

Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2027 - 2037

Equality Impact Assessment

Flood Risk Management Team
v2
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Introduction

This document sets out the Equality Impact Assessment undertaken alongside a Health Impact Assessment for Flooding, to support the creation of the draft East Sussex Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2027 - 2037.

Under the Equality Act 2010 East Sussex County Council has a legal duty to demonstrate that the East Sussex Local Flood Risk Management Strategy has identified and considered the actual and potential impacts of the strategy on people who share any of the legally protected characteristics.

These protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership.

The Equality Act 2010 requires East Sussex County Council to give due regard to the need to:

- avoid, reduce, minimise or eliminate any negative impacts,
- promote equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations.

Background of project

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has a duty to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management in East Sussex under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. This strategy will replace the current strategy which is due to expire at the end of 2026.

There are two purposes to the Strategy:

1. To support East Sussex County Council (ESCC) in its role as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) in managing flood risk across East Sussex.
2. Allow members of the public to understand the LLFA's role and approach to flood risk management.

The strategy sets out ESCC's vision of how flood risk will be managed up to 2036. This includes working with other ESCC services, other risk management authorities such as councils and external partners including the Environment Agency and Southern Water to reduce the risk of flooding across the county.

The strategy's recommendations will influence and guide how the LLFA interacts and supports provision of flood risk management measures within other stakeholder projects and services as well as projects undertaken directly by the LLFA.

The strategy will have the largest effect on those individuals, communities and

businesses impacted by flood risk. The strategy will contain recommendations and approaches which will impact how the LLFA interacts with the planning process, and this may affect development in East Sussex. Within ESCC it will affect teams delivering development or regeneration projects in areas where the impact of flooding has been assessed as significant.

The aim of the strategy is to produce a clear approach to flood risk management with areas of priority identified to ensure any flood risk management resources are directed toward projects and initiatives that will benefit the largest number of people.

Protected characteristics and locally important categories

Table 1 and Table 2 present information about people in East Sussex who share any of the legally protected characteristics or locally identified additional categories. Flooding is a geographically controlled risk, and some characteristics would have no bearing on the risks or impact that flooding or flood risk could have on an individual. Where a characteristic or category has been considered to have no bearing, this has been highlighted within the table using *red italic text* and removed from any further assessment.

Table 1: Protected characteristics in East Sussex

Protected Characteristic	Information about People in East Sussex
Age	Older People The mid-year 2024 population estimates state 26.6% of East Sussex’s total population are 65-years or older. It is projected this will rise to 34% by 2038 (East Sussex County Council, 2024). Older people have been identified as being less likely to respond to flood warnings. This may be due to a lack of internet or mobile phone access, and /or a lack of technical knowledge around signing up for flood warnings. They may also be more reluctant or less physically able to leave their homes or utilise manually installed property level protection (UK Health Security Agency, 2023). This group may also have difficulty reading material published to advise about flood risk and mitigation measures, or reporting flood events due to poor eyesight, reduced access to the internet, and/or a lesser technical ability.
	Children 2024, mid-year population estimates state 16% of East Sussex’s total population are 17-years or younger. It is projected this percentage will remain relatively consistent up to 2038 (East Sussex County Council, 2024). Studies have found that children impacted by flooding experience increased mental and behavioural problems (UK Health Security Agency, 2023).

