



Havering

L O N D O N B O R O U G H

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE AGENDA

7.00 pm

Thursday
6 November 2025

Appointment Centre
Room 7 & 8, Town Hall,
Romford

Members 9: Quorum 4

COUNCILLORS:

Conservative Group (3)

Jason Frost (Chairman)
Judith Holt
Jacqueline McArdle

Havering Residents' Group (4)

Sarah Edwards
Robby Misir
Christine Smith
Jacqueline Williams

Labour Group (1)

Frankie Walker (Vice-Chair)

East Havering Residents Group (1)

Vacancy

CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Statutory Members representing the Churches

Jack How (Roman Catholic
Church)

Statutory Members representing parent governors

Julie Lamb, Special Schools

Non-voting Members

Ian Rusha (NEU)

For information about the meeting please contact:

Luke Phimister

01708 434619 luke.phimister@havering.gov.uk

Please would all Members and officers attending ensure they sit in their allocated seats as this will enable correct identification of participants on the meeting webcast.

Under the Committee Procedure Rules within the Council's Constitution the Chairman of the meeting may exercise the powers conferred upon the Mayor in relation to the conduct of full Council meetings. As such, should any member of the public interrupt proceedings, the Chairman will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chairman will order their removal from the meeting room and may adjourn the meeting while this takes place.

Excessive noise and talking should also be kept to a minimum whilst the meeting is in progress in order that the scheduled business may proceed as planned.

Protocol for members of the public wishing to report on meetings of the London Borough of Havering

Members of the public are entitled to report on meetings of Council, Committees and Cabinet, except in circumstances where the public have been excluded as permitted by law.

Reporting means:-

- filming, photographing or making an audio recording of the proceedings of the meeting;
- using any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later; or
- reporting or providing commentary on proceedings at a meeting, orally or in writing, so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later if the person is not present.

Anyone present at a meeting as it takes place is not permitted to carry out an oral commentary or report. This is to prevent the business of the meeting being disrupted.

Anyone attending a meeting is asked to advise Democratic Services staff on 01708 433076 that they wish to report on the meeting and how they wish to do so. This is to enable employees to guide anyone choosing to report on proceedings to an appropriate place from which to be able to report effectively.

Members of the public are asked to remain seated throughout the meeting as standing up and walking around could distract from the business in hand.

What is Overview & Scrutiny?

Each local authority is required by law to establish an overview and scrutiny function to support and scrutinise the Council's executive arrangements. Each overview and scrutiny sub-committee has its own remit as set out in the terms of reference but they each meet to consider issues of local importance.

The sub-committees have a number of key roles:

1. Providing a critical friend challenge to policy and decision makers.
2. Driving improvement in public services.
3. Holding key local partners to account.
4. Enabling the voice and concerns to the public.

The sub-committees consider issues by receiving information from, and questioning, Cabinet Members, officers and external partners to develop an understanding of proposals, policy and practices. They can then develop recommendations that they believe will improve performance, or as a response to public consultations. These are considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and if approved, submitted for a response to Council, Cabinet and other relevant bodies.

Sub-Committees will often establish Topic Groups to examine specific areas in much greater detail. These groups consist of a number of Members and the review period can last for anything from a few weeks to a year or more to allow the Members to comprehensively examine an issue through interviewing expert witnesses, conducting research or undertaking site visits. Once the topic group has finished its work it will send a report to the Sub-Committee that created it and will often suggest recommendations for the Overview and Scrutiny Board to pass to the Council's Executive.

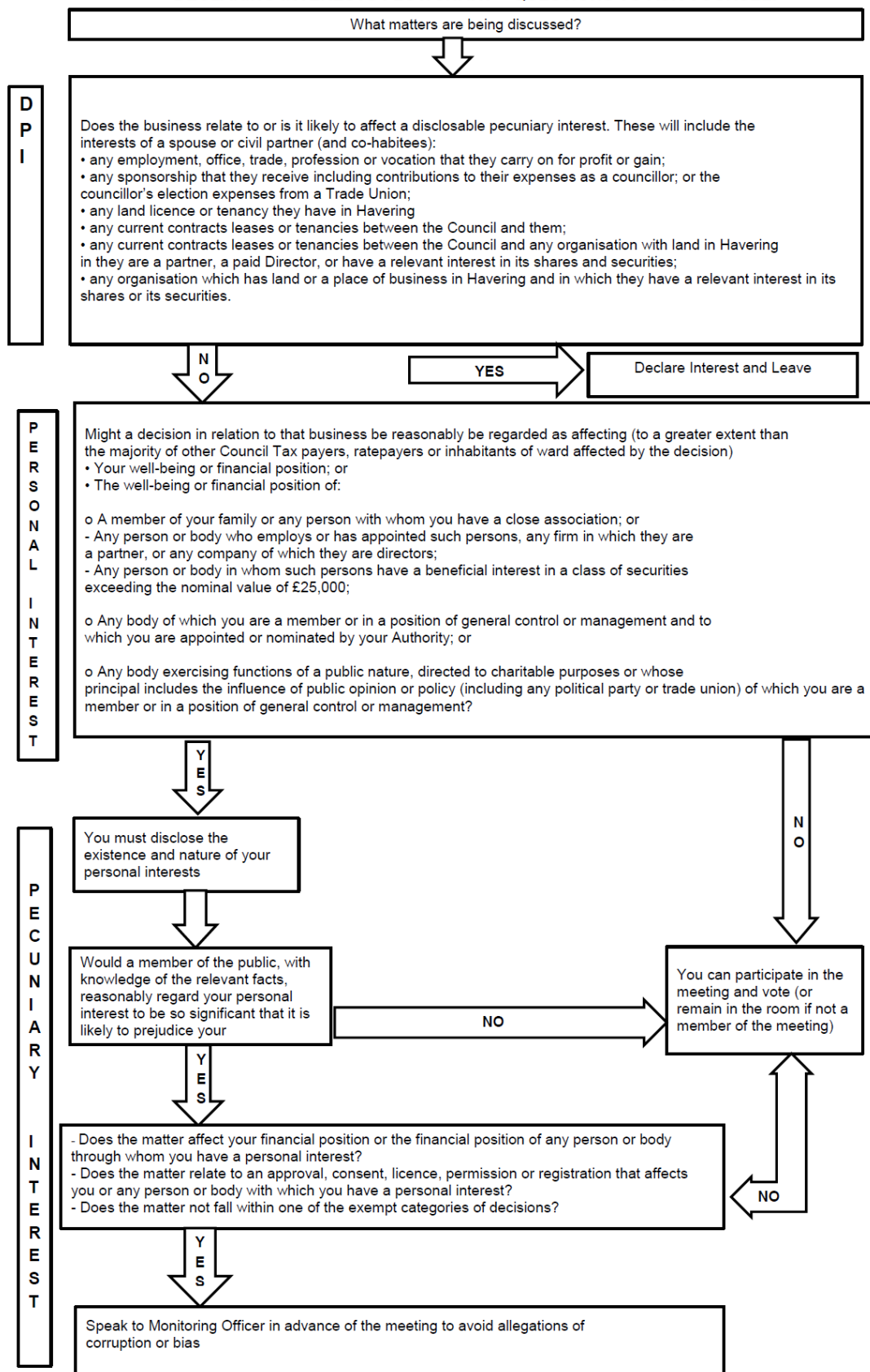
Terms of Reference

The areas scrutinised by the Committee are:

- Drug, Alcohol & sexual Services
- Health & Wellbeing
- Health O & Scrutiny
- Adult Care
- Learning and Physical Disabilities
- Employment & Skills
- Education
- Child Protection
- Youth Services

- Fostering & Adoption Services
- Education Traded Services
- Early Years Services
- Looked after Children
- Media
- Communications
- Advertising
- Corporate Events
- Bereavement & Registration Services
- Crime & Disorder

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF



Principles of conduct in public office

In accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, when acting in the capacity of a Member, they are committed to behaving in a manner that is consistent with the following principles to achieve best value for the Borough's residents and to maintain public confidence in the Council.

SELFLESSNESS: Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

INTEGRITY: Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

OBJECTIVITY: In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

OPENNESS: Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

HONESTY: Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

LEADERSHIP: Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

AGENDA ITEMS

1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair will announce details of the arrangements in case of fire or other events that might require the meeting room or building's evacuation.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

To receive (if any)

3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members are invited to disclose any interests in any of the items on the agenda at this point of the meeting. Members may still declare an interest in an item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.

4 MINUTES (Pages 9 - 10)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on **15th July 2025** and authorise the Chair to sign them.

5 CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY (Pages 11 - 20)

6 REVIEW OF FOSTER CARER ALLOWANCES (Pages 21 - 70)

7 VULNERABLE PERSON POLICY FOR COUNCIL TENANTS (2025) (Pages 71 - 88)

8 HAVERING EMPLOYMENT CHARTER FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE AND PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES (Pages 89 - 120)

Zena Smith
Head of Committee and Election Services

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE
Appointment Centre Room 7 & 8, Town Hall, Romford
15 July 2025 (7.00 - 8.35 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Jason Frost (Chairman), Judith Holt and
Jacqueline McArdle

Havering Residents' Group Robby Misir, Christine Smith and Jacqueline Williams

Labour Group Frankie Walker (Vice-Chair)

7 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no apologies for absence.

9 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interests.

10 MINUTES

A small typing error was raised.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

11 CQC ASSURANCE OF LA

The Sub-Committee received a report on the CQC Assurance of the Council.

Officers outlined the background of the upcoming inspection, due in August 2025, and members noted that adult social care had not undergone any statutory inspection for over a decade however reviews had taken place in March 2024. Officers explained the new single assessment framework included 4 themes (assessing needs, providing support, ensuring safety and leadership) and 9 quality statements with a particular focus on lived

experiences, unpaid carer experiences and feedback from partners and staff.

The Council had submitted 120 items of evidence and nominated 50 anonymised cases for review by the CQC with 6 cases having been selected for detailed tracking. The service had prepared staff workshops in collaboration with the LGA.

Following the inspection, the Council would receive a draft report before public release. Members noted a communications plan was being developed to support staff and residents regardless of the findings of the inspection.

The Sub-Committee noted the report and made no recommendations.

12 EHCP NEEDS AND PRESSURES

The Sub-Committee received a report on the Council's EHCP needs and pressures.

Members noted there had been a year-on-year increase in EHCPs nationally and an even higher rate of increase in Havering with over 3000 EHCPs. Officers outlined the challenges faced on performance, particularly with delays in issuing EHCPs within the statutory timeframe, this was due to an existing contract having expired and a new contract wasn't to be implemented until 1st November 2025.

Efforts had been made to increase capacity within the assessment and placement team and members noted that the use of technology was helpful with the writing of reports. Officers assured members that any child awaiting an EHCP would still receive all the necessary support and any funding would be backdated.

The Sub-Committee noted the report and made no recommendations.

13 ONEL JHOSC NOMINATIONS

The Chairman reminded members of the Sub-Committee's duty to nominate 3 members to the Outer North East London Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Members were asked to notify the clerk of their nomination.

Chairman



PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025 - 2028

ELT Lead:

Tara Geere - Director of Starting Well

Report Author and contact details:

Jannine Layhe - Head of Service for Corporate Parenting
jannine.layhe@havering.gov.uk

Policy context:

The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out our commitment to Havering's children in care and care experienced young people in adherence with our the statutory duties to act as a responsible "parent" as outlined within the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which includes duties for all councillors, officers and partners.

SUMMARY

Havering's statutory Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028 sets out our renewed commitment to ensuring that our children in care and care experienced young people are supported to thrive and reach their full potential. The strategy is guided by the borough's WISH principles, ensuring every child is Well, Inspired, Safe, Heard, and Treated Fairly and is aligned with the [Havering Vision](#) and the [Integrated Starting Well Plan](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028 attached at Appendix One.
- Note that the Corporate Parenting Panel will monitor the delivery of the strategy and associated action plan, which will include scrutinising that there is:
 - Timely access to health and mental health services.
 - Strengthened education, employment, and mentoring pathways.
 - Strengthened housing pathways.

- Safer placements and community environments.
- Meaningful participation of young people in shaping services.
- Promotion of fairness, inclusion, and cultural celebration.
- Note that the Corporate Parenting Panel will monitor progress through key performance indicators and qualitative feedback, with updates to be shared with stakeholders, including children and young people, by officers in the Starting Well directorate.
- Note that an annual report will be taken to People Overview and scrutiny on progress.
- Direct officers to carry out an internal review of the strategy for late 2027, and to make any interim revisions to the action plan as needed to ensure continued relevance and impact.

REPORT DETAIL

See cabinet report for full details.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

See cabinet report for full details.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS; N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendices:

Appendix One – Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025 - 2028 Final

Appendix Two – Equalities and Health Impact Assessment

Appendix Three – Consultation comments

[Corporate parenting: Resource pack for councillors | Local Government Association](#)

London Borough Of Havering

Corporate Parenting Strategy

2025-2028

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Foreword

At the heart of our Corporate Parenting Strategy is a simple but powerful truth. Young people in our care are not just service users, they are individuals with hopes, talents, and voices that deserve to be heard, respected, and acted upon.

This strategy developed with the help of young people who shared their stories, frustrations, and dreams. They told us they need Social Workers who listen, keep their promises, and take the time to really know them, not just their case files. They asked for consistency, respect, and recognition - not only at Christmas or during transitions, but every day.

We heard about the impact of delays, missed calls, and broken promises. But we also heard about the difference one caring, reliable adult can make. A personal adviser who checks in regularly. A social worker who celebrates you when you do well in school. A team that shows up when it matters most.

This strategy is our promise to do better. It is a call to action for every professional involved in Corporate Parenting across Havering, and our partners, to uphold the highest standards of care, communication, and compassion. It is a promise to work together *with* young people to create effective care and pathway plans for them, and it is a pledge to celebrate their achievements, support their transitions, and ensure their voices are central to every decision that affects their lives.

Thank you to all the young people who helped us. Your honesty and insight are the foundation of this Strategy. We are listening to you and taking action.

Together, we will build a system that not only supports but empowers every young person in our care.

***Councillor
Oscar Ford,
Cabinet Member
for Children and
Young People***

***Andrew Blake-
Herbert,
Havering
Council's Chief
Executive***

***Say It Louder -
Children in Care
Council***

***Youth
Management
Team – Faye De
Friend, Leah
Clarke Dyer,
Nkosinathi "NK"
Ogundiya***

Introduction

Putting You First: Well, Inspired, Safe, Heard and Treated Fairly

This strategy has been created together with children and young people, through engagement with our Youth Management Team and Children in Care Council. They have been at the very heart of shaping it, making sure their voices are heard loud and clear. This strategy is our promise to help children and young people feel safe, grow with confidence, and make sure their voice always matters.

This strategy is rooted in Havering's corporate vision, [The Havering you want to be part of](#), and is fully aligned with the borough's [Integrated Starting Well Plan – Happy, Healthy Lives 2024–2027](#).

Our goal is to make sure every Havering child and young person, including those in care or who have been in care, get the support they need.

Here's what we promise to do for you

- **Well** – We will help you stay healthy, support your mental wellbeing, and make sure your health needs are met.
- **Inspired** – We will cheer you on and support your education and ambitions, help you plan for your future, and give you chances to try new things.
- **Safe** – We aspire to work with others to keep you safe at home, in education, and in your community.
- **Heard** – Your voice matters. We will listen, involve you in decisions, and support you to speak up.
- **Treated Fairly** – We will celebrate who you are, make sure everyone is treated with respect and kindness, and challenge any discrimination.

Through the WISH framework—Well, Inspired, Safe, Heard, and Treated Fairly, we aim to create an environment where every child and young person feels valued and empowered. This strategy is not just about promises; it's about turning those promises into actions that truly make a difference in your life.

