

# Diversity impact assessment

<b>TITLE</b>
<b>Adult Social Care Strategy 2026-2030</b>
<b>DATE</b>
November 2025
<b>LEAD OFFICER.</b>
Sacha Kennard, Head of Adult Social Care Transformation and Improvement
<b>1 Summary description of the proposed change</b>
What is the change to policy / service / new project that is being proposed? How does it compare with the current situation?
<p>The previous Adult Social Care Strategy was set for 2021 to 2025. This refreshed strategy sets out Medway's objectives and focus for Medway Adult Social Care over until 2028, responding to rising demand, increasing complexity of need, and financial pressures. It builds on our statutory duties under the Care Act 2014 and Equality Act 2010 and aligns with wider system strategies. This strategy considers long-term changes in the local demographic to ensure that we can meet the financial and service requirements of our users.</p> <p>The new strategy represents a shift from reactive care to a proactive, strengths-based approach focused on early help, prevention, and person-centred support. Its primary aim is to help people live safely, stay independent, and be treated with dignity and respect. Wherever possible, we will support individuals with eligible needs to remain in or return to their own homes, maintain relationships, and stay connected to their communities.</p> <p>Key changes includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger emphasis on prevention and early intervention to reduce reliance on long-term care</li> <li>• Inclusive engagement and co-production with people who use services, carers, and communities</li> <li>• Greater use of technology and innovation, alongside non-digital access routes, to improve accessibility</li> <li>• Workforce development and partnership working to ensure sustainable, high-quality care</li> <li>• A commitment to fairness, equity, and safeguarding, supported by data and feedback to address inequalities</li> </ul> <p>This approach aims to improve outcomes for residents, safeguard vulnerable adults, and ensure financial sustainability while delivering best value for the council.</p>
<b>2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment</b>
E.g. Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user. E.g. Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile
The refreshed Adult Social Care Strategy was shaped by extensive consultation and engagement. Evidence sources include:

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- Consultation events: 19 sessions (16 in-person, 3 virtual) with 114 participants, including people with lived experience, carers, providers, and community representatives
- Internal engagement: A divisional meeting attended by over 300 Adult Social Care staff, who reviewed and commented on the draft strategy
- Online survey: Promoted via multiple channels (Medway Council website, social media, provider newsletter, Medway Matters) with nine responses providing qualitative feedback
- Demographic and performance data: Analysis of Medway's adult population, service user profile, and future forecasts.

Feedback themes include strong support for prevention, personalisation, and co-production; concerns about digital exclusion; calls for clearer, inclusive language; emphasis on fairness, equity, and managing expectations. These themes informed revisions to the goal, mission, and commitments, ensuring the strategy reflects what matters most to residents and carers. Analysis of demographic and performance data highlights the need for early intervention, sustainability, and tailored support.

The strategy explicitly addresses equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Commitments include reducing inequalities, improving access for diverse communities, and maintaining non-digital routes to prevent exclusion. Feedback from carers, SEND families, and minority groups informed language changes and shaped actions on early help, tailored support, and inclusive engagement.

The combination of these approaches to achieve feedback and data gathering has enabled the production and design of a comprehensive strategy designed by all stakeholders that are impacted. This has identified the key themes and trends that have shaped the strategy.

### 3 What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to:

Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't

**(insert Yes when there is an impact or No when there isn't)**

Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
<b>Age</b>		X	X
<b>Disability</b>		X	X

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Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
<b>Gender reassignment</b>		X	X
<b>Marriage/civil partnership</b>			
<b>Pregnancy/maternity</b>			
<b>Race</b>		X	X
<b>Religion/belief</b>		X	X
<b>Sex</b>		X	X
<b>Sexual orientation</b>		X	X
<b>Care experience</b>		X	X
<b>Other (e.g. low income groups)</b>		X	X

## 4 Summary of the likely impacts

Who will be affected?

How will they be affected?

*Who will be affected?*

- Adults with eligible social care needs, including older people, working age adults with disabilities, and those with mental health needs.
- Carers and families who provide unpaid care (approximately 25,000 in Medway, projected to rise to 35,000 by 2037)
- Communities across Medway, particularly those experiencing health inequalities or digital exclusion

*How will they be affected?*

The Adult Social Care Strategy aims to improve service quality, accessibility, and outcomes for all service users. Its focus on early help, prevention, and person-centred care will help people maintain independence, stay connected to their communities, and reduce crisis intervention.

Key positive impacts include advancing equality of opportunity for older people, disabled adults, carers, and minority groups through inclusive engagement, tailored support, and accessible information. The strategy also aims to foster good relations by embedding co-production, transparent, communication, and partnership working with diverse communities. Risks of exclusion will be

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mitigated by maintaining non-digital access routes and promoting digital inclusion.

