

Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment - Head of service review

Reference: ECIA421569490

Submitted: 11 May 2022 17:16 PM

Executive summary

Title of policy / decision: External Fostering Framework

Policy / decision type: Cabinet Decision

Overview of policy / decision: Decision to launch a tender for the provision of External Foster Care placements for Children in Care. This will be a new service due to the current contract ending on 20th November 2022. An access agreement will be made with Southend City Council for usage of the framework.

What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?: The Children Act 1989 requires Essex County Council (ECC) to secure accommodation for children in their care, where possible and when appropriate within 20 miles of home and the local authority boundary. This is referred to as the councils as the 'sufficiency duty'. To ensure that best value placement is found to meet the child's needs we are proposing this is done via a framework as this offers better value for money through transparent costs, greater competition, and clear expectations of how a child's needs will be met.

Outcomes

Children in care are settled and secure in their placements and feel part of a family

Children and young people in care and leaving care are happy, healthy and safe

Children in care and young people are proud to be who they are and feel a sense of belonging

Children in care and young people leaving care do well in school and/or training and have high aspirations for the future

Children in care and care leavers feel listened to, involved and understand what is happening to them

Executive Director responsible for policy / decision: Helen Lincoln (Children, Families and Education)

Cabinet Member responsible for policy / decision: Beverley Egan (Children's Services and Early Years)

Is this a new policy / decision or a change to an existing one?: New policy / decision

How will the impact of the policy / decision be monitored and evaluated?: There will be regular monitoring meetings with the framework providers and KPI's will be requested on a 6 monthly basis. Within these KPIs providers will be asked about the impact that there service is having on the child or young person and how they are gathering the child or young persons views. Regular monitoring of each placement will take place by the appropriate social worker.

Will this policy / decision impact on:

Service users: Yes

Employees: No

Wider community or groups of people: No

What strategic priorities will this policy / decision support?: A good place for Children and Families to Grow

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Families: Education outcomes, Family resilience and stability, Safety, Outcomes for vulnerable children, Levelling up outcomes for families

What geographical areas of Essex will the policy / decision affect?: All Essex

Digital accessibility

Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?: No

Equalities - Groups with protected characteristics

Age

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - learning disability

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - mental health issues

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - physical impairment

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - sensory impairment

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Sex

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Gender reassignment

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Marriage / civil partnership

Nature of impact: None

Pregnancy / maternity

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Race

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Religion / belief

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Sexual orientation

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Of 305 children and young people from ethnic minority groups currently in care, 44 are in independent fostering agency (IFA) placements. The only group with a higher proportion in IFA than in other placements are Pakistani and White and Asian, but with only 1 and 7 respectively in those groups. The proportion of minority groups in IFA placements compares well against all placements particularly when separated migrated children are excluded from all children in care numbers. There are lower proportions of children with disabilities placed in IFA's compared to in-house. As placements are always sought first with in-house foster carers this indicates that our in-house service is able to meet the need of many children with disabilities, leaving a smaller proportion requiring IFA placements. Placements are inclusive regardless of race, sexual orientation and religion. Providers are expected to provide reasonable adjustments to children who have cultural needs and this will form part of the care plan. There is some qualitative intelligence from social care colleagues that not all placement providers have the right knowledge and expertise to meet all children's ethnic and cultural requirements, therefore the service specification has been updated to be more explicit about this, for example in the care of afro hair. Children that have demonstrated complex mental health needs will be placed in the appropriate Lot where additional support is required as part of a therapeutic approach. Though we collect data on the ethnic make-up of children in care, we do not collect data on the ethnicity of IFA foster carers, therefore we are currently unable to understand the impact of cultural matching or lack of, on children in IFA placements. Data on the ethnic make-up of IFA foster carers will become a reporting requirement in the performance framework for this contract so we can better understand the availability of BAME foster carers and assess our ability to match placements on a cultural or ethnic basis and also to understand the impact of this.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts: N/A

Levelling up - Priority areas & cohorts

Children and adults with SEND, learning disabilities or mental health conditions (taking an all-age approach)

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Children on Free School Meals

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Working families

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Young adults (16-25 who have not been in education, training or employment for around 6-12 months)

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Harlow

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Jaywick and Clacton

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Harwich

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Basildon (Town) housing estates

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Canvey Island

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Colchester (Town) - Housing Estates

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Rural North of the Braintree District

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Fostering is a vocation and therefore offers employment opportunities to the right people in potentially all parts of Essex.

We require placements in the Essex area in all localities including families in all the levelling up priority areas, therefore this tender provides the opportunity for IFAs to recruit foster carers in these areas. Each Lot specifies

what level of engagement with education the child has and foster carers will be required to support to maintain education, training and employment and linking with virtual schools.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts: N/A

Equalities - Inclusion health groups and other priority groups

Refugees / asylum seekers

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Homeless / rough sleepers

Nature of impact: None

Offenders / ex-offenders

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Carers

Nature of impact: None

Looked after children

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Veterans

Nature of impact: None

People who are unemployed / economically inactive

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

People on low income

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Working families

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Separated migrated children are automatically taken in to care so placements fulfil these needs.
There will be an Intensive Placements Lot in the service and we specify that foster carers will need to have the

skills to support children who are offenders/ex-offenders with the specific support relating to these issues. Becoming a foster carer can be a route into employment for people who have been economically inactive, such as those whose own kids have grown older.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts: N/A

Equalities - Geographical Groups

People living in areas of high deprivation

Nature of impact: None

People living in rural or isolated areas

Nature of impact: None

People living in coastal areas

Nature of impact: None

People living in urban or over-populated areas

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Foster carers are needed pan Essex and supports employment in rural locations without needing to be near specific areas with more employment opportunities.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts: N/A

Families

Family formation (e.g. to become or live as a couple, the ability to live with or apart from children)

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Families going through key transitions e.g. becoming parents, getting married, fostering or adopting, bereavement, redundancy, new caring responsibilities, onset of a long-term health condition

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Families before, during and after couple separation

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: The ultimate goal for fostering is to support the family to reunify and support family formation.

This contract is about the provision of suitable and sufficient fostering placements therefore supports key transitions positively, including reunification for the child's birth family but supports foster carers to fulfil parenting roles when needed.

Fostering allows an option for children to be placed safely in a family-based setting away from their birth family. Sufficient IFA providers support ECC's sufficiency duty and enables the Council to place children within 20 miles of their birth family where appropriate, which helps support family networks, continuity of education and potential re-unification work with the birth family.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts: N/A

Climate

Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to the built environment / energy?: No

Does your decision / policy involve designing service provision and procurement to minimise freight and staff travel and enable use of active and public transport options?: No

Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to waste?: No

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your ECIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?: No

Details of person completing the form

I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance: I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

Date ECIA completed: 11/05/2022

Name of person completing the ECIA: Denise Murphy

Email address of person completing the ECIA: denise.murphy@essex.gov.uk

Your function: Children, Families and Education

Your service area: Commissioning

Your team: Children and Families

Are you submitting this ECIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?: No

Email address of Head of Service: clare.burrell@essex.gov.uk