

**Tameside & Glossop Strategic Commission  
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form**

|  |  |                                      |
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| <b>Subject / Title</b>                   | Foster Carer Offer                                     |                                      |
| <b>Team</b>                              | <b>Department</b>                                      | <b>Directorate</b>                   |
| Fostering Service                        | Children's   | Children's Services                  |
| <b>Start Date</b>                        | <b>Completion Date</b>                                 |                                      |
| June 2021                                | Ongoing, live document                                 |                                      |
| <b>Project Lead Officer</b>              | Glen Perryman  |                                      |
| <b>Contract / Commissioning Manager</b>  |  |                                      |
| <b>Assistant Director/ Director</b>      | Tony Decrop  |                                      |
| <b>EIA Group</b><br>(lead contact first) | <b>Job title</b>                                       | <b>Service</b>                       |
| Glen Perryman                            | Fostering Service Unit Manager                         | Fostering Service                    |
| Gabrielle Sulek                          | Marketing & Recruitment Officer                        | Fostering Service                    |
| Lorraine Kitching                        | Performance, Intelligence and Scrutiny Service Manager | Policy, Performance and Intelligence |
| Anna Wiley                               | Policy Officer   | Policy, Performance and Intelligence |

**PART 1 – INITIAL SCREENING**

*An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for all formal decisions that involve changes to service delivery and/or provision. Note: all other changes – whether a formal decision or not – require consideration for an EIA.*

*The Initial screening is a quick and easy process which aims to identify:*

- those projects, proposals and service or contract changes which require a full EIA by looking at the potential impact on, or relevance to, any of the equality groups
- prioritise if and when a full EIA should be completed
- explain and record the reasons why it is deemed a full EIA is not required

*A full EIA should always be undertaken if the project, proposal and service / contract change is likely to have an impact upon, or relevance to, people with a protected characteristic. This should be undertaken irrespective of whether the impact or relevancy is major or minor, or on a large or small group of people. If the initial screening concludes a full EIA is not required, please fully explain the reasons for this at 1e and ensure this form is signed off by the relevant Contract / Commissioning Manager and the Assistant Director / Director.*

|            |  |   |
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| <b>1a.</b> | <b>What is the project, proposal or service / contract change?</b> | Tameside Council is proposing a new Foster Care Offer. The main aim of this is to support and retain existing foster carers and attract more foster carers so that Tameside can build its proportion of in-house local placements for cared for children. |
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| <p><b>1b.</b></p> | <p><b>What are the main aims of the project, proposal or service / contract change?</b></p> | <p>It is proposed that a new offer to foster carers be implemented, to retain and build on our group of quality in-house foster carers in Tameside. A renewed and attractive foster care offer will support the organisational goal of increasing the numbers of mainstream and connected carers, and make Tameside a place of positive choice to become a foster carer. The human cost gain to this offer is that children will remain in Tameside, not just physically but all aspects of life remain in place for them; schools, health services, family and friends.</p> <p>The proposed changes to the Foster Care Offer will cover the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster care payments &amp; reward</li> <li>• Training and development offer</li> <li>• Support offer for foster carers</li> </ul> <p>Cost: The total anticipated cost of revising the fostering offer is £686,072. It should be noted that not all of the proposals amount to a cost to the authority and some will become self-funding.</p> <p>The proposals are outlined in a summary of recommendations below:</p> |
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|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation 1 – Outlines the need for all Foster Carers have an entry level of skills level 2 payments.</li> <li>• Recommendation 3: Provide a financial uplift in level 2 skills payments of £30 per week per child will shift Tameside into the top half of GM median entry level skill payments to approved foster carers</li> <li>• Recommendation 4: Increase Level 3 skill payments by 10% (£15 per week per child)</li> <li>• Recommendation 5: Provide a start-up grant for all newly approved foster carers</li> <li>• Recommendation 6: Introduce a referral fee to local approved foster carers who introduce new carers to Tameside</li> <li>• Recommendation 9: Review foster carer allowances and fees annually in consultation with foster carers</li> <li>• Recommendation 10: Clarify and notify all foster carers of allowances, fees and grant entitlements in a refreshed Foster Carer Handbook</li> <li>• Recommendation 11: Introduce a foster carer out of hours telephone advice service</li> <li>• Recommendation 12: Introduce new support role of foster carer coach</li> <li>• Recommendation 14: Establish a foster carer training and development pathway that provides universal, targeted and advanced practitioner training</li> <li>• Recommendation 15: Introduce the role of Fostering Development Co-ordinator</li> <li>• Recommendation 16: Introduce a Therapeutic Fostering Social Worker role</li> <li>• Recommendation 18: Establish a Tameside Foster Carer Forum</li> <li>• Recommendation 19: Establish a Tameside Foster Carer Association</li> <li>• Recommendation 20: Introduce a 'How Did We Do' annual foster carer survey</li> <li>• Recommendation 21: Establish a Tameside Fostering Training and Development Steering Group (T&amp;DSG)</li> </ul> |
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|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation 22: Provide an integrated approved foster carer and supervising social worker induction training programme</li> <li>• Recommendation 23: Introduce foster carer placement matching profiles and stretch targets into the annual review process</li> <li>• Recommendation 24: Review Tameside Fostering Handbook and local fostering standards, policies and protocols</li> <li>• Recommendation 25: Establish a set of supervising social worker professional practice standards that are specific to fostering</li> <li>• Recommendation 26: Establish annual supervising social workers stretch targets</li> </ul> <p>Recommendation 27: Introduce a 'Commitment to Practice' Statement of intent</p> |
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**1c. Will the project, proposal or service / contract change have either a direct or indirect impact on, or relevance to, any groups of people with protected equality characteristics? Where there is a direct or indirect impact on, or relevance to, a group of people with protected equality characteristics as a result of the project, proposal or service / contract change please explain why and how that group of people will be affected.**

