

Equality Impact Assessment [version 2.10]



Title: GAPCE1 Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Budget Proposal	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Already exists / review <input type="checkbox"/> Changing
Directorate: Children and Education	Lead Officer name: James Beardall
Service Area: Children's 0-25 Through Care	Lead Officer role: Head of Service - Children's 0-25 Through Care

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?

Briefly explain the purpose of the proposal and why it is needed. Describe who it is aimed at and the intended aims / outcomes. Where known also summarise the key actions you plan to undertake. Please use plain English, avoiding jargon and acronyms. Equality Impact Assessments are viewed by a wide range of people including decision-makers and the wider public.

Budget context

Every year, the council must agree an annual budget which balances the money we spend with the money we are expecting to receive. Councils across the country are continuing to face financial challenges and based on our current forecasts, we face a funding gap over the next five years (to 2028/29) of up to £81.2 million dependent on the severity of factors such as inflation, funding changes, and unavoidable service pressures. This is in addition to the £17.7 million of savings and efficiencies proposals for 2024-2028 outlined in the 2023/24 budget and assumed delivery of 2023/24 savings in the current year.

The Council has defined statutory responsibilities, but deliver against a far broader agenda, providing universal services benefiting the whole community, and targeted services aimed at individuals, communities with particular needs, and businesses – administered by our workforce, city partners, stakeholder organisations and commissioned services.

To address these challenges, we are looking across all of our services with a focus on:

- maximising our transformation programmes – where we are looking to improve services whilst achieving the best value for money
- income opportunities – where we are looking to improve our external income and most effectively apply that income

- targeted reviews – where we are looking at services that are comparatively high in cost compared to other councils to see where we can do things differently to reduce costs, be more efficient in how we do things and, in some cases, stop doing some things entirely.

This Proposal

This proposal will support the Fostering Service to recruit and retain foster carers, with innovative approaches to encourage and support foster carers with the right skills and experience, to come forward and offer some of our most vulnerable children an opportunity to experience a stable family life.

There are currently 727 children in care, 57% are male and 43% female (compared to 51% and 49% of the overall child population). 9% have a disability (compared to 6.1% of the total Bristol child population) and the majority (73%) are aged 10-17. In relation to ethnicity, 60% of children and young people in care are white (compared to 72% across the total Bristol child population), 16% are mixed race, 12% Other Ethnicity, 9% Black British, 3% Asian/Asian British. We know there are gaps in local diversity data, especially where this is has not historically been included in statutory reporting. The scope of the proposal includes the Fostering Team, the current community of Bristol Foster Carers, Bristol citizens who are potential Foster Carers and Children the in the care of Bristol City Council who need to live in local Foster Care.

This proposal would significantly increase our cohort of local foster carers and reduce the use of more expensive placements, including those out of area, expensive distant placements and the use of Independent Fostering Agencies. We currently have 414 children and young people in external placements of which 181 are in Bristol and 233 are outside of Bristol. By growing our local foster care community, we would increase the opportunities for children to live locally and be able to attend the same school and stay in touch with their friends and family networks. There is no set target figure but increasing the number of foster carers will reduce the number of external placements. Increasing our pool of foster carers would enable children coming into care and children currently in care to be better matched with carers who are best placed to support their needs which may be needs arising from their Disability status, race, religion and culture.

Increasing net foster carers will be promoted via a digital campaign, the Southwest Fostering Recruitment Hub and implementing an extended family model that provides sleepovers and short breaks, peer support, regular joint planning and training, and social activities known as Mockingbird. The outcomes of these initiatives will retain current carers through improved support, the reduction of breakdowns of placements, reduce carer terminations and therefore increase the number of foster carers.

This proposal should have a positive equality impact for children and young people across the city including some minoritized ethnic groups who are over-represented in the children in care population. No negative impacts have been identified at this stage. The proposal should improve equality of opportunity by offering the enhanced financial offer to make those who may be disadvantaged by financial constraints to make the necessary changes to meet the needs of these children and young people. Furthermore, it would have a positive equality impact for children and young people in care across the city by having a more diverse cohort of foster carers.

1.2 Who will the proposal have the potential to affect?

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

1.3 Will the proposal have an equality impact?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	[please select]
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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.

An enhanced offer and support for Bristol Foster carers would mean that more people would be able to become carers or remain as a carer for the Council and it should also help us improve equality of opportunity and diversify of our foster carers. Increasing net foster carers (stretch beyond current saving) through digital campaigning, Southwest Fostering Recruitment Hub and implementing an extended family model that provides sleepovers and short breaks, peer support, regular joint planning and training, and social activities known as Mockingbird. The outcomes of these initiatives will retain current carers through improved support, reduce breakdowns of placements, reduce carer terminations and therefore increasing the tenure of our carers and act as a positive for recruitment of carers, including under-represented groups in the cohort of foster carers.

