

**EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

<p><b>STRATEGY/ACTION:</b> People Group Information Services Review</p>	<p><b>Department:</b> People Group</p>
<p><b>Person responsible for assessment:</b> Melanie Brown/Janet Walke/Susan Walker</p> <p><b>Person responsible for strategy where different from above:</b></p>	<p><b>Date of assessment:</b> December 2011</p>

**Brief description of strategy, partners and those who will be affected by its delivery:**

The services that have been proposed to come together as part of the review of Information Services in the People group are:

- Functions of the Information Team- Adults & Social Care
- Family Information Services /Choice Advice/Parent Partnership
- People Group Website maintenance for both ASC and previously 'Children's Services'

The Family Information Services /Choice Advice/Parent Partnership deliver frontline services to the public through casework (Parent Partnership & Choice Advice Services) and a telephone helpline (Family Information Services /Choice Advice/Parent Partnership)

All services within the review maintain information to the public through website information, service directories and other online formats such as Facebook etc...

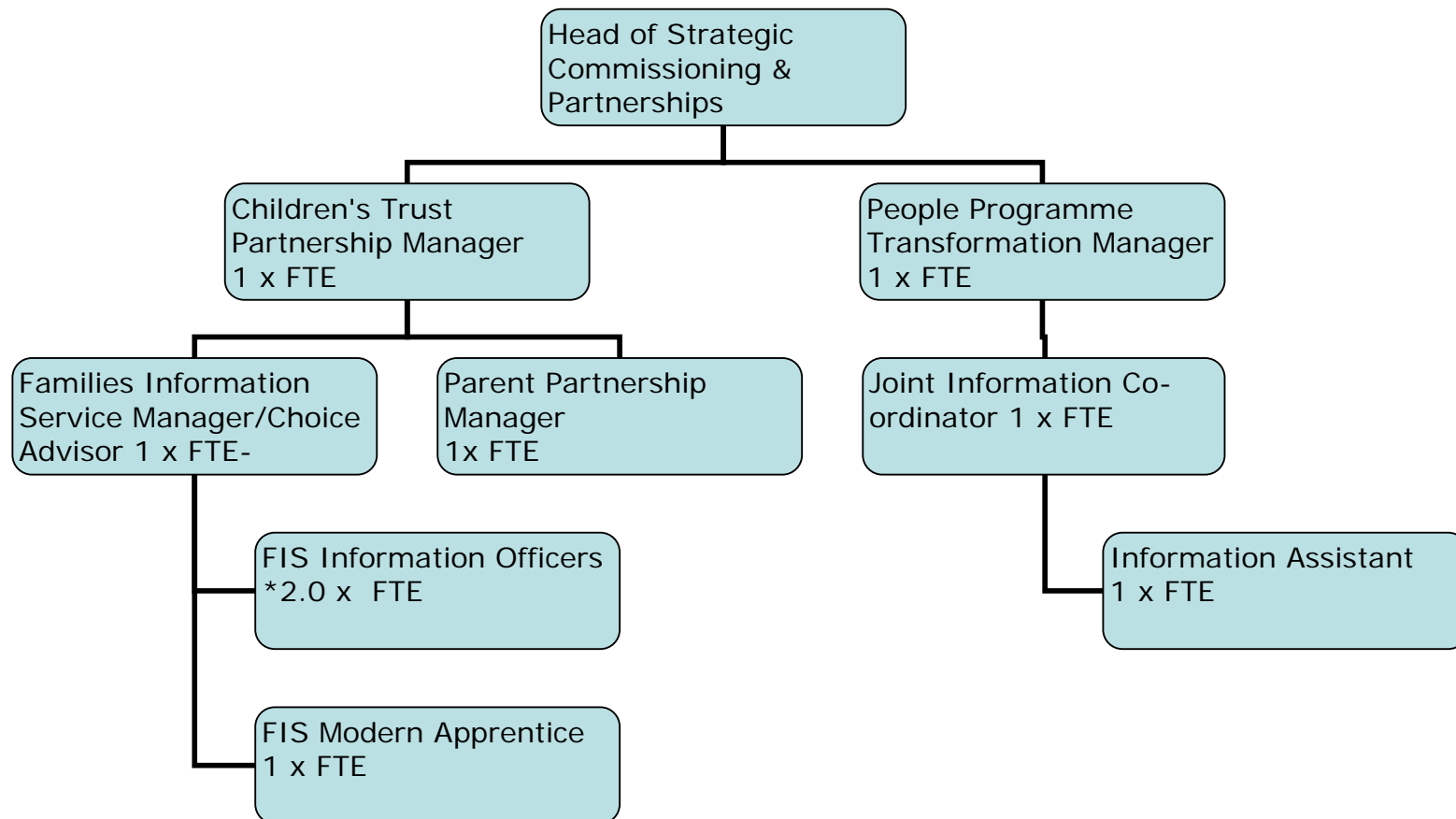
The FIS service is available to all families to access 0-19 and 0-25 if the child is disabled and the PPS is available to support families with children with SEN 0-25. The Choice Advisor supports parents with school admission process. The Adult Social Care team provides the following services to the Adult population in Darlington:

