vulnerable children and families, including those known to services.	Strategy includes support for children in care and vulnerable families as part of integrated services

*Additional characteristics identified by the Council to be considered in Equality Impact Assessments.

ii. Mitigating Actions

Negative impact	Mitigating action
N/A	

iii. Monitoring and Review

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Monitoring will be proportionate, data-driven, and aligned to existing performance frameworks, ensuring that equality impacts are actively tracked and addressed throughout the life of the strategy.

D. Approval

Approving officer (name and role)	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)
Brian Grady, Director of Education	17/06/2026