

Equality Impact and Needs Analysis (EINA) Template

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| Directorate: | Education and Children's Services |
| Service Area: | Specialist Children's Services |
| Name of service/ function/ policy/ being assessed: | Fostering and Adoption and Permanency Team |
| Officer leading on assessment: | Laura Demetriades and Katie Law |
| Other staff involved: | N/A |

PREPARATION FOR THE EQUALITY IMPACT AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

1. **Briefly describe the service/ function/ policy:**

The primary aim of the Fostering and Adoption and Permanency Teams is to provide a range of safe, high quality placements suitable for meeting the diverse needs of looked after children and young people who are unable to live within their birth families. The ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language of looked after children and young people and the particular needs of disabled children are fully recognised and positively valued and promoted when placement decisions are made. We aim to ensure that children and young people are appropriately placed either on a short or long term basis with carers who are suitably assessed, trained, and supported to meet their needs.

2. **Why is the equality impact and needs analysis being undertaken?**

The Fostering and Adoption and Permanency Teams were identified as part of the screening for relevance and information audit exercise that took place in 2013. Within this service we have a high level of interaction with the public and undertake significant screening processes of applicants, with a high level of focused placed on equality and diversity of applicants.

3. **Has this service/ function/ policy undertaken a screening for relevance?**

If so, which protected characteristics and parts of the duty were identified as of high or medium relevance and why? Please attach screening for relevance as an appendix to this EINA.

If not, make an assessment of which protected characteristics and parts of the duty are of high or medium relevance and explain why:

The Fostering and Adoption and Permanency Teams were rated as high relevance to all the protected characteristics, apart from Gender Reassignment against which they were rated

as medium relevance.

4. **What sources of information have been used in the preparation of this equality impact and needs analysis?** For example, this could include equalities monitoring information, performance data, consultation feedback or needs assessment. Please provide the details in the table below:

| Information source | Description and outline of the information source |
|---|---|
| Children Looked After Team & Leaving Care Services Strategic Plan | Annual Service Development Plan covering Fostering, Adoption and Permanency Services |
| Children in Care Council Action Plan | Annual Action plan for development of the Children in Care Council and delivery/experience of care services within LBRuT |
| Fostering Ofsted Dataset | Annual feedback mechanism regarding operation of fostering services, children in care, placements provided, and fostering applications etc |
| Adoption Scorecard | 12 monthly data collection of adoption services including adoptive placements made, adopters approved, children awaiting placement etc |
| Panel Reports | Collection of data for internal scrutiny regarding fostering placements, children in or awaiting permanent placements, numbers of foster carers and adopters approved etc |
| Enquiry Spreadsheets | Number of enquires received each month, location, ethnicity, reason for no further action etc |

ANALYSING IMPACT, NEEDS AND EFFECTS

It is important that the analysis addresses each part of the duty assessed as relevant to the area being examined (see further [Guidance on RIO](#)).

5. Key questions to consider:

- a. **What does the data tell you about the groups identified as relevant to the area being assessed?**
- b. **What does customer feedback, complaints or discussions with stakeholder groups tell you about the impact of the service/ function/ policy on the protected characteristic groups, where assessed as relevant to area being examined?**

Other questions to consider:

- How well are diverse needs met?
- Have any differences in access to services/functions been identified for any group?
- Has the area identified any disadvantages experienced by groups, which need to be addressed?
- Have there been any complaints about a failure to receive an appropriate and fair service?

- Is there any other evidence of differential impact or different outcomes which needs to be addressed?
- Is there any evidence that participation in areas of public life is disproportionately low for any particular relevant protected characteristic group?
- Have the needs of disabled people been identified and addressed where these are different from the needs of non-disabled people?
- Have you identified any need to tackle prejudice or promote understanding between different relevant protected characteristic groups?

Remember that equality analysis is not simply about identifying and removing negative effects of discrimination but it is also an opportunity to identify ways to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations.

| <i>Protected Group</i> | <i>Findings</i> |
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| Age | Both the Fostering and Adoption and Permanency Team welcome expressions of interest from anyone over the age of 21 years. This is based on Statutory Guidance which necessitates this lower age limit. There is no upper age limit for applicants, although we require applicants to be in good health and demonstrate an ability to care for a child through to independence (especially in permanent placements). All applicants are required to show a good support network including friends or relatives who could provide additional support for a child placed with them in times of need, especially those with historic ill health. |
| Disability | Disability is not a preclusion to fostering or adoption but applicants must demonstrate that they have the capacity to parent the child(ren) safely and meet all of their needs. The extent of the disability and the potential impact upon the child placed will be assessed in each individual case. Assessments will evidence the applicants functioning and capacity to parent appropriately. Life expectancy impairment as a result of disability will be assessed in respect of meeting the child's needs on a long term basis. A strong support network could be considered as a protective factor in these situations. |
| Gender (Sex) | <p>An equal opportunities approach is used by both services in terms of applications from either gender. Safer caring techniques are employed to minimise risk of allegation in placements. Appropriate placement matching is essential in all placements and ensures carers strengths and capacity are made the best use of. Gender diversity of an applicant's support network is positively considered in terms of placement matching and needs of children.</p> <p>The Fostering Service currently (1st March 2013) has 26 male foster carers and 36 female foster carers.</p> <p>Data regarding adopters and children being adopted relates to extremely small numbers and therefore cannot be presented as it would be identifiable.</p> |

