

Strategic Commissioning & Market Management

Integrated Community Equipment Commission (2025/26)

Evidence based equality analysis

Main aims, purpose and outcomes and how does it fit in with the wider aims of the organisation:

Cheshire West and Chester Council in partnership with Cheshire East Council and Cheshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) has a contract to provide an Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES). This service delivers community mobility aids and equipment to residents of the Boroughs, individuals access ICES through referral and contact with Health or Social Care prescribers such as Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Nurses and those who have undergone the approved prescriber's course.

This contract is due to cease on 31st March 2025 with options to extend for a further 2 years in yearly increments. Commissioning Governance Board have approved use of a contract extension to allow for a retender exercise to take place, the contract is now due to cease 31st March 2026.

Therefore, this Equality Impact Assessment will be focusing on the future recommission of the Integrated Community Equipment Service which will be led by Cheshire West and Cheshire Council on behalf of the partnership. The services delivered through the future recommission are crucial in supporting vulnerable residents and significantly contribute to the Borough Plan of:

- Supporting children and young people, as well as their families to access community equipment, receiving the best possible support when it is needed.
- Helping people to be healthy and independent for longer through provision of community equipment, supporting people to remain safe in their own homes for as long as possible.
- People with support needs can access community equipment to improve their quality of life, build resilience and enable them to be self-sufficient. People are supported in a manner that minimises hospital and residential care admissions.
- Helping people get their independence back after ill-health by supporting reablement teams.

This is a statutory, all age service and must be provided in accordance with The Care Act 2014, The Childcare Act 2005 and The Health Act 1999. These services are also impacted by the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards processes which puts a duty on the Council to support people in the least restrictive manner possible. This service supports an Occupational Therapy First, strengths-based approach, supporting individual's choices to reduce or avoid packages of care through use of equipment.

Use of Community Equipment to promote safety and independence, supports people to live healthier, happier lives at home for longer in line with The Borough Plan. Cheshire West and Chester Council vision Enabling Great Lives is built on three pillars of a strength-based approach, outcome focus and community assets, its intention is to move away towards supporting people in a place they call home only moving into care homes when all alternative avenues have been explored, the Integrated Community Equipment Service is integral in achieving this vision.

This service is delivered in partnership with Cheshire East Council and supports the 2021-25 Corporate Plan which aims to increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs, support all children to have the best start in life and work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient. Use of Community Equipment will also support the aim to reduce the reliance on long term care by improving services.

The Integrated Community Equipment Service supports people with both health and social care needs and aligns with the hospitals to support with timely discharges and where possible, prevent hospital admission. This service supports the Integrated Care Board Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy by helping to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing, helping people to have a good quality of life, to be healthy and happy. The Community Equipment Service is delivered in partnership with the ICB and supports a local focus of tackling inequalities, the wider causes of ill-health and the need for social care support, through an integrated approach. Through the Integrated Community Equipment Service, the ICB are working to create healthy environments that support and enable good physical and mental health and wellbeing and contribute to keeping people independent and at home for as long as possible

Lead officer(s): Nadine Oakes – Commissioning Support Officer (Community and Prevention) Michelle Taylor – Senior Manager (Strategic Commissioning)

Stakeholders:

As this service is across Cheshire West, East and Health, there are many stakeholders including and not exclusively:

- Residents of Cheshire West and Cheshire East Boroughs.
- Cheshire West and Chester Council (Elected Members)
- Individuals already in receipt of equipment.
- Individuals who may need to access this service in the future.
- Support networks of those with equipment needs.
- Care providers working on behalf of Local Authorities and via private arrangements.

- Council Operational Teams: Occupational Therapy and Visual Impairment Teams, Physiotherapy Teams, hospital discharge and other Social Care Teams.
- Healthcare Clinicians including Primary Care Networks, hospital discharge and community-based teams.

For each of the areas below, an assessment needs to be made on whether the policy has a positive, negative, or neutral impact, and brief details of why this decision was made and notes of any mitigation should be included. Where the impact is negative, this needs to be given a high, medium, or low assessment. It is important to rate the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact – some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence.

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

Target group / area	Neutral	Positive	Negative
Race and ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers, refugees, asylum seekers etc.)	There are no additional/ new race and ethnicity impacts from the new contract proposed. Service users will continue to have equipment delivered, serviced and maintained Irrelevant of race or ethnicity.	By co-producing the specification for a new tender, the future service will meet the needs of the population both now and in the near future.	
Disability (as defined by the Equality Act - a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities)	This service provides equipment to people who have a disability. Aims of the service are to support individuals in accordance with their wishes, to promote independence, enable people to live safely and ensure dignity for those with support needs. The contract will require providers to show respect and care to all persons,	As with the current contract, all providers will be required to adhere to the council equality and diversity principles or equity and compassion to all residents. The recommissioning of services provides an opportunity to reiterate the council priorities to the market and ensure there is a robust performance monitoring framework in place to effectively	

