

Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration (EDCI) screening



As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provides a record of both the **process** and **decision**. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.
- whether or not equality, diversity, cohesion and integration is being or has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an impact assessment.

Directorate: Children and Families	Service area: Kinship Care
Lead person: Emma Naylor	Contact number: 0113 3782633

1. Title: Revised Special Guardianship Support Offer

Is this a:

Strategy / Policy

 Service / Function

 Other

If other, please specify

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

Work has been ongoing across West Yorkshire to review the five local authority’s current policies for Special Guardianship arrangements, including financial support. This work has been led by One Adoption West Yorkshire and an agreement has now been reached regarding the detail of the proposed offer. There are local support arrangements in place within each local authority area that are specific to each authority. In addition to adopting a regional approach, there are several specific Leeds only recommendations set out to enhance the local ‘offer’ and entitlement to prospective Special Guardianship Order (SGO) Carers where children have been previously Looked After by the Local Authority.

Leeds existing policy for special guardianship support within Leeds was last reviewed in 2014. The current criteria related to the age at which an SGO arrangement qualifies for full ongoing support and subsequently the criteria related to eligibility for ongoing post 18 support provides a significant disincentive to foster carers and kinship carers to

progressing special guardianship arrangements for children looked after. Where foster carers and kinship carers do progress to special guardianship, there is often a delay in them doing so, due to such criteria as they will often wait until after the child is 10 years old or has been in placement for over two years.

Our principle is that children living apart from birth parents should be supported to grow up in permanent arrangements with the least statutory involvement possible. As such, special guardianship orders provide a positive permanent option for children where reunification with parents is not possible, particularly where children are being raised within their extended birth families within kinship care arrangements.

By adopting a West Yorkshire policy which will include levels of payment, arrangements for consideration of child benefit entitlement (though not child tax credit elements) and a consistent position on holiday and celebration entitlements, prospective special guardianship carers will have clarity on base level entitlements.

In addition to the West Yorkshire position, we are seeking to enhance and support our previously Looked After young people subject to special guardianship orders by enabling them to remain with their special guardianship carers with funding support until the age of 21.

3. Relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

All the council's strategies and policies, service and functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – city wide or more local. These will also have a greater or lesser relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Also those areas that impact on or relate to equality: tackling poverty and improving health and well-being.

Questions	Yes	No
Is there an existing or likely differential impact for the different equality characteristics?		x
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns about the policy or proposal?		x
Could the proposal affect how our services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		x

Could the proposal affect our workforce or employment practices?		X
Does the proposal involve or will it have an impact on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment • Advancing equality of opportunity • Fostering good relations 	X	

If you have answered **no** to the questions above please complete **sections 6 and 7**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above and;

- Believe you have already considered the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 4**.
- Are not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 5**.

4. Considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

If you can demonstrate you have considered how your proposals impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you have carried out an impact assessment.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below (use the prompts for guidance).

- **How have you considered equality, diversity, cohesion and integration?** (think about the scope of the proposal, who is likely to be affected, equality related information, gaps in information and plans to address, consultation and engagement activities (taken place or planned) with those likely to be affected)

The implementation of a revised SGO support offer will have an impact on supporting equality, diversity, cohesion, and integration by ensuring that there is a consistent, clear and equitable offer for potential Special Guardians across the city. It will increase the likelihood of Kinship Carers and long term foster carers feeling able to progress to non-statutory intervention for the Looked After Children in their care without the additional stress and pressure of financial hardship; thus, improving the quality of family life for our most vulnerable children.

A disproportionate number of Kinship families are caring for their kin on low incomes or reliant on welfare benefits. Providing the full-time care to a child or young person who may have experienced trauma and loss reduces the potential for carers to access full time employment or career progression due to the demands of caring. Furthermore, those families from ethnic minority backgrounds and effected by disability are even more likely to fall out of education prior to and post 18 due to the need to provide additional financial support to a household. The revised SGO offer will allow for ongoing financial support to 21 years of age for all previously Looked After Children, thus increasing the opportunity for them to fulfil their potential in education or training.

- **Key findings**

(think about any potential positive and negative impact on different equality characteristics, potential to promote strong and positive relationships between groups, potential to bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other, perception that the proposal could benefit one group at the expense of another)

The proposal will benefit Kinship Carers and long term foster carers who are considering progressing to Special Guardianship and thus eliminating the need for their children to be Looked After by the Local Authority, as evidenced above. The wider offer takes a whole family approach ensuring that the needs of all family members are considered and supported.

The implementation of the revised offer will benefit those identified, at no immediate expense and is inclusive of all communities caring for children who cannot be brought up by their birth families.

The team will be conscious of the factors affecting the demographic with whom they are working with. This includes the impact of poverty, deprivation, race, ethnicity, culture and trauma and they will tailor their approaches, accordingly.

- **Actions**

(think about how you will promote positive impact and remove/ reduce negative impact)

- Ensure effective communications around the detail of the revised offer to all relevant groups via social media, support groups, professionals, and any written documentation.
- Publish updated policy on relevant LCC websites to ensure all potential SGO carers have access to information about the offer.
- Engagement of carers and young people via support groups and link workers to ensure they have a voice and can feed back about positives and challenges of

new offer.

- Evaluation of what works and consideration of barriers to effective delivery.

5. If you are **not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you **will need to carry out an impact assessment.****

Date to scope and plan your impact assessment:

Date to complete your impact assessment

Lead person for your impact assessment
(Include name and job title)

6. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening

Name	Job title	Date
Vicky Fuggles	Head of Service	22.2.4
Date screening completed		22.2.24

7. Publishing

Though **all** key decisions are required to give due regard to equality the council **only** publishes those related to **Executive Board, Full Council, Key Delegated Decisions or a Significant Operational Decision.**

A copy of this equality screening should be attached as an appendix to the decision making report:

- Governance Services will publish those relating to Executive Board and Full Council.
- The appropriate directorate will publish those relating to Delegated Decisions and Significant Operational Decisions.
- A copy of all other equality screenings that are not to be published should be sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk for record.

Complete the appropriate section below with the date the report and attached screening

was sent:	
For Executive Board or Full Council – sent to Governance Services	Date sent: 16.1.24
For Delegated Decisions or Significant Operational Decisions – sent to appropriate Directorate	Date sent:
All other decisions – sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk	Date sent: