

# Equality Impact Assessment

[version 2.9]



Children's Independent Fostering Agency Framework – South Central	
<input type="checkbox"/> Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Already exists / review <input type="checkbox"/> Changing
Directorate: People	Lead Officer name: Gail Rogers
Service Area: Children's Commissioning	Lead Officer role: Head of Service Commissioning

## Step 1: What do we want to do?

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment is to assist decision makers in understanding the impact of proposals as part of their duties under the Equality Act 2010. Detailed guidance to support completion can be found here [Equality Impact Assessments \(EqIA\) \(sharepoint.com\)](#).

This assessment should be started at the beginning of the process by someone with a good knowledge of the proposal and service area, and sufficient influence over the proposal. It is good practice to take a team approach to completing the equality impact assessment. Please contact the [Equality and Inclusion Team](#) early for advice and feedback.

### 1.1 What are the aims and objectives/purpose of this proposal?

The purpose of this proposal is to join the South Central Consortium to design and commission the new framework contract and subsequently purchase Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements, for children and young people from it, for the period of the framework contract (April 2022 to March 2025), plus any contract extensions agreed. Placements will be secured from South Central IFA framework whenever possible or may be spot purchased if the framework is unable to meet the requirements.

Currently Bristol City Council commissions foster care from a mixed market of internal and external providers. Foster placements can be high cost and it is important the council plays a role in shaping the market to ensure placements are suitable, cost effective and deliver the agreed outcomes for children. Bristol City Council currently purchases most IFA placements through the South West Consortium Framework Agreement. This was due to expire in March 2021, however was extended until March 2022 due to the impact of Covid. In addition, around 9% of our placements have been made off framework, due to the complexity of need of some of our young people that this framework cannot meet.

Joining the South Central framework will enable Bristol City Council to negotiate in a provider led market and brings the following benefits:

- Ability to meaningfully participate in the design and commissioning of the framework contract to ensure it meets the needs of Bristol City Council
- Assurance of quality in the provision of children's foster care and price stability in what will otherwise be a market characterised by variable and escalating costs over the coming years.
- Commissioning as a larger consortium of authorities (with a significantly bigger market share than our current consortium) will allow us to meaningfully engage with and manage the market, whilst enabling us to achieve efficiencies in the purchasing and development of services.
- Developing stronger relationships with providers and a more collaborative approach to managing the market than is currently undertaken by the South West group.
- A clear process for monitoring providers.
- The South Central Consortium has reported a significant (25%) reduction in the number of placements they need to spot purchase off framework.
- There are staff based at Bournemouth Council who deliver (on behalf of the participating local authorities) the core Contract Management and Framework Co-ordination outputs. They provide regular sufficiency and monitoring reports which are currently produced by our Children's Placements team, thereby freeing up the Placement Team's time to undertake more pertinent work.

Bristol City Council has a statutory requirement in relation to children's placements. Section 22 (A-G) of the Children Act 1989 requiring local authorities to provide children in their care with accommodation and placing children in the most appropriate placement available.

## 1.2 Who will the proposal have the potential to affect?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bristol City Council workforce	<input type="checkbox"/> Service users	<input type="checkbox"/> The wider community
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioned services	<input type="checkbox"/> City partners / Stakeholder organisations	
Additional comments:		

## 1.3 Will the proposal have an equality impact?

Could the proposal affect access levels of representation or participation in a service, or does it have the potential to change e.g. quality of life: health, education, or standard of living etc.?

If 'No' explain why you are sure there will be no equality impact, then skip steps 2-4 and request review by Equality and Inclusion Team.

If 'Yes' complete the rest of this assessment, or if you plan to complete the assessment at a later stage please state this clearly here and request review by the Equality and Inclusion Team.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	[please select]
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We have not identified any significant negative impact from this proposal, which seeks to join a larger consortium of Local Authorities to aid partnership working with the independent fostering agencies to meet the changing needs of our children / young people in the care of the local authority.

This will enable Bristol City Council to develop the sufficiency in line with the Bristol City Council Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers to better manage the market and therefore quality, cost, availability and choice of placements. This will not impact what placements are being made or the services that children and young people will receive; this is always based on the needs of individual children. Cabinet will still retain oversight via the annual report submitted.

The procurement process ensures that all providers on the framework demonstrate that their organisation will operate in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 including the s.149 Public Sector Equality Duty, and other relevant anti-discriminatory legislation. The framework has been running for eight years and is re-designing the specific lots providers can bid for in the upcoming tender.

Bristol City Council have been part of the working groups to ensure these lots are suitable for our needs including the introduction of an 'Enhanced fostering' and 'Staying Put' lots. The framework provides a contract management function which includes a full time Contracts Co-ordinator and Project Officer and will ensure improved quality assurance processes to confirm we are using providers who are Ofsted rated 'good' or 'outstanding'. It will also mean that there is better information for the council, children and young people when deciding where to make a placement.

## Step 5: Review

<b>Equality and Inclusion Team Review:</b> <i>Reviewed by Equality and Inclusion Team</i>	<b>Director Sign-Off:</b>  Ann James
Date: 15/6/2021	Date: 16 <sup>th</sup> June 2021