Everyone at the council, along with professionals working in schools, health services, housing, and many other areas, will work together to support you. We promise to listen to you, celebrate when you do well, and help you feel [proud to be part of Havering](#), where you can learn, grow, and live a happy, healthy life. Whether you're in care or leaving care, we'll be here to help you live a good life and become the person you want to be.

These promises reflect our shared ambition to create the Havering that young people want to be part of; a borough where they are not only cared for but also cared about.

What is Corporate Parenting?

When you're in care, the council should take care of you like any good parent would. Being a "corporate parent" means we do everything we can to help our children and young people in, or leaving care, to feel supported, grow with confidence, and have the chance to do well in life, just like any caring parent would so you can be happy and healthy.

Our approach is guided by the seven principles set out in the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#). These principles provide a framework to ensure children in care and care leavers feel supported, respected, and empowered every step of the way.

Our Vision

We want every child and young person to feel supported, included, and inspired to be their best. We're here to help with your health, learning, friendships, and feelings because they all matter.

Our vision is part of the [Havering Vision](#) and the [Havering Integrated Starting Well Plan](#). Together, we're creating the *Havering you want to be part of*, where every young person is:

Well, Inspired, Safe, Heard, and Treated Fairly.

That is our WISH for our children and young people and what guides everything we do.

What We're Going to Do

To deliver on our promises, this is what we will do over the next three years:

1. Well - We will:

- Ensure timely access to physical and mental health services to keep you well.
- Deliver life skills programmes covering budgeting, cooking, and managing finances.
- Promote mental health awareness through inclusive events and campaigns.

2. Inspired – We will:

- Strengthen links with schools, colleges, and employers to offer mentoring, apprenticeships, and work experience.
- Celebrate achievements through awards and recognition events.
- Provide targeted support for care leavers transitioning into adulthood, including access to further education and training.
- Consider how to develop a community broadcast channel to support communication of events, key information and celebration events.

3. Safe – We will:

- Work with community safety partners to address concerns about public spaces and transport and your feelings around safety on public transport.
- Develop relationships with community resources and police to improve community safety.

- Ensure all homes that children and young people live in are safe, stable, and supportive, with regular reviews and feedback from children and young people.
- Continue to develop housing pathways ensuring that care leavers and those transitioning to adulthood can access housing in line with their needs.
- Make sure every child and young person has a trusted adult they can talk to, someone who listens, doesn't judge, and is always there for them.

4. Heard - We will:

- Expand participation groups and ensure children and young people are involved in shaping services and decisions that affect them.
- Include children and young people in care planning meetings and reviews, with accessible formats and language.
- Invite child and young people to co-author the strategy foreword and contribute to ongoing monitoring and evaluation of our work with you.
- Organise special 'Takeover Days' where young people get to run the 'show', leading meetings, sharing ideas, and helping make decisions.

5. Treated Fairly - We will:

- Celebrate a diverse range of cultural and religious events, including Eid, Hanukkah, Diwali and others, alongside Christmas and Easter.
- Promote inclusive practices across all services and challenge discrimination wherever it arises.
- Ensure equitable access to resources, support, and opportunities for all children and young people in care.
- Help adults working with you understand how to talk and act in ways that make you feel included, not different or left out.

These actions will be supported by a clear delivery plan, with named leads, timelines, and performance measures to track progress and impact.

Making Sure Everyone Does Their Part

The Corporate Parenting Panel is made up of a group of people who work for Havering council and our partner agencies, as well as elected Councillors including the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. This group meets to make sure that children and young people in care are happy and well supported. While the Corporate Parenting Panel will track our goals, looking at performance data, sharing updates, and listening to young people's feedback, to make sure that the strategy is delivered successfully, and improvements continue to be made. The subgroups will be responsible for delivering the strategy's key actions. This structure ensures clear ownership and helps hold partners to account for their contributions.

Helpful Information

- [The Havering you want to be part of](#)
- [Integrated Starting Well Plan – Happy, Healthy Lives 2024–2027.](#)
- [Corporate parenting: Resource pack for councillors](#)

How We'll Check Progress

Monitoring our progress is essential to make sure we do what we say we will. The Corporate Parenting Panel will be responsible for regularly reviewing the action plan and key performance data. By tracking what's working and where we can improve, the panel will help ensure that our support continues to make a real difference for children and young people. Updates and next steps will be shared openly, so everyone knows how we're moving forward together.

To ensure flexibility and ongoing improvement, the action plan and key performance data will be maintained as separate documents from the overall strategy. These will be revised regularly by the Corporate Parenting Panel, responding to the changing needs of children and young people and reflecting lessons learned along the way. By keeping these documents distinct and adaptable, we can better track progress and quickly implement new ideas or enhancements during the next three years.

This strategy is scheduled for review in 2028.

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PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

Review of Foster Carer Allowances

ELT Lead:

Tara Geere - Director of Starting Well

Report Author and contact details:

Jannine Layhe - Head of Service for Corporate Parenting
jannine.layhe@havering.gov.uk

Policy context:

This decision reflects our statutory corporate parenting responsibility defined in the Children Act, to ensure our children in care have sufficient access to stable, loving homes in line with Havering's Sufficiency strategy.

SUMMARY

1. The council has a legal duty to recruit and keep enough foster carers to provide safe and supportive homes for children in care.
 - 1.1. It is important for children to stay near their local area, so they can keep attending their usual schools and maintain relationships with family and friends.
 - 1.2. There has been a national drop in the number of foster carers, with a 4% decrease in England last year and nearly 10% fewer carers since 2021. Many leave due to lack of support and financial pressures.
 - 1.3. Havering's foster carer payments have not kept up with rising living costs and are not competitive with those offered by neighbouring councils and below the national minimum allowance for foster carers recommended by central government.
 - 1.4. The proposal is to increase both the weekly fee for foster carers and the allowance for each child, making Havering's offer more competitive.
 - 1.5. Using in-house foster carers is much more cost-effective than relying on agencies, saving around £32,000 per child each year.

- 1.6.** By improving financial support and recruitment efforts, the council aims to recruit at least 17 more in-house foster carers each year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To support recruitment and retention of our in-house foster carers, it is recommended that Cabinet agree to;

Increase the weekly foster carers' fee allowance and weekly allowance per child as set out in paragraph 2.5 of the Cabinet Report to ensure we are offering a fair and competitive rate when compared to neighbouring boroughs and the recommended national minimum allowance.

REPORT DETAIL

- 2.0** The Council is legally required to provide enough suitable foster homes for children in care, taking into account their diverse needs, such as education, siblings, and disabilities.
- 2.1** Keeping children close to their education setting and support networks is a key priority, so recruiting local foster carers is essential.
- 2.2** Current allowances for in-house foster carers are below the national minimum allowance guidance set by central government and slightly below the average paid by other East London councils, making recruitment more difficult.
- 2.3** The proposed changes are based on benchmarking with other councils and inflation since 2021, aiming to make Havering's offer more competitive.
- 2.4** The proposal increases payments for carers of older children, reflecting the greater challenges and costs involved in caring for this age group.
- 2.5** The proposal aligns Havering's rates with the government's National Minimum Allowance and recommends annual reviews in line with national updates.

- 2.6** Using in-house carers is much more cost-effective than agency placements, which can be significantly more expensive.
- 2.7** The council aims to recruit 17 more in-house foster carers in 2025–26, with several applicants already in the assessment process.
- 2.8** Increasing allowances is expected to help meet recruitment targets, reduce reliance on costly agency placements, and improve outcomes for children.
- 2.9** For full details, including the specific figures, benchmarking data, and the rationale behind the proposed changes, please refer to the full Cabinet report.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Please note that all information below is directly taken from the Cabinet report.

Financial Implications and Risks:

This report proposes a range of increases to the fostering allowances and fees paid to Havering's own foster carers. The costs of providing homes for children in care is a significant part of the Council's budget for Starting Well which is £21.9m in total in 25/26. Where possible a foster placement with a Havering foster carer or a connected (friends or family) carer is often the most cost effective choice – not only it is usually the lowest cost option but it also provides good quality care and allows children to stay in their local area.

As set out in this report the current direct cost of a placement varies from £354 to £750 a week with an average of around £465. The exact number of children in such placements does vary as children come into and out of Local Authority care but is in the region of 110 to 120 children (including connected carer placements.) We are forecasting to spend around £2.8m in direct placement costs.

In addition the authority also incurs the costs of recruitment, training, supervision and support of its carers. The fostering service budget for 25/26 is £2.2m which works out to around £385 a week on top of the fees and allowances making the full cost of a fostering placement in the region of £850. In comparison the cost of a placement with an independent fostering agency is £1,135 – with a small number being considerably higher (up to c£2,250 per week.). It should be noted however that the cost of the fostering service is partly fixed/stepped so as new carers are recruited the average cost will reduce.

These figures show that having and using in house carers is highly cost effective for the authority. However as the report sets out it is proving increasingly difficult to recruit and retain carers. The reasons for this are likely to be complex but the level of fees and allowances may be a contributory factor. Authorities and agencies tend to have different pay structures which makes direct comparison difficult but benchmarking data shows that Havering pays slightly better than some of its neighbours but not as well as some. It is also the case that our rates have not been uplifted for a number of years. In particular the allowance component has fallen below the minimum recommended rates for London for all age groups and this should be addressed.

The report recommends lifting the allowance to that London minimum rate. (Because we use the same rate for all children under 11, the rates for pre school children will now be higher than the amounts recommended for the lowest two age bands.) It also recommends a range of uplifts to the fees offered. These uplifts have been set in reference to our neighbours rates and so the overall percentage differs from 9% to 32%. Because benchmarking information has been used the uplifts may be indirectly reflecting the local market but it is hard to be sure. Certainly however the highest uplifts are going to the older teenager age group which is known to be hard to recruit to.

After application of the proposed uplifts the direct fees and allowances will be £408 to £859 per week making the average direct cost £540 a week and the full cost £930 a week. These revised costs are still lower than those charged by IFAs so in house will remain the most cost effective option.

As set out in the report the full year cost of the uplifts will be in the region of £0.42m to £0.45m (varying with the number and needs of children in care at any moment.) The in year cost will therefore be around £0.11m. There is a contingency in the LAC placement budgets for inflationary uplifts which will be sufficient to cover this although it should be noted that the LAC budget as a whole is overspent. A growth bid is being submitted as part of the MTFS process to ensure there will be sufficient funding available next year.

Using average figures of a £600 a week saving on the direct cost then if the service were able to make use of an additional 14 or 15 in house placements as an alternative to IFAs then the consequent saving would completely pay for the cost of the uplift. If the full cost is considered then an additional 28 placements would be needed. The Starting Well service has a savings target of recruiting a net additional 12 foster carers in each of 25/26 and 26/27.

The evidence about what really works to increase recruitment and retention of foster carers is however quite weak and muddled. Fee rates are certainly part of the picture but it may be the case other initiatives such as access to respite, membership of

Mockingbird clusters, more support and training or other incentives may be as or more effective and these have not been clearly considered.

The service may not be able to evidence a clear financial return for these increased costs. The Council may however consider that there are sufficient other grounds to raise the rates. It is strongly recommended that the service monitor carefully the impact of the change and use these findings to influence future decisions about how to improve recruitment and retention.

It is possible that following this decision there may be a knock on impact on other related costs such as Special Guardianship allowances or Staying Put costs. These have not been quantified at this stage.

Legal Implications and Risks:

The Local Authority has a duty under section 22G Children Act 1989 to ensure that it is able to provide the children in its care for whom other suitable arrangements cannot be made with accommodation that—

- (a) is within the authority's area; and
- (b) meets the needs of those children.

In doing so it has to take into consideration the benefit of having—

- (a) a number of accommodation providers in their area that is, in their opinion, sufficient to secure that outcome; and
- (b) a range of accommodation in their area capable of meeting different needs that is, in their opinion, sufficient to secure that outcome.

The Report makes clear that there are currently insufficient in house foster carers to meet local demand and that there would therefore be a duty to increase the supply of foster carers by making it more financially attractive to take on that role.

Accordingly the proposals within the Report to increase the weekly foster carers' fee allowance should support the Local Authority's s 22G Children Act duty and therefore there are minimal legal risks in approving these proposals.

There is statutory guidance in the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards which provides that:

28.1) Each foster carer receives at least the national minimum allowance for the child, plus any necessary agreed expenses for the care, education and reasonable leisure interests of the child, including insurance, holidays, birthdays, school trips, religious festivals etc, which cover the full cost of caring for each child placed with her/him.

This is not absolutely required but will be judged by Ofsted as a standard to be applied.

This relates to the amount of the weekly allowance for the child, as opposed to the fee, which represents a reward element.

The proposal to increase the weekly allowance for fostered children as set out at paragraph 2.5 is broadly in line with the current National Minimum Allowance as published by the Department of Education and presumably takes account of increased costs of living and appears to be a fair reflection of the real costs of looking after them and therefore there are low legal risks in approving this increase. .

Human Resources Implications and Risks:

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

Equalities Implications and Risks:

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation. 59. The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks;

Havering Council is committed to improving the health and well-being of all residents including those most vulnerable. Majority of children coming into foster care are vulnerable children who may have suffered loss, neglect, abuse or abandonment which will have negatively impacted on their health and wellbeing, particularly their mental wellbeing.

The proposed improved financial incentives to in house foster carers aimed at better retention of experienced carers, attraction of new carers and avoidance of reliance on more expensive Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) is likely to impact positively on health and wellbeing of fostered children by ensuring a bigger pool of foster carers to match successfully with the children and provision of longer term stable environment which is necessary to support the development and progress of fostered children.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS; N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1; Cabinet Report Key Decision; Review of Foster Carer Allowances
November 2025

Appendix 2; Havering Fostering Fees and Allowances 2023/24

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CABINET

Subject Heading:

Review of Foster Carer Allowances

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Oscar Ford - Cabinet member for Children and Young People

ELT Lead:

Tara Geere - Director of Starting Well

Report Author and contact details:

Jannine Layhe - Head of Service for Corporate Parenting

Policy context:

This decision reflects our statutory corporate parenting responsibility defined in the Children Act, to ensure our children in care have sufficient access to stable, loving homes in line with Havering's Sufficiency strategy.

Financial summary:

The full year cost increase of the proposed uplift to the foster carer weekly fee and allowances is around £0.42m to £0.45m. This would mean a cost of around £0.1m in Q4 2025/26 and a full year cost as above in 2026/27, which is already forecast within the growth request for 2026/2027. However it is expected to contribute to the avoidance of greater costs from using independent fostering agencies.

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

When should this matter be reviewed?

Annually

Reviewing OSC:

People Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

X People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well
Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

SUMMARY

1. As corporate parents, we have a statutory duty to recruit and retain foster carers who can provide a range of homes offering the appropriate support to meet the needs of the children and young people in our care.
- 1.1 It is a key priority to ensure that (where it is safe to do so) children in care remain within, or close to, their local area so that they can continue attending their school or clubs and maintain appropriate connections with family and friends.
- 1.2 As of the end of March 2024, there were 57,065 approved mainstream foster carers in England, which is a 4% decrease from the previous year. From 2021 to 2024, there was a 9.6% decrease in the number of registered foster carers nationally. Local authorities nationwide are facing recruitment challenges. The reasons cited for foster carers leaving the profession are lack of support and financial pressures.
- 1.3 The current Havering financial allowance structure has remained largely static since 2021 when a previous uplift and wider council support package was agreed. However, since this point increases in the cost of living and associated care costs have not been reflected.
- 1.4 Benchmarking data from other East London authorities and anecdotal feedback from our foster carers, has evidenced that our current fostering rates are not in line with neighbouring authorities.
- 1.5 Havering are part of the 'Local Community Fostering' (Greater London East) Fostering Hub initiative which was launched in May 2024. The hub hosted by the London Borough of Waltham Forest was established as a regional [fostering hub](#) involving [Waltham Forest](#), [Barking & Dagenham](#), [Havering](#), [Newham](#), [Redbridge](#), and [Tower Hamlets](#), with funding from the government's Fostering Recruitment and Retention Programme. This programme provided support to local authorities in finding new ways to recruit foster carers, which included funding for regional hubs like this one and a range of initiatives such as the Mockingbird constellations. Benchmarking at the time put Havering as one of the leading local authorities however this has changed over the last four years as the other local authorities reviewed their allowances.
- 1.6 Feedback from carers is that our current allowances is limiting interest for new carers to join and causing existing carers to considering fostering for other authorities. The benchmarking has shown that our current rates are also below the national minimum weekly allowance government guidance. We know currently that approximately 20% of Havering residents who apply

to be foster carers go on to do so with another local authority or fostering agency.