- Adult Social Care leaflet development, co-ordination and distribution
- Website development across Adult Social Care- Learning disability website
- Event co-ordination for Adult Social Care
- Co-production of information, strategies, leaflets for Adult Social Care
- Translation into alternative formats (Easy Read, Braille, alternative languages)
- Newsletters, Deaf newsletter, Visually impaired newsletter, AdSC internal newsletter

- Maintain the Adult Social Care service directory
- Produce Information Packs for service users and carers
- Team has strong links with GOLD readers group and Learning Disability People's Parliament

The changes in the review could have impacts on all of these service users, Adults and families in potentially positive and negative impacts. These impacts would be collated following impact events/sessions which will be undertaken as part of the MTFP 2011-2012 Talking Together proposals.

Currently the teams included in this review are managed as outlined below:



The review is proposing reducing management functions within these teams by bringing the service area under a leaner line management structure. Structure will be confirmed after the staff consultation process is completed on 13th February 2012 and will be fed into this process at this stage.

## Introduction

This is a generic document that will require interpretation in particular circumstances. If, after reading the guidance, you require further information on how to implement the assessment, please contact Peter Roberts, Social Enterprise Development Manager 01325 388713

**Q.1 Is your strategy and the actions it proposes accessible to everyone within the community? Bear in mind any economic, social, environmental, physical, intellectual, cultural, linguistic, technological or other barriers.**

Issue	Yes	No	If yes, what evidence do you have to demonstrate this?	If no, what do you plan to do to remove barriers to access?
Equality Act 2010 Protected characteristics:				
Age	✓		The FIS service is available to all families to access 0-19 and 0-25 ( <i>for families with a disabled child</i> ). The PPS is available to support families SEN children aged 0-25. The Choice Advisor supports parents through school admission process, 3-18 years. The Adult Social Care information team provides the services to the entire Adult population in Darlington if they require it.	The service restrictions which apply relate to statutory service provision and are out with the legislative requirements of age discrimination.

Issue	Yes	No	If yes, what evidence do you have to demonstrate this?	If no, what do you plan to do to remove barriers to access?
Disability	✓		<p>Consultation and involvement sessions have been held with <b>disabled people</b> and <b>parents</b> with <b>disabled children</b> regarding this service area as some services such as the Parent Partnership Service and FIS service offer <b>specific</b> services to families with disabled children.</p> <p>Relevant consultations which have taken place are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled People – 9<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• Young People – 7<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• A focus group session with Darlington Parent/Carer Forum - 9<sup>th</sup> January. This will allow individuals who may be impacted by the budget to express their concerns etc.</li> </ul>	Improvement in accessibility of services for disabled people including disabled children and their carers.
Gender reassignment	✓		The services within this review make no distinction regarding Gender (inc. transvestitism, transgender and Tran sexuality. The services are available to all families and adults within Darlington population.	<b><i>Consider proactive work with marginalised communities to improve accessibility.</i></b>
Pregnancy and Maternity				
Race	✓		The services included in the review are accessible to all families and adults within Darlington population, information can be made available in other languages and formats as requested.	<b><i>Consider proactive work with marginalised communities to improve accessibility.</i></b>

Issue	Yes	No	If yes, what evidence do you have to demonstrate this?	If no, what do you plan to do to remove barriers to access?
Religion or belief	✓		<b><i>Services within the review have regard to the needs of different faiths and beliefs.</i></b> The services are available to all families and adults within Darlington population.	<b><i>Consider proactive work with marginalised communities to improve accessibility.</i></b>
Sex				
Sexual orientation	✓		The services within this review make no distinction regarding Sexuality (inc. homosexuality, lesbian and bisexuality). The services are available to all families and adults within Darlington population.	<b><i>Consider proactive work with marginalised communities to improve accessibility.</i></b>
Marriage and Civil Partnership				
Local Priorities:				
Geographical impacts	✓		The services included within this review cover the whole Borough of Darlington and all its population of Adults, children, young people and families.	Consideration to be given to those hard to reach groups who live outside the urban area in the setting of priorities and deliver of services.
Carers	✓		The services included within this review are accessible to all adults, parents and carers of children, young people and their families and vulnerable groups such as parents and carers of disabled children.	
Young People leaving care				
Gypsies & Travellers				
Refugees & Asylum Seekers				

