

# South Cambridgeshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

## Introduction – Please read

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) allow the Council to:

- Show that the Council are meeting its legal duty, demonstrating due regard for the provisions of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) as below:
  - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
  - Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
  - Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Methodically consider and assess the impacts of proposals across the [nine protected characteristics](#)
- Allow the Council to develop and implement high quality proposals that maximise positive outcomes for all.

EqIAs should be completed during the development and review of all Council policies, strategies, procedures, projects or functions. Where there is any doubt, the completion of an EqIA is always recommended.

When the form is completed, please send an electronic copy to [equality.schemes@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:equality.schemes@scambs.gov.uk). Further support and guidance, [including a video on how to fill out EqIAs](#), is available on Insite or you can contact the Policy and Performance Team.

# Equality Impact Assessment Complete Form

## Section 1: Identifying Details

- 1.1 Officer completing EqIA:  
Michael Hill
- 1.2 Team and Service:  
Chief Executive's Office
- 1.3 Title of proposal:  
4DW Consultation – Outcomes from the consultation
- 1.4 EqIA start date:  
25/10/2024
- 1.5 Proposal implementation date:  
08/01/2025
- 1.6 Who will be responsible for implementing this proposal (Officer and/or Team):  
Liz Watts

## Section 2: Proposal to be Assessed

- 2.1 Type of proposal:  
Project  
If other, please specify  
[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- 2.2 Is the proposal:  
Change to an established
- 2.3 State the date of any previous equality impact assessment completed in relation to this proposal (if applicable):  
15/03/2023

2.4 What are the headline aims of the proposal and the objectives that will help to accomplish these aims? (Max 250 words)

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) has been carrying out a four-day week (4DW) pilot since January 2023. As part of the decision-making process to decide on the future of the 4DW for officers employed by the Council, the Council has committed to carrying out a public consultation. The current consultation plan consists of three separate surveys:

1. A targeted external survey of specific representative groups to meet our Best Value Duty requirements
2. A general external survey of residents and businesses
3. Statistically valid survey of 1,000 residents and 400 businesses

Separate from the consultation surveys, the latest views of Council colleagues are also be collated through a further wellbeing survey.

The results from the consultation surveys will be analysed by an external market research company and will form part of a final report, along with other relevant information (e.g. Key Performance Indicators; KPIs and the wellbeing survey), for Full Council. This EqIA will explore the potential impacts of decisions made at the end of the consultation process by Full Council on the future of the 4DW (a separate EqIA has been carried out on the consultation process itself). The current estimated outcomes from the final report, which of course can change, are:

1. A continuation of the 4DW at SCDC
2. A continuation of the 4DW at SCDC with alterations to the current practice
3. A return to a five day week working pattern

2.5 Which of the Council's equality objectives (as detailed in the Council's Equality Scheme) does this proposal link to or help to achieve?

- Identify, prioritise and deliver actions that will narrow the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged groups and the wider community



- SCDC is an employer that values difference and recognises the strength that a diverse workforce brings.
- Protected characteristic groups have a voice and are represented in forming the future shape of the district.
- None.

2.6 Which groups or individuals will the proposal affect:

- Service Users
- External Stakeholders
- Employees
- Councillors
- Other

If other, please specify [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

2.7 Broadly speaking, how will these groups or individuals be affected? (you will be asked to provide more detail on the specific impacts on different protected characteristic groups later in the form) (max 250 words)

All of the above groups have the potential to be impacted in different ways by the potential consultation outcomes.