| Protected Characteristic | Direct Impact/ Relevance | Indirect Impact/ Relevance | Little / No Impact/ Relevance | Explanation  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Age                      | X                        |                            |                               | <p><b>Foster Carers</b></p> <p>Of the 291* Tameside Council Foster Carers who currently form a crucial part of the fostering service, a significant proportion are over the age of 45:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 82% of foster carers are over 45</li> <li>• 0% of foster carers are aged under 25</li> </ul> <p>Therefore, the proposals will have the most impact on foster carers in the 45-65+ age bracket, with this age group forming the vast majority of carers.</p> <p>The proposals however, will have an indirect impact on children and young people ages 0-25 (including those in foster care, SGO and staying put arrangements) due to the benefits it plans to hold for their primary caregivers.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the proposals would benefit carers of all ages in equal measure and would only act to enhance the current offer to carers of every age group, rather than hinder the current offer in any way.</p> <p>Correct as of 15<sup>th</sup> June 2021</p> <p><b>Cared for Children</b></p> <p>As aforementioned, the proposals will have an indirect impact on cared for children within Tameside of ages 0-</p> |

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|            |  |   | 18.<br>The anticipated impact of the proposals to children & young people is to be positive; the support to foster carers both developmental and financial  |
| Disability |  | X | <p><b>Foster Carers</b><br/>Currently, there are no foster carers recorded as living with a disability, however, the proposals are not anticipated to affect foster carers if they were living with disabilities, e.g. if this was not recorded. The enhanced support for carers within the proposals would mean that they have a positive effect.</p> <p><b>Cared for Children</b><br/>Data across 3 years (2017-2020) shows that cared for children in foster care were more likely to be placed externally if they had an ECHP or disability, and this was the case across each of the 3 years. The foster carer offer proposals aim to recruit more carers and specifically those that have the skills to care for children with additional needs and disabilities. The enhanced training proposals also encourage existing carers to stretch their capabilities and feel more confident to care for children needing a more specialised care. Therefore, there is an anticipated positive indirect impact on cared for children.</p> <p>The proposals are anticipated to enhance the service provided to foster carers regardless of whether they are living with a disability or not.</p> <p>The enhanced support package on offer to foster carers will benefit all carers, inclusive of those living with a disability.</p> <p>Enhancements to foster carer allowances will not negatively impact the disability payments of any carers who receive them as it is not considered taxable income as such. Foster carers living with a disability will be able to claim the same allowances as previously, having no detrimental impact on these.</p> |
| Ethnicity  |  | X | <p>Taken from recent data, approximately 12% of foster carers in Tameside (both connected carers and mainstream) identify themselves as other than White British and are identified in the following ethnic groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White Other</li> <li>• Asian – Pakistani</li> <li>• Asian – Other</li> <li>• Asian - Indian</li> <li>• Mixed White British Caribbean</li> <li>• Mixed Other</li> </ul> <p>A 12% minority ethnicity foster carer population is slightly higher than the Tameside average (8.7%). The foster carer offer proposals aim to positively impact the service to all carers so there will be an anticipated positive impact on those from both minority and WBRI</p>   |