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| Gender reassignment | <p>If an applicant was in transition this would be considered a large life event, and as with any such significant change, applicants would be advised that an assessment would be best considered in a time of stability. As with all assessments the applicant would need to demonstrate an understanding and constancy of their own identity, the ability to support children and young people develop their own sense of identity, and an openness and non-judgemental attitude to others. There would be no reason why an application from a trans-gender applicant would not be considered if all other qualifying measures were met.</p> |
| <p>*Marriage and civil partnership (*only in relation to first part of the duty: eliminate discrimination and harassment)</p> | <p>If an applicant is in a relationship, regardless of its make up, the overriding issue is to assess the stability and commitment from both parties to the fostering or adoption process. Single applicants are welcomed. In all cases honesty with the service about change in relationship situations must be communicated and updated assessment and on-going support provided as appropriate in each instance.</p> <p>The Fostering Service currently (1st March 2013) has 46 married foster carers and 12 single foster carers and 2 co-habiting foster carers.</p> <p>Data regarding adopters and children being adopted relates to extremely small numbers and therefore cannot be presented as it would be identifiable.</p> |
| Pregnancy and maternity | <p>Having children prior to application to foster or adopt is not a barrier, the impact of changing the family circumstance upon the child(ren) will be considered within the assessment and may impact upon approval terms. Actively trying to conceive whilst making an application could be problematic as the assessment requires applicant to be at a stable point in their lives, and not going through a potentially significant life-changing event. Those experiencing infertility need to have an understanding of this and their feelings around it, and recognise that any child placed with them will/may not replace this loss. Not having had any children does not prevent applicants from progressing with either fostering or adoption, although they need to demonstrate that they have the capacity to parent appropriately. If any applicant becomes pregnant either during the assessment or once assessed this change in circumstances needs to be discussed with the service, and decisions made on the impact of this on fostering or adoption. As with all areas we require an open and honest line of communication between applicants and the service.</p> |
| Race/ethnicity | <p>Applications from all ethnic backgrounds are positively considered within both services, which aim to recruit a diverse range of fostering and adoptive placements to meet the wide range of needs of children. Trans-racial placements (whereby a child who is of one race or ethnic group is placed with carers of another race or ethnic group) are actively considered and will be made if appropriate for the child(ren) and the carers. We require applicants to demonstrate a commitment to promoting equality and diversity to the children they care for. Where carers are providing trans-racial placements support is offered</p> |

to help them fully meet the cultural and ethnic needs of the child in their care. Applicants must be accepting of others and demonstrate an open and non-judgemental attitude to those of different ethnic backgrounds to themselves.

At 31st March 2012 the Fostering Service had 56 approved foster carers from the following ethnicities:

- White British- 42
- White other- 2
- Asian other- 2
- Black Caribbean- 6
- Black African- 2
- Any other background- 2

Overall then, 75% of foster carers are White British and 25% are from a BME background.

During the financial year 2011-12 95 fostering enquiries were also received. The ethnicity of enquirers was as follows:

- White British- 34
- White Irish- 3
- White other- 13
- Unknown- 11
- Chinese- 1
- Black Caribbean- 4
- Black African- 3
- Asian other- 11
- Indian- 6
- Mixed- 5
- Other- 5

Overall then, 36% of enquirers are White British, and 64% are from a BME background. This represents an increase in the number of enquiries from people from a BME background from the previous year. This can be attributed to a targeted campaign on Sunrise Radio to recruit an Asian family as a permanent placement for a child. The Fostering service also try and recruit a diverse range of carers through publicity material that is representative of BME carers and children. However, the increase in enquiries from people from a BME background will not necessarily translate into an increased number of approved BME foster carers. This is because a large number of enquiries from people from a BME background come from out of borough and there is a specific requirement that carers live in, or within easy reach, of the borough. Given the demographics of adults living in Richmond, clearly the pool of potential BME carers is smaller than in other areas of London.

Although no specific analysis has yet taken place to better understand how enquiries relate to approvals, the service is looking into how more feedback can be generated which would increase understanding.