- 1.7 This proposal seeks to increase the weekly fee paid to our in-house foster carers, as well as increasing the weekly allowance for the child (or children) they are caring for to be more competitive within the market.
- 1.8 In-house foster care is the most cost-effective option for the local authority. The use of independent (agency) carers costs, on average, an additional £32,000 per child per year.
- 1.9 By improving our financial incentives alongside our marketing and recruitment support, we aim to meet our target of an additional 17 in-house foster carers year on year. The target for foster carer recruitment in 2026-27 is yet to be determined however we will continue to have robust targets for recruitment as part of our strategic plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To support recruitment and retention of our in-house foster carers, it is recommended that Cabinet agree to;

- Increase the weekly foster carers' fee allowance and weekly allowance per child as set out in paragraph 2.5 of the Report to ensure we are offering a fair and competitive rate when compared to neighbouring boroughs and the recommended national minimum allowance.

REPORT DETAIL

2. Section 22G of the Children Act 1989, the 'sufficiency duty' mandates local authorities to secure as far as reasonably practicable, a sufficient range of suitable accommodation for children in care, including the need for suitable fostering placements to meet the diverse needs of children accommodated, considering factors like education, siblings, and disability. As corporate parents our responsibility is to recruit and retain a diverse range of foster carers who are skilled, trauma informed, and resilient to meet the needs of our children in care cohort. To achieve this, our in-house foster carers are supported by the fostering service to ensure we are providing the best standard of care for our children in care.

- 2.1 One of our key priorities is to keep children in our care within (or as close to) the borough as possible, which is why it is important to be able to recruit local foster carers.
- 2.2 Our benchmarking evidence shows that the current allowances provided to in-house foster carers are below the national minimum weekly allowance government guidance and generally fall slightly below the average paid by other East London local authorities. Alongside the national shortage of foster carers, we are experiencing challenges in recruiting new carers. We know that applicants wanting to foster will usually research other fostering providers (including other local authorities) allowances before applying to foster.
- 2.3 It should be noted that, whilst there is value in undertaking benchmarking against other local authorities, several different pay structures are used alongside a variety of benefits and rewards packages as well. This means that we are not always able to make direct comparisons with other local authorities
- 2.4 Alongside the benchmarking activity, we have also calculated the amount our rates would increase by using the Bank of England inflation calculator looking at 2021 compared to June 2025.
- 2.5 The below tables outline the current pay at each level alongside the proposed pay at each level.

Weekly Allowances Per Child		
	Current	Proposed
Age 0-10	£186	£225
Age 11-15	£231	£257
Age 16-17	£281	£299

Weekly Allowance / Fee for Foster Carers	Age 0-10		Age 11-15		Age 16-17	
	Current	Proposed	Current	Proposed	Current	Proposed
Level 1	£168	£183	£231	£252	£196	£329
Level 2	£213	£218	£261	£277	£226	£336
Level 3	£239	£279	£282	£304	£252	£359
Level 4	£314	£335	£337	£389	£362	£412
Level 5	£421	£493	£444	£537	£469	£560

Combined Weekly Fostering Fee	Age 0-10		Age 11-15		Age 16-17	
	Current	Proposed	Current	Proposed	Current	Proposed
Level 1	£354	£400	£462	£509	£477	£628
Level 2	£399	£443	£492	£534	£507	£635
Level 3	£425	£504	£513	£561	£533	£658
Level 4	£500	£560	£568	£646	£643	£711
Level 5	£607	£718	£675	£794	£750	£859

- 2.6 The amount we have recommended to increase the rates by is based on a calculation of the median between the average pay scales from five East London local authorities (including Havering) and the rate calculated on inflation increase.
- 2.7 The proposed changes also recognise the issue with the current pay structure in that the weekly allowance for foster carers currently decreases for carers of 16- and 17-year-olds at levels 1, 2 and 3 compared to carers of 11–15-year-olds.
- 2.8 The increase in financial allowance for older children reflects the increasing challenges being faced in finding suitable homes and accommodation for this age group. In 2022 the Competition and Markets Authority published its final report on its market study into children's social care provision. The report found that older children often present with more complex behavioural, emotional and mental health needs meaning they require more specialist and therapeutic care.
- 2.9 Older children are also more likely to enter care in a crisis scenario which typically results in a larger number of placement moves and a greater risk of instability requiring us to ensure we have a resilient cohort of foster carers able to meet these challenges.

- 2.10 The proposed change in the weekly allowance for the fostered children also brings Havering in line with London National Minimum Allowance (NMA) 2025/26 as outlined by central government. The NMA was introduced in 2007 to provide a consistent, baseline level of financial support for foster carers across the UK.
- 2.11 For further information regarding the criteria for the foster carer fees levels 1-5, please see the published 2023/24 fostering fees and allowances (appendix 1).
- 2.12 It is proposed that, going forward, the foster carer fees and allowances are reviewed annually in line with the central government review of the foster carer national minimum allowances. These are usually published in January each year in anticipation of the next financial year.
- 2.13 By increasing our weekly allowance, we are increasing the likelihood that we will reach our recruitment target for 2025-26. By reaching our target, we will reduce our reliance on agency foster carers which are significantly more expensive than our in-house carers. The average annual costs of an agency placement is £56,000. We currently have a small number of Independent Fostering Agency placements that cost between £75,000 and £120,000 per year. We also place children in Residential Children's Homes which can range between £240,000 and £830,000 per year. By comparison, the most expensive of our in-house placements, based on the proposed changes, would cost £44,668 a year.
- 2.14 By accommodating children with in-house carers rather than agency foster carers we are potentially avoiding costs to the placement budget which has already got significant savings to be met.
- 2.15 For 2025-26 our target is to increase the number of in-house foster carers by 17 households. There are currently seven applicants in the assessment stage, which are due to come to panel between September 2025 and January 2026. Should all of these be approved, this would bring our total number of in-house foster carers to 75.
- 2.16 Based on insights from other local authorities and our own research, we are confident that this proposal will better support our in-house foster carers, encourage an increased number of potential high calibre carers to apply, and lead to improved outcomes for the children we care for. Having more in house foster placements would also provide an opportunity for us to step down children in residential settings back into foster care, which gives us greater scope to support them directly and will provide cost savings for the future.

Reasons for the decision:

This decision proposes to improve our offer to prospective and existing foster carers, by increasing the weekly fee and allowance for foster carers. The proposal in this report will enable the borough to better compete in the foster carer market and make the borough a destination of choice for local foster carers.

Other options considered:

Option 1: Do nothing

This option is not recommended as doing nothing will mean fewer in-house carers and higher reliance on the independent market, where costs are dictated by competition. Alongside, outcomes for children in our care would not be as strong and likely to impact at the borough's next Ofsted inspection.

Option 2; Increase weekly child allowance but leave the foster carer fee at current rate

This option is not recommended as the current financial allowances have not been reviewed since 2021, meaning it is not a fair reflection of the current cost of living and rate of inflation.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial Implications and Risks:

This report proposes a range of increases to the fostering allowances and fees paid to Havering's own foster carers. The costs of providing homes for children in care is a significant part of the Council's budget for Starting Well which is £21.9m in total in 25/26. Where possible a foster placement with a Havering foster carer or a connected (friends or family) carer is often the most cost effective choice – not only it is usually the lowest cost option but it also provides good quality care and allows children to stay in their local area.

As set out in this report the current direct cost of a placement varies from £354 to £750 a week with an average of around £465. The exact number of children in such placements does vary as children come into and out of Local Authority care but is in the region of 110 to 120 children (including connected carer placements.) We are forecasting to spend around £2.8m in direct placement costs.

In addition the authority also incurs the costs of recruitment, training, supervision and support of its carers. The fostering service budget for 25/26 is £2.2m which

works out to around £385 a week on top of the fees and allowances making the full cost of a fostering placement in the region of £850. In comparison the cost of a placement with an independent fostering agency is £1,135 – with a small number being considerably higher (up to c£2,250 per week.). It should be noted however that the cost of the fostering service is partly fixed/stepped so as new carers are recruited the average cost will reduce.

These figures show that having and using in house carers is highly cost effective for the authority. However as the report sets out it is proving increasingly difficult to recruit and retain carers. The reasons for this are likely to be complex but the level of fees and allowances may be a contributory factor. Authorities and agencies tend to have different pay structures which makes direct comparison difficult but benchmarking data shows that Havering pays slightly better than some of its neighbours but not as well as some. It is also the case that our rates have not been uplifted for a number of years. In particular the allowance component has fallen below the minimum recommended rates for London for all age groups and this should be addressed.

The report recommends lifting the allowance to that London minimum rate. (Because we use the same rate for all children under 11, the rates for pre school children will now be higher than the amounts recommended for the lowest two age bands.) It also recommends a range of uplifts to the fees offered. These uplifts have been set in reference to our neighbours rates and so the overall percentage differs from 9% to 32%. Because benchmarking information has been used the uplifts may be indirectly reflecting the local market but it is hard to be sure. Certainly however the highest uplifts are going to the older teenager age group which is known to be hard to recruit to.

After application of the proposed uplifts the direct fees and allowances will be £408 to £859 per week making the average direct cost £540 a week and the full cost £930 a week. These revised costs are still lower than those charged by IFAs so in house will remain the most cost effective option.

As set out in the report the full year cost of the uplifts will be in the region of £0.42m to £0.45m (varying with the number and needs of children in care at any moment.) The in year cost will therefore be around £0.11m. There is a contingency in the LAC placement budgets for inflationary uplifts which will be sufficient to cover this although it should be noted that the LAC budget as a whole is overspent. A growth bid is being submitted as part of the MTFS process to ensure there will be sufficient funding available next year.

Using average figures of a £600 a week saving on the direct cost then if the service were able to make use of an additional 14 or 15 in house placements as an alternative to IFAs then the consequent saving would completely pay for the cost of the uplift. If the full cost is considered then an additional 28 placements would be

needed. The Starting Well service has a savings target of recruiting a net additional 12 foster carers in each of 25/26 and 26/27.

The evidence about what really works to increase recruitment and retention of foster carers is however quite weak and muddled. Fee rates are certainly part of the picture but it may be the case other initiatives such as access to respite, membership of Mockingbird clusters, more support and training or other incentives may be as or more effective and these have not been clearly considered.

The service may not be able to evidence a clear financial return for these increased costs. The Council may however consider that there are sufficient other grounds to raise the rates. It is strongly recommended that the service monitor carefully the impact of the change and use these findings to influence future decisions about how to improve recruitment and retention.

It is possible that following this decision there may be a knock on impact on other related costs such as Special Guardianship allowances or Staying Put costs. These have not been quantified at this stage.

Legal Implications and Risks:

The Local Authority has a duty under section 22G Children Act 1989 to ensure that it is able to provide the children in its care for whom other suitable arrangements cannot be made with accommodation that—

- (a) is within the authority's area; and
- (b) meets the needs of those children.

In doing so it has to take into consideration the benefit of having—

- (a) a number of accommodation providers in their area that is, in their opinion, sufficient to secure that outcome; and
- (b) a range of accommodation in their area capable of meeting different needs that is, in their opinion, sufficient to secure that outcome.

The Report makes clear that there are currently insufficient in house foster carers to meet local demand and that there would therefore be a duty to increase the supply of foster carers by making it more financially attractive to take on that role.

Accordingly the proposals within the Report to increase the weekly foster carers' fee allowance should support the Local Authority's s 22G Children Act duty and therefore there are minimal legal risks in approving these proposals.

There is statutory guidance in the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards which provides that:

28.1) Each foster carer receives at least the national minimum allowance for the child, plus any necessary agreed expenses for the care, education and reasonable leisure interests of the child, including insurance, holidays, birthdays, school trips,

religious festivals etc, which cover the full cost of caring for each child placed with her/him.

This is not absolutely required but will be judged by Ofsted as a standard to be applied.

This relates to the amount of the weekly allowance for the child, as opposed to the fee, which represents a reward element.

The proposal to increase the weekly allowance for fostered children as set out at paragraph 2.5 is broadly in line with the current National Minimum Allowance as published by the Department of Education and presumably takes account of increased costs of living and appears to be a fair reflection of the real costs of looking after them and therefore there are low legal risks in approving this increase. .

Human Resources Implications and Risks:

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

Equalities Implications and Risks:

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
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Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation. 59. The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

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Havering Council is committed to improving the health and well-being of all residents including those most vulnerable. Majority of children coming into foster care are vulnerable children who may have suffered loss, neglect, abuse or abandonment which will have negatively impacted on their health and wellbeing, particularly their mental wellbeing.

The proposed improved financial incentives to in house foster carers aimed at better retention of experienced carers, attraction of new carers and avoidance of reliance on more expensive Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) is likely to impact positively on health and wellbeing of fostered children by ensuring a bigger pool of foster carers to match successfully with the children and provision of longer term stable environment which is necessary to support the development and progress of fostered children.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS; N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1; Havering Fostering Fees and Allowances 2023/24

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Fostering Fees & Allowances



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

Version control	Author	Approval
Date of Issue February 2023	Lisa Edmeades	Head of Care Resources – Fostering Service



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1.Introduction

1.1 The nature of fostering children has changed significantly in recent years. As our services, commitment and support to enable families to care for their own children where possible has increased, foster carers are now being asked to care for children with more challenging behaviours.

1.2 Havering has high ambitions and aspirations for our looked after children. We want them to be able to reach their full potential and to achieve their goals and we recognise that skilled foster carers will help them to achieve this.

1.3 We highly value our foster carers and the service they offer to looked after children. We wish to reward our foster carers for their skills and commitment to caring for our looked after children. We have developed levels which recognise the value of a skilled and experienced workforce in improving the outcomes for our looked after children.

1.4 The overall purpose of the levels are to:

- a) Ensure that the payment outline as fair and equitable as possible.
- b) Ensure that child-care element of the payment is fully understood.
- c) Ensure that foster carers are able to meet the needs of the children placed in their care.
- d) Ensure that foster carers have adequate reward in relation to their levels of skills and experience.
- e) Clarify the difference between the allowance element paid to carers to enable them to provide for the child in their care and the reward element which recognises and rewards the skills and experience of our foster carers.

1.5 The levels allocate part of the payment as an allowance, which will be adequate to meet the needs of a child in placement and part as a 'reward fee' for the foster carer.

1.6 Family and Friends foster carers (sometimes referred to as Kinship carers or Connected persons) are valued equally to unrelated carers and as such are eligible for payments on the same terms. Family and Friends foster carers are treated equally throughout this payment outline. This is in line with London Borough of Havering's policy and legal guidance and the Fostering National Minimum Standards.

1.7 The payments outline is intended to acknowledge that fostering is a unique situation where looked after children are living as part of a family. Fostering does not have the same attributes as other working situations.

- a) The Fostering Payment scheme is split into 2 parts:
- b) The allowance paid to cover the costs of the child or young person placed
- c) The reward element or fee for the foster carer.