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|  |                                |                                  |                                     | backgrounds within the fostering service, regardless of ethnicity. However, due to the data showing that those from minority backgrounds are represented more highly within the service, there is an anticipated indirect positive impact upon those from minority ethnic backgrounds.  |
| Sex  |                                |                                  | X                                   | Overall, the service is used by broadly similar numbers of men and women. There is no evidence available to suggest any direct or indirect impact in terms of sex.  |
| Religion or Belief   |                                |                                  | X                                   | The service is used by people of all religion/beliefs. There is no evidence to suggest any direct or indirect impact in terms of religion or belief.  |
| Sexual Orientation   |                                |                                  | X                                   | The service is used by people of all sexual orientations. There is no evidence to suggest any direct or indirect impact in terms of sexual orientation.   |
| Gender Reassignment  |                                |                                  | X                                   | No direct impact is anticipated in terms of gender reassignment. There is no evidence available to suggest there would be either direct or indirect impact in terms of gender reassignment.   |
| Pregnancy & Maternity  |                                | X                                |                                     | <p>The birth parents of cared for children are most likely to have recently (or currently) be experiencing pregnancy and maternity of young children. These are the individuals who therefore will experience an indirect impact from the proposals. Foster carers will typically have completed their biological families prior to fostering.</p> <p>There is an anticipated indirect impact on birth parents of foster children experiencing pregnancy and maternity where their child later becomes cared for by the Local Authority. The impact is anticipated to be a positive one; better support for foster carers who may go on to look after their children when they come into care of the LA. In addition, the proposals would also mean a more attractive offer to recruit and retain a network of skilled foster carers who are able to form a crucial part of the team around the child, alongside birth parents and professionals.</p> <p>This would therefore have the anticipated positive impact on those experiencing pregnancy and maternity within Tameside.</p> |
| Marriage & Civil Partnership   |                                |                                  | X                                   | No direct or indirect impact of the proposals is anticipated for anyone who is Married or in a Civil Partnership. There is no evidence to suggest any direct or indirect impact in terms of Marital or Civil Partnership status.  |
| <b>Other protected groups determined locally by Tameside and Glossop Strategic Commission?</b> |                                |                                  |                                     |   |
| <b>Group (please state)</b>  | <b>Direct Impact/Relevance</b> | <b>Indirect Impact/Relevance</b> | <b>Little / No Impact/Relevance</b> | <b>Explanation</b>  |

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|  |                                | <b>ce</b>                        |                                     |   |
| Mental Health  | X                              | X                                |                                     | <p>Many cared for children within Tameside will experience Mental Health issues at some point in their childhood/adulthood. Foster carers play a vital role in advocating for the best services for the child and also ensuring they are well equipped with appropriate support and training themselves to best support the young people in their care.</p> <p>The proposals are therefore anticipated to have an indirect positive impact on the Mental Health of cared for children within Tameside and an anticipated direct positive impact on foster carer's Mental Health and wellbeing as they aim to better support them in their roles through a range of service enhancements including out of hours support services, training investment, uplifted allowances among other benefits.</p> |
| Carers   | X                              |                                  |                                     | <p>The proposals will have a, anticipated direct positive impact on specifically foster carers, but also an indirect positive impact on other carers (perhaps birth family and close friends) of the child.</p>   |
| Military Veterans  |                                |                                  | X                                   | <p>The service may be used by military veterans, but it is not anticipated there would be any direct or indirect impact on these individuals as a result of the proposals.</p>  |
| Breast Feeding   |                                |                                  | X                                   | <p>The service is used by individuals who breastfeed, particularly birth parents of cared for children, however the proposals bear no anticipated indirect or direct impact on these individuals as a result.</p>   |
| <p><b>Are there any other groups who you feel may be impacted by the project, proposal or service/contract change or which it may have relevance to?<br/>(e.g. vulnerable residents, isolated residents, those who are homeless)</b></p> |                                |                                  |                                     |   |
| <b>Group (please state)</b>  | <b>Direct Impact/Relevance</b> | <b>Indirect Impact/Relevance</b> | <b>Little / No Impact/Relevance</b> | <b>Explanation</b>  |
| Low or no income groups  |                                | X                                |                                     | <p>The proposals could positively impact those from low/no income groups. The proposed uplift in foster carer allowances could mean that individuals and families (for whom fostering is not financially feasible) could now foster children, benefitting both cared for children in Tameside and the wider service which would have both social and financial benefits for both the individuals and the wider organisation.</p>  |
| Cared for Children   | X                              | X                                |                                     | <p>Cared for children are at the centre of all proposals, with the aims of providing the highest quality of care and the best outcomes for cared for children within Tameside. The proposals are aimed to benefit foster carers, but the indirect anticipated impact will be to cared for children. If foster carers are better supported, the level of care they are able to provide to the children in their care is also likely to improve. The ability to recruit more foster carers will also directly benefit cared</p>   |

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|  |  |  |  | for children, as it will mean more children remaining within a home setting rather than residential care. Children will therefore continue to be a part of their own communities despite not living within their birth families. This offer will have direct impact on reducing the number of children placed externally and outside of the borough. |
|--|--|--|--|--|

*“Low or no income groups” should be included as a key consideration when assessing the impact of your project, proposal, policy or service/contract change.*

*Wherever a direct or indirect impact or relevance has been identified you should consider undertaking a full EIA or be able to adequately explain your reasoning for not doing so. Where little / no impact or relevance is anticipated, this can be explored in more detail when undertaking a full EIA.*

|            |  |  |           |
|------------|--|--|-----------|
| <b>1d.</b> | <b>Does the project, proposal or service / contract change require a full EIA?</b> | <b>Yes</b>   | <b>No</b> |
|            |  | X  |           |
| <b>1e.</b> | <b>What are your reasons for the decision made at 1d?</b>                          | <p>The changes proposed are seeking to make a direct positive impact for service users and service providers alike. As the proposals include important changes to certain ways in which areas of the service are run (which will impact all users and providers either directly or indirectly) it is important that all demographic groups are considered in this process.</p> <p>Both cared for children and foster carers are central to the considerations in this process, as they are the individuals who will be most impacted by the offer proposals.</p> |           |