	<p>promoting an enabling mindset, ensuring that their service is accessible to all.</p> <p>The referral process into the Integrated Community Equipment Service has a clinical assessment pathway in place provided by qualified individuals to ensure the suitability of the equipment prescribed.</p>	monitor the quality of care to add service users.	
Sex (male or female)	Neutral impact. There will be no change from the current contract in relation to gender as all providers will be required to operate within the guidance of The Equality Act 2010 which provides the legislative framework.		
Gender identity (gender reassignment)	Neutral impact. There will be no change from the current contract in relation to Gender Identity as all providers will be required to operate within the guidance of The Equality Act 2010 which provides the legislative framework.		
Religion and belief (including lack of belief)	Neutral impact. There will be no change from the current contract in relation to religion and belief as all providers will be required to operate within the guidance of The Equality Act 2010 which provides the legislative framework.		
Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and others)	Neutral impact. There will be no change from the current contract in relation to sexual orientation as all providers will be required to operate within the guidance		

	of The Equality Act 2010 which provides the legislative framework.		
Age (children and young people aged 0 – 24, adults 25 – 50, younger older people 51 – 75/80; older people 81+. Age bands are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs)	Neutral impact. There will be no change from the current contract in relation to Age as all providers will be required to operate within the guidance of The Equality Act 2010 which provides the legislative framework.	<p>The Integrated Community Equipment Service provides equipment to all ages and supports both paid and unpaid carers to safely support the cared for individuals.</p> <p>Equipment for Children and Young People is generally highly specialised with very few standard items available. Opinions of specialist practitioners will guide this area of the recommission. The recommission of this service includes a working group specifically reviewing the provision of Children's equipment.</p> <p>There is a standard stock of items which generally support the needs of most adults age 18+ with the facility for practitioners to request more specialised items as required.</p>	
Care Experienced (all young people and adults who have been in the care of Cheshire West and Chester Council - for a period of 13	Neutral impact. There will be no change from the current contract in relation to Care Experienced individuals as all providers will be required to operate within the guidance of The Equality Act		

weeks or more - from the age of 14 years. This includes those children/young people for whom the Council currently or have previously held corporate parenting responsibilities)	2010 which provides the legislative framework.		
Carers (people who care for others, informally or formally)	Neutral impact. There will be no change from the current contract in relation to Carers.	The Integrated Community Equipment Service provides equipment to all ages and supports both paid and unpaid carers to safely support cared for individuals.	
Rural communities	Neutral impact. The current provider is required to provide services across the whole of Cheshire West and East. This will not change for future services.		
Areas of deprivation (include any impact on people living in poverty who may not live in areas identified as deprived)	Neutral impact. There will be no change from the current contract; the contract will be required to provide a service to individuals across Cheshire West and East.		
Human rights (see guidance note for key areas to consider)	The Human Rights Act 1998 underpins all of our social work practice when working with families. Due regard should be given to sharing information and consideration given to all our interventions in infringing upon individuals Human Rights.		
Health and wellbeing and Health Inequalities (consider the wider	This service provides equipment to all individuals having been assessed and prescribed equipment by a relevantly	The contract provides important services to provide personalised care to residents and enable them	

determinants of health such as education, housing, employment, environment, crime, and transport, plus impacts on lifestyles and effects on health and care services)	<p>qualified practitioner. Aims of the service are to support individuals in accordance with their wishes, promote independence, enable people to live safely and ensure dignity for those with support needs.</p> <p>The contract will require providers to show respect and care to all persons, promoting an enabling mindset, ensuring that their service is accessible to all.</p> <p>The referral process into the Integrated Community Equipment Service has a clinical assessment pathway in place provided by qualified individuals to ensure the suitability of the equipment prescribed.</p>	<p>to remain independent in their home, within their local communities and services. This is important to people's mental wellbeing and sense of value/role within the community.</p> <p>This contract supports practitioners to reduce risk for individuals. Practitioners will also consider property adaptations under a separate contract where applicable.</p>	
Procurement/partnership (if project due to be carried out by contractors/partners etc, identify steps taken to ensure equality compliance)	<p>The recommissioning will comply with corporate procurement guidance and processes which includes guidance on equality compliance.</p> <p>New procurement legislation will come into effect in February 2025, Commissioners have worked closely with Procurement colleagues to ensure retender work is compliant with these changes. This includes keeping a register of conflict of interests for anyone participating in retender working groups.</p>	<p>The recommissioning of services is an opportunity to develop a robust performance management framework which requires providers to evidence how they will embed practice which is equality compliant. The new model and progression of the new model has been practitioner led. There have been multiple engagement events with practitioners and as a result of this, commissioners feel confident that the new model will be a success.</p>	

Evidence

Co-production is the process by which this service will be recommissioned. When identifying key stakeholders, it has been acknowledged that prescribers use this service to action outcomes of their strength-based assessments which are carried out to promote an individual's independence. Prescribers have therefore been identified as the service users and principal stakeholders in this retender exercise and are the primary cohort for co-production.

