

Equality Impact Assessment

EIA of

Reunification Support Service (RSS), Looked After Children

Did you use the EIA Screening Tool? (Delete as applicable)

No

1. Explaining the matter being assessed

Is this a:

(Delete the ones that don't apply)

- Other: A new service or function launched in Oct 2022

Summarise the strategy, policy, service(s), or function(s) being assessed. Describe current status followed by any changes that stakeholders would experience.

The service to be assessed is called the Reunification Support Service, which was launched in late October 2022. An EIA is required to identify and mitigate potential equality impacts for key stakeholder groups:

- Look After Children (ALL)
- Families of Looked After Children
- Foster Carers

Reunification is when a looked after child or young person (referred to as a child in this document) returns home to live within their birth family network following a period of being in the care of the local authority. Returning home is the most common outcome for children in care; the Department for Education state that between 2018 and 2022, 20% of children who cease to be looked after, return to their parents or other persons with parental responsibility. Reunification is most successful when it is well planned, based on robust assessment of need and where there are risks identified. When appropriately planned, children return to the care of their families at a pace that accords with their needs with relevant services identified to support the family for as long as they are needed.

The overall aims of Surrey County Council's new Reunification Support Service (RSS) are to:

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- Ensure that children can return to the care of their parent(s) (or other close relative) at the earliest opportunity, if safe to do so and in their best interest.
- Ensure that when reunification occurs, it is successful (with the child remaining at home, and not needing to return to care within a 6-month timeframe); and
- Reduce the overall cost to Children's Services by investing in the support required for successful reunification to occur, knowing this will generate savings in the longer-term.

RSS contains five distinct phases which will be tailored to the needs of each child and family.

The 5 phases are:

- 1.) Identification: where social workers identify and request the service
- 2.) Planning: RSS consider and plan the reunification
- 3.) Implementation: services are provided to the family in the areas needed to support positive reunification
- 4.) Review: evaluate results
- 5.) Reunification: Reunification is achieved and discharge/revocation of legal orders is progressed with a new care plan implemented for the child, reflecting the outcome of the intervention from RSS

How does your service proposal support the outcomes in [the Community Vision for Surrey 2030](#)?

Specify which of the ten vision outcomes this work is linked to.

- Children and young people are safe and feel safe and confident.
- Everyone lives healthy, active and fulfilling lives, and makes good choices about their wellbeing.
- Everyone gets the health and social care support and information they need at the right time and place.
- Communities are welcoming and supportive, especially of those most in need, and people feel able to contribute to community life.
- Everyone has a place they can call home, with appropriate housing for all.

Are there any specific geographies in Surrey where this will make an impact?

(Delete the ones that don't apply)

- County-wide

Detail here who you have involved with completing this EIA. For each include:

- Jason Yip, Project Manager, Policy, Planning and Programmes
- Elaine Andrews, Service Manager North West Looked After Children and Care Leaver's Team
- Natasha Gunner, Team Manager, Reunification Support Service for Looked After Children
- Siobhan Walsh, Assistant Director, Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

2. Service Users / Residents

Who may be affected by this activity?

There are 9 protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) to consider in your proposal. These are:

1. Age including younger and older people
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Pregnancy and maternity
5. Race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
6. Religion or belief including lack of belief
7. Sex
8. Sexual orientation
9. Marriage/civil partnerships

Though not included in the Equality Act 2010, Surrey County Council recognises that there are other vulnerable groups which significantly contribute to inequality across the county and therefore they should also be considered within EIAs. If relevant, you will need to include information on the following vulnerable groups (Please **refer to the EIA guidance** if you are unclear as to what this is).

- Members/Ex members of armed forces
- Adult and young carers*
- Those experiencing digital exclusion*
- Those experiencing domestic abuse*
- Those with education/training (literacy) needs
- Those experiencing homelessness*
- Looked After children/Care leavers*
- Those living in rural/urban areas
- Those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage*
- Out of work young people)*
- Adults with learning disabilities and/or autism*
- People with drug or alcohol use issues*
- People on probation
- People in prison
- Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers
- Sex workers
- Children with Special educational needs and disabilities*
- Adults with long term health conditions, disabilities (including SMI) and/or sensory impairment(s)*
- Older People in care homes*
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities*
- Other (describe below)

(*as identified in the Surrey COVID Community Impact Assessment and the Surrey Health and Well-being Strategy)

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Impacts of all protected characteristics: Age, disability, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, Marriage/Civil partnerships

Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.

The Reunification service is open to all Surrey County Council Looked After Children. Any social worker for a Looked After Child can request the service, irrespective of the child's protected characteristics and all requests will be assessed with the same set of criteria.

Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.

Provision of the service depends on the suitability of the children returning to their parents and the readiness of their parents to care for the children. Managers and social workers will consider all children in supervision discussions who may be eligible for the service to ensure there is equitable consideration of the circumstances of all Looked After Children.

Any additional needs of the child or young person will be considered and addressed during the planning process to make sure their needs are met and these will not prevent reunification.

Managers will use monthly RSS performance review meetings to review handling of service requests, including how additional needs have been considered.

What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?

None.

Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?

No.

3. Staff

Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.

There are no impacts on the staff group.

Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.

Not applicable.

What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?

Not applicable.

Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?

Identify negative impacts that can't be mitigated and explain why, together with evidence.

No.

4. Recommendation

Based on your assessment, please indicate which course of action you are recommending to decision makers. You should explain your recommendation below.

- **Outcome One: No major change to the policy/service/function required.** This EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or negative impact, and all opportunities to promote equality have been undertaken.
- **Outcome Two: Adjust the policy/service/function** to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better advance equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments will remove the barriers you identified?
- **Outcome Three: Continue the policy/service/function** despite potential for negative impact or missed opportunities to advance equality identified. You will need to make sure the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You need to consider whether there are:
 - Sufficient plans to stop or minimise the negative impact
 - Mitigating actions for any remaining negative impacts plans to monitor the actual impact.
- **Outcome Four: Stop and rethink the policy** when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. (For guidance on what is unlawful discrimination, refer to the [Equality and Human Rights Commission's guidance and Codes of Practice on the Equality Act](#) concerning employment, goods and services and equal pay).

Recommended outcome:

Confirm which outcome you are recommending.

Outcome One: No major change to the policy/service/function required.

Explanation:

Explain the reasons for your recommendation

The reunification practitioner and manager will review and share any concerns about inequalities arising from the operations of the reunification service.

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5. Action plan and monitoring arrangements

Insert your action plan here, based on the mitigations recommended.

Involve you Assessment Team in monitoring progress against the actions above.

Item	Initiation Date	Action/Item	Person Actioning	Target Completion Date	Update/Notes	Open/Closed
1	17-NOV-2022	Managers will use monthly RSS performance review meetings to review handling of service requests, including how additional needs have been considered.	Jason – Project manager	N/A	Recurring task monthly during review meeting	Open
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6a. Version control

Version Number	Purpose/Change	Author	Date
1	Reviewed and approved version by Assistant Director, Service manager and Reunification manager	Jason Yip	17/11/2022
2	Reviewed and approved by Assistant Director, Service manager and Reunification manager for the year 2023/2024	Jason Yip	10/07/2023
3	Reviewed and approved by Chief of Staff	Rebecca Neate	25/10/2023

The above provides historical data about each update made to the Equality Impact Assessment.

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Please include the name of the author, date and notes about changes made – so that you can refer to what changes have been made throughout this iterative process.

For further information, please see the EIA Guidance document on version control.

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6b. Approval

Secure approval from the appropriate level of management based on nature of issue and scale of change being assessed.

Approved by	Date approved
Assistant Director	31/08/2023
Executive Director	25/10/2023
Cabinet Member	15/12/2023
Directorate Equality Group	

Publish:

It is recommended that all EIAs are published on Surrey County Council's website.

Please send approved EIAs to: **INSERT SHARED EMAIL ACCOUNT ADDRESS**

EIA author:

6c. EIA Team

Name	Job Title	Organisation	Team Role

If you would like this information in large print, Braille, on CD or in another language please contact us on:

Tel: 03456 009 009

Textphone (via Text Relay): 18001 03456 009 009

SMS: 07860 053 465

Email: contactcentre@surreycc.gov.uk