

# Equality Impact Assessment

## Part 1: Basic details

<b>Project title</b>	Direct Care and Support day services – approval to progress to public consultation in the future of Thrift Farm
<b>Is this a new or existing document/service?</b>	Review of previous EIA
<b>Responsible officer</b>	Adam Willison
<b>Job title</b>	Commissioning Manager
<b>Contact no.</b>	01296 387691 / 07766 697828
<b>Team</b>	Integrated Commissioning
<b>Service</b>	Integrated Commissioning
<b>Business Unit</b>	CHASC
<b>Date started</b>	April 2018, review January 2019
<b>Date completed</b>	January 2019 - updates will continue through development of scheme

## Part 2: Purpose and Objectives

<b>2.1</b>	<b>What is the purpose of the project or change?</b>	<p>The Adult Social Care Transformation Programme contains the work stream relating to the review of Direct Care and Support services. The purpose of this work stream is to review or re-model in-house services to ensure these are effective, outcomes-focussed and support people to maintain or achieve the greatest degree of independence of which they are capable. The remodelled services must represent value for money and be financially sustainable.</p> <p>Across adult social care we want to support people to live well at home, maintaining or recovering their independence, and to fulfil their potential, partaking in meaningful day opportunities and supported employment. We want any services we commission to help achieve these aims, to reflect local need now and in the future and to draw on best practice models emerging across the country that offer best value for money. This means our service models need re-thinking.</p> <p>Thrift Farm has been a Council owned and run horticultural / farm day service for service users with a learning disability since the early 1980s. The service is not financially sustainable.</p> <p>In addition, running a farm requires specialist knowledge, which appears to have led to a number of other local authorities with this type of service to de-commission, or re-provide in a different way. Thrift Farm is not a statutory</p>
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service and there are no proximal local authorities known to us with provisions combining Adult Social Care services and Council owned farms locally, although some exist further afield e.g. Nottinghamshire County Council.

Whilst there is a market for leisure farms in the local private sector, they do not appear to combine supported employment as part of their business model. Service users attend sessions at Thrift Farm on a daily basis. Placements are also provided for students from Special Schools and other local care establishments. Service Users work on the farm with the help and guidance of a small, experienced staff team.

There are a number of alternative community based horticultural services in Bucks for example Lindengate, Missenden Walled Garden and a number of alternative animal focused out door provisions for example Animal Antiks

The proposal is to consult on the future of Thrift Farm with the preferred option to decommission Thrift Farm and if agreed we would support the 36 Buckinghamshire County Council service users, undertaking a review or reassessment of their individual needs and identify suitable alternative day service provision. We would then decommission the services and return the farm to corporate landlord.

Milton Keynes Council, a local authority neighbouring the farm places approximately 19 clients at Thrift Farm and we have maintained a regular contact to appraise them of the planning regarding the proposed changes.

In 2017 we requested information from the market about the potential to run such a concern with limited response but the information obtained didn't provide sufficient clarity on how a service may be operated. The subsequent recommendation from procurement colleagues was to invite submission of business plans for the continued operation of the service via the South East Business Portal.

Two such rounds of invitation were held and the first attracted two providers, neither of which had sufficiently robust business plans to result in an award. One of these was the only respondent at the second invitation with an amended business plan. This second business plan precipitated some concerns and did not result in the decision to award, failing to reach the thresholds again on both quality and finance.

Whilst there has been some limited interest from the social care market in taking on the running of the farm with adult social care activities, due diligence demonstrated very limited confidence in the plans submitted in terms of financial viability and ongoing sustainability.

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The financial cost of running the service with an underlying overspend is unsustainable and doing nothing is not an option. Having exhausted options in relation to identifying a 3<sup>rd</sup> party to take on the running of the farm, the recommended option is to progress to decommissioning the service, following a period of consultation. If the proposal to consult is agreed, consultation with Thrift Farm stakeholders will commence. This is scheduled for 13/2/19 – 27/3/19.

Formal consultation with staff regarding plans to decommission the service would be required.

Thrift Farm is a 52 acre Council owned farm in North Buckinghamshire, very close to the border with Milton Keynes. It has functioned as a rural supported employment and day opportunity service for Adults with Learning Difficulties since the early 1980's. It is also a popular visitor attraction, split into three main areas:

- Horticulture
- Animal farm park and picnic area
- Café

The site contains a house, a number of outbuildings, animal paddocks and meadow.

Between April 2013 and December 2016, Thrift Farm was managed by Buckinghamshire Care Local Authority Trading Company. During this time, significant investment was made in order to improve the Farm as a commercial visitor attraction e.g. building a new café. When the Council took the decision to close Buckinghamshire Care, staff and services at Thrift Farm were transferred back in house in order to continue operating.

Thrift Farm has operated as a traditional type of social care service. This has resulted in a large number of service users remaining there for a considerable period of time, some having attended for over 30 years.

The location of the farm creates transport difficulties for many Buckinghamshire service users, as it is not accessible by public transport, and is only accessible by car. Most service users are taken by Client Transport and being located in the far north east of the county creates to be a barrier for service users from the south who may wish to access it.

Thrift Farm has operated as a rural a day opportunities and supported employment service for adults with Learning Difficulties since the early 1980s and continues to provide a traditional type of day service which does not readily support

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		<p>people to move on from the service to increased independence. Despite significant investment between 2013 and 2016 in the catering facilities, the commercial income and out-of-county placement income are such that the running costs for Thrift Farm make it financially unsustainable. To develop Thrift into a viable commercial venture the Council would need to invest significant capital.</p>
2.2	<p><b>What are the key objectives of the project or change?</b></p>	<p>The objective of this project is to remove the financial pressure of operating adult social services at the Farm from the Adult Social Care budget, either through decommissioning or by identifying an alternative provider who has a viable and sustainable proposal. Ultimately we want to ensure that service users are able to access suitable services to meet their identified needs, whilst promoting independence and engagement in meaningful activities.</p> <p>The objectives of this project are aligned with those of the wider Direct Care &amp; Support Services Transformation Programme which aims to supports people to access the most appropriate type of support to meet their needs within sustainable and value for money services.</p> <p>Decommissioning the service would contribute to sustaining adult social care provision in Buckinghamshire within defined budget.</p>
2.3	<p><b>Which other functions, services or policies may be impacted?</b></p>	<p>Staff and resource required from Communications, HR, Finance, Direct Care &amp; Support, Operations, Property and Transport.</p>
2.4	<p><b>Who are the main stakeholders impacted by this project or change?</b></p>	<p>Existing clients of Thrift, potential service users, including funded by other local authorities ( mainly Milton Keynes Council), members of staff, carers/families, Talkback, Carers Bucks, members of the public, volunteers and community alternative providers.</p>
2.5	<p><b>Which other stakeholders may be affected by this project or change?</b></p>	<p>Local Members</p>

### Part 3: Data and Research

3.1	<p><b>What data and research has been used to inform this assessment?</b></p>	<p>Running a farm that provides adult social care support requires specialist knowledge, which appears to have led to a number of other local authorities with this type of service to de-commission, or re-provide in a different way. Thrift Farm is not a statutory service and there are no proximal local authorities known to us with provisions combining Adult Social Care services and Council owned farms locally, although some exist further afield e.g. Nottinghamshire Special Schools and other local care establishments. Service</p>
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Users work on the farm with the help and guidance of a small, experienced staff team.

There are a number of alternative community horticultural services in Buckinghamshire including Lindengate, Missenden Walled Garden and a number of alternative services which provide day opportunities with animals e.g Animal Antiks, Equicate, Thomley

The service has been running at a significant underlying overspend (£351,000 at the start of 2018-19) which is not sustainable. It has not been possible to identify a provider with a robust business plan evidencing how the farm can be operated to break even.

Many of the clients who attend Thrift Farm have been attending to service for many years. The cohort is generally static and there is a lack of move on and this means that capacity to take on new clients is very limited. The service has not generally been successful in enabling individuals to move on, to other activity options or to greater independence. Some current service users may have become dependent, remaining at Thrift Farm for considerable length of time.

This proposal is part of the Direct Care & Support Transformation Programme, which does not have targeted or intentional impact on any single or specific group of service users.

Thrift Farm provides services to people predominantly with learning disabilities and some with mental health difficulties. There are currently 69 people attending the service, 36 (52%) are Bucks clients, 19 clients (28%) are from Milton Keynes and the remaining 14 clients are from other local authorities or self-funders (20%).

Buckinghamshire Service users are predominantly male (2/3rds) Most service users live in Aylesbury or the north of the county although there are a small number who do travel from the south of Aylesbury.

The age range is considerable, the youngest service user is 22 to 69 years. With the following break down.

Age range	Numbers
22 - 29	19
30 - 39	13
40 - 49	11
50 - 59	7
60+	5

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		The cohort who access services at Thrift Farm is generally static, with few people moving out of the service and no capacity to take on new clients. Some people have been at the Farm for many years.
3.2	<b>Have any complaints on the grounds of discrimination been made in relation to this project?</b>	No tbc
3.3	<b>Please provide evidence of these.</b>	N/A
3.4	<b>What <u>positive</u> impacts have been established through research findings, consultation and data analysis?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other similar services are available within the county that will be able to provide similar and stimulating opportunities</li> <li>• Some other services are more accessible using public transport</li> <li>• Adult Social Care would be able to support people in accessing suitable cost effective services, whilst addressing the underlying overspend</li> <li>• There would be more opportunity to address the potential for move on for individuals who have remained in traditional services such as Thrift for very long periods of time. Service Users will have the opportunity for new and meaningful experiences</li> </ul>
3.5	<b>What <u>negative</u> impacts have been established through research findings, consultation and data analysis?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thrift Farm is not accessible by Public Transport and is generally only accessible via car</li> <li>• Many service users have been at Thrift Farm for many years and would be anxious about a move. The Transition Plans and the support we provide would be very important.</li> <li>• Carers would be anxious about moving their cared for person who is accustomed to the Farm experience and may be unsettled by change</li> <li>• The service is well regarded and used by service users and the wider community and its decommissioning would reduce the extent of choice</li> <li>• The travel implications of the proposed move are yet to be fully understood until clients have been reviewed and suitable placements found.</li> <li>• Some service users may elect to access placements which are more expensive than those which social care can source to meet identified need and may be required to pay a top up.</li> </ul>
3.6	<b>What additional information is needed to fill any gaps in</b>	Work is commencing to match home location, needs and likely interests of existing clients; to further work with providers of potential alternative services to look at how

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<b>knowledge about the potential impact of the project?</b>	<p>needs could be met in a way which supports people to develop their independence.</p> <p>Detailed travel planning would need to take place as part of the transition planning for both services and for individuals.</p>
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### Part 4: Testing the impact

**Within this table, please indicate (✓) whether the project will have a positive, negative or neutral impact across the following nine protected factors and provide relevant comments.**

*Note 1: Listing a negative outcome does not mean the project cannot continue.*

*Note 2: This is an opportunity to identify and address issues for improvement*

		Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	What evidence do you have for this?	Improvement Actions Required
4.1	<b>Age</b>			✓	There are service users across the age range using this service	Ensure market place is developed to be able to provide suitable alternatives to meet individual needs.
4.2	<b>Disability</b>		✓		Potential reduction of day support and supported employment choices for clients with a learning disability or autism	Ensure market place is developed to be able to provide suitable alternatives to meet individual need. Refer individuals through to supported employment where appropriate
4.3	<b>Gender</b>			✓		
4.4	<b>Marriage / Civil Partnership</b>			✓		
4.5	<b>Pregnancy / Maternity/ Paternity</b>			✓		
4.6	<b>Race</b>			✓		
4.7	<b>Religion/ Belief</b>			✓		
4.8	<b>Sexual Orientation</b>			✓		

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4.9	Transgender			✓		
4.10	Carers		✓		Potential reduction in day support and supported employment could lead to more pressure on carers with potential for difficulty accessing the new service location	The project will need to ensure people's needs are appropriately met and that carers needs are considered as part of the assessment process.

### **Part 5: Director / Head of Service Statement**

<p>I am fully aware of the duties required of Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) under the Equality Act 2010 and I have read our Equality Strategy.</p> <p>I am satisfied that this Equality Impact Assessment shows that we have made every possible effort to address any actual or potential unlawful discrimination.</p>	<p><b>Name</b> <b>Jane Bowie</b></p>
	<p><b>Signature</b></p>
	<p><b>Date</b></p>