As this service spans across Cheshire West and Chester Council, Cheshire East Council and Cheshire ICB, it is impractical to involve all prescribers as equal partners as required for co-production. Following consultation with Cheshire West and Chester Council's Co-production Development Manager, the following approach has been agreed:

- 1) Formation of a joint Operational Working Group consisting of senior operational leaders including Principal Occupational Therapist for Cheshire West, Operational Leaders for Cheshire East, Senior Managers within Healthcare and Commissioners from all organisations. The group has been formed to review the service and collaborate on the future service specification. It is intended to have representation from those with clinical backgrounds on the evaluation panel during the procurement process.
- 2) Online and face-to-face workshops aimed at all prescribers across Health and Local Authorities. These workshops are an opportunity for clinicians using the service to discuss what they would like to see in the future service, highlight areas of improvement and educate Commissioners on the demands of their role. It is intended as an opportunity to build relationships between those using the service and the Commissioners of the service, giving an insight into how other teams work and how best to support them.
- 3) Online questionnaires have been circulated so that if prescribers do not wish or do not have opportunity to attend a workshop, they can still have an avenue to participate.

Although prescribers are identified as the primary service users, consideration is also due to those who currently or may need to engage with the service either presently or in the future through receipt of equipment. A questionnaire circulated for members of the general population to provide their views on the future of the service, this has been circulated via Let's Talk, Healthwatch and through Community Partnership providers. Anyone working with service users have been asked to support and encourage responses.

Action plan:

Actions required	Key activity	Priority	Outcomes required	Officer responsible	Review date
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Procurement documentation	Ensure the procurement document (tender documents, evaluation etc.) are accessible and include a requirement to consider equality compliance.	Med	Ensure the specification and contract include the council's commitment to provide high quality care to all adults and that no adult is discriminated against based on protected characteristics	Debbie Pitcher	August 2025 (prior to opening tender)
Contract Monitoring and Performance Framework	Performance and quality of contract to be monitored to ensure that service users are not discriminated against based on protected characteristics.	Med	Ensure the specification and contract show the council's commitment to provide high quality support to all service users and that no service user is discriminated against based on protected characteristics, there will be an expectation for the provider to evidence EDI training for all staff. A formal procedure for practitioners to raise concerns about the service will be implemented which would extend to instances of discriminatory practice. The contract will be subject to regular reviews and findings will be taken through governance to assure that we have achieved the outcomes.	Nadine Oakes	March 2026 (agree monitoring prior to commencement of service)
Market engagement	Market engagement events to outline the council's priorities and equality framework so that providers are aware of their responsibilities and duties in partnering with the council to provide services.	Med	Providers have a clear understanding of the need to provide equitable services and that no adult is discriminated against based on protected characteristics, New procurement regulations are effective as of Feb 2025 requiring an enhanced level of transparency. All participants in the retender exercise	Nadine Oakes	January – March 2025 (complete soft market research)

			<p>must declare any conflicts of interest, these declarations will be logged and stored with the procurement documentation.</p> <p>New regulations also require that elements of provider performance are available for public record therefore promoting a greater level of scrutiny.</p>		
Prescriber Engagement and Co production	<p>Engagement with prescribers who use the service will take place throughout the new contract's specification review, tender, mobilisation and throughout the lifetime of the contract. A formal procedure for prescribers to raise concerns and give feedback will be implemented throughout the contract.</p> <p>We want to ensure that those reliant on these services can inform how they are delivered.</p>	High	<p>Services are designed and evolved by those that use them. This contract is used by prescribers to enable them to support residents of the boroughs, as such, prescribers have been identified as the service users and key stakeholders to involve in co-producing the future service.</p> <p>By engaging with the prescribers in a multitude of ways, we are of the hopes that we can provide a service that supports prescribers to promote independence and keep residents of the borough safe in their homes.</p>	Nadine Oakes and Commissioning and Operational Teams	September 2025 (tender evaluation)

Service User Engagement	Engagement with those in receipt of the service will take place throughout the recommission of this service. The current provider is eliciting feedback from those who use the service. We have also launched a questionnaire aimed at the general population, this has been cascaded by Healthwatch, Community Partnerships, prescribers and Let's Talk.	High	By engaging with people living in the boroughs in a multitude of ways, we are of the hopes that we can provide a service that supports prescribers to promote independence and keep residents of the borough safe in their homes.	Nadine Oakes Commissioning and Operational Teams, Community Partnerships and Healthwatch.	September 2025 (Review alongside evaluation)
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Sign off	
Lead officer:	Nadine Oakes
Approved by Tier 4 Manager:	Michelle Taylor
Moderation	
Date: 10 March 2025	
Date analysis to be reviewed based on rating (high impact – review in one year, medium impact - review in two years, low impact in three years)	Medium Impact - January 2026