Disability	The 2021 census identified that 20% of East Sussex adults identified as being disabled with their day-to-day activities limited in some way. A further 8% of the adult population identified as disabled but day-to-day activities were not impacted (East Sussex County Council, 2024). The same census also shows that 5.7% of the adult population self-reported as having bad or very bad health. Surveys undertaken by Sport England in 2023/24 identified that of the participants 63% of adults (18+) were classified as overweight or obese (East Sussex County Council, 2024). A self-reported wellbeing survey undertaken by East Sussex County Council in 2022/23 identified that 24% of respondents identified themselves as having high anxiety. This is just slightly higher than the 23% of respondents identifying high anxiety in surveys across England (East Sussex County Council, 2024). The number of people receiving complex healthcare interventions at home is unknown. However, the 2021 census identified that nearly 10% of the East Sussex population provided at least some unpaid care activities per week, with 3% providing more than 50-hours of care per week (East Sussex County Council, 2024). This is suggestive of a demographic which requires additional support and may be receiving healthcare interventions at home. Some people in this group may have difficulty reading material published to advise about flood risk and mitigation measures or reporting flood events due to poor eyesight and/or communication challenges, reduced access to the internet, and/or a lesser technical ability. People with pre-existing mental health conditions may be more vulnerable to the mental health impacts of flooding. These mental health impacts may occur before, during or after a flood event (UK Health Security Agency, 2023). The UK Health Security Agency identified that people who are obese and have a body mass index over 40 may find it more challenging to evacuate in a flood event. They also identify that flooding can worsen or accelerate the deterioration of the health of people with chronic conditions. Those receiving interventions such as receiving oxygen, dialysis or palliative care may face barriers to successfully and/or timely evacuation (UK Health Security Agency, 2023).
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Protected Characteristic	Information about People in East Sussex
<i>Gender reassignment</i>	<i>Across East Sussex 0.4% of people aged 16 and over have a “gender identity different to their sex registered at birth” (East Sussex County Council, 2024).</i> <i>Flooding is a geographically controlled risk and a person’s gender, or gender identity have no bearing on the risks or impact that flooding or flood risk could have on an individual.</i>
Pregnancy and maternity	Across East Sussex there were a total of 4,321 births in 2023. Birth rates across the county have declined from 60.5 births per 1,000 females in 2013 to 51.3 births per 1,000 females in 2022. This declining birth rate follows the trend from across England in the same period (East Sussex County Council, 2024). Population estimates from 2024 suggest there are a total of 24,243 children aged 4-years or younger in East Sussex (approximately 4% of the total 2024 population) (East Sussex County Council, 2024). Pregnant individuals and those with very young children are likely to require regular attendance at healthcare provisions including doctors, health centres and hospitals. They may also be reliant on medical professionals being able to reach them from healthcare locations (for home births, emergencies etc).

Protected Characteristic	Information about People in East Sussex
Race (ethnicity)	Based on broad ethnic groups the 2021 census identified the East Sussex population as being: • 93.9% White, • 2.1% Asian or Asian British, • 0.8% Black, Black British, Caribbean or African, • 2.3% mixed or multiple ethnic groups, and • 0.9% other ethnic group. A total of 0.3% of the population identified as either Gypsy, Irish Traveller or Roma. A total of 96.3% of the population stated that English was their main language. However, a total of 0.6% of the population stated they could not speak English well or could not speak English at all. This may have an impact on ability to understand materials published to advise about flood risk and mitigation actions. The 2021 census identified a total of 2,950 people moved into East Sussex from outside the UK within the previous 12-months. (East Sussex County Council, 2024)
Religion or belief	<i>The 2021 census identified that 45.9% of the population identified as Christian, whilst 44.7% identified as having no religion. A total of 2.1% of the population identified as Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim or Sikh (East Sussex County Council, 2024).</i>
Sex	<i>The mid-year estimates (2024) shows that 52% of the population identify as female, with 48% identifying as male (East Sussex County Council, 2024).</i> <i>Flooding is a geographically controlled risk and a person's sex has no bearing on the risks or impact that flooding or flood risk could have on an individual.</i>

Protected Characteristic	Information about People in East Sussex
Sexual orientation	<i>The 2021 census was the first census which asked residents over 16-years to describe their sexual orientation, answering was voluntary and 7.5% of the population did not provide an answer.</i> <i>89.2% of people over 16-years in East Sussex said they were straight or heterosexual. A total of 3.3% of the population identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or with another (not heterosexual) sexual orientation. (East Sussex County Council, 2024)</i> <i>Flooding is a geographically controlled risk and a person's sexual orientation has no bearing on the risks or impact that flooding or flood risk could have on an individual.</i>
Marriage and civil partnership	<i>Across East Sussex 31.9% of people are single, and 46.8% are married or in registered civil partnership. Living arrangements do not always reflect marital status and the 2021 census identifies that 60.4% of the population are living in a couple, whilst 39.6% of the population were not living in a couple (East Sussex County Council, 2024).</i> <i>Flooding is a geographically controlled risk and a person's marital status has no bearing on the risks or impact that flooding or flood risk could have on an individual.</i>
Armed Forces	<i>The 2021 census was the first census which asked residents over 16-years old if they had previously served in the UK armed forces. People currently serving in the UK armed forces were advised to tick no as part of this question and as such this data relates to veterans only.</i> <i>4.6% of the population have previously served in the UK armed forces, either in the regular armed forces, the UK reserves or both regular and reserves. (East Sussex County Council, 2024)</i> <i>Flooding is a geographically controlled risk and a person's veteran status has no bearing on the risks or impact that flooding or flood risk could have on an individual.</i>
Impacts on community cohesion	<i>The East Sussex County Council's local Transport Plan 4 Equality Impact Assessment identified that changes to transport networks and infrastructure can be a matter of concern to residents (East Sussex County Council, Oct 2024).</i>

Table 2: Locally important groups in East Sussex

Locally identified category	Information about People in East Sussex
Rurality	The Rural Urban Classification for Local Authorities classified local authorities across England based on the percentage of their resident population in rural areas or in ‘rural-related’ hub towns. The districts and boroughs are classified as: • Eastbourne: Urban with City and Town • Hastings: Urban with City and Town • Lewes: Urban with significant rural • Rother: Largely rural • Wealden: Mainly rural (DEFRA, 2014) A study into transport inequality identified that “rural and small urban communities experience transport disadvantage due to a lack of transit and a low density of employment, education, recreation and other opportunities” (NatCen Social Research, 2019). The low density of employment, education, recreation and other opportunities is relevant in relation to the potential impact of flooding.
Carers	The 2021 census identified that nearly 10% of the East Sussex population provided at least some unpaid care activities per week, with 3% providing more than 50-hours of care per week (East Sussex County Council, 2024). A report looking into the impact of caring on the carers across the UK’s health (Carers UK, Nov 2023) identified that 29% of respondents were disabled themselves, and 31% were aged 65 or older.

Locally identified category	Information about People in East Sussex
Rough sleepers or people experiencing homelessness	The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government compile a ‘single night snapshot’ dataset obtained by local authorities annually over the autumn period. This snapshot data identified a total of 97 individuals rough sleeping in autumn 2024 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2025). The total number of households in East Sussex owed a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2023/24 is reported to be 3,054 (of a projected total number of households in East Sussex in 2023 of 247,692, or 1.2% of East Sussex households).

Assessment of strategy outputs

The strategy’s guiding principles, objectives and measures inform how the LLFA engage with flood risk management across East Sussex. These have been drafted in collaboration with the project’s Technical Working Group and Governance Board and aim to consider the wider health impacts of flooding, the impact on any person with a protected characteristic or locally important groups, and flood risk management priorities.

Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, Table 6 and Table 7 present an assessment of the draft principles, objectives and measures. This assessment aims to identify whether each element could have a direct or indirect positive, negative or neutral impact on those with protected characteristics or within locally important groups.

Table 3: Assessment of impact: Principles

Protected characteristic or locally important group	Strategy Output: Principles		
	To actively collaborate and work in partnership with others, to promote and improve sustainable flood risk management and sustainable drainage across the county.	To focus flood risk management programmes on areas and communities identified as the most likely to be most negatively impacted by flooding both now and in the future.	To support people to better understand their flood risk, be prepared for flooding, and adapt to changes in flood risk over time.
	(+1 positive, 0 neutral, -1 negative)		
Age	0	0	+1
Disability	0	+1	+1
Pregnancy and maternity	0	+1	0
Race (ethnicity)	0	0	+1
Impact on community cohesion	0	+1	+1
Rurality	0	+1	+1
Carers	0	0	+1
Rough sleepers or the homeless	0	0	+1

Table 4: Assessment of impact: Objective 1 and measures

Protected characteristic or locally important group	Strategy Output: Objective 1 and Measures				
	Objective 1 Climate resilient communities where resident's work with, and are supported by, RMAs and other stakeholders to actively engage with and manage their own flood risk.	Measure 1.1 Raise awareness within communities across East Sussex of their flood risk.	Measure 1.2 Support the creation of community Flood Action Groups in areas where flooding has been identified to have the greatest potential impact. Provide support and training to any Flood Action Group in East Sussex to allow them to help their communities engage with and manage flood risk and flood events.	Measure 1.3 Focus ESCC's flood risk management resources on projects which provide the most significant impacts to at-risk communities.	Measure 1.4 Where appropriate, encourage ESCC-led flood risk management projects to utilise project structures which incorporate community engagement and consultation.
	(+1 positive, 0 neutral, -1 negative)				
Age	0	+1	+1	0	0
Disability	0	+1	+1	0	0
Pregnancy and maternity	0	+1	+1	0	0
Race (ethnicity)	0	+1	+1	0	0
Impact on community cohesion	+1	+1	+1	+1	0
Rurality	0	+1	0	0	0
Carers	0	+1	+1	0	0
Rough sleepers or the homeless	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5: Assessment of impact: Objective 2 and measures