The adult population of Medway is estimated at 223,299, with 174,514 working age adults and 48,785 aged 65 and over. Currently, 3038 adults receive long-term care and support from Medway Council, equivalent to one in every 74 adults. The majority of these individuals require physical support for personal care, followed by learning disability support, and mental health needs.

Older adults account for the largest proportion of service users, with over 2100 people aged 65 and above receiving support compared to just under 1000 working age adults. Among those aged 65+, women represent 67% of service users, reflecting higher longevity and care needs in later life. For working age adults, needs are often linked to learning disabilities, mental health, and mobility support.

Medway's population is predominantly White (88.7%), with smaller proportions from Black (3.05%), Asian (2.96%), and Mixed ethnic groups. Most service users did not state a religion.

Unpaid carers play a vital role in supporting vulnerable individuals, with an estimated 25,000 carers in Medway. Women, particularly those aged 50 – 64, provide the majority of unpaid care.

A full assessment of all protected characteristics has been undertaken, and no characteristic has been assessed as being negatively impacted by this work, therefore no further assessment is believed to be required. Key outcomes include:

- Age: Positive impact for older adults (65+) who represent 67% of those receiving care. Strategy prioritises early help and independence, reducing reliance on residential care. Working age adults (18 – 64) will also benefit from tailored support for complex needs, alongside improved access to early help and community-based services.
- Disability: Strong positive impact through personalised support, safeguarding, and improved accessibility
- Race and Religion: Inclusive engagement and accessible information standards will advance equality and foster good relations
- Sex: Women aged 65+ are disproportionately represented among service users, improvements in care quality and prevention will benefit this group
- Carers: Estimated 25,000 unpaid carers in Medway, projected to rise to 35,000 by 2037. The strategy strengthens support for carers through assessment improvements and partnership working
- Low income households: Maintaining non-digital routes and promoting financial clarity supports equity for those with limited resources

It is unlikely that the strategy will negatively impact on any protected characteristic. Instead, it is designed to advance equality, foster good relations,

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and reduce inequalities. Ongoing monitoring will ensure impacts remain positive.

## 5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?

Are there alternative providers?

Can demand for services be managed differently?

There are no adverse impacts identified within this DIA for the Adult Social Care Strategy. The strategy itself does not make any direct service changes, rather provides a framework, establishing the strategic direction, vision and aims for the future of care and support in Medway.

Adult Social Care now has an established Engagement Team dedicated to ongoing dialogue with residents, carers, and communities. This includes developing Community Involvement Groups and a Co-Production Board to ensure lived experience shapes service design and delivery.

Further actions to improve equality and foster good relations include:

- Maintaining non-digital routes for those at risk of exclusion, while promoting digital confidence through training and support. All communications will meet Accessible Information Standards
- Investing in training to embed inclusive practice, cultural competence, and safeguarding awareness across the workforce
- Using consultation feedback and equality data to identify and address emerging inequalities
- Exploring assistive technology and self-service options for those who wish to use them, alongside traditional support routes
- Improving front door pathways for advice and guidance, ensuring people can access support quickly and appropriately
- Supporting carers through improved assessments and targeted resources, recognising their vital role in sustaining independence

These actions will ensure the strategy not only avoids adverse impacts but actively advances equality of opportunity and fosters good relations.

## 6 Action plan

Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
No adverse effects on protected characteristic groups identified. Continue to monitor equality implications as strategy actions are implemented.	Adult Social Care Transformation and Improvement Programme Board	Ongoing

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Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
Maintain and strengthen engagement with people who use services, carers, and communities	Engagement Team	Ongoing
Ensure all communications meet Accessible Information Standards and maintain non-digital access routes to mitigate digital exclusion	Head of Adult Social Care Transformation and Improvement	Quarterly review
Embed inclusive practice and cultural competence through workforce training linked to the strategy's commitments	Principal Social Worker	Annual review

## 7 Recommendation

The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be: to proceed with the change, implementing the Action Plan if appropriate, consider alternatives, gather further evidence

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

It is recommended to proceed with the publication and implementation of the Adult Social Care Strategy for Medway, supported by the Action Plan outlined in this assessments. This strategy sets a clear framework for improving the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of Adult Social Care services, while ensuring compliance with statutory duties.

## 8 Authorisation

The authorising officer is consenting that the recommendation can be implemented, sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned, the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored

### Assistant Director

Jackie Brown, Assistant Director Adult Social Care

### Date of authorisation

9<sup>th</sup> December 2025