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| | Data regarding adopters and children being adopted relates to extremely small numbers and therefore cannot be presented as it would be identifiable. |
| Religion and belief including non-belief | <p>Religion and non-belief are assessed on an individual basis in terms of impact upon lifestyle, and applicant's ability to be open to others and support children and young people in the belief choices they may make. Religious belief may have an impact on placement matching but holds no barriers to assessment. Where prejudice views are held based on religious belief these would be assessed in terms of their potential impact upon a child placed. Applicants are required to show an ability to hold their own beliefs and moral code, whilst also acknowledging that other people may choose to live their lives differently and not judging them for this.</p> <p>The Fostering Service currently has 56 approved foster carers (1st March 2013) from a diverse range of religious backgrounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian- 5 • Church of England- 20 • Roman Catholic- 13 • No religion- 17 • Baptist- 2 • Muslim- 2 • Hindu- 2 <p>Data regarding adopters and children being adopted relates to extremely small numbers and therefore cannot be presented as it would be identifiable.</p> |
| Sexual orientation | Applicants are required to be open about their sexual orientation and show an understanding and solidity in their sexual identity. We require carers to be accepting of difference and to not impose their views on children or young people, instead supporting them to reach their own views and conclusions, and challenging them when these are based on stereotypes or prejudice. The LBRuT fostering and adoption services sign up to a number of independent support services including those specifically for LGBT carers. |

6. Have you identified any data gaps in relation to the relevant protected characteristics and relevant parts of the duty? If so, how will these data gaps be addressed?

| <i>Gaps in data</i> | <i>Action to deal with this</i> |
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| None identified. We have a range of information available to monitor enquiries and applications received, the diversity of these and the reasons why some are not taken forward. | N/A |

SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

7. Set out the key findings from the equality impact needs analysis of the service/ function/ policy. Key questions to consider when completing this section:

- *Are there findings of unlawful discrimination?*
- *Can you address any identified adverse impact?*
- *Can you mitigate any negative impact?*
- *Please provide rationale if you are unable to address any adverse impact.*
- *Have you identified any ways of advancing equality in this area? For example, meeting diverse needs?*
- *Is there a need for any actions to promote understanding between different protected groups?*

There are no findings of unlawful discrimination and both services display a commitment to recruiting carers from a wide range of backgrounds.

It was recognised that the staff base of both teams is not very diverse being predominantly White British females. However, addressing this whilst not discriminating against those who are White British women who apply for the posts available is problematic. To combat any adverse impact, the services: subscribe to range of independent support services which specifically support minority carers; provide training to staff to recognise potential discrimination and to acknowledge difference and power within their working relationships with carers.

Supporting carers in managing trans-racial placements and recognising the needs of a child arising from their ethnicity and race could be strengthened.

CONSULTATION ON THE KEY FINDINGS

8. What consultation have you undertaken with stakeholders or critical friends about the key findings? What feedback did you receive as part of the consultation?

We invite feedback from all parties through an anonymous online feedback form. Enquiries are invited to give feedback post pre-approval training, in their assessment, and after attending panel. Children’s views about their placements are sought during foster carers annual reviews, and during LAC Reviews. Although formal feedback is sought it is not often forthcoming, or can be quite specific to a certain issue rather than about the whole service in general.

ACTION PLANNING

9. What issues have you identified that require actions? What are these actions, who will be responsible for them and when will they be completed?

| Issue identified | Planned action | Lead officer | Completion Date |
|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| Training regarding supporting carers with trans-racial placements | Commission trainer to provide this | Laura Demetriades & Katie Law | 6 months time |
| Feedback systems | Develop system to | Laura Demetriades | 6 months time |

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| | encourage more feedback from enquiries | & Katie Law | |
| Need to continue to promote equality and diversity in applicants | Continued publicity including targeting BME and LGBT groups | Laura Demetriades & Katie Law | On going |

MONITORING AND REVIEW

10. How will the actions in the action plan be monitored and reviewed? For example, any equality actions identified should be added to business, service or team plans and performance managed.

Laura Demetriades and Katie Law will meet again in 6 months time to review the agreed actions, meeting scheduled for 24th July at 11am.

PUBLISHING THE COMPLETED ANALYSIS

11. When completed, the equality impact and needs analysis should be approved by a member of DMT and published on the Council’s website. Please provide details below:

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| Approved by | ECCS Equalities Working Group |
| Date of approval | 24 April 2013 |
| Date of publication | April/ May 2013 |

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

12. Has a copy of this EINA or summary of key findings been provided to key decision-makers to help inform decision making, for example as an appendix to a Cabinet or Committee report?

- **If so please provide the details including the name of the report, the audience i.e. Cabinet/ Committee, the date it went, and the report author.**
- **Please also outline the outcome from the report and details of any follow up action or monitoring of actions or decision taken:**

N/A