1) Service Users: Should the 4DW continue, either in its current form or with alterations to its current practice, there should be limited impact on the service that our residents and service users receive. This is because while the Council has been employing this working model, independent analysis of our KPIs have shown that our services have, in general, been maintained or improved. There may be occasions wherein service users cannot contact specific individual officers as it is their non-working day. This is the same as when specific officers are on annual leave or unwell (or in the previous five-day week working pattern, when officers took days off as flexi-time). However, all officers keep their out of office information up to date with alternative contacts to ensure there is not an impact on service delivery. A return to a five-day week working pattern would therefore not have any impact on hours of service delivery, but, due to the fact the KPI data has shown some improvement in

service delivery, there is a risk that service quality may decrease. Prior to the 4DW, the Council struggled to recruit and retain staff in some key positions, such as planning officers which led to cases being passed on to another officer which slowed down the process.

2) External Stakeholders: External Stakeholders are likely to be impacted in the same way as Service Users.

3) Councillors: Councillors are likely to be impacted the same way as Service Users. Officers are expected to respond to Councillors within 2 working days. Further efforts have been made to support Councillors with access to Officers by ensuring that 'team representatives' are available at Council Office sites Monday through to Friday.

4) Employees: Those who are most likely to be impacted by the outcomes of consultation are Employees, as any changes to working patterns have the most significant impact on Officers at the Council. Any changes to working pattern are likely to impact Officers through measures such as wellbeing, health, and retention (see [Four Day Week Report \(item 5\), Employment and Staffing Committee – Monday, 15 July 2024](#) for more information on how the 4DW has impacted Officers to date).

2.8 If any part of the proposal is being undertaken by external partners, please specify how the Council will ensure that they will meet equality standards?  
(Max 250 words)

The outcome of the consultation will be decided by SCDC Councillors. However, independent analysis for the final report will be carried out by the third parties. The equality impact of this is explained in a separate EqIA.

### Section 3: Evidence and Data

3.1 Describe any work you have done (this could include consultation) to understand any effects on groups of people, including those within [9 protected characteristic groups?](#) Please list any key sources (e.g. web-search, previous

versions of document, customer feedback etc) that you used to reach your conclusions.

(Max 250 words)

The Council has made significant efforts to understand the impact of the 4DW on both our service delivery for our residents and businesses and the impact on colleagues. As part of our extended 4DW trial, SCDC worked with the University of Cambridge and the University of Salford to analyse the impact of the 4DW on our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). This analysis, published at Employment and Staffing Committee on 15 July 2024, indicated that a majority of our 31 KPIs had not been significantly impacted by the 4DW. When adjusting for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, 11 KPIs improved and two KPIs (Percentage of housing rent collected, and Average days to re-let all housing stock) were worse. Additionally, the Council's Customer Feedback survey is available on our website and has been, and will continue to be, analysed to understand our service users view on the Council and its services. Teams also have local KPIs which are monitored separately by each Head of Service or Service Manager.

The Council also commissions an annual staff wellbeing survey, carried out by Robertson Cooper for the last three years. The 2024 report showed that there have been significant improvements to key measures compared to the start of the 4DW trial, such as both physical and mental health, subjective wellbeing, and motivation. Overall, 73% of SCDC employees rated the 4DW as positive (8 out of 10 or above). Regular conversations with both recognised unions, GMB and UNISON, have also taken place throughout the trial process.

EqlAs have previously been completed for both the extended desk-based 4DW trial (April 2023) and for the Waste Route Optimisation which formed part of the 4DW trial within the Waste Service (January 2024). A February

2025 survey has also taken place and will form part of the final reports on 4DW.

3.2 If you have not undertaken any consultation, please detail why not, or when consultation is planned to take place.

(Max 250)

Until this point, SCDC has been unable to complete a public consultation on the 4DW. This is because, on 18 December 2023, the previous Government carried out a consultation on the Local Government Finance Settlement, which helps to determine potential upcoming funding for Local Authorities. As part of this consultation, the Government asked “Do you have any views about the government using levers in future local government finance settlements (those occurring after 2024- 25) to disincentivise the so-called ‘4 day working week’?”. As such, the Council was unable to consult on the 4DW until any potential ‘levers’ were detailed further, as any consultation carried out during this time could not be considered sufficient as it would not be possible to meet the second Gunning Principle (providing sufficient information as to permit intelligent consideration and response). In light of this, Cabinet agreed on 12 March 2024 to continue the 4DW until such a time that a meaningful consultation was possible. Following a change in Government after the 2024 General Election and a lifting of the Best Value Notice in November 2024, the Council was able to carry out a meaningful consultation beginning in January 2025 to help provide Councillors with information to help inform their decision making process.

## **Section 4: Impact of proposal on those with protected characteristics**

4.1 Please select all characteristics that may or will be impacted (positive or negative). When providing details of the impact please consider the following questions

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative



- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. (both the number of persons affected and the severity of the impact)
- you will be asked to set out actions to manage these impacts in the following question (4.2)

All - general to all protected Characteristics.

Details: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Age

Details: As the Council pursues greater efficiencies, it may be that older adults, who typically struggle more with digital self-service ([Age UK, 2023](#)), become at risk of being digitally excluded. A continuation of the 4DW does put more pressure on the Council to achieve its digital ambitions, though, equally, a return to five working days would not remove the need for the Council pursue these efficiencies. More information is given in the Digital Inclusion section below.

Disability

Details: In 2023, 7.80% of colleagues at SCDC declared that they had a disability. Reduced working hours is often a reasonable adjustment for disabled individuals under the Equality Act 2010 and disabled individuals are more likely to work part time in comparison to non-disabled individuals ([Office for National Statistics, 2019](#)). By supporting reduced or altered working hours as default, SCDC could be enabling disabled colleagues to remain active within the workforce without sacrificing their financial wellbeing or career prospects. Additionally, reduced working hours may help individuals with disabilities better manage said disabilities, helping to improve their physical and mental health. Overall, officers at the Council have seen a significant improvement to both Physical and Mental Health since the start of the 4DW trial. In the colleague health and wellbeing survey, Officers reported an average of 18% increase in health scores against the benchmark (Robertson Cooper, 2024). Additional research has been undertaken by the University of



Cambridge (Hughes and Burchell, 2025) into how individuals with medical conditions, disabilities and/or caring responsibilities have experienced the 4DW, involving interviews with 73 officers from SCDC. Overall, respondents were positive about how the 4DW model had improved their wellbeing to a greater extent than their colleagues without these additional challenges or responsibilities. Should the Council return to a five day working pattern, these benefits might not continue.

It is predicted that the outcome of the 4DW Consultation will have minimal impact in relation to disability for all other groups.

Gender reassignment

Details: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Details: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Pregnancy and maternity

Details: Research suggests a continuation of the 4DW could make the process around pregnancy and maternity easier for Council Officers. General research on working hours suggests that longer working hours during pregnancy can increase the risk of worse pregnancy outcomes ([British Medical Association, 2024](#)). However, research often looks at the impact of long working hours (40+ hours) and the impact of shift work, rather than the impact of shorter working hours. As such, it is not possible to directly draw a link between the 4DW and the outcomes of pregnancy. However, it could be possible that the reported improvements ([Robertson Cooper, 2024](#)) in Physical and Mental Health, as well as more time potentially spent resting on non-working days, may support a better outcome of pregnancy - though, again, a direct causal link cannot be substantiated with existing evidence.

Race

Details: The 2024 Robertson Cooper survey did collect demographic data in relation to Race. Due to the low number of respondents from non-white backgrounds, it is not possible to explore these results in detail here, though the results do not raise any



cause for concern that the 4DW is negatively impacting Officers on the basis of race. Therefore, there is no predicted impact from the outcome of the consultation, regardless of any decisions made, on officers specifically in relation to race.

There is no predicted race-based impact for all other groups.

Religion and belief

Details: Click or tap here to enter text.

Sex

Details: The outcome of the consultation, most notably a return to a five day week working pattern, may potentially have a more significant impact on female employees. This is because females in the UK are statistically more likely to provide unpaid care than males ([Census, 2021](#)). The Robertson Cooper staff welfare survey revealed that 39% of all respondents used their non-working day for 'Caring and Family Responsibilities'. When accounting for only female members of staff who responded to the welfare survey, this rises to 46%, with 66% of this group selecting it as one of their top 3 activities on their non-working day. This supports the idea that female members of staff are more likely to be care providers than their male counterparts. Therefore, it is possible that a change to the 4DW working patterns would increase the financial and social burden for female members of staff who would need to find alternative sources of care. Furthermore, females within the workforce are often already financially penalised by the societal expectations to take on care responsibilities, with the the gender pay gap in the UK partly driven by differences in working hours due to care responsibility ([Insititute for Fiscal Studies, 2018](#)). As such, 4DW working patterns could enable women to retain their working hours in parity with men ([World Economic Forum, 2019](#)). Additionally, evidence exists that shorter working patterns such as the 4DW can actually encourage more equitable distribution of care work within households as men, who typically work longer hours, are more able to take on caring responsibility ([Chung, 2022](#)).

Existing part-time positions at the Council are more likely to be occupied by females

([SCDC, 2025](#)), in part due to some of the reasons listed above. In the original EqIA for the 4DW trial, it highlights that there may be increased risk of already part-time staff, whose hours are then reduced by a further 20% in a 4DW working pattern, may struggle with their workload. However, the Robertson Cooper survey revealed that self assessed 'balanced workload' scores for part-time workers have actually positively increased and are in line with that of full-time colleagues, with other measures such as 'performance' and 'good days at work' also having significantly positively increased.

There is no predicted sex-based impact for all other groups.

Sexual orientation

Details The 2024 Robertson Cooper survey did collect demographic data in relation to Sexual Orientation (namely, if an individual was Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual; LGB. No information was collected in relation to Gender Identity). Due to the low numbers of LGB officers at the Council, it is not possible to explore these results in detail here, though the results do not raise any cause for concern that the 4DW is negatively impacting LGB officers specifically. Therefore, there is no predicted impact from the outcome of the consultation on colleagues specifically in relation to sexual orientation.

There is no predicted sexual orientation-based impact for all other groups.

None of the above

#### 4.2 Other characteristics

Some characteristics are not yet protected in law, but the Council has made declarations it will consider them in policy making.

Digital inclusion ([what is this?](#))



Details: In order to operate under the 4DW working model, it is acknowledged that the Council must continue to make efficiency improvements to its working practices, enabling residents and customers to better self-serve without having to contact Council Officers when they would prefer to carry out tasks online and in their own time. In turn, this allows Council Officers to focus on other tasks, increasing the Council's productivity. The Council's approach to this target operating model is outlined in the Council's Technology strategy. Separate EqIAs are completed for each project. In general, services which are made more efficient through digital means, such as self-service online forms, can still be completed through 'traditional' means, such as over the phone or by coming to the Council Offices in person.

However, it is important to note that the Council's approach to its Technology Strategy and Transformation Programme is not tied to the 4DW working model. Regardless of the outcome of the 4DW consultation, it is likely that the Council will continue to look for ways to improve efficiency and help residents and customers self-serve.

Care experience ([what is this?](#))

Details: Click or tap here to enter text.

Rurality

Details Click or tap here to enter text.

Socio-economic

Details It is likely that our residents from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to need to engage with certain Council services, such as benefits and housing. As such, any changes to working patterns that could impact how easily they are able to access these services should be considered fully. Independent analysis of the Council's KPIs found that the majority of KPIs were not impacted by the introduction of the 4DW trial. Of those that were impacted, the 'average number of days to process housing benefit and council tax support change events' (FS113) was one of the KPIs that improved during the trial period, as was '% of emergency housing repairs in 24 hours' (SH332). Improvements to both of these KPIs should

theoretically benefit our residents who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds who engage with these services. The 'average days to re-let all housing stock' (AH211) was negatively affected by the trial period when taking into account the COVID-19 pandemic, which delays social housing being available to the next tenant. However, the impact of the 4DW on this measure was only found when not taking into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, the independent analysis completed is not able to prove that the changes to officer working patterns is responsible for any of the identified changes to the KPIs. However, should the Council change its working patterns again in future as a result of the consultation, it is a possible risk that the performance of these KPIs may decrease, resulting in poorer outcomes for our residents. An additional analysis of the Council's KPIs for the year 2024/25 will also be carried out, giving more clarity to the long term trend and impact of the 4DW on Council services.

4.3 Considering the above impacts you have identified above, please detail any actions (specific or general) which may help to enhance or mitigate impacts.

Please include the timescale for completing the action.

Action and timescale	Officer
Project Officers to continue to produce EqIAs for digital projects to minimise and mitigate against digital exclusion. This is ongoing.	All project managers working on digital projects, Policy & Performance, PMO
Annual Staff Wellbeing survey to be carried out and analysed to identify any potential areas for concern. This is a yearly survey, occurring every Spring. As such, any impacts because of the outcome of the Consultation will be captured in the 2026 survey.	The People Team

An additional independent analysis of KPIs will be undertaken in Spring 2025. This will provide additional evidence of any impact of the outcome of the consultation on the basis of socio-economics.

Cambridge  
University, Policy &  
Performance

4.4 How will you monitor that the above actions have been completed and that this proposal, once implemented, is impacting fairly on everyone it affects? In answering this question, please include information about feedback you will seek and/or data you will collect and analyse, and how often you will do this

The Council's Policy and Performance Teams will continue to work closely with the Council's Project Management Office to ensure that all projects are completing EqIAs where possible. These EqIAs are published on the Council's Website. Additionally, The People Team will continue to monitor the outcome of the staff wellbeing survey yearly, identifying potential areas of concern should they arise. These reports are made available to staff and published as part of the Council's reporting process. Both of the above points will occur regardless of the outcome of the consultation.

The additional independent analysis will be published as part of the report to Full Council and will be scrutinised by elected members.

## Section 5: Summary

5.1 Briefly summarise the key findings of the EqIA and any significant equality considerations that should be taken into account when deciding how to proceed with the proposal (this section can be included within the 'equality implications' section of any committee reports). (Max. 250 words)

Dependent on the outcome of the consultation, there are different equalities implications to consider. For all outcomes, the most impacted group are officers employed by SCDC, namely around characteristics such as age, gender, pregnancy



and maternity, and disability. The Council is taking efforts to continue to monitor officers' experiences with the 4DW to understand the impact of any changes to, or a continuation of, the current working model. Residents are most likely to be impacted on the basis of socio-economics and digital exclusion. The Council is already taking steps to manage the impact of digital exclusion and continues to monitor the impact of the 4DW on our key services that are often used by those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

5.2 Confirm the recommendation of the officer completing the EqIA:

Proceed with the proposal (with any actions identified as required within Section 4 of the EqIA). Analysis demonstrates that the proposal is robust, we have taken all appropriate opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations between groups.

Reject the proposal: Analysis demonstrates that the proposal will cause unlawful discrimination and it must be removed or changed

## Section 6: Sign Off

6.1 Signature of individual completing EqIA:

Michael Hill

6.2 Date of completion:

26/03/2025

6.3 When will this proposal next be reviewed and who will this be? (when in doubt 3 years minimum)

26/03/2028

6.4 Approving officer signature \*, this should be your Head of Service, Service Area Manager, or Project Sponsor:

Liz Watts

6.5 Date of approval:



23/04/2025

Please send the completed document to [Equality.Schemes@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:Equality.Schemes@scambs.gov.uk) for publishing on the website.

*\*in the event that this EqIA is completed by Head of Service, then no additional approving signature is required.*