*If a full EIA is required please progress to Part 2.*

**PART 2 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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| <b>2a. Summary</b>  |
| <p>There is a national shortage of foster carers and this situation is reflected regionally across Greater Manchester, including in Tameside.</p> <p>The Greater Manchester Children and Young People’s Plan 2019-2022 contains the wider context of Greater Manchester’s ambition for children, young people and their families. It also includes a commitment to review “placement sufficiency across Greater Manchester to capture the varied needs of looked after children alongside the current offer of placements and the requirements of placements in the future” and to “develop a Greater Manchester Commissioning Plan and Sufficiency Strategy to ensure children coming into care are provided with a quality placement which meets their needs, ensuring permanence is achieved at the earliest stage.”</p> <p>Between 31 March 2016 and 31 March 2020 the national number of mainstream LA fostering households decreased by 14.3%, while the number of mainstream IFA households increased by</p> |

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4.7%. If this trend continued at the same year-on-year average percentage change, **IFAs will have more mainstream fostering households than LAs, by around 2026/27**

Recent data has been provided and has evidenced that Tameside have placed 43 children with IFA carers within our own borders. Tameside use of IFA's is the second highest in GM and there is a pressing need to improve the balance of availability of internal placement options at local level. The cost of an IFA placement to the local authority, is significantly higher (circa 50%) than a local authority approved foster placement cost (not taking into account infrastructure costs).

There is a myth that private provider means better quality provision but this isn't necessarily the case if we get the support model right. There are a number of recommendations and proposals that are at no additional cost and are within our gift to implement but to really enhance the offer those other recommendations with some cost are really critical.

Additional to the cost issue, one of our corporate parenting priorities is about permanence, stability and security. This is more achievable within a family and that outlined within our permanence strategy as a priority.

The review of the Foster Carer offer is in line with the corporate plan in terms of ensuring that children who become cared for after are able to remain in Tameside with Tameside foster carers. Children therefore continue to be a part of their own communities despite not living within their birth families. This offer will have direct impact on reducing the number of children placed externally and outside of the borough.

**IMPACT OF NEW FOSTER CARER OFFER**

The proposed new foster carer offer will shape, support influence the growth of the internal fostering service to provide fostering households for Tameside Cared for Children. The proposed offer is crucial to enable the service to deliver on the 3 year recruitment strategy that was presented at Childrens senior leadership team in January 2021.

Through a variety of marketing, recruitment & retention techniques, the aim is to support and grow our network of valued carers in Tameside. The number of cared for children in Tameside has been on an upward trajectory, so the need for high quality in-house foster carers is crucial. This approach includes the retention of existing foster carers, through implementation of the improvements to the foster carer offer, in addition to working closely with carers to listen to their views and consider them when building and implementing the strategy.

**Tactical objectives;**

- To increase in-house placement sufficiency in Tameside by 34% over the next four years
- To retain existing foster carers and through support and training, enable them to take on more challenging placements;
- To implement the Marketing Plan for FY21/22 which has the primary aim of delivering the first steps towards the 34% increase target for foster carers (**plan to be updated each FY in line with optimisation approach**);

**Strategic objectives;**

- To support & retain existing foster carers through training & incentives and ensure they feel valued in their roles;
- To build a strong fostering identity that is recognisable and resonates with our carers and young people;
- To ensure all comms are consistent & aligned to enable strength in campaign messaging
- To raise awareness & consideration for fostering in Tameside (long term).

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A renewed and attractive foster care offer is one way to support the organisational goal of increasing the numbers of mainstream and connected carers, and make Tameside a place of positive choice to become a foster carer.

**THE FOSTER CARER OFFER – WHAT DO THE PROPOSALS INCLUDE?**

Please note, some of the recommendations from the offer proposals were not accepted therefore not included in the list below. The below recommendations are the ones currently being progressed and are included in the latest version of the implementation plan:

- Recommendation 1 – Outlines the need for all Foster Carers have an entry level of skills level 2 payments.
- Recommendation 3: Provide a financial uplift in level 2 skills payments of £30 per week per child will shift Tameside into the top half of GM median entry level skill payments to approved foster carers
- Recommendation 4: Increase Level 3 skill payments by 10% (£15 per week per child)
- Recommendation 5: Provide a start-up grant for all newly approved foster carers
- Recommendation 6: Introduce a referral fee to local approved foster carers who introduce new carers to Tameside
- Recommendation 9: Review foster carer allowances and fees annually in consultation with foster carers
- Recommendation 10: Clarify and notify all foster carers of allowances, fees and grant entitlements in a refreshed Foster Carer Handbook
- Recommendation 11: Introduce a foster carer out of hours telephone advice service
- Recommendation 12: Introduce new support role of foster carer coach
- Recommendation 14: Establish a foster carer training and development pathway that provides universal, targeted and advanced practitioner training
- Recommendation 15: Introduce the role of Fostering Development Co-ordinator
- Recommendation 16: Introduce a Therapeutic Fostering Social Worker role
- Recommendation 18: Establish a Tameside Foster Carer Forum
- Recommendation 19: Establish a Tameside Foster Carer Association
- Recommendation 20: Introduce a 'How Did We Do' annual foster carer survey
- Recommendation 21: Establish a Tameside Fostering Training and Development Steering Group (T&DSG)
- Recommendation 22: Provide an integrated approved foster carer and supervising social worker induction training programme
- Recommendation 23: Introduce foster carer placement matching profiles and stretch targets into the annual review process
- Recommendation 24: Review Tameside Fostering Handbook and local fostering standards, policies and protocols
- Recommendation 25: Establish a set of supervising social worker professional practice standards that are specific to fostering
- Recommendation 26: Establish annual supervising social workers stretch targets
- Recommendation 27: Introduce a 'Commitment to Practice' Statement of intent

