

Bristol City Council Equality Impact Assessment Form

(Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this form)



Name of proposal	Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers
Directorate and Service Area	People Directorate
Name of Lead Officer	Jacqui Jensen and Ann James

Step 1: What is the proposal?

Please explain your proposal in Plain English, avoiding acronyms and jargon. This section should explain how the proposal will impact service users, staff and/or the wider community.

1.1 What is the proposal?

In November 2015 Bristol launched the current Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers. The Strategy is designed for Bristol City Council and our partners and the Pledge is for children and young people.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy was developed as part of the Council's response to the 2014 Ofsted Inspection of Bristol's services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers. It set out our vision as an effective, caring and ambitious corporate parent with 9 objectives and 19 actions outlining how we aimed to improve outcomes for children in care and leavers. Governance arrangements were established with Bristol's Corporate Parenting Panel and Strategic Boards to monitor and support delivery against the strategic objectives.

There have been significant improvements in some areas, in others challenges remain. There have been changes in legislation and national policy, most notably the Children and Social Work Act 2017 has enshrined seven Corporate Parenting Principles in law. It also requires local authorities to publish an offer to care leavers including extending the provision of a leaving care personal adviser and leaving care support to age 25 for all those who want it.

Step 2: What information do we have?

Decisions must be evidence-based, and involve people with protected characteristics that could be affected. Please use this section to demonstrate understanding of who could be affected by the proposal.

2.1 What data or evidence is there which tells us who is, or could be affected?

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Steering group commissioned a JSNA Chapter on Children in Care and Care Leavers. JSNA Chapters include detailed data and evidence of effectiveness, local views and proposed recommendations. This detailed report has informed the strategy refresh.

2.2 Who is missing? Are there any gaps in the data?

The data in the Children in Care population analysis does not include local information about children’s religion, disability (other than SEN), gender reassignment or sexual orientation. There are some gaps in the JSNA data around some risky behaviours, diet and obesity.

2.3 How have we involved, or will we involve, communities and groups that could be affected?

The Strategy and Pledge have been developed in consultation with a range of partners and the voices of young people have been central to the development of both documents. Messages from children in care were gleaned through an online survey and focus groups with the Children in care Council and Care Leaver Forum. The aim is to respond to their priorities through the strategic actions outlined in the Strategy and the commitments in the Pledge. Further consultation will be taking place with the Children in Care Council to review the commitments in the Pledge and ensure that they do address their priorities.

Step 3: Who might the proposal impact?

Age

There is a growing number of older children entering care in Bristol which poses the challenge of securing appropriate accommodation for this population. Young people in England are now able to stay with their foster carers until the age of 21. This will improve outcomes for young people who have previously faced the prospect of living alone too soon. We will need to continually recruit carers to allow current carers to keep their foster children living with them longer. We are working to recruit more experienced carers who can look after more challenging children and young people, including teenagers.

Disability

Factors that lead to a disabled child becoming looked after are complex, inter-woven and difficult to extrapolate. Factors include family stress, abuse or neglect, and parental illness. The literature states that disabled looked after children are more likely to be voluntarily accommodated than subject to a care order. However, it is reported that disabled children experience a heightened vulnerability to abuse¹.

We are working to recruit more carers who can care for disabled children, including short breaks and contract short break care. Bristol City Council’s ‘Diversity and Equality in fostering and adoption recruitment’ statement makes a commitment to recruit disabled foster carers and adopters. The intention is to reflect carers with disabilities in recruitment material, and using myth busting as part of recruitment strategies.

¹ Dowling, S., Kelly, B. & Winter, K. (2012) Disabled Children and Young People who are Looked After: A Literature Review. Belfast: Queen's University Belfast.

Marriage and civil partnership

It is important to highlight to potential foster carers that they do not need to be married in order to foster, and that single people can foster too, as well as those in civil partnerships, and living with their partner. All Bristol City Council fostering and adoption recruitment material will emphasise this.

Pregnancy & maternity

The principal risk factors associated with teenage pregnancy, such as socio-economic deprivation; limited involvement in education; low educational attainment; limited access to consistent, positive adult support; being a child of a teenage mother; low self-esteem; and experience of sexual abuse, are to be found more often in the looked after population than among children and young people who are not in care².

Almost a quarter of girls (22%) in care in England become teenage mothers, according to the Centre for Social Justice, around three times the average rates. The figures also suggest at least one in 10 care-leavers who become parents have their children taken into care.

Increased capacity to care for teenage parents is therefore necessary, as well as preventative initiatives to reduce rates of teenage pregnancy. A Bristol campaign is planned for 2015-16 to encourage an increase in mother and baby fostering.

