

Equality Impact Assessment Record

Date of EIA	August 2009
Directorate	Social Care and Learning
Part One - Initial Screening Record	
1. Activity to be assessed	Permanency Planning in Children's Social Care
2. What is the activity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing
4. Who are the members of the EIA team?	Sheila McKeand, Head of Service Liz McAuley, Policy and Commissioning Officer
5. Initial screening assessment. If the answer to either of these questions is 'yes' then it is necessary to go ahead with a full Equality Impact Assessment.	<p>1. Does the activity have the potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the Councils workforce or the community?</p> <p>No - the aim of the policy is to ensure that the overall needs of looked after children are met in an appropriate and timely way taking into account the specific needs of the individual and takes into account the views of the child and of their parents. The process is transparent and decisions are open to challenge.</p> <p>2. Does the activity make a positive contribution to equalities?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Policy and Procedures provide guidance to staff involved in permanency planning for looked after children who are a vulnerable group. Permanency Planning involves assessing the child's long term needs and considering a range of options before deciding on the one which will provide the greatest stability and continuity of care for the child. These options include return to parents' care as well as Adoption, Kinship care, Special Guardianship, long term foster care. Permanency is defined within a framework of emotional, physical and legal conditions which are designed to provide security and permanence for the child.</p>
6. Did Part 1: Initial Screening indicates that a full EIA was necessary?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes – full EIA completed and recorded below.

Part Two - Full EIA Record

<p>7. Why is a full EIA being completed on the activity? Double click on boxes to check all that apply.</p>	<p>The activity has the potential to have an adverse impact/discriminate against different groups in the community. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The activity makes a positive contribution to equalities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>8. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?</p>	<p>The purpose of the activity is to: This activity covers a range of policies and procedures and functions which contribute to Permanency planning for children who are Looked After by Bracknell Forest Council</p> <p>The activity is designed for: Looked After Children</p>
<p>9. Summarise the information gathered for this EIA including research and consultation to establish what impact the activity has on different equality groups.</p>	<p>The following policies and procedures reflect the range of options available to children who require Permanency. This EIA covers all these policies and arrangements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Procedure for Permanency Planning • Special Guardianship • Adoption • Kinship Foster Care • Residence Order • Reunification with Parents <p>The following legislation is relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Children Act 1989 and associated regulation and guidance. • Human Rights Act 1998 • The Adoption and Children Act 2002 • Children Act 2004 • Children and Young Persons Act 2008 <p>Profile of LAC in Bracknell Forest:</p> <p>The numbers of Looked After Children in Bracknell Forest average between 70-75, a rate of 28 per 10,000. This compares with a national average of 54 per 10,000. The lower rate reflects the relatively low indices of deprivation in the Borough and the impact of the range of services focusing on supporting children and young people within their families.</p> <p>The majority of looked after young people in the Borough (79% at Dec 31st 2008) are over 10 years old. They are likely to remain in the care system until independence. Younger children are more likely to return to their birth family or to move out of the care system into adoption or other permanent placement.</p> <p>In 2008/09 3 children were placed for Adoption and 1 child for Special Guardianship. In March 2008, 36 out of 49 (62%) LAC were reunified with their families.</p> <p>A number of looked after children (42%) and care leavers live outside the Borough. This may be because the placement best meets their needs however distance can disadvantage the child who</p>

may lose connection with family or community.

In December 2008 children from black and ethnic minority groups were over-represented in the looked after system in Bracknell Forest. This may indicate that families from some BME groups are not accessing preventive service early enough, but, because of the small numbers this figure needs to be treated with caution. The figure is also expressed as a ratio compared to the 2001 census figure and the BME population in Bracknell Forest has changed since then.

There is currently no data available to be able to compare sexual orientation or religion or belief between looked after children and the general child population. The numbers of male and female looked after children are fairly equally distributed across the age range.

Children and young people and their carers are consulted regularly through the statutory review process, and a range of surveys used to ascertain their views and wishes.

Research on Permanency

The Pursuit of Permanence: A Study of the English Care System (Ian Sinclair, Clare Baker, Jenny Lee and Ian Gibbs, University of York).

This was a large-scale quantitative and qualitative study of 7399 looked after children in 13 councils.

The Reunification of Looked After Children with their Parents: Patterns, Interventions and Outcomes (Elaine Farmer, Wendy Sturgess and Teresa O'Neill, University of Bristol). This study examined the patterns and outcomes of return home by means of a two-year follow-up of a sample of 180 looked after children who were returned to their parents between January and December 2001

Kinship Care: Fostering Effective Family and Friends Placements (Elaine Farmer and Sue Moyers, University of Bristol).

This study examined the characteristics, progress and outcomes of children placed with family and friends, compared these with a similar group of children placed with unrelated foster carers, and considered the factors that contribute to success in kin placements.

Studies of young people leaving care during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000, show that about a third experience four plus moves and about ten per cent of these young people have as many as ten or more placements. Currently, about 13 per cent of young people have three or more placements in a single year and only two-thirds of young people who have been in care over two and a half years are likely to remain in the same placement for two years. (Information from Quality Matters 2009 – DCSF)

Consultation:

A number of consultation events took place in 2008 and 2009 to launch the Pledge for LAC and Care Leavers in Bracknell. There is ongoing consultation with members of the Children In Care Council (SILSIP) and each LAC is individually consulted and encouraged to participate in their LAC reviews which take place at a minimum of every 6 months and are chaired by an independent person.

Children in Court Proceedings have a Children's Guardian appointed to ensure their views, wishes and feelings are represented at Court.

<p>10. A) With regard to the equalities themes, which groups does the activity impact upon?</p> <p>B) Might any of these groups be adversely impacted?</p>	<p>A) Groups Impacted</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Race and ethnicity</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disability</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Age</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sexual Orientation</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion or belief</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify</p>	<p>B) Groups impacted adversely</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Race and ethnicity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Disability</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Gender</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Age</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Orientation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Religion or belief</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify</p>
<p>11. What evidence is there to suggest an impact/adverse impact?</p>	<p>Permanency planning takes place within a statutory framework and all LAC Care Plans are reviewed by an Independent Reviewing Officer.</p> <p>http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/docs/public_law_outline.pdf</p> <p>Research indicates that nationally LAC do less well than other children but there are national and local plans in place to narrow this gap. No other adverse impact has been identified for LAC in Bracknell.</p>	
<p>12. On what grounds can impact or adverse impact be justified?</p>	<p>Looked After Children are at risk of poor outcomes due to their social history and status. Permanency Planning ensures that plans are made to minimise disadvantage and improve positive outcomes for this group.</p>	
<p>13. Have any examples of good practice been identified as part of the EIA?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Care Matters agenda to improve outcomes for all LAC - Care Matters Implementation Plan 2008 • Work of family placement team to assess kinship foster carers, those who wish to apply for residence orders or special guardianship orders • Work on Procuring a range of quality placements to improve placement stability for LAC • Independent Reviewing process ensures plans for permanency are considered at 2nd LAC Review. • Use of Special Guardianship and Adoption to give children who cannot live with their parents a permanent and secure living arrangement. • Sign of Safety approach being used to assess risk and plan intervention to help keep children safely within their families where possible. • Public Law outline – provides a robust legal framework for children who are subject to Court decision making. Some will move on to permanent placements and some will return home. 	
<p>14. What actions are you currently undertaking to address issues for any of the groups impacted/adversely impacted?</p>	<p>Care Matters multi agency steering group working on implementation of Care Matters to improve outcomes for all LAC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care Plans are reviewed by and Independent Reviewing Officer • Assessment of permanent substitute carers is rigorous and the approval of foster carers/kinship foster carers and adoptive carers go through an independent panel. • Support for placements through the CAMHS service, Education Support team and Connexions service all contribute to stability and better long term outcomes. • Outcomes for all LAC are monitored locally and evaluated by inspection framework. 	

<p>15. What actions will you take to reduce or remove any differential/adverse impact?</p> <p>Please also list any other actions you will take to maximise positive impacts.</p>	<p>No further action required Service Plans in place. Permanency Policies relating to permanency have been reviewed to reflect new legislation and guidance.</p>
<p>16. Into which action plan/s will these actions be incorporated?</p>	<p>Bracknell Forest Children and Young People's Plan Children's Trust Commissioning Strategy Children's Social Care Commissioning Strategy Action Plan</p>
<p>17. Who is responsible for the action plan?</p>	<p>Sheila McKeand, Head of Service</p>
<p>18. Chief Officers signature.</p>	<p>Penny Reuter</p>
<p>19. Which PMR will this EIA be reported in?</p>	<p>SCL Q2 2009-10</p>