**2b. Issues to Consider**

The planned implementation of the foster carer offer within Tameside will be mindful of some of the

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key demographic groups within its service users:

- 82% of foster carers in Tameside are over 45 years old;
- 12% of foster carers are from minority ethnic backgrounds (slightly above the 8.7% Tameside average)

#### Consultation Considerations

The full consultation will consider the views of all foster carers and members of the general public within Tameside and negative comments reviewed and addressed.

It is important that both majority and minority groups are considered to ensure equal opportunity and for each person's voice to be heard.

Both online survey and Zoom format focus groups will be held to ensure accessibility for all participants during the consultation process.

#### Consultation & findings

From 168 foster carer households, 49% participated in the consultation either through the online survey or the Zoom focus groups.

The foster carer offer consultation survey was live for 8 weeks from 2/08/21 until 28/09/21 and open to all members of the Tameside general public. Three focus group sessions also took place over Zoom and all Tameside Council foster carers were invited to attend. The sessions took place on the following dates:

- Focus Group 1 took place on 08/09/21 with 8 households in attendance
- Focus Group 2 took place on 14/09/21 with 5 households in attendance
- Focus Group 3 took place on 24/09/21 with 1 household in attendance

#### SurveyMonkey

There were 69 responses in total from the survey. The below graph shows that 97% of respondents were foster carers for Tameside Council, 1.5 % were interested in becoming a foster carer for Tameside Council and 1.5% were employed by Tameside Council.

The below analysis details responses from both the survey and the focus groups to identify key themes raised by foster carers and other respondents;

#### Payment & Reward

Please give us your comments and opinions on the proposals relating to Pay & Reward of Foster Carers in Tameside:

#### Survey

- 28% of respondents feel positive about the overall plans regarding payment & reward;
- 20% of respondents felt that it is fair to align the payments for connected and mainstream carers;
- 10% said that all foster carers should receive the same payment & reward, regardless of experience or foster carer type

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- 10% felt that the proposals still are not enough to attract new foster carers;
- 10% commented that there were no incentives in the proposals for Level 4 carers

**Focus Groups**

- Foster carers felt that the proposal to uplift basic levels of pay is welcome. This was said to be an essential (referring to uplift level 2, align connected carers and recruited carers etc.)
- Some carers commented on the lack of further incentives for Level 4 carers.
- The start-up grant was said to be vital. Some reasons given were that some reported personal experience of difficulty when a new child was placed with them.
- It was felt that the proposal of a referral fee when one foster carer recommends Tameside to someone who later becomes a carer – there were concerns that this creates too much of a monetary focus on the decision to foster.
- In contrast, referral fee was seen as an incentive by some as it helps to attract other people who would make good foster carers to undertake the role. It was cited that independent agencies often offer £500.
- It was said that the £30 uplift will not make Tameside competitive with IFAs. Suggestion that in order to tackle it properly, Tameside should be offering higher fees closer to that of IFAs. Other comments in the chat by others echoed this sentiment.
- There was a general consensus that the revised offer is a positive move in the right direction, however still a way to go with some of the existing issues mentioned

The survey results and focus group comments show that a significant proportion of carers feel positive about the proposals, with many commenting that it is a step in the right direction to align the allowances for mainstream & connected carers. However, some feel that there is more to be done in equalising payments across the board, regardless of experience or foster care type and also becoming more competitive with IFA's. Some positive comments were made by carers who feel that the proposals will help with foster carer recruitment (5%). However, in addition to those listed above some suggestions were made of the following; they feel bridging payments should be made available to foster carers between placements (8%) and that foster carers should be entitled to paid holidays (3%).

Overall, 53% of the total survey responses were positive comments regarding the proposals. While there were some respondents that disagreed with the referral fee proposal all other comments focused on further suggestions rather than disagreeing with the other proposals made. This shows that overall, foster carers feel that the plans are a step in the right direction (and though some feel that there is further work to be done to build upon these) they are welcomed in the main.

**Training & Development**

**Please give us your comments and opinions on the proposals relating to revising the training and development of foster carers in Tameside.**

**Survey**

- 55% of respondents believe the training proposals sound positive and will benefit them as a foster carer;
- 23% of respondents feel that they are already happy with the current training provided and feel that it meets my needs as a carer already;

**Focus Groups**

- There was a general feeling that the organisation of training had improved although some participants would rather face-to-face training where you have the opportunity in coffee breaks to network with other foster carers, something that has proved difficult with virtual training. It was felt that a lot can be learned from each other.
- Other suggestions for training included – having a portal showing all training, payslips etc.

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in one place, as well as the idea of suggesting new types of training.

- It was said that the Steering Group was an important move – this would be an easy way for foster carers to work together like a professional team.
- One participant noted that the attachment training they had recently been on had been the best training received in the last 20 years (not just related to fostering).

Overall the proposals on training and development were welcomed and were seen as positive for foster carers

It is very positive to see that the majority of foster carers are either happy with the new proposals, or feel that they already receive adequate training. While there has been much ongoing development in the training offer for foster carers throughout the pandemic, the proposals will bring a much enhanced & varied offer to foster carers built on the strong foundations already in place.

While acknowledging that the plans are welcomed, some other comments regarding training and development including carers wanting more specific detail on the proposals (3%) and carers requesting more accredited courses to be included as part of the offer (3%) and also that training should be offered outside of school hours for better accessibility (3%).

**Support**

**Please give us your comments and opinions on the proposals relating to improving the level of support to foster carers in the box below.**

**Survey**

- 58% of respondents believe that the new proposals sound positive and will support them in their role as a foster carer;
- 15% of respondents are pleased with the proposals as long as they are supported with proper implementation;

**Focus Groups**

- Regarding the proposals to establish a foster carer forum, it was said that having the experience and input of other foster carers is important, not just from social workers
- The move to having a first port of call for foster carers was welcomed
- Practice standards will create among foster carers a better idea of what standards can be expected of social workers, which is positive. At the moment there is some inconsistency depending on the social worker.
- Other comments reflected that all the proposals in this section were positive. Participants were hopeful that the support offer to bring up standards for children's social care as opposed to the fostering side of things.
- It was felt by some that the Forum should be independently chaired.
- A question was raised regarding if there is any work to take place regarding retention of social workers, citing difficulties with children having multiple changes of social worker.

To summarise the response to the support proposals, it is good to see that they were welcomed by the majority of foster carers, with many positive comments made. Some further suggestions were made including the provision of Respite support (3%) and a plan for the retention of social workers (6%) to allow for better continuity for children. Overall, foster carers felt that the support plans were a step in the right direction and were happy with the proposals made.

**Overall comments**

**Please give us any other comments you have in relation to the Fostering Offer:**

**Survey**

- 67% of respondents feel that the proposals are positive and will support them in their role as a foster carer;

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- 8% commented that a foster carer handbook is much needed and will be welcomed by foster carers

**Focus Groups**

- Participants said that the proposed offer is a positive start, not the endpoint of doing better but moving in the right direction for children in Tameside.
- Further comments suggested the possibility of foster carers having a 2-week break in between placements. Some expressed the need for this over having a referral fee introduced.

The results show that the majority (67%) of the responses regarding the overall proposals are that carers feel positive about the foster carer offer. Other comments that were made about the proposals overall were that matching and referrals should be done so carers are not without placement for long periods (8%) and that more flexibility around holidays for foster carers should be considered (8%).

**2c. Impact/Relevance**

It is anticipated that:

**For payment & reward**, this will have a positive impact on service users. While there were some comments from carers regarding a further increased payment necessary for Level 2&3 carers to compete with private agencies, the majority of participants felt that the proposals will have a positive impact.

Comments regarding placing a monetary reward on referrals of new foster carers were considered, but positive comments made by other participants give a more balanced reaction to this recommendation and therefore it will remain on the proposals.

**For training & development**, this will support foster carers in their roles and will continue to build upon the improved training programme that launched over the pandemic. While many carers felt the new approach to training met their needs, the proposals will offer further support to carers to offer children and young people the best possible care. Comments around moving some training back to being face to face are also being considered to allow carers to enjoy a hybrid model that combines the best of both platforms.

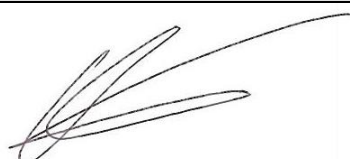
In terms of support, there will be a positive impact to service users in offering them much improved support in their roles as foster carers. The majority of responses to the survey reflected this, with some comments around ensuring proper implementation that will be considered. The comments around improvement in retention of children's social workers are also being considered in response to the issues raised in the consultations.