Issue	Yes	No	If yes, what evidence do you have to demonstrate this?	If no, what do you plan to do to remove barriers to access?
Unemployed or low income				
People with spent criminal convictions				

**Q.2 (a) For whatever reason, does your strategy and the actions it proposes treat any group differently from others?**

Yes	✓
No	

**If you have answered 'yes', please specify those individuals or groups affected and whether the impact has the potential to be adverse.**

The services outlined in the review provide services to:

- Disabled people, children, families and Adults

**(b) What needs to be done to prevent any potentially adverse impact?**

The requirement for all services to ensure appropriate and proportionate impact assessments are carried out with disabled people and parents and carers of disabled children.

**Q.3 (a) Does your strategy promote equality? (e.g. does it contain actions that demonstrate a consideration of community cohesion and the needs of the members of Darlington's diverse communities)**

Yes	✓
No	

**If you have answered 'yes', please give examples of how equality is promoted.**

The services within this review in the People group aim to address inequality and narrow the gap within the community examples of this are through providing information on childcare options for families seeking employment.

The services provide support to Adults, parents and carers of children, young people and their families and vulnerable groups such as parents and carers of disabled children or children with special educational needs.

**Q.4 In the past three years, have you consulted with any of the following groups regarding the development of your strategy?**

Group	Yes	No	If yes, please summarise evidence (Who? When? What were the outcomes?)	If no, are you satisfied that the strategy has no impact on this group?
Age	✓		<p>Information regarding the proposal was sent out to service users and their carers allowing them to have a look at the proposals and express their views and concerns. This included using communications tools such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town Crier publications</li> <li>• DBC Online forums</li> </ul> <p>Questionnaires were sent out to service users asking them to express their views regarding the budget proposal. An Easy Read version of the questionnaire was sent out on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2011, following comments from the public a revised questionnaire was sent out on January 9<sup>th</sup> January 2012 which included frequently asked questions about the proposals.</p> <p>Consultation events have been taking place throughout December 2011 and January 2012, these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Public – 5<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• Disabled People – 9<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• Old People – 12<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• Young People – 7<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• General Public – 17<sup>th</sup> January</li> </ul> <p>A focus group session with Darlington Parent/Carer Forum took place and this group considered the proposals on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2012. This allowed individuals who may be impacted by the proposal to express their concerns, highlight impacts both positive and negative etc.</p>	
Disability	✓			
Gender reassignment	✓			
Pregnancy and Maternity	✓			
Race	✓			
Religion or belief	✓			
Sex	✓			
Sexual orientation	✓			
Marriage and Civil Partnership	✓			
Geographical impacts	✓			
Carers	✓			
Young people leaving care	✓			
Gypsies & Travellers	✓			
Refugees & asylum	✓			

seekers			All comments which have been collected have been recorded and analysed.
Unemployed or low waged	✓		Below are examples of some of the positive and negative comments which have been raised. The main concerns seem to be that if the Parent Partnership Manager role was to be deleted it will result in a loss of an experienced member of staff. There were also concerns that the Parent Partnership Service would no longer be able to act independently from the local authority if it was part of the proposed Information Services Review.
People with spent criminal convictions			<p>Some of the <b>negative impacts</b> which have been expressed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I just had to let you know that I am deeply unhappy with the proposal and that I feel it will massively impact on vulnerable families and schools who are already having to learn to cope with less expert advice from central services as it is.</li> <li>• Based on contact with the (PPS) service since 2000. The benefits of the service did not come from handing out standard information. The benefits came from expertise, experience ability and scope for action of the Manager to treat all contacts according to their individual circumstances and take whatever action was necessary.</li> <li>• Location of the service within Town Hall building. This will be perceived as an intimidating location and will not promote the view of Parent Partnership independence or even 'arms length' operation.</li> <li>• Downgrading of Parent Partnership Officer's post from 'Manager' to 'Officer'. If the post involves removing blockages wither within the Local Authority or schools or other agencies then this does not promote a feeling of the importance of the new post.</li> <li>• The downside of the phone manning arrangements is that there is a likelihood that messages will not be passed on correctly or that parents will lose confidence if they are</li> </ul>