1.8 In addition to the two main parts there may additional payments made in certain circumstances when agreed by the Head of Service.

1.9 The level of allowance is based on the recommended rates from the Fostering Network for carers in London.

2.Allowances

General

2.1 All looked after children are likely to have extra needs over and above children who continue to live with their birth parents. Therefore in calculating this rate, Fostering Network have considered the basic costs for raising a child as provided by the Government and added a further enhancement in recognition of the extra needs of any looked after child and costs incurred as a result of this.

2.2 The fostering allowance element for any full time placement should therefore pay for most of the expenses associated with caring for the child or young person.

2.3 This includes:

- Food
- Clothing
- Luggage
- Pocket money
- Additional savings for child/young person
- Fares and local transport costs (up to 60 miles per week), including transport to and from school and contact arrangements and any day trips, visits, holidays and leisure activities.
- Costs associated with attending school
- Heating and other utilities
- Toiletries including hair products
- Hair cuts
- Extra laundry requirements
- UK telephone calls to mobiles and landlines
- Entertainment and activities including attending clubs
- Attendance at mainstream parent and toddler groups, nurseries and holiday play schemes
- Replacement of toys and equipment due to wear and tear
- Costs associated with the increase of appointments both in and out of the foster home
- Household insurance
- Other normal day to day expenses involved in caring for any child.

2.4 The level of allowance is different depending on the child's age. There are three age groups:

- 0-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-17 years.

2.5 The allowance paid to carers is to enable them to offer good quality care to a child or young person. It is not intended that the whole amount of the allowance be paid to any child or young person in the care of a foster carer.

2.Allowances

Parent and Child Placements

2.6 Parent and child placements offer foster care placements a home to a baby or young child together with its parent.

2.7 Input from a foster carer can provide the help a young parent needs with reassurance, guidance, and support during a period of considerable change. The foster carer helps the young parent to develop their own parenting skills. The foster carer also ensures the child is in a safe, secure and nurturing environment, taking part in assessments and encouraging young parents without taking over their parental responsibilities.

2.8 Where foster carers are approved for parent and baby placements and the parent is over 18 years, these will be paid at the full payment for parent (16/17 age allowance and carer's fee) and half the payment for the child (age related allowance and carer's fee), in the expectation that the child's parent is providing the majority of the day to day care.

2.9 If the parent is under 18 the full allowance and fee will be paid to the carer for both the parent and the child. There is an expectation that a proportion of the child's allowance will be given to the parent to allow him or her to care for the child. This should be agreed at the placement planning meeting.

2.10 The Placement Plan should clearly outline the expectations of the foster carer and parent in terms of purchasing of food, clothing, caring regime etc. It is generally expected that the parent will purchase food, clothing and other items as necessary for the child out of any benefit entitlements.

Dates of Payment

2.11 All of the allowances are paid on a fortnightly basis one week in arrears and one week in advance (with the exception of August and December which are four weekly).

2.12 Because of the nature of fostering, there will be times when carers have been overpaid due to a child moving mid payment cycle. In this instance foster carers will be expected to repay the Council within 30 days. Likewise if there are situations where a carer has been underpaid, payment of the shortfall will be arranged directly.

2.13 Where an overpayment has been made, carers can opt to have any repayment deducted from any other continuing payments for other children in placement.

However if there is no other child in placement, the carer will be expected to reimburse the Council in a timely fashion either by agreeing with their supervising social worker a repayment schedule or full repayment within 30 days.

2.Allowances

Pocket Money

2.14 All fostered children and young people aged 5 and above should be given pocket money. This enables them to begin to understand the value of money and to understand what they can afford to buy from an early age.

2.15 Withholding pocket money should not be used as a sanction against a child or young person unless this has been agreed with the child’s social worker as payment for damage caused by the young person in placement.

2.16 If there are concerns about how any young person is spending their money (e.g. use of drugs or alcohol or persistent and prolonged absence) this should be discussed with the child’s social worker and it may be appropriate to offer to spend the money with the child or to break it up into smaller daily amounts. It may even be appropriate to reduce the weekly amount in these circumstances. This money can be put aside for later or be added to the young person’s savings. Where young people have been missing it may be appropriate to delay payment.

2.17 The recommended age range weekly pocket money allowances are as follows:

- 5-10 years £5.00
 - 11-16 years £10.00
 - 16+ £20.00
- (additional amount for young person to purchase all non-essential clothing).

2.18 Foster carers should not take out a mobile phone contract in respect of any looked after child in their care. There is no requirement that all looked after children should have a mobile phone. However many of their peer group are likely to have one (depending on their age) so this needs to be considered. Provision of a mobile phone is at the discretion of the foster carer in consultation with the social worker and child’s parents. Carers may provide a looked after child with a “pay as you go” mobile package if they wish- this may be as part of a birthday or Christmas/Religious festival gift.

2.19 Top up payments for mobile phones should be agreed by the foster carer with the young person and the placing social worker at the placement planning meeting and be reviewed on a regular basis. Any such payments should be in addition to the pocket money allowance set in 2.17.

Savings

2.20 Savings are deducted at source of payment and placed in a child ISA for each child looked after until they are 18 years of age.

2.21 There will be situations where a young person will receive a significant amount of money under the arrangements for savings. Money placed in a savings account for a child or young person will be transferred to the young person at the age of 18. It is expected that the foster carer and social worker will have undertaken work with the young person prior to their 18th birthday so that they understand the most appropriate way of managing this money.

2.Allowances

Supplementary Support Care (SSC)

2.22 Ideally every child should have the opportunity to live as part of the family without disruption to their care giving environment. However, in exceptional circumstances, a break may be part of the care plan or agreed as part of a stability meeting around the needs of the young person.

2.23 Frequency and any payments are to be agreed by Head of Service/Fostering Team Manager prior to arrangements commencing in conjunction with the Social Worker for the young person.

2.24 Foster carers can provide unpaid support for another carer in their network with the agreement of the supervising social worker and the social workers involved, and also inform the Fostering Service as the whereabouts of any young person in our care must be recorded.

2.25 A request for a break must be completed for all situations not identified at placement planning meeting or stability meeting.

Sudden incapacity to care for children - Foster Carer illness or bereavement

2.26 There are occasions where a foster carer is unable to continue to care for a child placed with her/him due to their own or a significant family member's illness or a family bereavement. In this case the allowance element of the payment will cease to be payable to the foster carer from the date the child/young person moves. The carers fee will be payable for a period of up to 2 weeks. In exceptional circumstances this can be extended at the discretion of the Head of Service for the Fostering service.

Allegations

2.27 This section deals with payments when an allegation about a foster carer is made. This is not the policy on allegations. For more information see the Allegations and Complaints section in the Foster Carers Handbook and the Allegations Against Foster Carers section of the Havering Child Care Procedure Manual.

2.28 Where an allegation has been made against a foster carer a decision can be reached that the child should be removed for the period of the investigation. The allowance and all other child related payments including holidays and birthday allowances for the child removed will cease to be payable to the foster carer from the date the child moves. The foster carer will continue to receive the fee element for that child for the period of that investigation for up to six months, even if there is another child remaining in placement.

2.29 Where a child has been removed after an allegation and an investigation is continuing, the foster carer will receive their full fostering payment for two weeks from the date the child was removed. This will be followed by the payment of the appropriate fee level until the date of the final strategy meeting or for six months, whichever is earlier.

2.30 At the direction of the Head of Service, the fee level can continue and be reviewed monthly.

2.Allowances

2.31 Where a foster carer is suspended, which is likely to be the case if, for example, they are charged with a serious offence either against a child in their care or that would prohibit them from fostering; only the fee element will continue to be paid for the period of any such investigation up to six months. The allowance for the child removed and all other child related payments including holidays and birthday allowances will cease to be payable to the foster carer from the date the child moves.

2.32 If any investigation shows clear evidence that the carer has harmed a child in their care such that they are unlikely to remain approved as a foster carer, all payments may be suspended immediately at the discretion of the Head of Service for the Fostering service. Such decisions will be made on a case by case basis. In such instances paragraphs 2.31 and 2.32 above shall not apply. In the event that when the foster carer's approval is reviewed and they are not removed as a foster carer, then payments that would otherwise have been made under paragraphs 2.31 or 2.32 above will be reinstated and backdated. This is likely to be a rare and extreme instance – in most cases such decisions will need to wait for the outcome of the investigation.

2.33 The outcome of an investigation may lead to recommendations for additional training or other practice issues. It is possible that one of the outcomes of an investigation might be to reconsider the appropriate level of fee for the carer.

2.34 Should an investigation be required outside of CYPS and take longer than six months, the situation will be reviewed and returned to Fostering panel.

Preparation for Independence

2.35 It is important that young people are given as much experience as possible in managing finances before moving to independence.

2.36 It is equally important to remember that young people will need to manage on a limited income when they live independently. A balance needs to be struck between spending adequately as for any young person in care and not allowing them to build up unrealistic expectations. Children of all ages should be encouraged to develop age appropriate skills in managing money and general saving and budgeting skills.

2.37 If a young person wishes to remain with their foster carers after they reach 18, this is appropriate to their care needs and the foster carers are willing to continue to offer accommodation consideration needs to be given to converting the placement to staying put. This will need to be discussed with the young person's social worker and a request made at least 6 months before the young person's 18th birthday.

Please see the Staying Put Policy.

3.Fees

3.1 Fees are paid to foster carers depending on their level of skills and experience and the needs of the young person.

3.2 Fees are income for the carer/s and are paid as recognition of skills and experience for the foster carer.

3.3 Fees are payable to one foster carer only in any household but both partners will be required to meet the eligibility criteria to increase or maintain their fee level approval.

3.4 There are five levels of fee. Progression through the levels will be agreed between the foster carer and the local authority on a full set of criteria.

3.5 Training to enable foster carers to progress through the levels will be supported with flexible times where possible and will include opportunities for online learning. Foster carers can use their identified back up supporters to cover childcare for training sessions following discussion with SSW.

3.6 As well as rewarding foster carers, the levels of fees are designed to give incentive to foster carers to increase their level of skills and experience and to improve attendance at training courses provided by the Fostering service

3.7 Support will be given where necessary to any carers who may be disadvantaged in progressing through the fee levels as a result of English being a second language or a level of disability or special need.

3.8 There is no defined limit on the numbers of carers at any level. Any foster carer can progress through the levels as long as the required criteria are met.

Fee Level 1

3.9 To be eligible for payment at Fee Level 1 Foster carers must:

- Be caring for a child who cannot remain at home due to safeguarding concerns at the request of the London Borough of Havering
- Be a Connected Person in respect of the child under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010. Children are placed under Regulation 24 because of the existing relationship that they have with the adult(s).
- Be assessed as Temporary Foster Carers (Regulation 24) through the required Havering procedures
- Be approved as Temporary Foster Carers by the Agency Decision Maker

3.10 Or have:

- Attended Skills to Foster training or completed equivalent training where this is not possible due to distance
- Been assessed presented and approved by the Fostering panel with a positive recommendation
- Been approved as a foster carer by the Agency Decision Maker

3.Fees

3.11 For children placed as in 3.9 - they can remain placed for a maximum of 16 weeks.

3.12 The temporary approval will be for a specific child and can be extended by a further 8 weeks on the recommendation of the Fostering panel and with the agreement of the Agency Decision Maker.

3.13 As with all foster carers the level of allowance for temporary foster carers is age related.

3.14 Where the placement is likely to extend beyond 16 weeks, the temporary foster carers may not wish to undertake approval as a foster carer. They will have the option of applying for alternative ways of caring for the child, including Special Guardianship Orders. Any financial remuneration through this route will be considered under the Havering Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order Procedures and Allowances.

3.15 If the carers make the decision to continue to be foster carers for the child beyond 16 weeks they will be assessed as with all other foster carers. As in paragraph 3.10 they will need to complete Skills To Foster training in the same way as any new applicant. This completed assessment will then be presented to Fostering panel and the agency decision maker for approval.

3.16 Once approved as foster carers they will have exactly the same opportunities to access training, support and to achieve higher fee levels as any other foster carer approved by Havering Council.

3.17 Where there are delays in securing alternative orders beyond the maximum 24 weeks approved temporary foster carers be assessed as with all other foster carers. They will be offered preparation training in the same way as any new applicant. They will be assessed and then be presented to Fostering panel and the agency decision maker for approval

Fee Level 2

3.18 To be eligible for payment at Fee Level 2, Fee Level 1 foster carers will need to achieve the following:

- To be approved as a foster carer for a minimum of 1 year
- To complete the Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) Workbook for Foster carers or Friends and Family Carers.
- To have attended at least 4 core training courses and 4 carers support groups during each year- where carers are fostering as a couple, this is an individual requirement. This does not include informal coffee mornings but can include learning and development via videos, reflective logs, small group discussion topics etc.
- To have gained sufficient experience in fostering. The level of experience required will be to have provided foster care for at least one child for at least six months. The 6 months could be caring for the same child for a continuous period, or include caring for several children, not necessarily over a continuous period, so long as the total period of time they have children placed is 6 months or greater. Break or supplementary support care periods where foster carers are not caring for children will not count towards the 6 months required

3.Fees

- Attended all professional meetings and adhered to statutory requirements in terms of meeting timescales and providing information as requested
- Had an Annual Foster Carer Review with a positive recommendation for on-going approval
- Completed daily electronic records which are submitted to the SSW at least weekly, regarding the child(ren) in their care.

3.19 The recommendation that the foster carer moves to Fee Level 2 will be made at the foster carer's review meeting. The foster carer has responsibility to submit evidence that they have met the criteria and this must be supported by the supervising social worker.

3.20 The Team Manager of the Fostering Team must endorse the recommendation and the final decision to progress will be made by the Head of Service for the fostering service.

3.21 If this is agreed, payments will be backdated to the date the Head of Service makes the decision.

3.22 To maintain Level 2, the foster carer will be expected to:

- Continue to attend 4 core training courses and 4 carers support groups each year and can include learning and development via videos, reflective logs, small group discussion topics etc. Where carers are fostering as a couple, this is an individual requirement
- Continue to be available for placements as agreed through their approval. Any period of unavailability due to particular circumstances may be agreed with the Supervising Social Worker and will not affect payments.
- Continue to maintain a high standard of care to children placed
- Continue to attend all professional meetings and adhere to statutory requirements in terms of meeting timescales and providing information as requested
- Continue to complete daily electronic records, submitted at least weekly to the SSW regarding the child(ren) in their care.
- Continue to participate in Annual Foster Carer Reviews with a positive recommendation for on-going approval.

3.23 The level will be reviewed annually at the foster carer review.

Fee Level 3

3.24 To be eligible for payment at Fee Level 3, a foster carer will be required to:

- Complete the TSDS workbook.
- Have been a Level 2 foster carer for at least two years
- To have attended at least 4 core training courses and 4 carers support groups during each year- where carers are fostering as a couple, this is an individual requirement. This does not include informal coffee mornings but can include learning and development via videos, reflective logs, small group discussion topics etc.

3.Fees

- Have experience of providing foster care for a child for at least 18 months. This can be 18 months for one child or 18 months made up of caring for several children, not necessarily over a continuous period, so long as the total period of time they have children placed is 18 months or greater. Break or supplementary support care periods where foster carers are not caring for children will not count towards the 18 months required
- Attend all professional meetings and adhere to statutory requirements in terms of meeting timescales and providing information as requested
- Have had 3 Annual Foster Carer Reviews with a positive recommendation for on-going approval
- Complete daily electronic records, submitted at least weekly to the SSW regarding the child(ren) in their care.
- Participate in the recruitment of further foster carers at events and Skills To Foster.
- Assist with recruitment, mentoring and buddying other less experienced foster carers.

3.25 The recommendation that the foster carer moves to Fee Level 3 will be made at a foster carer's review meeting. The foster carer has responsibility to submit evidence that they have met the criteria and this must be supported by the supervising social worker, manager and Reviewing Officer.

3.26 The Team Manager of the Fostering Team must endorse the recommendation and the final decision to progress will be made by the Head of Service. If this is agreed, payments will be backdated to the date of the Head of Service's decision.

3.27 To maintain Fee Level 3 the foster carer will be required to:

- Continue to offer one of the services outlined above
- Be open to consider all proposed placement requests
- Continue to attend 4 core training courses and 4 carers support groups each year- where carers are fostering as a couple, this is an individual requirement This does not include informal coffee mornings but can include learning and development via videos, reflective logs, small group discussion topics etc.
- Continue to be available for placements as agreed through their approval. Any period of unavailability due to particular circumstances may be agreed with the Supervising Social Worker and will not affect payments.
- Continue to maintain a high standard of care to children placed
- Continue to attend all professional meetings and adhere to statutory requirements in terms of meeting timescales and providing information as requested
- Continue to complete electronic daily records, submitted at least weekly to the SSW regarding the child(ren) in their care.
- Continue to participate in an Annual Foster Carer Review with a positive recommendation for on-going approval.

3.28 A Level 3 foster carer may decide to revert to Level 2 at any time.

3.Fees

Fee Level 4

3.29 Foster Carers Levels 4 and 5 are specifically targeted at experienced foster carers looking after young people with multiple complex needs (ie CSE; gangs; substance misuse, missing, risk of placement breakdown, mental health, significant behavioral challenge etc).

3.30 To be eligible for Level 4 and Level 5, a foster carer will be required to:

- Complete the TSDS workbook.
- To have attended at least 4 core training courses and 4 carers support groups during each year- where carers are fostering as a couple, this is an individual requirement. This does not include informal coffee mornings but can include learning and development via videos, reflective logs, small group discussion topics etc.
- Have experience of providing foster care or gained relevant child care experience in another setting for at least 18 months.
- Attend all professional meetings and adhere to statutory requirements in terms of meeting timescales and providing information as requested
- Complete daily electronic records, submitted at least weekly to the SSW regarding the child(ren) in their care.
- Participate with recruitment, mentoring and buddying other less experienced foster carers.

3.31 In addition to the above Level 4 and Level 5 Foster Carers should also meet the following criteria:

- Be able and willing to go the extra mile for children and young people regardless of the challenges
- Be able and willing to care for children who meet multiple complex needs according to Havering council Children's Matrix indicator.
- Be able to work closely with social work intervention to help facilitate a return home and/or work to move a child on to independence.
- To provides support for at least the first month where a child returns home or moves to independence.
- Willing to learn systemic concepts and implement them during direct work with a young person and work in close partnership with therapists, education and other professionals.
- Carers may revert to a previous level at any time and when the placement does not reach the threshold a Level 4 or Level 5 enhancement.

Fee level 5

3.32 Same criteria as level 4 but for intended for placements for those young people with enhanced multiple complex support needs, ie constant support or activity requirements or increased supervision/attendance due to health, social, emotional or mobility needs.

3.Fees

Enhancements For Children With Additional Needs

3.33 The majority of children looked after by the local authority will have additional needs compared to the majority of the population. These additional needs are recognised in the setting of the allowance. Some of these children and young people will also be eligible for DLA or for children over 16 the Personal Independence Payment (PIP). For the purposes of the payment scheme this is considered an additional enhancement to be spent on the care of this child. Is it still called DLA/PIP

3.34 However children with disabilities may incur additional expenditure to ensure that their needs are met. For instance, a child who requires greater assistance with their personal care needs may require additional washing to be undertaken in the household, and a more frequent replacement of clothing and personal items than would be the case for another child, increased transport costs due to attendance at medical or professional appointments or other activities. .

3.35 Where a child has a disability, the Local Authority may decide to enhance the allowance for the child. In very exceptional cases this may reflect fee levels 4 and 5.

3.36 Enhancements are decided at a pre-placement planning meeting and authorised by a Head of Service. Enhancements will be reviewed on a regular basis and Head of Service must agree to the continuation of payments.

3.37 The majority of other issues should be covered by the fostering allowance; however, consideration will be given to making additional one-off payments in exceptional circumstances. Such decisions will be made by the Head of Service on a case by case basis following assessment by the supervising social worker and agreement from the Deputy and Fostering Team Manager.

Reviewing Levels

3.38 Fee levels will be considered at each foster carer review. Foster carers can move up or down levels.

3.39 Where the foster carer has not achieved the requirements set out above, the reasons for this need to be discussed. Where there are extenuating circumstances, these can be presented to the Fostering Team Manager and/or Head of Service and an Action Plan set out to address any shortfall. Any Action Plan will include a date for review.

3.40 In general where foster carers do not meet fee level requirements they will move down one level.

3.41 A number of long established carers now live some distance from Havering and the Fostering Team Manager can consider alternative learning for some sessions where it would be unreasonable to ask carers to travel.

3.42 Where the recommendation of the foster carer review is that the foster carer has not maintained their Fee Level status and there are no extenuating circumstances, this should be presented to the Head of Service for a decision on the appropriate level of payment.

3.Fees

3.43 If the foster carer does not agree with the decision, they should be advised that they have the right of ask for a review to be carried out by the Head of Service.

3.44 The foster carer has 14 days from the date of the review to write or email to the Head of Service giving their reasons for disagreement.

3.45 The Head of Service has 14 days in which to reply.

3.46 If the Head of Service accepts the reasons for disagreement, then an Action Plan as set out in paragraph 3.33 will be developed.

3.47 If the Head of Service endorses the recommendation to reduce the level, then the foster carer will be provided with information regarding the Complaints Procedure.

4. Additional Payments

Religious Festivals and Birthdays

4.1 Foster carers will be expected to provide gifts for birthday and religious festivals as appropriate and to have budgeted for this from the child's allowance. In addition to this two extra allowances- Christmas/religious festival and birthday- will be paid for each child in placement as financial support towards these celebrations. Each allowance will be £100.

4.2 If the child or foster family are members of a different religion and wish to have the additional payment made at a specific time of year, this can be arranged. It is expected that all of these allowances will be spent directly on the child and foster carers should always keep receipts.

4.3 Foster carers should consider providing presents that reflect the child's development including education and social needs. Examples are educational books and games, bicycles, mobile phones and driving lessons.

4.4 Consideration should also be given to saving some of the birthday/religious festival money for the child/young person in order to create a "nest egg" for them when they leave the placement.

4.5 Where parents or relatives give money to a foster carer for a child or young person, the foster carer must give this person a receipt in the form of a note stating date and amount. The foster carer should make a note in their daily records of receiving the money and record how it has been used. Under no circumstances should carers accept money for themselves from the child's family. This would be considered as serious misconduct and could lead to termination of a carer's approval.

Holiday Payments for children/young people placed

4.6 In order to facilitate holiday expenses, one payment in each financial year will be available for every child who has been in placement for longer than 2 weeks with a full time carer.

The rate depends on age and is paid as follows:

- Children aged 0 to 4 - £215
- Children aged 5 to 10 - £275
- Children aged 11 to 15 - £300
- Young people aged 16 to 18 - £325.

4.7 This money will be paid to individual carers, usually each June/July to enable summer trips/holidays/activities. Foster carers are not permitted at any time to take looked after children on holiday during school time.

4. Additional Payments

Clothing

4.8 Foster carers are expected to budget for clothing from the child's allowance. In exceptional cases, an initial payment for clothing of up to £100 will be paid on placement if the child has no clothing or only very minimal clothing. Spending on initial clothing should be proportional to the amount of time a child may be in placement, especially if a child is placed as an emergency out of hours but this should be authorised by the social work manager/Head of Service at the time of placement.

4.9 A school uniform grant will be paid when a child starts at a new school. The grant will be for up to £100 for a primary school age child and up to £200 for a secondary school age child. Authorisation for uniforms should be sought in advance via the supervising social worker or the child's Social Worker, to the Head of Service for the children's social worker. Foster carers are expected to replace school uniform items from their weekly allowance.

4.10 The expectation for the minimum amount of clothing that each child will have is set out in the Foster Carer's Handbook. It is expected that each child will have at least this amount of good quality clothing, which fits.

4.11 Each child should have sufficient luggage to carry their belongings. Under no circumstances should black plastic sacks be used to transport a child's belongings. Supervising social workers will check that there is sufficient clothing and luggage available.

4.12 Foster carers are expected to use NHS services for dental or optical needs. Any specialist treatment or equipment requiring reimbursement must first be discussed and agreed via the child's social worker and receipts provided.

Equipment

4.13 On approval, new foster carers are expected to have a room that has basic items/equipment such as bed, mattress, wardrobe, chest of drawers, car seats, cot, buggy etc. The Local Authority will consider requests to purchase specific equipment that is required over and above the basic requirements.

4.14 Foster carers are expected to keep their house in good repair and replace such items as necessary and on an ongoing basis.

4.15 Where a child has a specific disability Havering will provide any specialist equipment that is needed and liaise as appropriate with partners in Health.

4.16 Where a child moves, consideration should be given as to whether it is appropriate that any specific equipment or furniture moves with him or her.

4.17 Over time, foster carers will generally be expected to replace equipment as required from the child's allowance. If there is exceptional wear and tear on equipment, due to a child's disability or behaviour, this should be reviewed at the foster carer's annual review.

4. Additional Payments

4.18 Foster carers must have full buildings (where appropriate) and household Contents Insurance on their property, and should declare that they are Foster Carers.

4.19 If equipment is destroyed or damaged by a child or young person in placement, the foster carer will be expected to claim on their household insurance if they wish to replace the equipment. The department will reimburse the carer any excess payment due on their insurance policy up to £250. The Local Authority will give consideration to paying any amount not covered in full by the foster carer's household insurance on a case by case basis taking into consideration the circumstances, including any fault on the part of the foster carer.

4.20 The Local Authority will not make payment for any equipment that is destroyed or damaged by a child or young person in placement where the foster carer's insurance company refuses to make payment due to the fault of the foster carer, such as failing to declare relevant information or failing to keep up payments to the insurance company. (See section on Insurance for further details)

Extra Curricular Activities

4.21 It is important that looked after children are able to benefit from a range of activities. Many of these can be met through the foster care allowance, which has provision for activities.

4.22 Day school trips should be paid for out of the allowance for each child up to the maximum cost of £100 per academic year. Any additional costs should be discussed with the child's social worker.

4.23 In addition, foster carers should contribute up to £100 towards any residential school trip. As residential school trips may require additional funding, a top up may be available from either the child's Pupil Premium or the Virtual School. There will be a limit of additional funding for one residential school trip per school year for each child.

4.24 Money is available in the allowance for each child to cover the cost of out of school activities. Carers are encouraged to allow children to experience different opportunities and to become members of clubs and groups to enhance their self-esteem as well as to encourage any particular talents or interests. There is an expectation that carers will spend a minimum of £10 per child per week towards these activities.

4.25 If there is a particular piece of equipment needed to allow a child to undertake a specific activity, then this can also be considered. Such requests need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Factors such as the amount of commitment that a child has demonstrated need to be taken into account. The activity should also be related to the needs of the child and discussed with the child's social worker.

4.26 Where a child attends a holiday play scheme, this will generally be the financial responsibility of the foster carer. The Head of Service will consider requests for payment of play schemes where there are exceptional circumstances (for example if it is agreed that the child has particularly challenging behaviour or because of a profound level of disability).

4.27 Any extra-curricular activities should be negotiated via the Virtual school and the Childs Social Worker ie music lessons, tutorials etc

4. Additional Payments

Holiday Payments for carers

4.28 Each full time active foster carer family will receive one payment of £200 of holiday pay per financial year. Foster carers who have not been approved for a full year will receive an amount proportionate to the time that they have been available for placements (allocated at £50 per quarter per fostering household).

Retainers

4.29 Where a foster carer is being retained to offer a placement for a particular child, they will receive £60 per week (or portion of week) for the period of the retainer. This can be agreed for a period of up to four weeks at the discretion of the Head of Service. In exceptional circumstances, the Head of Service may agree an extension or agree a lower rate for a longer period.

4.30 Where foster carers have had placements and are without a placement a £60 per week retainer will be paid per foster family if a placement is not made after 2 weeks (14 days), from the last placement leaving. Foster Carers must be available within the whole time frame to take placements to qualify for this retainer. It is the carer's responsibility to inform their supervising social worker that this fee is to be paid and that they are available to accept a placement. It will be paid for a maximum period of 6 weeks.

4.31 Retainers are not paid to foster carers who regularly provide supplementary support care or for newly approved foster carers, until they have had their first placement. Retainers will not be paid for those carers living more than 10 miles outside of the boroughs boundaries due to the difficulties in finding appropriate placements and where placements offered within the foster carers' approval category are refused.

Additional travelling expenses

4.32 It is an expectation that foster carers will provide transport for the child in their care and that costs are covered within the child's allowance. This includes transport to school and to contact. However when a foster carer is undertaking significant travelling (currently set at over 60 miles a week) the excess can be reimbursed.

4.33 Claims must be made within 3 months of the travel and will be paid at the current local authority mileage rate (currently 42p per mile). Foster carers should submit their claims on the foster carer mileage claim form, available from the fostering team. The mileage claim form should show the total weekly mileage evidencing the travel costs associated with essential travel for each looked after child. It is appropriate to record the deducted 60 miles from the weekly claim so the whole claim is evidenced for the purposes of our internal audit requirements.

Any claims submitted after three months will not be payable.

4. Additional Payments

Emergency Rota

4.34 Carers on the rota - usually referred to as the EDT (Emergency Duty Team) rota - will be available to take emergency placements out of hours. Placements will be (either male or female) within the foster carer's approved age range and numbers through the Children's Emergency Duty Team.

4.35 Foster carers on the emergency rota will be on duty for one week at a time and will be paid an agreed weekly fee of £90 for being "on call". If a carer is on duty for a proportion of the week, they will be paid a pro rata proportion of the weekly rate. Any placements made will be paid at the appropriate allowance and fee level.

Support Fostering

4.36 Where foster carers provide support fostering this should always be with the agreement of their supervising social worker. This will be at an hourly rate of £10 an hour per child and must be agreed before the episode takes place. There will not be any payment for baby-sitting for social purposes. In circumstances where Foster Carers need additional support outside of their network to attend training this should be discussed with the Supervising Social Worker.

Insurance

4.37 Havering Council provides Public Liability cover to its foster carers up to the value of £50 million.

4.38 Foster carers must take out adequate household insurance (both building and contents) and inform their insurers in writing that they are foster carers. Failure to provide insurers with this information could result in insurers refusing to honour any claim, even if the specific claim does not relate to a foster child. Supervising social workers will check for evidence that carers have adequate insurance cover on an annual basis.

4.39 Foster carers must ensure that they have suitable car insurance and should inform their insurance company in writing that they are fostering. Foster carers are expected, with their insurance company, to ensure that they are covered for any liability in relation to transporting foster children. All cars must have a valid MOT certificate and tax payment where applicable. Supervising social workers will check for evidence that carers have adequate insurance cover and an MOT certificate on an annual basis.

4.40 Any child may accidentally lose or damage small household items from time to time, and the cost of replacing items in these circumstances is covered in the weekly fostering allowance. It is recognised that foster children may cause more loss or damage than other children. Foster carers should claim from their own insurance policies should the costs be high. The Council will reimburse any excess that the carers need to pay as a result of any such claim up to £250.

4. Additional Payments

4.41 There is an expectation that foster carers take all reasonable precautions to avoid losses and damage to property. This includes keeping valuable items such as cash, credit cards and jewellery in a safe and secure place. Where children are routinely causing damage it is expected that the child's social worker, supervising social worker and foster carer meet to agree an appropriate plan to manage such situations.

4.42 The Fostering Service pays the membership fees to Foster Talk for all approved foster carers that entitle carers to advice and support including tax advice.

4.43 For more information on your entitlements please contact:

Foster Talk
Oak Tree House
Waterside
Hanbury Road
Bromsgrove
Worcestershire
B60 4FD
01527 573 790
E: enquiries@fostertalk.org

Advice Regarding Tax and Benefits

4.44 Foster carers will be given appropriate current literature from FosterTalk giving advice about their entitlements to Benefits and Tax Credits.

4.45 There is currently no distinction for Her Majesty's Customs and Revenue (HMCR) between fees and allowances. If your total receipts from providing foster care in the year do not exceed the qualifying amount, your receipts will be exempt (free) from income tax for that year. This means that, for taxation purposes, you will be treated as having no profit or loss from foster care for the year. This will not affect any other income you may have (e.g. income from employment, self-employment or savings) which will be taxed in the normal way. The qualifying amount consists of two parts to be added together:

• Your share of the fixed amount. The fixed amount is £10,000 per year for each household. If two or more carers in the same household receive separate foster care receipts they will share the £10,000 equally. If you are a registered foster carer for less than a full year you can claim a proportion of the fixed amount.

- An amount per week for each foster child placed with you (£200 a week for a child aged under 11 and £250 a week for a child aged 11 or older). Part of a week counts as a full
- More information is available on the HMRC website under Foster care relief.

4.46 Foster carers are responsible for their own tax returns

4. Additional Payments

National Insurance

4.47 Foster carers may be eligible for National Insurance contributions from the Department of Work and Pensions. Havering Council will provide a supporting letter for any foster carer who wishes to claim these contributions. Foster carers should request this through their Supervising Social Worker.

Children Missing from Placement

4.48 Where a looked after child is missing from a placement without permission, the foster carer must follow the Council's Missing Child Procedure.

4.49 Where a child is reported as missing or absent from a placement, the foster carer will be paid the age related allowance and carer fee until the child returns to placement or the placement is officially ended.

4.50 Where a child is not in placement, due to overnight school trips or staying contact with family members but is expected to return to the placement, the full fostering payment would be paid.

Glossary

Foster Carer	A person or persons approved to be able to care for a child on behalf of the local authority. The approval may be on a temporary or permanent basis.
Foster carer payment (Joint fee plus allowance)	The total amount actually paid to a Foster carer family to care for a child on behalf of the local authority.
Allowance/allowance for the child	The amount paid to a foster carer family to be spent on providing appropriate care for any child placed by the local authority.
Fee/Fee Level	The amount of money paid to the foster carer family in recognition of their skills and commitment to the fostering task.
Additional Payment	A payment made to a foster carer family in addition to the Foster carer payment.
Supplementary Support Care (SSC)	Short period of care in an alternative, agreed arrangement.
Short Breaks	Where families caring for a disabled child have a series of regular breaks from the care.
Fostering Panel	This panel is a meeting of skilled and appropriate people who meet on a regular basis to recommend approval of foster carers and review and deregistration of foster carers.
Agency Decision Maker (ADM)	A designated senior officer in the local authority who, considering the recommendation of the Fostering and Permanency Panel, makes the decision about approval of foster carers and review and deregistration of foster carers. In Havering this is the Head of Service.
Emergency Rota (EDT)	A rota of fostering carers on duty to cover the request for placements after office hours and at weekends.
Fostering Team	The team in Havering who offer on going supervision of foster carers and undertake foster carer review and recruit and assessment of foster carers.
Head of Service, Care Resources	The senior manager in Havering who has overall responsibility for the fostering service. The Head of Service is responsible to the Director.
Director of Service	The senior manager with overall responsibility for all children’s social care services.

Fostering Fees

Weekly Allowances Per Child

Age Range	Allowance (£)
0-10	186
11-15	231
16-17	281

Weekly Allowance For Foster Carers

Level	0-10	11-15	16-17
Level 1	168	231	196
Level 2	213	261	226
Level 3	239	282	252
Level 4	314	337	362
Level 5	421	444	469

Fostering Fees

The tables below summarise the combined effect of the weekly allowance and the fee, making the Weekly Fostering Payment.

0 to 10 Years

Level	Rate (£)
Level 1	354
Level 2	399
Level 3	425
Level 4	500
Level 5	607

11 to 15 years

Level	Rate (£)
Level 1	462
Level 2	492
Level 3	513
Level 4	568
Level 5	675

16 to 17 years

Level	Rate (£)
Level 1	477
Level 2	507
Level 3	533
Level 4	643
Level 5	750

Appendix A

National Minimum Fostering Allowances

Local authorities are responsible for the maintenance of looked after children. Where a child is placed in foster care, the cost of caring for the child is paid to the foster carer in the form of a fostering allowance. To ensure that no foster carer is out of pocket because of their caring role, a national minimum allowance (NMA) was introduced. These rates are published annually by Gov.UK.

Minimum Weekly Allowance – April 2021 to 05 April 2022

Weekly rates	0-2 yrs	3-4 yrs	5-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	16-17 yrs
Rest of England	134	138	152	173	202
South East	149	153	169	193	226
London	155	158	177	202	235

Tax Free Earning

Tax Exemption

There’s a fixed tax exemption of up to £10,000 per year (less if for a shorter period) which is shared equally among any foster carers in the same household. This means you don’t have to pay tax on the first £10,000 income (after expenses) you make from fostering.

Tax Relief

On top of the £10,000 exemption, you also get tax relief for every week (or part week) that a child is in your care. This means you don’t have to pay tax on some of your earnings over £10,000.

Age of Child	Tax Relief
Under 11	£200 per child
Over 11	£250 per child

Example

Laura is a foster carer for a 14-year-old for the whole of the year and for an 8-year-old for 10 weeks of the year. She doesn’t have to pay tax on the first £25,000 she earns:

Tax exemption = £10,000

+

Child 1 (52 x £250) = £13,000

+

Child 2 (10 x £200) = £2,000

Total = £25,000

Appendix B

Emergency Fostering Equipment – Allowance Guidance

If a foster carer is already in receipt of payments the child element should be used to purchase required equipment.

Where required urgently, i.e. in the case of emergency placements, the following may be considered if there is not one in the placement but payment will need to be authorised by Head of Service prior to purchase.

Single Bed & Mattress	£200	
Cot	£180	
Cot Mattress	£30	For every new baby placed
Pushchair	£130	
Car Seats	£40-100	Depending on the age of the child and Stage of car seat required.
Child Safety Gates	£40	
High Chair	£50	

Please note, financial support to purchase equipment will be considered in emergency situations only. The expectation is that a foster carer should be set up with the relevant equipment to support a placement. (ie bed, bedding, wardrobe). If a child moves placement, equipment purchased for that child should move with them.



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH



Subject Heading:	Vulnerable Person Policy for Council Tenants (2025)
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Paul McGeary, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property
ELT Lead:	Paul Walker, Director of Housing & Property. Patrick Odling-Smee, Director of Living Well.
Report Author and contact details:	James Delaney, james.delaney@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	This policy sets out Havering Housing Services' commitment to assisting our vulnerable tenants to access our services and to sustain their tenancy.
Financial summary:	No direct financial implications.
Is this a Key Decision?	Yes. Significant effect on two or more Wards.
When should this matter be reviewed?	Annually, to ensure that it continues to comply with legislative or regulatory requirements.
Reviewing OSC:	Place Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well	X
Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy	X
Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council	

SUMMARY

This policy sets out Havering Housing Services' commitment to assisting our vulnerable tenants to access our services and sustain their tenancy. It describes how a resident's vulnerabilities will be identified and recorded, and how we can adjust the way we deliver services to ensure the resident is not disadvantaged by their vulnerability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are recommended to approve the Vulnerable Person Policy for Council Tenants.

REPORT DETAIL

This new policy explains:

1. The staffing arrangements to be put in place to support this policy.
2. How vulnerabilities will be identified and recorded.
3. Safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable tenants.
4. How we will support vulnerable residents who lack the capacity to make decisions.
5. How services may be adjusted for vulnerable residents.
6. How tenancy management and enforcement will take vulnerabilities into account.
7. How this policy will be monitored.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Reasons for the decision:

This policy is required because the Regulator of Social Housing requires registered providers to publish clear and accessible policies which outline their approach to tenancy management, including "their policy on taking into account the needs of those households who are vulnerable by reason of age, disability or illness...including through the provision of tenancies which provide a reasonable degree of stability."

The Regulator's Consumer Standards Code of Practice states that registered providers should "be able to demonstrate how they have taken into account the needs of vulnerable households in their approach to tenancy management."

Vulnerable residents would benefit from a policy which makes clear how the delivery of services can be adjusted to ensure they have the same access to services as other residents.

Other options considered:

<u>Other option</u>	<u>Reasons for not doing this</u>
Relying on information contained within other policies, including the Tenancy Policy, Aids and Adaptations Policy, and Reasonable Adjustments Policy.	The Tenancy Policy is brief on this topic and does not include specific actions or details on how vulnerabilities will be recorded and how any necessary service adjustments will be delivered. The Reasonable Adjustment Policy addresses the needs of disabled residents but not those with other types of vulnerabilities. The Aids and Adaptations Policy is concerned with physical adaptations, not service adjustments.
Make minor amendments to other policies instead of creating this new policy	To clearly and demonstrably meet the Regulator's requirements, the amendments would need to be more than minor. Having a Vulnerable Person Policy will make compliance with the Regulator's requirements more obvious. Doing so will also make the information easier for residents to locate.
Do nothing	• Will not meet Regulator's requirements. • Residents will not know how we can adjust services in light of their vulnerabilities.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

The Housing Regulator requires providers to have a robust policy and procedures in place to identify and support vulnerable clients, ensuring they receive appropriate services and are treated with fairness and respect. This includes making reasonable adjustments to accommodate individual needs, particularly for those with disabilities or other support requirements, and complying with relevant legislation, for example Equalities Legislation. The Housing Regulator has not stipulated a specific way in which the needs of vulnerable tenants are to be taken into account, including in relation to tenancy management. But there is a clear requirement for Councils to have a policy, to have published the policy and to be working to that Policy in dealing with Vulnerable Clients.

This report is requesting the approval of the Havering Vulnerability Policy for residents. It outlines clearly the steps that Havering Council is taking to address the Housing Regulator requirement. It also identifies other policies upon which the Vulnerability Policy relies and relates. This Policy does not intend to increase the services in place and on offer to residents. However, there is a risk that the publication of the Policy could increase demand and this should be monitored, as this will be a demand led service. The increase may not be a direct cost in terms of money but could be indirect in staff time. Training mentioned within the policy, and any other demands relating directly to this policy for example requirements such as the need to ensure information is accessible and understood by vulnerable clients, will be met from existing budgets. This is a demand led service and as such if a client is entitled to the service it cannot be withdrawn on the basis of insufficient budget without risk of challenge which could ultimately end in judicial review if other avenues of the complaints procedure are exhausted first. As stated above additional training is to be provided, this is to be provided by current in house teams and no additional cost to the Council.

The publication of this policy, as with any, creates an obligation to meet the requirements within it. Failure to comply with the terms of the Vulnerability Policy once implemented could expose the council to risk of successful litigation, which is its most extreme could be a judicial review claim, or discrimination claim. This should be recorded on the risk register with clear mitigations to manage the risk. It should be noted that there are several stages before this risk would be reached, and the complaints procedure is referred to in the policy itself to clearly identify the stages a client could take if unhappy with the application of the policy or the Councils actions in meeting the policy commitments. Failure to publish the policy would be detrimental to the Council when reviewed and assessed by the Housing Regulator.

Legal implications and risks:

The Council is required to ensure that when supporting vulnerable tenants that it complies to the relevant legislation and regulations, which includes: the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and the Regulator for Social Housing Standards. Failing to comply with these puts the Council at risk of breaking the law.

The Regulator of Social Housing's new enhanced regulatory powers were introduced into law via the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which now make it possible for failing landlords to be fined and / or 'named and shamed' through published reports and findings. Where a Council fail to comply with its legal and regulatory duties towards its tenants, it is at the risk of being identified by the Regulator as non-compliant, which could result in both financial and reputational damage.

The Regulator's Consumer Standards Code of Practice provides that registered providers should be able to demonstrate how they have taken into account the needs of vulnerable households in their approach to tenancy management.

The Regulator for Social Housing has issued Consumer Standard Code of Guidance in April 2024. This Code is issued by the Regulator of Social Housing, under section 195(1) of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (as amended)

Section 195(2) of the HRA provides that the regulator may have regard to the Code when considering whether the standards have been met.

Human Resources implications and risks:

Training on how to recognise vulnerabilities will be delivered by the Havering Safeguarding Adults' Board (HSAB).

Training on how to record vulnerabilities will be delivered in-house by the Service Improvement team.

The two posts referred to under "Staffing" are already existing and occupied.

Equalities implications and risks:

An EHIA (Equality and Health Impact Assessment) has not been completed and is not required for this decision. The Council seeks to ensure equality, inclusion, and dignity for all. There are no equalities and social inclusion implications and risks associated with this decision.

Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks

This policy will help to improve the health and wellbeing of Havering residents by identifying and better supporting vulnerable council tenants.

Environmental and Climate Change Implications

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.



Property and Housing Services

**Vulnerable Person Policy for
Council Tenants (2025)**

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Purpose

Havering Housing Services recognises that for various reasons, tenants can face additional difficulties and circumstances that can result in them being more vulnerable and unable to cope and manage their tenancy.

This policy sets out Havering Housing Services' commitment to assisting our vulnerable tenants to access our services and sustain their tenancy.

Scope

The policy applies to vulnerable people who are named tenants of the London Borough of Havering, as well as to other vulnerable people who reside in the named tenant's household.

All Housing Officers and external partners working with Housing Services must comply with this policy.

Definition of vulnerability

Havering Housing Services defines 'vulnerable' in relation to the provision of its services as:

Residents who have a particular characteristic and/or experience a specific life event, that means they are currently unable to act independently and/or are unable to cope with managing their tenancy without additional support.

These factors can include, but are not limited to, mental health, domestic violence, age, disability, bereavement and poverty.

We will also consider vulnerabilities that may arise due to those identified in Appendix A.

Policy Objectives

The main goals of this policy are to provide fair and supportive treatment for vulnerable residents in Havering. Our Housing Services will quickly identify and record any vulnerabilities a tenant has, before deciding the service adjustments that are required to better support that resident.

How we will set ourselves up for success

Staffing

- We will ensure that we have a dedicated Intensive Housing Needs Officer, who will work as the central link across housing, adult social care (liaising with social workers where necessary), children's services, benefits, local area coordinators, the voluntary care sector and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, providing enhanced support to our most vulnerable residents.
- We will employ a dedicated Hoarding Officer in Housing Services. The Hoarding Officer and the Intensive Housing Needs Officer will team up to address the cases of hoarding which have stood in the way of carrying out repairs and tenancy audits.

Training for staff

- We will ensure that staff have ongoing training, to ensure they can identify and respond appropriately to our vulnerable residents' needs. This will include safeguarding training.
- All staff will be aware of the possibility that a resident may be vulnerable e.g., from information they receive or from their own observations during routine work such as home visits or ASB (antisocial behaviour) interviews. Staff will be aware of the different approaches required for someone bereaved by suicide or sudden violent death.
- All staff will be trained so that they are able to recognise:
 - potential signs of vulnerability
 - safeguarding issues, and make appropriate referrals
 - hoarding, self-neglect or other behaviour which results in the person's home and/or garden becoming damaged, neglected or otherwise unfit for occupation.
 - vulnerabilities of residents who are subject to antisocial behaviour, harassment or domestic violence including cuckooing
 - issues including: failure to answer the door when visited; failure to allow access for works such as a gas safety boiler check; erratic rent payments and falling into arrears when the tenant previously had a good payment history.
- All staff will be trained in how to record vulnerabilities on our systems, and how to decide the service adjustments that are required.
- The above training will be mandatory and refreshed annually.

How vulnerabilities will be identified

A resident's vulnerability may be identified by:

- Residents when they apply for housing or contact us, or self-refer. Residents can self-refer in the following ways:
 - during the settling-in visit.
 - By contacting the Housing Officer or Intensive Housing Needs Officer.
- By any Havering Council staff member who may have contact with a resident in person, on the phone or through any other channel of communication. This

- will include a council-approved contractor or partner agencies.
- A referral from an external agency or organisation.

New tenants

- At the tenancy sign up, new tenants will be given the opportunity to tell us about the needs of any vulnerable household member and any existing care and support services received. Where appropriate, a referral can be made to an external support agency, or further advice and support sought from our resident services team.
- At the settling in visit, the Housing Officer can also be notified of a vulnerability and will work with the resident to develop an appropriate housing support plan.

Records

- The responsibility for recording information about vulnerabilities will rest with whichever Housing Officer receives the information from the resident. A pathway will also exist for contractors to pass relevant information to officers.
- We will record on the tenant's housing record any known vulnerability, or any communication or access needs. We will record any known representatives who act as a 'delegated authority' or with power of attorney to act on the resident's behalf. This will ensure our staff have advance knowledge of any additional factors to consider when delivering services.
- We will ensure that all vulnerable residents have a clearly defined housing support plan, which we will aim to review every two years. The Housing Officer and the resident will agree upon the frequency of visits and/or contact that is appropriate for the resident.
- When a resident contacts us to request a repair, the contact centre call handler will confirm if there are any disabilities or support needs which should be taken into account. This will be recorded on the resident's record so that the service can be delivered appropriately.

How we will respond to vulnerabilities

Safeguarding

Who do adult safeguarding duties apply to?

- In the context of the legislation, specific adult safeguarding duties apply to any adult who has care and support needs and is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect and is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect, because of those needs.
- Within the scope of this definition are:
 - All adults who meet the above criteria regardless of their mental capacity to make decisions about their own safety or other decisions relating to the safeguarding process and activities
 - Adults whose needs for care and support have not been assessed as eligible

- or which have been assessed as below the level of eligibility for support.
- Adults who fund their own care and support

Safeguarding actions

- We will safeguard adults in a way that supports them in making choices and having control about how they want to live. This will include taking part in multi-disciplinary professionals' meetings, forums and groups to share information and make plans for individuals. The groups involved may include the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference and the Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership. We will work closely with the Council's Adult and Children Services where necessary, for example by attending Child in Need meetings.
- We will make safeguarding referrals whenever needed, and in a timely way. Housing staff and officers who believe that an adult or child is at risk, or is in need of support services and is suffering, likely to suffer or has suffered significant harm must bring the matter to the attention of the safeguarding team.
- We will follow a preventative approach to safeguarding, to prevent harm occurring. This will involve:
 - Discussing prevention at every stage of safeguarding, especially at the closure stage.
 - raising public awareness
 - providing information, advice and advocacy to people at risk of harm
 - inter-agency cooperation between internal partners
 - working with external partners in the community
- In all adult safeguarding work, staff working with the person at risk will establish whether there are children in the family and whether checks should be made on children and young people who are part of the same household, irrespective of whether they are dependent on care either from the adult at risk or the person alleged to have caused harm. Children and young people may be at greater risk of harm or need additional help in families where adults have mental health problems, misuse of alcohol and substances, are in a violent relationship, have complex needs or have learning difficulties.
- Abuse within families calls for a multi-disciplinary approach to protect all those at risk. Where appropriate, housing staff will be assisted by using Domestic Abuse Risk Management tools as well as safeguarding risk management tools.

Residents Lacking Capacity

- Any prospective tenant must be able to understand:
 - Their obligation to pay rent as a tenant, and to occupy and maintain the interior of the property
 - The landlord's obligations, e.g. to maintain the property
 - That failure to keep to the terms of the tenancy agreement may mean they could be evicted.
- Where the adult may lack capacity to make decisions about tenancy management and enforcement, communication preferences, or managing any

abusive situation, then their capacity must always be assessed and any decision made in their best interests.

- Assessments of capacity, and decision-making for tenants found to lack capacity, will adhere to London Borough of Havering's *Mental Capacity Act 2005 Procedure* (2024).
- In line with the Mental Capacity Act 2005, we will liaise with those who have legal authority to act on behalf of our residents who lack capacity. This person must be a representative who has or is:
 - Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA)
 - Deputyship Order from the Court of Protection
 - litigation friend appointed in Court proceedings if the resident lacks capacity to litigate
 - appointee appointed by the DWP to manage a person's benefits if they lack capacity
 - Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) commissioned by the local authority, where a person aged 16 or over lacks ability to decide for themselves where to live and has no-one, such as a friend, relative, attorney or deputy to advise or support them.

Service adjustments

- We will consider any additional needs that result from a vulnerability, and where appropriate, adjust how we deliver services to ensure vulnerable residents still receive the same level of service.
- When we say "adjustment", we only refer to a change made to a housing-related service. Tenants who require physical adaptations or alterations to their property because of a disability should refer to our Aids and Adaptations and Reasonable Adjustments policies. Housing Officers who become aware of a need for physical adaptations or alterations to a property will make a referral to the relevant team.
- Where a vulnerability is identified that means the tenant or a member of the household needs additional support, each service area will consider what additional support or variation in usual service provision is appropriate.
 - In deciding what adjustment is appropriate, we will consider: how effective the adjustment will be in assisting a vulnerable tenant; the practicality of the adjustment; the cost of the adjustment; any disruption to the service that making the adjustment may cause.
 - We will endeavour to make adjustments to a service when this is requested by a tenant. However, in some cases, we may not be able to approve a request if we deem it to be unreasonable and unjustified.
 - If a customer is dissatisfied with the decision we have made regarding a service adjustment, we will respond in accordance with our Complaints Policy. If necessary when reviewing our decision, we will seek advice from specific expert groups.
 - Within 10 working days of a vulnerability being identified, a Housing Services Officer will decide which service adjustment, if any, is required.
- Within 10 working days of a vulnerability being identified, any service adjustment decided upon will be in place.

- This may vary from service to service but some examples are: allowing longer for customers to answer their door when we call for an appointment; visits in person where we would normally provide a phone service; explain a letter over the phone in addition to sending it; consider providing or referring for additional support for an ASB perpetrator with mental health issues before contemplating enforcement action; consider applying for an injunction instead of possession action when the resident's vulnerability would make it extremely difficult for them to secure suitable alternative accommodation should we take possession.
- Residents are asked about any communication needs when they attend the tenancy sign up and at other opportunities during their tenancy. Residents can also ask that correspondence is sent to someone who has 'delegated authority' to act on their behalf.

Tenancy management and enforcement

- We will take into account known vulnerability factors in decisions around tenancy management and enforcement.
- For example, when allocating our homes, we will review any information we receive on vulnerability to help us ensure any offer of housing is right for the individual and their family, as a commitment to longer-term tenancy sustainment. We will require confirmation from a medical professional or other support agency of the tenant's circumstances before giving any additional priority due to vulnerability in line with our Allocations Policy.
- All tenants must pay their rent on time. However, we will advise and support those who are struggling to make these payments. We recognise that many vulnerable tenants may have other money problems and difficulties with budgeting; we will refer tenants and/or their carers who approach us for help or who fall into arrears to our Financial Inclusion Officers to ensure the tenant is maximising their income, supported in managing their budget, and has a realistic plan to repay their rent and arrears.
- In managing tenancies and leases, we will consider whether our decision would have an unfair or disproportionate impact on the resident compared with another resident who does not have a protected characteristic. In particular, where possession action is being contemplated, we will consider any legally required pre-action protocols for possession. We will also ensure that pre-action consideration is given to:
 - whether the resident's behaviour, actions or lack of action is related to their vulnerability
 - whether the behaviour is putting the health and safety of others at risk (e.g. neighbours)
 - alternatives to possession action and whether they are suitable
 - whether possession action is justifiable and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim
 - whether the effect on the occupier is outweighed by the advantages of our action.

Other actions

- Where appropriate, officers will seek support from statutory agencies and other external partner support agencies.

How this policy will be monitored

The Resident Services Manager will monitor the attainment of this policy's objectives every six months, and report back to the Assistant Director of Housing Operations.

The following key performance indicators will be monitored:

- Within 10 working days of a vulnerability being identified, a Housing Services Officer will decide which service adjustment, if any, is required.
- Within 10 working days of a vulnerability being identified, any service adjustment decided upon will be in place.
- Rates of tenancy sustainment for vulnerable tenants will be no lower than those for other tenants.
- Eviction rates for vulnerable tenants will be no higher than those for other tenants.
- The rate of conversion from introductory tenancies to secure fixed term tenancies will be no lower for vulnerable tenants than for other tenants.
- The completion of vulnerability assessments will be monitored.

The policy will be reviewed and reissued after three years.

Legal context

Legal duties and regulatory requirements

- Under the Equality Act 2010, Havering may be considered as exercising a public function in the provision of its services and so must "in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited under this Act.
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;"
- The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage & civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. While we do not necessarily define all people with a protected characteristic as 'vulnerable' for the purposes of this policy, we will give due consideration to any protected characteristics in deciding any enforcement action under the terms of a tenancy or lease to avoid any inadvertent discrimination.
- Havering Housing Services recognises that many other residents can be vulnerable for reasons other than the characteristics protected under the equalities legislation.
- The Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

Standard requires registered social landlords, including local authorities, to provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of tenants and to demonstrate that they understand the different needs of tenants, including in relation to equality and to tenants with vulnerabilities.

Other policies to consult in conjunction with this one

Allocations policy

Tenancy policy

Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy

Hoarding and Clutter Policy

Repairs policy

Damp and Mould Control Policy

Aids and Adaptations policy

Reasonable Adjustments policy

To learn how the council will respond to anti-social behaviour, please see the *Property and Housing Services Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) policy 2024*, and in particular section 6, "Vulnerable groups".

Delegated authority to make minor changes to this policy

The Assistant Director of Housing Operations, in consultation with the Director of Housing and Property, will be able to approve minor amendments; i.e. amendments that do not significantly change this policy or associated procedures.

Such amendments will require an assessment by Finance to consider potential financial implications. Any other departments who will be required to implement changes will also be consulted.

Appendix A: Factors in Defining Vulnerability

The categories below do not list every possible factor, as the whole spectrum of who could be regarded as vulnerable at any point in time is wide, but these are the more common factors to take into consideration when considering a resident's state of vulnerability.

Factor 1

Underlying characteristic (people in these groups may not always require additional support just because of this characteristic)

- Older people (particularly those 75 years or older)
- 16 – 21-year-olds
- Disabled people
- Care leavers
- Lone parents under 21 years old
- Refugees or asylum seekers
- Carers
- Families with disabled children
- Ex service personnel
- Those living with a terminal illness

Factor 2

Ability to act, engage and cope (people may lack ability because of having one or more of these factors)

- Learning disability
- Mental illness
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Permanently impaired mobility or frailness
- Chronic, debilitating health conditions
- Addiction / serious substance or alcohol abuse
- Low level of literacy
- Low or non-English language skills
- Age related conditions that impact on independent living

Factor 3

Exceptional life event (people may not have factors 1 and 2 but may have recently experienced an exceptional or traumatic event, and so may be vulnerable at this point in time)

- Recent history of street homelessness
- Recently moved from supported accommodation to independent living
- Bereavement following the death of a partner, child, or other close relationship
- Having recently left care as a young person
- Sexual or racist abuse or serious harassment or other hate crime
- Recent experience of domestic violence
- Living in or recently left a refuge or homeless persons hostel
- Recently discharged from hospital or other institutional care
- Periods of sustained physical or mental illness at home
- Multiple debts and unable to meet basic needs e.g. fuel or food poverty
- Pregnant women
- Recently given birth, still born, or miscarried

- Recently released from prison after a custodial sentence
- Families with children excluded from school
- Ex-service personnel returning from area of conflict



CABINET

Subject Heading:

Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Gillian Ford; Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Adults and Wellbeing

SLT Lead:

Patrick Odling-Smee; Director of Live Well

Report Author and contact details:

Bradley Ramsey; Learning Disabilities and Autism Manager
Bradley.ramsey@nhs.net

Policy context:

The council has been enrolled in the Disability Confident Employer Scheme.

Increasing the employment of autistic people is a key priority under the national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026 and the local All-Age Autism Strategy 2022-2025.

Financial summary:

Implementation of the charter will have an impact on resources but there are no financial implications associated with recommending the charter for approval. It is envisaged the charter will be implemented within existing budgets/grant funding available. Any resourcing concerns will be raised through the appropriate channels as needs arise.

Is this a Key Decision?

N/A – Internal Policy Change

When should this matter be reviewed? April 2026

Reviewing OSC: People Overview and Scrutiny

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

X People - Things that matter for residents

X Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

X Resources - A well run Council that delivers for People and Place.

SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Havering Employment Charter for the Employment of People with Learning Disabilities and Autistic People aims at increasing the number of autistic people and people with a learning disability employed directly by Havering Council. The charter aligns with the Council's wider aims under the Disability Confident Employer Scheme and is the initial step of a multi-staged approach aimed at reducing employment inequalities for people with learning disabilities and autistic people within the borough.
- 1.2. The charter is underpinned by several key principles aimed at developing and sustaining meaningful employment opportunities, where appropriate and suitably assessed for employment, within the council. These are nurturing a disability confident and inclusive culture within Havering Council, empowering employing managers, providing competitive meaningful employment, providing a person-centred approach to work and workplace support, and a commitment to continuous evaluation and improvement of the workforce.
- 1.3. People with learning disabilities and autistic people are two groups, among several others with protected characteristics, of individuals who are heavily underrepresented in the workforce, being significantly more likely to be socio-economically inactive even when compared to people with other recognised disabilities.
- 1.4. The council undertakes various initiatives aimed at reducing economic activity within Havering, and whilst these initiatives may include activity for autistic people and people with learning disabilities, due to the specific adaptations and requirements, a more focused approach will provide greater refinement in addressing the inequality.
- 1.5. The implementation of the charter will be overseen by the Learning Disabilities and Autism Employment Steering Group and monitored within the annual reporting on Workforce data. The steering group will initially support the council to improve data collection and reporting employment of individuals with disabilities and develop an action plan across the council. The action plan will be reviewed and refreshed annually to adapt to emerging trends, initiatives and developments relating to the employment of autistic people and people with learning disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.0 Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Agree to and support the addition of the of the employment charter into the Council's Human Resources recruitment and selection policy within the conditions of the Disability Confident scheme.