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| <b>2d. Mitigations</b> (Where you have identified an impact/relevance, what can be done to reduce or mitigate it?) |   |
|--|---|
| Some respondents commented that new allowances do not compare with IFA's (private agencies)                        | Review the fostering allowances annually to ensure that we are in line with the upper quarter of LA's. While it is difficult to be competitive with private agencies for Levels 2 & 3, the fostering service should ensure that it competes with other LA's and allowances are in line particularly with neighbouring GM authorities. |
| Training should be offered in person in addition to virtual training   | A hybrid training model to be considered pending the continuation of lifted COVID restrictions.   |
| Retention of children's social workers should be considered in addition to the support proposals                   | While CSW team sits separately to fostering, the issues raised by foster carers have been escalated to leadership who are identifying an action plan to address this issue. This will work alongside the foster carer proposals to support both carers and children.  |

| <b>2e. Evidence Sources</b>   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Statistics, Fostering in England 2019 to 2020: main findings. Published 12 November 2020</li> <li>Tameside Performance and Intelligence Service data, provided for the report 2021</li> <li>Tameside Fostering Service - Where every carer counts, Maria Greenwood, 2020</li> </ul> |

| <b>2f. Monitoring progress</b>                   |                     |                  |
|--|---------------------|------------------|
| <b>Issue / Action</b>                            | <b>Lead officer</b> | <b>Timescale</b> |
| Post-consultation Survey Monkey to foster carers | Gabrielle Sulek     | TBC              |

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Signature of Contract / Commissioning Manager</b>                                | <b>Date</b> |
|  | 21.10.2021  |
| <b>Signature of Assistant Director / Director</b>                                   | <b>Date</b> |
|   |             |

*Guidance below to be removed from the completed EIA template submitted to Executive Board, Executive Cabinet or Strategic Commissioning Board (SCB)*

**Tameside & Glossop Strategic Commission  
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance**

The purpose of an EIA is to aid compliance with the public sector equality duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010), which requires that public bodies, in the exercise of their functions, pay 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, victimisation, and harassment; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations. To this end, there are a number of corporately agreed criteria:

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- An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for all formal decisions that involve changes to service delivery. All other changes, whether a formal decision or not, require consideration for the necessity of an EIA.
- The decision as to whether an EIA is required rests with the relevant Project Lead or Contract / Commissioning Manager, in consultation with the appropriate Assistant Director / Director where necessary. Where an EIA is not required, the reason(s) for this must be detailed within the appropriate report by way of a judgement statement.
- EIAs must be timely, with any findings as to the impact or relevance of a change in policy or procedure which affects residents, the public, service users, patients or staff, being brought to the attention of the decision maker in the body of the main accompanying report. As such, EIAs must be conducted alongside the development of any policy change, with appropriate mitigations integrated into its development where any potentially detrimental or inequitable impact is identified.

### How to complete the EIA Form

EIAs should always be carried out by at least 2 people, and as part of the overall approach to a service review or service delivery change. Guidance from case law indicates that judgements arrived at in isolation are not consistent with showing 'due regard' to the necessary equality duties.

### Part 1 – Initial Screening

The Initial Screening is a quick and easy process which aims to identify:

- those projects, proposals and service / contract changes which require a full EIA by looking at the potential impact on, or relevance to, any of the equality groups
- prioritise if and when a full EIA should be completed
- explain and record the reasons why it is deemed a full EIA is not required

A full EIA should always be undertaken if the project, proposal and service / contract change is likely to have an impact upon, or relevance to, people with a protected characteristic. This should be undertaken irrespective of whether the impact or relevance is major or minor, or on a large or small group of people. If the initial screening concludes a full EIA is not required, please fully explain the reasons for this at 1e and ensure this form is signed off by the relevant Contract / Commissioning Manager and Assistant Director / Director.

Wherever a direct or indirect impact or relevance has been identified you should consider undertaking a full EIA or be able to adequately explain your reasoning for not doing so. Where little / no impact or relevance is anticipated, this can be explored in more detail when undertaking a full EIA.

The table below is an example of what part 1c of the screening process may look like. In this example we have used a review of the services delivered at Children's Centres and the impact or relevance this may have.

**1c. Will the project, proposal or service / contract change have either a direct or indirect impact on, or relevance to, any groups of people with protected equality characteristics? Where there is a direct or indirect impact on, or relevance to, a group of people with protected equality characteristics as a result of the project, proposal or service / contract change please explain why and how that group of people will be affected.**

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| Protected Characteristic   | Direct Impact /Relevance | Indirect Impact/ Relevance | Little / No Impact / Relevance | Explanation   |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Age  | ✓                        |                            |                                | Children's Centre services are targeted to the 0 to 5 age group                                 |
| Disability   |                          | ✓                          |                                | Some Children's Centre users may be disabled  |
| Ethnicity  |                          | ✓                          |                                | Children's Centre users come from a range of ethnic backgrounds                                 |
| Sex  |                          | ✓                          |                                | Children's Centres aren't sex specific but evidence shows service users are predominantly women |
| Religion or Belief   |                          |                            | ✓                              |   |
| Sexual Orientation   |                          |                            | ✓                              |   |
| Gender Reassignment  |                          |                            | ✓                              |   |
| Pregnancy & Maternity  | ✓                        |                            |                                | Children's Centres provide services to pregnant women   |
| Marriage & Civil Partnership   |                          |                            | ✓                              |   |
| <b>NHS Tameside &amp; Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group locally determined protected groups?</b>  |                          |                            |                                |   |
| Mental Health  |                          |                            | ✓                              |   |
| Carers   |                          | ✓                          |                                |   |
| Military Veterans  |                          |                            | ✓                              |   |
| Breast Feeding   | ✓                        |                            |                                | Children's Centres provide services to pregnant women and new mothers                           |
| <b>Are there any other groups who you feel may be impacted by the project, proposal or service/contract change or which it may have relevance to?<br/>(e.g. vulnerable residents, isolated residents, low income households, those who are homeless)</b> |                          |                            |                                |   |
| Group (please state)   | Direct Impact/Relevance  | Indirect Impact/Relevance  | Little / No Impact/Relevance   | Explanation   |
| Lone Parents   |                          | ✓                          |                                | Children's Centre users may include lone  |

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Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form**

|                        |   |  |  |   |
|------------------------|---|--|--|---|
|                        |   |  |  | parents   |
| Disadvantaged families | ✓ |  |  | Children's Centres support the most disadvantaged families, with an aim to reduce inequalities in child development and school readiness. |

**Part 2 – Full Equality Impact Assessment**

If a full EIA is required then part 2 of the EIA form should be completed.

**2a. Summary**

In this section you should:

- Explain the reason why the EIA was undertaken i.e. the main drivers such as a change in policy or legislation etc. This can be a combination of factors.
- Outline what the proposals are
- Summarise the main findings of the EIA - what are the main impacts or relevancies of the change in policy and what protected characteristic groups do they effect?
- Summarise what measures have been put in place to mitigate any negative impact or relevance and how the success of these measures will be monitored

It may be useful to complete this section towards the end of the EIA process.

**2b. Issues to Consider**

In this section you should give details of the issues you have taken into consideration when coming to your proposals / recommendations and outline the protected characteristic group(s) affected - Age, Ethnicity, Disability, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Religion / Belief, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy/Maternity, Marriage/Civil Partnership, and how people associated with someone with a particular characteristic (i.e. a carer of a disabled and / or elderly person may be affected (you can refer to the information in 1c identifying those groups who may be affected).

Considerations should include (but are not limited to):-

- Legislative drivers. How have you considered the Equality Act, and the elimination of discrimination, victimisation and harassment, and the three arms of the PSED in coming to a decision / set of proposals i.e. the need to take into account the specific needs of disabled people above and beyond the general needs of other service users? You should consider similar circumstances where a similar service has been provided and changed, and whether this has been challenged. What rules / laws was it challenged under, and what lessons have you taken from this? This can include things such as Judicial Reviews or cases considered by the relevant Ombudsman.

- Comparative data and examples of learning from other areas / benchmarking (linked to legal issues as above)

- Financial considerations. How have your recommendation / proposals been shaped by finances /

## **Tameside & Glossop Strategic Commission Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form**

resources available (please note –legal rulings have indicated that the need to make savings alone is not likely to be deemed sufficient on its own to justify reduction in services – evidence of assessment of impact and relevance is required to ensure a safe and sound decision)

- Service user information. What information do you hold about service users and patients and their protected characteristics? How does this compare to comparative data i.e. national / regional picture?

- Consultation, engagement & feedback. What work has been done to ensure interested parties have been made aware of proposed changes, and that comments have been recorded and have the opportunity to influence the final decision? You should detail when consultation took place, those involved i.e. staff, service users, timescales. Any consultation should be timely in order to ensure that all participants are able to contribute fully.

### **2c. Impact/Relevance**

Use this section to outline what the impact or relevance of the changes being proposed is likely to be based on the evidence, and consultation & engagement? Will there be a disproportionate impact on, or relevance to, particular group/s? Does the evidence indicate that a particular group is not benefiting from the service as anticipated? What are the uptake / participation rates amongst groups? Where a greater impact on, or relevance to, a particular group is recorded, is this consistent with the policy's aims? Does the project, proposal and service / contract change include provision for addressing inequality of delivery / provision?

Try to distinguish clearly between any negative impacts or relevancies that are or could be unlawful (which can never be justified) and negative impacts or relevancies that may create disadvantage for some groups but can be justified overall (with explanation). Similarly, does the evidence point to areas of good practice that require safeguarding? How will this be done?

### **2d. Mitigations**

Where any potential impacts or relevancies have been identified as a result of the EIA, you should detail here what can be done to reduce or mitigate these.

### **2e. Evidence Sources**

Use this section to list all sources of information that the EIA draws upon. Evidence can include surveys & questionnaires, policy papers, minutes of meetings, specific service user consultation exercises, interviews etc

*NB – this section is not asking you to give details of your findings from these sources, just the sources from which evidence and considerations were drawn.*

### **2f. Monitoring Progress**

Use this section to identify any ongoing issues raised by the EIA, how these will be monitored, who is the lead officer responsible and expected timescale.

### **Sign Off**

Once the EIA is complete this should be signed off by the relevant Contract / Commissioning Manager and the Assistant Director / Director.

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