

## 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	James Beardall

### 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 December 2017 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 updated Corporate Parenting Strategy was developed in response to children and young people's feedback, as well as analysis of data, monitoring and review, and feedback from our most recent Ofsted inspection of 2018. It sets out our vision as an effective, caring and ambitious corporate parent with eight priorities and 45 actions outlining how we aim to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers. Governance arrangements have been re-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. The strategy is based on the seven Corporate Parenting Principles as enshrined in law in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 which invites our key partners to join us in our work to be the best corporate parents we can, acknowledging we all have an important role to play. 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 Leaving Care Self-Evaluation 2020, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Chapter on Children in Care and Care Leavers in 2018, the results from our survey, and our own data

gives us detailed information on children and young people affected by this proposal. The JSNA Chapter includes 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?

Information is not routinely recorded about obesity levels. Information on Child Criminal Exploitation is relatively recent.

#### 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 and care leavers were gleaned through an online survey and focus groups with the Children in Care Council and Care Leaver Forum (CLUB). 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**

Young people in England are 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 children with a range of needs including teenagers and disabled children, and carers who reflect the ethnicity and culture of children needing their care.

#### **Disability**

Factors that lead to a disabled child coming into care are complex, and can include family stress, abuse or neglect, and parental illness. The literature states that disabled children in care 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 abuse<sup>1</sup>.

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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 and adopters that they do not need to be married in order to foster or adopt, and that single people can 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 care-experienced population than among children and young people who are not in care<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>.

Increased capacity to care for teenage parents is therefore necessary, as well as preventative initiatives to reduce rates of teenage pregnancy. We continue to develop our resources to increase the offer for parent/child fostering.

## **Race/ethnicity**

An increasing number of asylum-seeking children are beginning to have an impact on the profile of children in care. 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 make up approximately 8% Bristol's looked after children population and 11% of care leavers.

Good foster care matching processes are associated with better outcomes for children and young people. Ideally, research suggests that these processes should include attention to the characteristics of foster parents or key carers, so that carers and children can be well matched<sup>4</sup>.

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

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<sup>2</sup> SCIE Research briefing 9: Preventing teenage pregnancy in looked after children

<sup>3</sup> Craine et al (2014) found that [children in care] were far less likely to terminate their pregnancy than young people in the wider population, with 70% of LAC carrying on with their pregnancy, compared to 28% in the wider population.

<sup>4</sup> SSIA, What Works in Promoting Good Outcomes for Looked After Children and Young People?

ethnic backgrounds in order to better reflect the ethnicity of children in care through the following recruitment strategies:

- Joint working with Black, Asian and minority ethnic led organisations, meetings with adoption agencies and councillors.
- Advertising and radio interviews on Ujima, BCFM and Ramdan radio
- Recruitment stands at schools with high Black, Asian and minority ethnic population
- Working with Black, Asian and minority ethnic Councillors to promote fostering
- Meeting with Somali and Polish groups
- 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
- Mail-out to all schools for Black History Month with famous Black, Asian and minority ethnic people who have been in care or adopted.
- Specific leaflet with diverse 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
- Partner with Home for Good to encourage fostering and adoption amongst churches

### **Sex**

There are slightly more boys than girls in care in Bristol, which reflects the national demographic profile. As explored above, girls in care experience a higher rate of teenage pregnancy.

Girls are four times more likely than boys to be identified as at risk of CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation). Boys are more likely to be involved in CCE (Child Criminal Exploitation) with the caveat that some areas in Bristol are seeing a year on year increase in girls involved in serious youth violence. In terms of educational outcomes, 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 children in care.

### **Sexual Orientation and Gender reassignment**

New Family Social survey from 2020 found that 1 in 7 LGBT+ people currently being assessed for adoption say that their sexual orientation has been a barrier in the process. This rose to 1 in 3 of those at the family-finding stage<sup>5</sup>.

The increased recruitment of LGBT+ people 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 parents<sup>6</sup>. 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?
Actions to address the identified issues relating to each protected characteristic have been identified above. We are also looking to promote Care Experience as a protected characteristic in Bristol.
4.2 How will the impact of your proposal and actions be measured moving forward?
The implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers will be monitored through the applicable multi-agency boards – Learning City Partnership Board, Health and Wellbeing Board, the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership, as well as the Corporate Parenting Panel.

<sup>5</sup>[https://newfamilysocial.org.uk/resources/Documents/Research/08\\_09\\_20\\_FINAL\\_STATEOFTHESYSTEM\\_SUMMARY.pdf](https://newfamilysocial.org.uk/resources/Documents/Research/08_09_20_FINAL_STATEOFTHESYSTEM_SUMMARY.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> e.g. Golombok, 2000

Service Director Sign-Off:	Equalities Officer Sign Off: <i>Reviewed by Equality and Inclusion Team</i>
Date:	Date: 10/11/2020