Race/ethnicity

An increasing number of asylum seeking children are beginning to have an impact on the profile of looked-after children. Many of these children may have been traumatised and living in very stressful circumstances, which means that they often need more specialist care. Asylum seeking children will increasingly make up some of Bristol's looked after children population.

There are no significant differences in placement breakdown between children placed with carers from a similar background to their own and those placed with white families.

Good foster care matching processes are associated with better outcomes for looked after children and young people. Ideally, research suggests that these processes should include attention to the characteristics of foster parents or key carers, so that care givers and

² SCIE Research briefing 9: Preventing teenage pregnancy in looked after children

children can be beneficially matched in order to avoid unnecessary discord, friction, confrontation, and placement breakdown³.

Bristol City Council's 'Diversity and Equality in fostering and adoption recruitment' statement makes a commitment to recruiting more foster carers from black and minority ethnic backgrounds in order to better reflect the ethnicity of children in care through the following recruitment strategies:

- Joint working with BAME organisations, meetings with adoption agencies, councillors and BAME organisations
- Advertising and radio interviews on Ujima, BCFM and Ramdan radio
- Recruitment stands at schools with high BAME population
- Working with BAME Councillors to promote fostering
- Meeting with Somali and Polish groups (fastest growing BAME population in Bristol)
- Basic information on fostering provided in Somali and Polish- available at recruitment events
- Attendance at Black History Month awards- nomination of our black carers
- Advertising in Black History Month leaflet of events
- Mailout to all schools for Black History Month with famous BAME people who have been in care or adopted.
- Specific leaflet with BAME imagery developed
- Lead the way campaign- encouraging faith and community leaders as well as councillors to learn about fostering and adoption and cascade this to communities

Religion and belief

We need to be aware of the importance to some children and young people of the religious observance of their family's traditional religion. Not all children and young people will feel strongly about their religion, but some will. In line with our fostering recruitment strategy, recruiting a diverse range of carers who can support children and young people from a variety of religions and beliefs is important. In order to do this, we have committed to:

- Working specifically with Muslim communities to provide appropriate and relevant information, spreading the word for the need for a diverse population of carers
- Holding information stands at church events
- Working with local faith groups

Sex

There are slightly more boys than girls in care in Bristol, which reflects the national demographic profile. As explored above, one of the risks for girls in care is teenage

³ SSIA, What Works in Promoting Good Outcomes for Looked After Children and Young People?

pregnancy. 4YP Bristol has developed prevention initiatives with the aim of decreasing teenage pregnancy rates as well as a teenage pregnancy outreach nurse to support young parents.

In terms of educational outcomes, looked after girls generally outperform looked after boys which mirrors patterns of attainment in the general population. The HOPE Virtual School aims to increase the educational attainment of all looked after children.

Sexual Orientation and Gender reassignment

Research by Action for Children in 2013 revealed that 32% of LGBT people in the UK believe that being LGBT means you cannot foster, a misconception which must be challenged⁴. The increased recruitment of lesbians and gay men as foster carers and adopters has been influenced by the view that for children, it is the quality of the adult-child relationship that matters rather than the structure of their family, or the sexual orientation of their parents⁵. Bristol City Council aims to increase the number of LGBT people registering as foster carers by:

- Holding a week-long campaign targeting potential LGBT foster carers
- Utilising press and media opportunities around National LGBT fostering week
- Holding open information sessions with LGBT communities
- Having a stand at Pride for adoption and fostering
- Ensuring New Family Social materials are available at all recruitment events

Step 4: So what?

The Equality Impact Assessment must be able to influence the proposal and decision. This section asks how your understanding of impacts on people with protected characteristics has influenced your proposal, and how the findings of your Equality Impact Assessment can be measured going forward.

4.1 How has the equality impact assessment informed or changed the proposal and what actions have been identified going forward?
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Actions to address the identified issues relating to each protected characteristic have been identified above.
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4.2 How will the impact of your proposal and actions be measured moving forward?
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The implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and pledge to Children in care and Care Leavers will be monitored through the applicable multi-agency board – Learning City Partnership Board, Health and Wellbeing Board, and the Safeguarding Children Board.
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Service Director Sign-Off:

Equalities Officer Sign Off:

⁴ <http://www.lgbtadoptfosterweek.org.uk/uncategorized/press-release-lgbt-people-urged-to-consider-fostering-and-adoption/>

⁵ e.g. Golombok, 2000

Ann James	
Date: 01/12/17	Date: