

Equality Impact and Needs Assessment Form

A) Description

Name of service, function, policy (or other) being assessed

West Midlands Regional Supported Accommodation Framework Agreement

Directorate or organisation responsible (and service, if it is a policy)

Children's Wellbeing

Date of assessment

11.7.17

Names and/or job titles of people carrying out the assessment

Mark Cage, Category Manager Commercial Services in Consultation with Sandra Griffiths, Children's Commissioning Officer

Accountable person

Chris Baird, Interim Director Children's Wellbeing

What are the aims or main purpose of the service, function or policy? What does it provide and how does it provide it?

Local Authorities have a duty to make arrangements for the accommodation and care of children for whom it has a responsibility pursuant to Sections 31 and 20–23 of the Children Act 1989. Herefordshire has developed a strategy to meet this sufficiency duty. The strategy includes a range of approaches to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation available for looked after children and young people of all ages and levels of need. One of these approaches is the procurement of a framework agreement for the provision of supported Accommodation placements by independent agency organisations. This particular agreement will help to ensure that the authority has access to good value and quality externally provided placements for young people between the ages of 16 and 18 years when it is not possible or appropriate to place the young person in an alternative provision.

This agreement will deliver a framework of preferred providers that have been evaluated through a procurement exercise that considers cost and quality. The Council will have no financial commitment to purchase services from these providers, but will be able to call-off purchases at pre-agreed prices and to standard terms and conditions of service and quality.

Location or any other relevant information

Where it is in the best interests of the young person, placements will be sought within Herefordshire to maintain links with their local communities, schools and families. Preferred providers may also be able to offer placements outside of Herefordshire.

The framework agreement has been procured jointly by the 14 West Midlands local authorities with Staffordshire County Council as lead procuring and contracting authority.

List any key policies or procedures to be reviewed as part of this assessment.

Herefordshire Council has been operating a framework arrangement for supported accommodation services for four years. The new agreement will have some minor technical structural differences which will relate to the regional approach and administration though the service will not be changed in any way.

Who is intended to benefit from the service, function or policy?

Securing sufficient 16+ accommodation has been a growing pressure in recent years. Herefordshire's 16+ normally operates a case load of around 200 young people. Out of these 200 on average around 45-50 young people are looked after 16-18 so are in need of a placement. Some will be able to remain in their existing fostering placement under the Council's 'Staying Put' arrangements for looked after children. In some cases though, a supported living placement will be more suitable to help them develop their independent living skills as they transition to adulthood.

Who are the stakeholders? What is their interest?

- Young People who are service users are interested in the availability and quality of the placements they are provided with
- Sixteen Plus Service is interested in the availability, quality and cost of placements
- Independent Supported Accommodation Providers are interested in the Council's quality and cost expectations, procurement processes, and placement decision processes

B) Partnerships and Procurement

If you contract out services or work in partnership with other organisations, Herefordshire Council remains responsible for ensuring that the quality of provision/delivery meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, i.e.

- Eliminates unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Fosters good relations between different groups

What information do you give to the partner/contractor in order to ensure that they meet the requirements of the Act? What information do you monitor from the partner/contractor in order to ensure that they meet the requirements of the Act?

This service has recently been tendered. The Specification will form the basis of a pre-placement agreement which sets out the requirements of the service and expectations in terms of service delivery and appropriate legal framework.

The contract will reflect the provider's responsibility to comply with the Equality Act 2010 or subsequent revisions and all other relevant anti-discriminatory legislation.

Provider's will also operate an equal opportunities policy for the duration of the Contract Period and ensure that their recruitment, employment and equal opportunities policies comply with all statutory obligations.

The needs of each child requiring the service are assessed by the Council's social care teams. Preferred providers submit service offers based on this assessment, and Social Care undertake a matching exercise to decide which provider offer or option can best meet the assessed needs. Any specific equality issues are highlighted in the needs assessment and reflected in an individual placement agreement (contract) that is signed by the provider and Council.

Are there any concerns at this stage that indicate the possibility of inequalities/negative impacts? For example: complaints, comments, research, and outcomes of a scrutiny review. Please describe:

None. Increased service choice is more likely to meet the young person's needs, promote their independence and improve their outcomes as they enter adulthood.

C) Information

What information (monitoring or consultation data) have you got and what is it telling you?

Herefordshire is a party to the current sub regional supported accommodation framework administered by Staffordshire which was implemented in 2012 this is now due to expire and be replaced by this new framework. Herefordshire usually has fewer than five active placement via the current framework at any one time and costs vary depending on the level of support required for each young person. The relatively small numbers of placements are due to a restricted pool of providers willing to deliver services in the county. A new framework agreement on a regional level will seek to provide some further options for the placement of looked after children aged 16/17 when there is either limited local availability or it is in the best interests of the young person to be accommodated elsewhere. Organisations that have been successful at tender have been placed on a tiered list of service providers and will enter into a framework agreement with the council subject to the councils governance procedures.

D) Assessment/Analysis

Describe your key findings (eg. negative, positive or neutral impacts - actual or potential). Also your assessment of risk.

Strand/community	Impact
Children and Young People	Positive: Young people can remain in the county if appropriate they are supported and enabled to integrate socially and develop emotionally within the community.

Children and Young People	There is a risk that some young people will have very specific needs that can't be met by the framework. In such cases, the Local Authority will be able to spot-purchase outside of the framework agreement in order to ensure that the best placement options can be found to meet the young people's needs.
---------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

E) Consultation

Did you carry out any consultation?

YES NO

Who was consulted?

- The voices of children and young people are collected as part of the placement search process and have helped to inform the service specification
- Children's Wellbeing Senior Management Team have been consulted on options to procure independent care settings and have informed the wider development of the authority's sufficiency strategy
- Independent Provider Agencies have been involved in pre-tender supplier engagement events.

Describe other research, studies or information used to assist with the assessment and your key findings.

Regional benchmarking exercises on placement services helped to inform the development of Herefordshire's sufficiency strategy

Do you use diversity monitoring categories? Yes No

(if No you should use this as an action as we are required by law to monitor diversity categories)

If yes, which categories?

- Race
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion & Belief
- Disability
- Age
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage & Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy & Maternity

What do you do with the diversity monitoring data you gather? Is this information published? And if so, where?

The data collected pertains exclusively to children and young people and is used to tailor the support and care provided for them. The aggregate data is used in the performance management of the Council's Looked After Children Service, and has informed the latest Children's Integrated Needs Analysis

F) Conclusions

	Action/objective/target OR Justification	Resources required	Timescale	I/R/S/J
a)	None.			
b)				
c)				
d)				

(I) Taking immediate effect.

(R) Recommended to Council/Directors through a Committee or other Report*.

(S) Added to the Service Plan.

(J) To be brought to the attention of the Herefordshire Equality & Human Rights Group.

*Summarise your findings in the report. Make the full assessment available for further information.

NB: Make sure your final document is suitable for publishing in the public domain.