			<p>answered by another member of the department's staff who is untrained in the field of issues faced by parents especially those of disabled children (ISSUES WHICH REQUIRE MORE THAN STANDARD INFORMATION).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children with special needs are vulnerable and often parents have little knowledge of the 'system'. They need the best support which they can get, which I believe comes from an experienced manager.</li> <li>• Darlington is a small borough and the parent partnership manager has built up trust with parents. I would be extremely concerned if this service was disrupted or changed.</li> <li>• Personal impact (if no PPS Manager in place): parent had to stay with daughter for 3 hours per day up to Christmas. Horrendous experience until PP Manager became involved and started to make progress. If PPS officer was new to the post they would not have the necessary experience.</li> <li>• Personal impact (if no PPS Manager in place): Paraplegic child at Education Village, Mum had another baby, problems with statements causing mum to feel suicidal.</li> <li>• Associated pressure put on parents and carers</li> <li>• Parents can't cope, more tribunal cases which can cost up to £150k</li> <li>• That parents and carers will be bombarded with information for lots of different areas making it difficult to find the right help/path to take.</li> <li>• Having worked with the current PP Manager over several years, I am aware of the value of both her experience and the service she has provided. I would urge you to reconsider this decision and the great impact it would have on many vulnerable families in Darlington</li> <li>• My sister has nursed a child with SEN through the school system and I know from experience how difficult this has been for her, despite having my full support and experience. I urged her to contact her local PPS, which she did, but unfortunately the support she received was poor and</li> </ul>	
--	--	--	--	--

		<p>ineffective and she did not benefit at all. I told her at the time that she should have lived in Darlington as <u>our</u> PPS was a strength of our LA. My sister is a highly educated and capable person but the emotional distress of dealing with her child who had significant difficulties, meant that she found it hard to deal in a focused manner with the SEN system and procedures. She would suffer from anxiety about attending meetings on her own and then would find it hard to remember what had been said etc. I always said that due to the experiences of my sister, I would help my parents to access support asap and I have been delighted with the quality of service provided by the current PP Manager.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I am writing to stress the importance of having an experienced and appropriately qualified person in the position of Service Manager. The current PP Manager's advice, guidance, input, knowledge and expertise to those accessing the service would be a great loss and if the proposals go ahead it would diminish the quality and value of the service that you currently offer to parents, pupils and schools.</li><li>• Just recently there has been a re-shuffle in the SEN team in Darlington which has been a complete joke and has resulted in many children with additional needs not getting into schools including xxx my own child. Why? Because someone decided to replace the main person with an employee from the housing department. This resulted in statements not being filed in time, schools not being ready and able to offer the provisions straight away. xxx case included!!!! The current PP Manager was the only person to offer support, knew the right people to speak to, what meetings should take place, who should be there, and offering my family the support we needed. If it was not for her the situation could have been a lot worse. We need her, without her along side her experience, knowledge and expertise you will find parents depressed, suicidal or on a brink of a nervous breakdown with this "merry go round" of trying to get the</li></ul>	
--	--	---	--

		<p>correct provision for our children in the schools. There will be a lack of communication which the current PP Manager always makes sure there is plenty of.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes as one person is not sufficient to do this new job! (PPS Officer). This will be another professional office where you will be unable to contact anyone. Private advice line, what a laugh!!! Just another number to be told “the lines are full”. Money is hard to come by and phone units are expensive, not to listen to music! How about having an office where you can discuss your point of view or complaint with somebody face to face!</li> </ul> <p><b>Positive impacts and some positive comments</b> included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More independent parental supporters.</li> <li>• More people will be aware of information and there would be a stronger knowledge base</li> <li>• “Yes I feel that as a parent you can feel you are being passed around services currently. Sometimes you don’t know why you are seeing them and I think it will be better if people at the Town Hall were all working together. This looks ok from that point of view.</li> <li>• “This makes sense to me as a parent who has been well supported by parent partnership service within the last couple of months and I have no concerns.</li> <li>• “In respect to the proposed restructure, from our point of view this is really good as it gives much more symmetry to what we are trying to achieve with the life stage service.”</li> <li>• “Increased manning of phone lines”</li> <li>• I think it’s a good idea and it would have a positive impact on families if there is broader cover for all of the services that are involved with the review.</li> <li>• I’m new to the services (PPS) and I’ve been satisfied with the service I’ve had so far. As a parent I would like access to all of these services and as long as these services are available to me I can’t see any negative impact to my family.</li> <li>• “As a parent, I would like to be provided with as much information as I can and given their experience hopefully</li> </ul>	
--	--	---	--