By growing our local foster carer community, we would increase the opportunities for children and young people to live locally and be able to attend the same school and stay in touch with their friends and family networks. In summary the proposal will positively impact via; greater local sufficiency for children in care in fostering services, greater stability for children in residential care and the ability to ensure these homes remain safely at full capacity, ensuring resources are best utilised, reduce the dependence on expensive independent foster agencies and de-escalate the use of residential, and high-cost placements for children in care.

This proposal aligns to the Corporate Strategy: Theme 1: of the Corporate Strategy 2022-27 is Children and Young People with the top-level aim of achieving "a city where every child belongs and every child gets the best start in life, whatever circumstances they were born in to". Child friendly city - Children and young people are supported by the city, their community, and the council to have the best possible start in life. They can reach their full potential and are kept safe from and supported to overcome violence, abuse, and other adverse childhood experiences, whatever the circumstances of their birth. Supported to thrive - Children and young people are supported by the city, their community, and the council to have the best possible start in life. They can reach their full potential and are kept safe from and supported to overcome violence, abuse, and other adverse childhood experiences, whatever the circumstances of their birth. Intergenerational equality - Lead city-wide approaches to tackling the root causes of structural inequality, breaking cycles of disadvantage, poverty, and trauma across generations to improve health and life opportunities. Furthermore, aligns to Bristol's Belonging Strategy. The over-arching vision of the strategy is supported by four pillars which will deliver on the intentions of the Bristol One City Plan, the Bristol Corporate Parenting Strategy, the Bristol Children's Charter and the Bristol Equality Charter. This proposal contributes to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy working with communities, children and families, schools, early years which in turn impacts on demand management.

Step 4: Impact

4.1 How has the equality impact assessment informed or changed the proposal?

What are the main conclusions of this assessment? Use this section to provide an overview of your findings. This summary can be included in decision pathway reports etc.

If you have identified any significant negative impacts which cannot be mitigated, provide a justification showing how the proposal is proportionate, necessary, and appropriate despite this.

Summary of significant negative impacts and how they can be mitigated or justified:
none
Summary of positive impacts / opportunities to promote the Public Sector Equality Duty:
This should have a positive equality impact for children and young people across the city including some minoritised ethnic groups who are over-represented in the children in care population. It should also help us improve equality of opportunity and diversity of our foster carers through financial incentives.

4.2 Action Plan

Use this section to set out any actions you have identified to improve data, mitigate issues, or maximise opportunities etc. If an action is to meet the needs of a particular protected group please specify this.

Improvement / action required	Responsible Officer	Timescale
All relevant EqlAs will be published on the Council's website https://www.bristol.gov.uk/council-spending-performance/council-budgets and continue to be updated as appropriate.	James Beardall	Ongoing
Ongoing monitoring of the service with inclusion of voice of young people	James Beardall	Ongoing

4.3 How will the impact of your proposal and actions be measured?

How will you know if you have been successful? Once the activity has been implemented this equality impact assessment should be periodically reviewed to make sure your changes have been effective your approach is still appropriate.

<p>Our Equality and Inclusion Annual Progress Reports show what we have done to achieve the aims of our Equality and Inclusion policy and strategy, and the progress we have made including reporting on all relevant KPIs and workforce diversity Equalities policy - bristol.gov.uk</p> <p>We will also know if we have been successful through our monthly monitoring and quarterly assurance reports, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Measuring the number of Foster Carers, we have recruited and retained,2. Measuring the number of children placed with these Foster Carers3. Measuring the number of children moved from external placements into a foster care home4. Measuring recruitment of Foster Carers from our minoritised ethnic groups

The Equality and Inclusion Team need at least five working days to comment and feedback on your EqlA. EqlAs should only be marked as reviewed when they provide sufficient information for decision-makers on the equalities

impact of the proposal. Please seek feedback and review from the [Equality and Inclusion Team](#) before requesting sign off from your Director¹.

Equality and Inclusion Team Review: The Equality and Inclusion Team	Director Sign-Off:  Vanessa Wilson Director of Children & Education Transformation
Date: 19/12/2023	19/12/2023

¹ Review by the Equality and Inclusion Team confirms there is sufficient analysis for decision makers to consider the likely equality impacts at this stage. This is not an endorsement or approval of the proposal.