

Equality Impact Assessments Toolkit

EqIA Template



You must consider the [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance](#) when completing this template.

The EDI team can provide help and advice on undertaking an EqIA and also provide overview quality assurance checks on completed EqIA documents.

EDI team contact email: edi_team@sandwell.gov.uk

Quality Control	
Title of proposal	Sandwell Health Determinants Research Collaboration: Better Research for Better Health
Directorate and Service Area	Public Health
Officer completing EqIA	Dr Lina Martino Consultant in Public Health
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Other officers involved in completing this EqIA	N/A
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Name of Director or Executive Director signing off EqIA	Liann Brookes-Smith Interim Director of Public Health
Date EqIA considered by Cabinet	TBC 15 November 2023
Where the EqIA is Published (please include a link to the EqIA and send a copy of the final EqIA to the EDI team)	

Section 1.

The purpose of the project, proposal or decision required

Use funding of up to £5 million from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) to establish a Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) in Sandwell, subject to being successful in our funding bid.

This report proposes that we establish a HDRC in Sandwell in partnership with the University of Birmingham (UoB) and the voluntary and community sector (VCS), represented by Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and Sandwell Consortium CIC. This is subject to being awarded funding from the NIHR of up to £5 million to cover the cost of the proposed 5-year programme.

The Sandwell HDRC will be based on the theme of Poverty and Cost of Living, aligning with the LUP to address the wider determinants of health (the conditions in which people are born, live, grow, work and age) and tackle systemic disadvantage in the Borough.

Aims and Objectives

The HDRC vision is to undertake evidence-informed, robustly evaluated activities that reflect the needs and values of our diverse local communities. The Sandwell HDRC will align with a borough-wide Levelling Up Programme to improve the wider determinants of health.

The HDRC aims to transform SMBC's research culture and infrastructure to:

- Make the best use of empirical evidence to inform decision-making and investment
- Robustly evaluate services to ensure quality, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness
- Facilitate research activity with partner organisations and local residents
- Effectively disseminate research outputs for wider influence

This will be achieved by:

- Strengthening research and development capacity, resources and infrastructure
- Embedding a strong research culture for evidence-informed decision-making
- Developing robust systems and partnerships for cultural and knowledge exchange
- Creating a community-led research culture

Outline the Business Case

- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) is the 12th most deprived local authority in England and life expectancy is 2-3 years shorter than the national average. Inequalities have been deepened by the pandemic, austerity and climate change, yet Sandwell's superdiverse communities, industrial heritage and green spaces are key assets.
- A research needs analysis in 2021 found a strong culture of evidence-based decision making in the Public Health directorate, but this was weaker across the wider Council. Existing structures and collaborations show commitment and potential to be more research active and evidence-informed, but limited capacity to take this forward.

- Meeting the objectives of the proposed HRDC programme will lead to higher quality of the services we deliver and commission, and more efficient investment to improve Sandwell as a place, including education, skills, employment, community cohesion, transport, housing, economy and the built environment – which are the wider determinants of health, and the objectives of the Corporate Plan. Over the longer term this will lead to improved health outcomes and reduced inequalities in both physical and mental health across the life course, contributing to the Vision 2030 of a thriving, optimistic and resilient community.

Relationship to other policies, strategies, procedures, or functions.

The HDRC would align to our Borough-wide Levelling Up Programme (LUP), which will invest in affordable homes, improved skills infrastructure, better leisure facilities, an improved public realm, active travel infrastructure, social value and local spend, and local employment opportunities. The HDRC would give us the means to ensure that the LUP and related work across the Council is informed by evidence and robustly evaluated.

Delivering HDRC outcomes would contribute to achieving the outcomes of several strategies and local functions to include:

- Sandwell's Corporate Plan 2021-2025 (see above)
- The Health and Wellbeing Board and Strategy
- Sandwell Health and Care Partnership Board
- Sandwell Business Intelligence Strategy (in development)

Although the HDRC would be embedded within the Public Health team, it would be a pan-Council unit working across Directorates.

Issues or likely impact on equality groups

The proposed HDRC programme aims to shape the way we work as an organisation so that we make better use of evidence and research to improve the wider determinants of health. Ultimately the aim is to reduce health inequalities, and so we anticipate that the HDRC would have a positive impact across equality groups. However, in order to achieve this we need to ensure that HDRC activities, communications and engagement are inclusive and representative of Sandwell's diverse communities. Failure to do so may risk increasing health inequalities, as those most likely to engage tend to be those who are already the most advantaged in terms of access to services and resources. The HDRC Business Case and the suggested actions in Section 4 set out ways to mitigate this risk, including community outreach activity as part of the dedicated Community Participation workstream.

Other service areas/directorates or partners involved in or likely to be impacted upon by the proposals

The HDRC programme would have a positive impact on all Directorates and service areas, particularly deprived neighbourhoods and those supporting marginalised groups as it will support the delivery of outcomes to improve the wider determinants of health and tackle health inequalities in Sandwell.

Section 2.

Evidence used and considered. Include analysis of any missing data

The impact of socioeconomic deprivation and persistent inequality on the health and wellbeing of Sandwell residents is well documented, and shows a clear need to enhance existing work to improve the wider determinants of health – the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. Existing inequalities have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis.

- Sandwell Census 2021 data can be found [here](#)
- [The Public Health Outcomes Framework \(PHOF\)](#)
- Marmot's "Fair Society, Healthy Lives" [Review 10 Years On](#)
- WMCA Health of the Region report 2020
<https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/4290/state-of-the-region-2020-final-full-report.pdf>

An independent NIHR-funded research needs analysis in 2021 found that whilst there was a strong culture of evidence-based decision making in SMBC's Public Health directorate, this was weaker across the wider Council. Barriers to undertaking and participating in research were found to mirror the wider literature: difficulty obtaining resources for research activity; lack of time to apply for funding and deliver research; difficulty accessing the right data; lack of information governance; and difficulty identifying and engaging with appropriate external research partners. Identified training needs included using research evidence, writing research proposals, and advanced analytical techniques. Finances, budget and workforce constraints were particularly highlighted as having an impact on ability to search for, retrieve and apply research evidence, and the potential to engage in research, which was not always seen as a priority for the Council. In line with previous local authority research, high value was placed on local evaluation evidence.

Existing partnerships and infrastructure, including established relationships with UoB and the VCS, provide strong foundations to develop the HDRC and sustain benefits over the longer term.

Section 3.

Consultation

This proposal has been informed and shaped by conversations at existing local forums, where residents have been keen to share ideas on priorities around the wider determinants of health; engagement with SMBC's elected members, who are representatives of local communities in their towns and wards; and input from the voluntary and community sector (VCS). The HDRC theme of poverty and the cost of living has been consistently highlighted across all groups consulted as a major concern for people living and working in Sandwell, who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and austerity.

SCVO and Sandwell Consortium CIC are umbrella organisations representing VCS organisations across the Borough, with direct experience of working with an extremely broad range of community and hyper-local groups in all of Sandwell's six towns. They have supported SMBC to connect with these groups on a variety of programmes and projects, including the COVID-19 pandemic response, Cost of Living support, and inclusion health and mental wellbeing. This has helped to ensure that our diverse

communities, including those who are marginalised or underserved, are heard and included, which enables us to understand the needs and values of local people and the barriers they face to engaging with their local services and communities. Both organisations also have experience of conducting research and evaluation with community groups. The Chief Executives of SCVO and Sandwell Consortium have been involved in developing this proposal from the first stage, including through a bid development workshop that focused specifically on issues around PPIE, EDI and dissemination. The bid draws on their extensive local knowledge and experience of working directly with local residents and community groups with a very diverse range of needs.

A community event was held in May 2023 at a local children's centre as part of a project to develop tools to assess maternal wellbeing in diverse communities. It was attended by parents and young children from a range of ethnic backgrounds. A feedback survey from the event included questions on how mothers would prefer to engage with the research. The survey gave some valuable insights into what is important to residents when participating in research, including a desire to be involved in all aspects of the research process, and a preference for group sessions as it would give them opportunities to meet others. The survey is being used as a starting point to develop a wider citizen survey to find out more about our local residents' perceptions and understanding of research and how it can be used to improve determinants of health, and how they would like to be involved – this is in progress and we anticipate that it will be completed by September.

Through these activities we have identified several barriers to participating in research activity through community engagement undertaken through previous and current work. These relate both to how research is communicated and practical barriers (e.g. physical location and expenses). The HDRC proposal describes how we will build on existing PPIE structures to actively involve local residents in co-developing the HDRC and related activity.

Section 4.

Summary assessment of the analysis at section 4a and the likely impact on each of the protected characteristics (if any)

The aim of the proposed HDRC is to embed ways of working that improve the effectiveness and efficiency of investment into improving the wider determinants of health. Over the longer term this is likely to have beneficial impacts across a range of protected characteristics through reducing health inequalities that disproportionately affect certain groups. The impacts noted below are potential and will depend on the proposed objectives of HDRC activity being met. Actions against each protected characteristic have been suggested to maximise positive impacts.

Section 4a - What are the potential/actual impacts of the proposal on the protected characteristics?

Reviewed Characteristic	Impact? Positive (P) Negative (N) Neutral (Ne)	Details of impact	Actions to address negative impact or promote positive impact (use section 8 table)	Owner of action/ Timescale
Age	Positive (P)	The Community Participation workstream has a dedicated focus on making sure our diverse communities are engaged and represented in shaping HDRC activities and setting research priorities, including younger/older residents. Longer term the proposed programme will have applications and benefits across a wide range of service areas and interventions, including those that focus specifically on children/young people and older people. Recruitment to the HDRC will follow Council processes to ensure that potential applicants are not discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics.	Work with our VCS partners to ensure that people of all ages are engaged and represented in shaping HDRC activities and setting research priorities. Monitoring of protected characteristics for all HDRC activity wherever possible to ensure equity of participation and representation.	HDRC Director and Strategic leads/Full programme duration
Disability	Positive (P)	The Community Participation workstream has a dedicated focus on making sure our diverse communities are engaged and represented in shaping HDRC activities and	Work with our VCS partners to ensure people with disabilities are engaged and represented in shaping HDRC activities and setting research priorities, including	HDRC Director and Strategic leads/Full

Reviewed Characteristic	Impact? Positive (P) Negative (N) Neutral (Ne)	Details of impact	Actions to address negative impact or promote positive impact (use section 8 table)	Owner of action/ Timescale
		<p>setting research priorities, including disabled people. Longer term the proposed programme will have applications and benefits across a wide range of service areas and interventions, including those that focus specifically on disabled people. Recruitment to the HDRC will follow Council processes to ensure that potential applicants are not discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics. The HDRC will have a hybrid working model which will be more inclusive of people with disabilities and/or long-term conditions. It is proposed that we trial alternative recruitment processes for the recruitment of new HDRC staff to be more inclusive of people who are neurodivergent.</p>	<p>through accessibility of events and communications. Monitoring of protected characteristics for all HDRC activity wherever possible to ensure equity of participation and representation.</p>	<p>programme duration</p>
Gender Reassignment	Positive (P)	<p>A recent LGBTQ+ Health Needs Report highlighted the health inequalities facing this group, including experiences of discrimination within services: https://www.sandwelltrends.info/wp-</p>	<p>Work with our VCS partners and via our LGBTQ+ Health Needs working group to ensure that transgender and nonbinary residents are engaged and represented in shaping HDRC activities and setting</p>	<p>HDRC Director and Strategic leads/Full programme duration</p>

Reviewed Characteristic	Impact? Positive (P) Negative (N) Neutral (Ne)	Details of impact	Actions to address negative impact or promote positive impact (use section 8 table)	Owner of action/ Timescale
		<p>content/uploads/sites/5/2023/03/Sandwell-LGBTQ-Health-Needs-Report-2023.pdf</p> <p>The Community Participation workstream has a dedicated focus on making sure our diverse communities are engaged and represented in shaping HDRC activities and setting research priorities, with a particular focus on marginalised groups which will include specific communities within the broad LGBTQ+ group. Longer term the proposed programme will have applications and benefits across a wide range of service areas and interventions to improve the wider determinants of health. Recruitment to the HDRC will follow Council processes to ensure that potential applicants are not discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics.</p>	<p>research priorities. Monitoring of protected characteristics for all HDRC activity wherever possible to ensure equity of participation and representation.</p>	

Reviewed Characteristic	Impact? Positive (P) Negative (N) Neutral (Ne)	Details of impact	Actions to address negative impact or promote positive impact (use section 8 table)	Owner of action/ Timescale
Marriage and civil partnership	Neutral Impact (Ne)	No adverse impact on this protected characteristic has been identified. Recruitment to the HDRC will follow Council processes to ensure that potential applicants are not discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics.	Monitoring of protected characteristics for all HDRC activity wherever possible to ensure equity of participation and representation.	HDRC Director and Strategic leads/Full programme duration
Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral Impact (Ne)	No adverse impact on this protected characteristic has been identified. Recruitment to the HDRC will follow Council processes to ensure that potential applicants are not discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics.	Ensure that community engagement events are hosted at a range of times and venues so that mothers with young children are not excluded. Monitoring of protected characteristics for all HDRC activity wherever possible to ensure equity of participation and representation.	HDRC Director and Strategic leads/Full programme duration
Race	Positive Impact (P)	Sandwell represents a superdiverse population, with 42.2% of our residents from minority ethnic backgrounds. Almost a third of residents (30.3%) do not speak English well or at all (source: ONS, 2021 Census). The Community Participation workstream has a dedicated focus on making sure our diverse communities are engaged and represented in shaping HDRC activities and	Work with our VCS partners to ensure people from all ethnic groups are engaged and represented in shaping HDRC activities and setting research priorities, including working with the Sandwell Language Network to provide translations of materials where needed. Ensure that HDRC activities and communications are culturally appropriate and take into	HDRC Director and Strategic leads/Full programme duration

Reviewed Characteristic	Impact? Positive (P) Negative (N) Neutral (Ne)	Details of impact	Actions to address negative impact or promote positive impact (use section 8 table)	Owner of action/ Timescale
		<p>setting research priorities, with a particular focus on those from marginalised groups including those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Longer term the proposed programme will have applications and benefits across a wide range of service areas and interventions to improve the wider determinants of health, which have a disproportionate impact on those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Recruitment to the HDRC will follow Council processes to ensure that potential applicants are not discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics.</p>	<p>account the scope of diversity across the Borough. Monitoring of protected characteristics for all HDRC activity wherever possible to ensure equity of participation and representation.</p>	
Religion or belief	Neutral Impact (Ne)	<p>Recruitment to the HDRC will follow Council processes to ensure that potential applicants are not discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics.</p>	<p>Work with our VCS and faith sector partners to ensure people from all faith groups are engaged and represented in shaping HDRC activities and setting research priorities. This will help to ensure that activities are culturally appropriate, as well as identifying opportunities to maximise engagement (e.g. via faith</p>	<p>HDRC Director and Strategic leads/Full programme duration</p>

Reviewed Characteristic	Impact? Positive (P) Negative (N) Neutral (Ne)	Details of impact	Actions to address negative impact or promote positive impact (use section 8 table)	Owner of action/ Timescale
			leaders and centres). Monitoring of protected characteristics for all HDRC activity wherever possible to ensure equity of participation and representation.	
Sex	Neutral (Ne)/ Positive (P)	Positive impacts on women are largely due to intersections with other protected characteristics. The HDRC will have a hybrid working model, which will be more inclusive of those with caring or family responsibilities who tend to disproportionately be women. The longer term impacts of the HDRC will be to reduce health and social inequalities that disproportionately affect women from minority and/or low income backgrounds. Recruitment to the HDRC will follow Council processes to ensure that potential applicants are not discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics.	Ensure that Monitoring of protected characteristics for all HDRC activity wherever possible to ensure equity of participation and representation.	HDRC Director and Strategic leads/Full programme duration

Reviewed Characteristic	Impact? Positive (P) Negative (N) Neutral (Ne)	Details of impact	Actions to address negative impact or promote positive impact (use section 8 table)	Owner of action/ Timescale
Sexual Orientation	Positive (P)	<p>A recent LGBTQ+ Health Needs Assessment highlighted the health inequalities facing this group, including experiences of discrimination within services:</p> <p>https://www.sandwelltrends.info/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2023/03/Sandwell-LGBTQ-Health-Needs-Report-2023.pdf</p> <p>The Community Participation workstream has a dedicated focus on making sure our diverse communities are engaged and represented in shaping HDRC activities and setting research priorities, with a particular focus on marginalised groups which will include specific communities within the broad LGBTQ+ group. Longer term the proposed programme will have applications and benefits across a wide range of service areas and interventions to improve the wider determinants of health. Recruitment to the HDRC will follow Council processes</p>	<p>Work with our VCS partners and via our LGBTQ+ Health Needs working group to ensure that lesbian, gay and bisexual residents are engaged and represented in shaping HDRC activities and setting research priorities. Monitoring of protected characteristics for all HDRC activity wherever possible to ensure equity of participation and representation.</p>	<p>HDRC Director and Strategic leads/Full programme duration</p>

Reviewed Characteristic	Impact? Positive (P) Negative (N) Neutral (Ne)	Details of impact	Actions to address negative impact or promote positive impact (use section 8 table)	Owner of action/ Timescale
		to ensure that potential applicants are not discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics.		
Could other socio-economic groups be affected?				
Carer Low income groups	Positive Impact (P)	<p>As described in section 1 above, SMBC is the 12th most deprived local authority in England. A more detailed analysis of socioeconomic deprivation within the Borough's six towns can be found here: https://www.sandwelltrends.info/deprivation-2019/</p> <p>The Community Participation workstream has a dedicated focus on making sure our diverse communities are engaged and represented in shaping HDRC activities and setting research priorities, with a particular focus on those from marginalised or disadvantaged groups including carers. The HDRC will have a hybrid working model, which will be more inclusive of those with</p>	<p>Work with our VCS partners to ensure people from all backgrounds are engaged and represented in shaping HDRC activities and setting research priorities. Ensure that community events are held at a range of times and venues so that those with carer responsibilities are not excluded, and that these are accessible via public transport. Consider intersections between socioeconomic status, area deprivation and protected characteristics (e.g. age and race) when developing community engagement activity.</p>	<p>HDRC Director and Strategic leads/Full programme duration</p>

Reviewed Characteristic	Impact? Positive (P) Negative (N) Neutral (Ne)	Details of impact	Actions to address negative impact or promote positive impact (use section 8 table)	Owner of action/ Timescale
		caring or family responsibilities. Longer term the proposed programme will have applications and benefits across a wide range of service areas and interventions to improve the wider determinants of health, aiming to improve the health of the most disadvantaged fastest.		

If there are no adverse impacts or any issues of concern or you can adequately explain or justify them, then please move to Sections 6.

5. What actions can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts?

No adverse impacts on any of the protected characteristics have been identified.

6. Section 6: Decision or actions proposed

A number of actions have been included in the proposal to promote/enhance positive impacts on each of the protected characteristics.

7. Monitoring arrangements

Any activity undertaken through the proposed HDRC programme will be subject to monitoring of protected characteristics where possible

Section 8 Action planning (if required)

Question no. (ref)	Action required	Lead officer/ person responsible	Target date	Progress

If you have any suggestions for improving this process, please contact EDI_Team@Sandwell.gov.uk