			<p>this will all be to hand and readily available instead of having to wait or search for information myself. I can't think of any negative points, this change is only for the good and to improve in my eyes. It means that everything is in one place and the knowledge and skills base can be found more easily instead of being passed from pillar to post.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Yes Changes will directly impact my family as we are beginning the process of locating a suitable secondary school for our son and will need help with sorting through the options available. A more cohesive service, particularly during the transition from children's to Adult Services. Better Information sharing between the various services. Savings through using less office space and more choice and more awareness of the choices available.</li><li>• As for the good things with a dedicated and good team I hardly think things will go wrong but like I said we don't know until the changes are up and running! Not sure as no one knows how things are going to work with a new project/change etc... unless/until it is up and running. I would like to say a big thank you for the meetings you have attended concerning my son with other parents. And even though my son is now 17 I would like to attend other meetings if any in the future. All sounds good to me! But like I said one never knows!</li></ul>	
--	--	--	--	--

## **Guidance and Definitions**

The Equality Act 2010 combined over 100 pieces of legislation into one Act and introduces nine protected characteristics for which due regard is required in ensuring discrimination is prevented. These are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership. The Public Sector Equality Duty came into force on April 5th, 2011.

The following definitions and information will be useful in determining impacts of strategies, actions or services on specific groups.

### **Age:**

Having a particular age (e.g. 32 year-olds) or being within an age group (e.g. 18-30 year olds). Discrimination on the grounds of age under the Equality Act 2010 applies from the age of 18 years.

### **Disability:**

Physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

### **Gender Reassignment:**

A process which is undertaken under medical supervision for the purposes of reassigning a person's sex by changing physiological or other characteristics of sex, and includes any part of such a process.

The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999 outlaw direct discrimination against transsexuals on the grounds of "gender reassignment".

**Transgender:** An individual, who appears as, wishes to be considered as or has undergone surgery to become a member of the opposite sex.

**Transsexual:** An individual who believes that their apparent gender is not their actual gender and may seek gender reassignment surgery to alter their body to meet their belief. Transsexuals may appear similar to transvestites, but have a different intent.

Transvestite: An individual who wears the clothing of the opposite gender to express their feminine/masculine side, or for relaxation. Also known as cross-dressing.

For the purposes of completing the impact assessment, consideration ought to be given, in the first instance for example, to the arrangements made (or which could be made/agreed upon), regarding the use of toilets and any other gender specific facilities.

**Pregnancy and Maternity:**

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant. Maternity is the period after giving birth. It is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, including as a result of breastfeeding.

**Race:** includes colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic origin or national origins.

**Religion or Belief:**

Religion means any religion including a reference to a lack of religion. Belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live it for it to be included.

This area presents, perhaps, the greatest difficulty in terms of providing a definition, not least because of the close links/overlaps in some instances with culture and race/ethnicity.

The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 ban discrimination in employment and vocational training on grounds of religion or belief. Under the regulations, religion is defined as being 'any religion, religious belief, or similar philosophical belief'. This does not include any philosophical or political belief unless that belief is similar to a religious belief. Courts and tribunals may consider a number of factors when deciding what is a 'religion or belief' (e.g. collective worship, clear belief system, profound belief affecting way of life or view of the world)'.

For the purposes of completing the impact assessment, consideration ought to be given to a range of factors, examples of which are set out below. It is recognised, however, that whilst knowledge of the central tenets of those religions most likely to be encountered would help ensure that appropriate provision is made with regard to the delivery of and access to services, such knowledge might not necessarily be held.

- Is provision made, when dealing with customers, for them to be dealt with, if requested, by persons of the same sex?
- Does the way in which your service is delivered restrict access to certain religious groups that have days of religious observance restricting or preventing them accessing services on those days?

- Is your service delivered in locations or environments that might preclude or restrict access to certain religious groups?

**Sex:** Man or woman.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 ensured that no person is treated less favourably because of his or her gender or because he or she is married.

**Sexual Orientation:** Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards

- Persons of the same sex (lesbians and gay men)
- Persons of the opposite sex (heterosexuals)
- Persons of the same sex and opposite sex (Bisexuals).

It does not cover sexual practices such as sado-masochism and paedophilia.

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 ban discrimination in employment and vocational training on grounds of sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is defined as an orientation towards:

**Marriage or Civil Partnership:** Discrimination on grounds a persons marital status or civil partnership is illegal under the Equality Act 2010.