

Equality Impact Assessment

Name of project/proposal T19 - Level 3 Fostering Partnership
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Department Childrens Services
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Description of Service / Policy

The service will provide foster care through Fostering Agencies (IFAs) who specialise in recruiting highly skilled and experienced carers providing foster care for children and young people with challenging behaviour or who have disabilities with complex healthcare needs, who may have experienced placement breakdowns, abuse, neglect and loss and will be emotionally vulnerable. Carers must be able to provide specialist placements for step down from Residential placements or reunification (with family); they should be experienced and skilled and able to provide additional support to ensure successful transitions and build resilience of children and young people and their family where relevant.

Geographical impact* All Hampshire

Description of proposed change

The current service is aimed at children and young people who present with less challenging behaviours and needs. The current service is not targeted to meet the needs of children and young people who require more support and evidence shows that this can lead to placement breakdown when carers are not able to manage behaviours and needs. The new service will focus specifically on children and young people with challenging behaviour or disabilities with complex healthcare needs and will provide a greater level of support to both the child or young person and the carer to improve placement stability.

Engagement and consultation

Has engagement or consultation been carried out? Yes

Consultation has been carried out with the in-house placement service to establish what works and what does not work. Social workers have been consulted about the new services and their feedback has been used to develop the service further.

The Council's in-house foster care service has been consulted to ensure that they are aware of the Council's strategy in respect of addressing our need for Level 3 carers and to be clear about the services that we will look to to match children and young people to suitable carers. The referral process has been clearly communicated in order that foster carers understand the approach that the Council will take to make placements for children and young people with challenging behaviour or with disabilities and complex healthcare needs to ensure that the child or young person is placed with the foster carer/s who offer the best match in terms of being able to meet their needs.

Providers have been consulted about the proposed new services and their feedback has been used to inform decision making and further develop the strategy. This has been supported by the development of a Market Positioning Statement which has been signed off by the Director of Children's Services and published on the Children's Service webpages.

Service Leads been central to driving the strategy and communicating with the Assistant Directors and Director of Children's Services. As corporate Parent for Looked

After Children it is the Council's responsibility to ensure that the children and young people looked after by the Council are given the same life chances as their peers this service is about maximising the opportunity for this.

Impacts of the proposed change

This impact assessment covers Service users

Statutory considerations

Impact

Age Impact	Positive The inclusion of step down and reunification services will provide older teenagers with a wider range of opportunities which will in turn lead to better outcomes.
Disability Impact	Positive This Framework Agreement will deliver services for children and young people with disabilities. These services will be defined in detail and providers will be expected to evidence achievement of required outcomes to maximise the opportunity for children and young people to achieve their full potential. Having targeted services will improve the offer of suitable placements and improve placement stability which will lead to better outcomes for children and young people.
Sexual Orientation	Neutral
Race	Neutral
Religion and Belief	Neutral
Gender Reassignment	Neutral
Gender	Neutral
Marriage and civil partnership	Neutral
Pregnancy and Maternity	Neutral

Other policy considerations

Poverty Impact	Positive Children and young people who are looked after by the Council have often experienced abuse, neglect and loss and may demonstrate offending and/or challenging behaviours or be emotionally vulnerable. By creating a specialist contract with an outcome orientated approach and working in partnership with a reduced number of IFAs which allow for flexibility within the contractual arrangements we will be able to respond to the changing needs of children and young people and adapt the support services to meet their needs. This will improve placement stability which will lead to better outcomes for children and young people.
Rurality	Neutral

Additional Information

Hampshire County Council has established a Placements Strategy which aims to reduce competition between the Council and IFAs by clearly defining focus and priority for the Council's in house foster care provision. As a result, the Council will be clearer with providers regarding those placements that will be available to them through targeted contracts. The Council's strategy focuses on creating contracts with outcome orientated approaches to high cost, specialist placements; working with a reduced number of IFAs; providing flexibility within arrangements to adapt approaches to meet the needs of individuals; and having more open and flexible arrangements with cost breakdown to enable a clear understanding of individual placement costs.

This Framework Contract will set an expectation that the experience, qualifications and skills of IFA foster carers is equivalent to the Council's Level 3 carers and that the assessment, training and support is also comparable. This will ensure that the foster carers available through the IFAs on the Framework Contract are able to meet the needs of children and young people with challenging behaviour or with disabilities and complex healthcare needs.

All approvals in respect of spend and the design of the framework / service to be delivered have been granted.