Protected characteristic or locally important group	Strategy Output: Objective 2 and Measures		
	Objective 2	Measure 2.1	Measure 2.2
	Where cross-agency, cross-team collaboration and cooperation becomes business as usual, and relevant flood risk and project data is shared freely between agencies.	Work with relevant internal and external stakeholders to: a) Identify early on where collaborative projects could deliver multiple benefits such as flood risk and drought management, community amenity and biodiversity improvements. b) Facilitate the creation of mixed-speciality multi-agency project teams to deliver collaborative projects.	Facilitate a central flood and development information hub to increase awareness of community scale developments/ projects where collaboration could bring multiple benefits. To be accessible by all ESCC teams and relevant external stakeholders.
	(+1 positive, 0 neutral, -1 negative)		
Age	0	0	0
Disability	0	0	0
Pregnancy and maternity	0	0	0
Race (ethnicity)	0	0	0
Impact on community cohesion	0	0	0
Rurality	0	0	0
Carers	0	0	0
Rough sleepers or the homeless	0	0	0

Table 6: Assessment of impact: Objective 3 and measures

Protected characteristic or locally important group	Strategy Output: Objective 3 and Measures		
	Objective 3	Measure 3.1	Measure 3.2
	Where multiple stakeholders incorporate climate resilient design and partnership resourcing as standard.	Provide support for other ESCC services and external stakeholders on how to incorporate climate resilient flood risk management and/ or sustainable drainage into their plans, strategies and projects.	Facilitate regular and open stakeholder communication with the view of increasing awareness of climate resilient design and encouraging the sharing of lessons learnt.
	(+1 positive, 0 neutral, -1 negative)		
Age	0	0	0
Disability	0	0	0
Pregnancy and maternity	0	0	0
Race (ethnicity)	0	0	0
Impact on community cohesion	0	0	0
Rurality	0	0	0
Carers	0	0	0
Rough sleepers or the homeless	0	0	0

Table 7: Assessment of impact: Objective 4 and measures

Protected characteristic or locally important group	Strategy Output: Objective 4 and Measures		
	Objective 4	Measure 4.1	Measure 4.2
	Where opportunities to embed and enhance flood risk management, flood alleviation and climate resilience in all development across the county are encouraged and supported by relevant planning policy and guidance.	LLFA to engage with all future planning policy consultations received from Planning Authorities and the Mayoral Authority relating to their flood risk management and sustainable drainage policies and guidance and encourage these to be regularly updated.	Provide regular flood risk management and sustainable drainage training opportunities for Planning Authority staff to increase awareness and understanding across the planning system.
	(+1 positive, 0 neutral, -1 negative)		
Age	0	0	0
Disability	0	0	0
Pregnancy and maternity	0	0	0
Race (ethnicity)	0	0	0
Impact on community cohesion	+1	+1	0
Rurality	0	0	0
Carers	0	0	0
Rough sleepers or the homeless	0	0	0

General actions to increase equality

The assessment has identified no negative impacts on a those with protected characteristics or locally important groups through the draft principles, objectives or measures. However, there are general actions which should be considered when determining how the Strategy shall be presented and during the creation of the future Action Plan.

These general actions are:

- Ensure that any publication or reporting mechanisms are accessible.
 - For example, using Alt Text to describe any images within the document, a point of contact to verbally discuss the Local Strategy, printed publications to be available on request, Large Print copies available and for the website that the document is published on to have the option to be read by an automated voice.
 - Ensure all publications use Plain English without unnecessary technical jargon and provide translations wherever necessary.
 - Include details of how alternative format reporting (translations, large print copies etc) can be obtained on all printed publications and digital presentations of the strategy and Action Plan.
 - Ensure the strategy and Action Plan's publication is communicated via digital and traditional means of communication to address those that may be digitally excluded.
- Community engagement, reporting and projects must consider communities and individuals within protected characteristic groups.
 - For example, engagement work should utilise the existing networks within locally known and trusted voluntary or community groups, religious centres etc. This is to ensure engagement reaches the widest possible community and includes voices of groups often missed during engagement work.
 - Any engagement events should be held in accessible venues, over multiple days and at different times of day (in and out of work hours). Consideration should be given to allowing remote digital attendance for those unable to attend in person.
 - Any engagement should consider the requirements of any advice provided (such as physical fitness or digital access) and aim to provide alternative ways of achieving the main goal wherever possible.
 - The strategy should consider how best to advise those with no fixed address as to the flood risk across the county. This may include engagement with government agencies, council teams, charities or support groups that regularly meet rough sleepers or people experiencing homelessness to spread awareness of high flood risk areas and what to do in case of a flood event.