

The **public sector Equality Duty** (Section 149 of the Equality Act) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people carrying out their activities.

The Equality Duty supports good decision making – it encourages public bodies to be more efficient and effective by understanding how different people will be affected by their activities, so that their policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people’s needs. The Council’s Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) includes an assessment of the community safety impact assessment to comply with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and will enable the Council to better understand the potential impact of the budget proposals and consider mitigating action.

Outcome	Children and young people in Southampton get a good start in life
Code	CYP 1 (ii)
Name or Brief Description of Proposal	<p>Reduction in Looked After Children (LAC) placement costs through transfer from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) to in-house provision and promoting Special Guardianship Orders (SGO).</p> <p>The Council wants to achieve better outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people by making sure that as many children as possible can move out of the care system and into permanent family arrangements, as quickly as possible, as well as ensuring whilst in care they are in good quality local placements with the Council’s foster carers. This will lead to better outcomes for those children and cost the Council less. To help achieve this, we are proposing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit more ‘in-house’ foster carers. • Promote Special Guardianship arrangements. • Create a Support and Reunification Team. • Create a dedicated Looked after Children ‘champion’ role.
Brief Service Profile (including number of customers)	
<p>57,600 children and young people live in Southampton, and this is expected to increase by 5.4% by 2022. The Council provides a range of services for children, young people and families who are vulnerable or need some support. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s safeguarding • Adoption and fostering • Support for care leavers 	

- Services for children and young people who are under the Council's care (known as 'Looked after Children').

Children's Social Care services currently support around 600 Looked after Children. The rates of Looked after Children in the city have increased significantly over recent years, and are nearly double the England average. This proposal contributes to achieving additional extra reduction in Looked After Children. The current number of Looked After Children is 605 (November 2016) the aim is, with these additional proposals, to reduce this to 390 in 3 years.

Summary of Impact and Issues

Recruiting more 'in-house' foster carers – this will provide high quality, value for money care for our Looked After Children in local provision.

Promoting Special Guardianship arrangements - this will mean more children can move out of the care system. Special Guardianship Order (SGO) carers will additionally receive a level of dedicated support where required when there are ongoing issues e.g. behavioural challenges, contact issues etc. supporting stability and success of the placement.

Establishing a Support and Reunification Team – this will be a targeted service to work with children returning home to their families, and families considering moving from fostering into Special Guardianship arrangements.

Creating a dedicated Looked after Children 'champion' role - this approach is intended to increase and accelerate further the number of children moving to permanence arrangements and out of the care system. This role will drive, coordinate, monitor and scrutinise the process ensuring timely decisions for children and reducing days they are in care.

Potential Positive Impacts

Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on the children in our care, ensuring they are in high quality local placements and are moved as quickly as possible to the right permanent home. Reducing LAC caseloads will in turn help Social Workers to have more time to focus on improving practice and timeliness of decision-making for those children who remain in care.

Responsible Service Manager	Lissa Minnis – Service Manager, Looked After Children
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Date	12 October 2016
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Approved by Senior Manager	Jane White – Service Lead, Children's Social Care
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Date	12 October 2016
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Potential Impact

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
Age	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on the children in our care whatever their background or personal characteristics.	The service will take full account of the individual and unique needs of each child by ensuring that assessments and care plans meet with legislative and best practice standards. Risk assessments will be required for any reunification or Special Guardianship proposals and ratified by the Court and Independent Reviewing Officer.
Disability	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on the children in our care whatever their background or personal characteristics.	As above.
Gender Reassignment	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on the children in our care whatever their background or personal characteristics.	As above.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	N/A	N/A
Pregnancy and Maternity	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on the children in our care whatever their background or personal characteristics.	As above.
Race	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on the children in our care whatever their background or personal characteristics.	As above.
Religion or Belief	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on the children	As above.

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
	in our care whatever their background or personal characteristics.	
Sex	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on the children in our care whatever their background or personal characteristics.	As above.
Sexual Orientation	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on the children in our care whatever their background or personal characteristics.	As above.
Community Safety	Children will only be reunified home if they are considered to be safe in their local community.	<p>The service will take full account of the individual and unique needs of each child by ensuring that assessments and care plans meet with legislative and best practice standards.</p> <p>Risk assessments will be required for any reunification or Special Guardianship proposals and ratified by the Court and Independent Reviewing Officer.</p>
Poverty	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on the children in our care whatever their background or personal characteristics.	As above.
Other Significant Impacts	Involvement of the Support and Reunification Team may encourage Courts to approve applications for SGO rather than making Care Orders further reducing numbers of LAC.	