REPORT DETAIL

- 3.0 Nationally the paid employment rate for working age autistic people ([3 in 10 in employment, The Buckland Review 2024](#)) unemployment rate) and people with a learning disability ([26.7%, Mencap, The Big Learning Disability Survey 2022](#)) is significantly lower than other types of long-term disability ([5 in 10, The Buckland Review 2024](#)) and the general population ([7 in 10, The Buckland Review](#)). People with either of these long-term conditions are more likely to be in receipt of benefits and be in contact with multiple council services i.e. social care, housing, benefits, etc.
- 3.1 The Havering JSNA 2025 highlighted that these individuals are even more likely to be economically inactive with largest employment gaps in Havering for adults aged 18 to 64 years being those with learning disabilities, with a difference of 80.7% against the employment rate of the general population (2022/23). This compares to 70.5% across London and 70.9% across England ([LBH Havering JSNA 2025 - Living Well, Ageing Well & Dying Well](#)).
- 3.2 Traditional employment schemes offered under social care for autistic people and people with a learning disability can often be seen as providing limited access to meaningful competitive employment and limited long term career prospects for those individuals. These schemes are often subsidised by the local authority or other organisations and offer limited career development or prospects of moving into other forms of employment.
- 3.3 The Learning Disabilities and Autistic Employment Steering Group was established to provide a specific focus in developing a robust approach to increasing the employment of autistic people and people with learning disabilities within the borough of Havering. The group has developed a several phased approach to achieve this aim with the first phase aimed at optimising Havering Council's position as one of the largest employers in the borough with over 2,400 directly employed and 700 contingent workers.

- 3.4 The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is aimed at embedding inclusive practices into the recruitment and retention processes within the council. Subject to Human Resource policies being updated and approved, the implementation of the charter identifies five key actions that must be undertaken by the Council to more appropriately recruit and support autistic people and people with a learning disability:
- 3.4.1 **Workforce Engagement:** Engage with the workforce to promote the benefits of hiring individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people and provide training on inclusive practices.
 - 3.4.2 **Selective Recruitment Focus:** Automatically enable people with learning disabilities and autistic people who meet the minimum criteria eligible for interviews when applying for job opportunities advertised across the local authority in line with the conditions of the Disability Confident guaranteed interview scheme.
 - 3.4.3 **Inclusive Recruitment Practices: The Talent Team** will support hiring managers with providing more flexible recruitment approaches and selection exercises to reduce disadvantages in the recruitment processes within the remit of reasonable adjustments as identified through the recruitment application process.
 - 3.4.4 **Individualized Employment Plans:** Adopt inclusivity focused personalised employment plans that outline the individual's goals, strengths, and support needs. This will include ensuring that the PDR process captures flexibility and reasonable adjustments agreed in work plans.
 - 3.4.5 **Job Matching and Placement:** Further support matching individuals with suitable job opportunities that align with their skills and interests.
 - 3.4.6 **On-the-Job Support:** Provide ongoing person-centred support and coaching via 121 and PDR processes to help individuals succeed in their employment.
 - 3.4.7 **Community Partnerships:** Collaborate with internal community organisations within Havering local authority to create a network of support for individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people in the workplace.
- 3.5 The charter and proposed actions are primarily reliant on Human Resources to implement, and they have been engaged via the Employment Steering Group. It has been noted that whilst there should

be minimal financial, the resources impact on the boarder Human Resources services will be significant. It is expected that the majority of the impacted caused by implementation of the charter should fall in line with the requirements under the Disability Confident Employer Scheme which the council is mandated to meet to retain the accreditation. It is expected that the impact will be managed within the current budget and resources with the LDA Employment Steering Group providing supporting in obtaining the specialist knowledge and training required to implement the changes required. In addition, the LDA Employment Steering Group will support with applications for external funding to increase resources available locally.

3.6 Support from the extended leadership team to implement the charter within the council will help to support the next phases proposed by the Learning Disabilities and Autism Employment Steering Group. These phases are:

- 3.6.1 **Implementation of the employment charter within the council;** to increase direct employment of individuals with learning disabilities and autistic individuals
- 3.6.2 **Mandating inclusion of social value requirements for employment of people with learning disabilities and autistic people in all external contracts procured by the council;** to increase indirect employment of individuals with learning disabilities and autistic individuals.
- 3.6.3 **Working with local employers within Havering;** to increase employment of employment of individuals with learning disabilities and autistic individuals and create wider employment pathways within Havering.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

4.0 Reasons for the decision:

- 4.1 Adoption of the Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities will enable the council to meet the aims and requirements of the Disability Confident Employer Scheme. Furthermore, it would enable the council to support the reduction in outcomes inequalities for a group of people that are significantly disadvantaged nationally and locally, but not to the detriment of other underrepresented groups who have declared a disability. This is expected to be accomplish with limited financial and legal impact within the council as it is a modification of process and policies. The implementation is expected to have a large impact on Human Resources but will be supported by the LDA Employment Steering Group with appropriate

expertise to manage this within the current budgets. The benefits associated in making this change within the council are significant enough to warrant the change with acknowledgement to the resource implications.

4.2 Other options considered:

4.3 A consideration was made to the council not adopting any kind of charter. As the council has made a commitment towards becoming a disability confident employer, there are already modification of the recruitment processes and policies taking place. By not adopting the charter the council will neither be negatively or positively impacting local Havering communities. whilst adopting the charter now will provide a net positive to the borough and limit impact due to the wider changes already being undertaken.

4.4 Additionally, a consideration was made to adoption of a wider policy to impact other disadvantaged groups. Whilst it was acknowledged that this approach would also provide have a net positive impact on local Havering communities, it was agreed that a specific focus on autistic people and people with learning disabilities was required to address the specific inequalities within those communities whilst wider council processes are updated. The employment rate for people with learning disabilities and autistic people are significantly lower than for other kinds of disabilities and both groups of individuals are likely to suffer other forms of discrimination which further negatively impacts them.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

5.0 Financial implications and risks:

5.1 There are no financial costs associated with the direct adoption of the charter, but there is the potential for costs for implementation of the charter beyond those associated with general recruitment and retention practices. There are several government schemes which provide additional funding to support individuals with disabilities into employment which would mitigate any potential costs required for reasonable adjustments to the workplace to support the recruitment on individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people.

5.2 Legal implications and risks:

5.3 All local authority employed staff are to be appointed on merit pursuant to section 7 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

5.4 The positive action provisions in the Equality Act 2010 allow employers to take action that may involve treating one group that

shares a protected characteristic more favourably than others, where this is a proportionate way to enable or encourage members of that group to: (i) overcome or minimise a disadvantage; or (ii) have their different needs met; or (iii) participate in a particular activity. This is called taking 'positive action'. "Positive action" is lawful provided that it is done so in compliance with sections 158 and 159 of the Equality Act 2010. Disability is one of the nine protected characteristics that are covered in the Equality Act 2010.

- 5.5 Workers with disabilities or physical or mental health conditions are legally entitled for reasonable adjustments to be made when carrying out their jobs pursuant to section 20 and 21 of the Equality Act 2010.

6.0 Human Resources implications and risks:

- 6.1 The implementation of the Charter may have a significant impact on the Council's HR&OD support service as well as an impact on Leaders/Managers across the Council who will need to be trained and supported. To fully and successfully implement the Charter and embed the necessary practices and organisational culture change the following will need to be planned and considered.

6.2 HR Considerations for Implementation.

6.3.1 Training and Upskilling Needs

The charter outlines several inclusive recruitment practices, such as:

- Guaranteed interviews for eligible candidates.
- Flexible recruitment approaches.
- Personalised employment plans
- On-the-job support and coaching.

These will require additional staff training, particularly for HR and hiring managers, to ensure they can confidently apply inclusive practices and understand the support needs of autistic and learning-disabled candidates

6.3 Embedding Across Directorates

- 6.4 There is a noted concern about how the charter will be embedded across all council directorates, including those not traditionally associated with social care or SEND. This suggests that HR will need to support the coordination with directorate leads to ensure consistent application. Directorates will require change management support and directorate-specific guidance.

6.5 Ongoing Support and Monitoring

The charter includes commitments to:

- Annual review and refresh of the action plan.

- Monitoring via workforce data reporting.

Oversight will be provided by the Learning Disabilities and Autism Employment Steering Group

This implies a need to evolve workforce data to include:

- Data collection and analysis, beyond our current workforce data set.
- Coordination with the steering group.
- Continuous review and improvement cycles.

6.6 Community and Partnership Engagement

HR may also need to support collaboration with local community organisations to build a wraparound support model. This adds a layer of external engagement that may require:

- Liaison roles or partnership leads.
- Capacity to manage relationships and integrate community input into recruitment and retention strategies.

6.7 Policy Integration and Compliance

The charter is to be embedded into the Council's recruitment and retention policy, aligning with the Disability Confident Employer Scheme. While the report notes minimal financial impact, HR will need to:

- Review and update all existing policies.
- Ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).
- Possibly conduct or support Equality and Health Impact Assessments (EHIA) as part of policy changes.

6.8 Summary Recommendations

To effectively deliver and embed the charter, there will be considerable impacts for HR that will need to be planned as part of the Corporate Workforce Strategy Refresh 2020-2027 action plan, especially within the EDI specialism, these include, but are not limited to:

- A planned approach to effectively resource for training, monitoring, and partnership engagement.
- A planned approach to establishing cross-directorate implementation leads.
- A planned approach to building capacity for inclusive recruitment and personalised employment planning.
- A planned approach to ensuring policy alignment and compliance tracking.

7.0 Equalities implications and risks:

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not. Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

7.1 People with learning disabilities and autistic people are often discriminated against and marginalised within the workforce. Adoption of the employment charter is expected to have a net positive outcome in enabling the council to better support the recruitment and employment of individuals with those disabilities and empowering those who are employed with their career development.

7.2 Individuals with these protected characteristics are less likely to be employed and are more likely to be considered to have poor social-economic status. Implementation of the charter should directly support social mobility within Havering and reduce inequalities within these marginalised groups. It is expected to have an overall net positive for the borough.

7.3 A full EQIA has been completed and is attached as an appendix to the cabinet paper.

7.4 Summary of Charter on Inclusive Employment for Autistic and Learning-Disabled People.

- **Focus:** The Charter targets two of the most underemployed and marginalised groups—autistic people and those with learning disabilities—who often face multiple, compounding disadvantages.
- **Evidence-Based Approach:** Supported by research and reviews (e.g., Havering JSNA, Mencap, Buckland Review), making a strong legal and moral case for action under the Equality Act 2010.
- **Concrete Actions Proposed:** Includes guaranteed interviews, personalised job matching, and on-the-job support—aiming for systemic, not symbolic, change.
- **Inclusive Language:** Consider refining phrasing to reflect a supportive, inclusive workplace culture.
- **Community Engagement:** Partnering with local organisations is key to building a wraparound support model for recruitment and retention.
- **Strategic Alignment:** Ties in with the Disability Confident Employer Scheme, reinforcing accountability with minimal extra cost or duplication.

- **Implementation Concerns:** Lack of clarity on how the Charter will be embedded across all council directorates, including non-social care services.
- **Intersectionality Considerations:** Suggest including how race, gender, and age may intersect with disability, and whether minorities groups are proportionately represented—aligning with the Council’s Anti-Racism Charter.
- **Co-Production:** It should be clear whether autistic and learning-disabled individuals were involved in shaping the Charter, as lived experience is essential.
- **Overall Assessment:** The Charter reflects strong, progressive intent and, if adopted, could establish Havering Council as a leader in inclusive employment practice.

8.0 Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks

- 8.1 The health and wellbeing impact is fully explored in the EqHIA. There are no negative health and wellbeing risks associated with the adoption of the charter, and it is expected that the charter will have a net positive impact on the autistic people and people with a learning disability that are supported via the proposal by improving employment outcomes.
- 8.2 Improvements in employment outcomes are directly linked to improvements in socio-economic status, and mental health and wellbeing. Additionally, autistic people and people with learning disabilities are at greater risk of social isolation than the general population so it is expected that the social isolation risk should reduce for the individuals benefiting from the implementation of the charter.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The adoption of and implementation of the charter is not expected to have any negative environmental or climate impact. Under the proposals, the council will support local Havering residents into local jobs. This should support the councils environmental and climate agenda.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities.
2. EqHIA for the Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities.

The London Borough of Havering Employment Charter – Employment of People with Learning Disabilities and Autistic People

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. Inequalities and inequity in employment can be associated with inequalities and inequity in other areas of life including health, social mobility, and education. People with learning disabilities and autistic people are more likely to experience life inequalities and be unemployed relative to both the general population and even people with other kinds of disability.
- 1.2. To help reduce inequalities in employment outcomes for people with learning disabilities and autistic people, the London Borough of Havering will adopt the following charter to increase the number of people with learning disabilities and autistic people employed locally.
- 1.3. This charter forms part of the borough's wider employment strategy, the local autism strategy, and our commitment to the Disability Confident Employer scheme.

2.0 Vision

- 2.1. To promote employment opportunities and personal and career development for people with learning disabilities and autistic people within Havering to reduce inequalities by enabling equal employment opportunities for meaningful and sustainable employment.

3.0 Mission

- 3.1. To increase the number of individuals with learning disabilities and autism employed directly by the London Borough of Havering and to support them in achieving their employment goals through appropriate personalised development once employed.

4.0 Key Principles for Employment Opportunities

- 4.1. To enable the local authority to achieve its vision the charter sets out six key principles that the local authority will adopt to make recruitment, and employment opportunities more inclusive for people with learning disabilities and autistic people.
 - 4.1.1. **Meaningful Competitive Employment:** Ensure that the local authority provides job opportunities that provide competitive living wages and enable people to meaningfully develop their career paths.
 - 4.1.2. **Disability Confident Employer:** Empower hiring managers to be confident in the recruitment and support of individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people.
 - 4.1.3. **Person-Centred Approach:** Tailor employment opportunities to meet the unique needs, preferences, and goals of each person.

- 4.1.4.**Inclusion:** Promote inclusive workplaces where people with disabilities work alongside their non-disabled peers.
- 4.1.5.**Empowerment:** Empower people with disabilities to make informed choices about their employment and career paths.
- 4.1.6.**Continuous Improvement:** Commit to ongoing evaluation and improvement of the recruitment and employment practices within Havering local authority.

5.0 Objectives of the Employment Charter for People with Learning Disabilities and Autistic People

- 5.1. The objectives associated with adoption of the employment charter for people with learning disabilities and autistic people are:
 - 5.1.1.**To Increase Employment Opportunities within Havering Local Authority for People with Learning Disabilities and Autistic People:** Develop a positive discrimination approach to job opportunities and expand job opportunities available for people with learning disabilities and autistic people within the local authority. This objective will apply to all employment opportunities within Havering local authority including all paid employment, internships, graduate schemes, apprenticeships, and work experience opportunities.
 - 5.1.2.**To Further Development the Local Authority Towards Maintaining its Position as a Disability Confident Employer:** Develop managerial training to further develop inclusive workplace environment where employees can be confident in interviewing, recruitment of and support of individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people.
 - 5.1.3.**To Enhance Skills and Competencies of People with Learning Disabilities and Autistic People Employed by the Local Authority:** Provide continuous training and support to help people with learning disabilities and autistic people to develop the skills needed for carer development.
 - 5.1.4.**To Monitor and Evaluate the Success of the Interventions that are Aimed at Supporting the Implementation of the Employment Charter and Employment Principles:** Continuous assessment of the effectiveness of the supported employment services and make necessary adjustments to improve outcomes in the recruitment of people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

6.0 Key Actions to Support the Employment Charters Approach to Employment Opportunities

- 6.1. The following actions should be undertaken to implement this charter as part of the approach to making Havering local authority a more inclusive workplace:
 - 6.1.1.**Workforce Engagement:** Engage with the workforce to promote the benefits of hiring individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people and provide training on inclusive practices.

- 6.1.2. **Selective Recruitment Focus:** Automatically make people with learning disabilities and autistic people who meet the minimum criteria eligible for interviews when applying for job opportunities advertised across the local authority.
- 6.1.3. **Inclusive Recruitment Practices:** HR should support all hiring managers with adopting more flexible recruitment approaches across recruitment exercises to reduce disadvantages inherent in traditional interview and recruitment processes.
- 6.1.4. **Individualized Employment Plans:** Adopt inclusivity focused personalised employment plans that outline the individual's goals, strengths, and support needs.
- 6.1.5. **Job Matching and Placement:** Further support matching individuals with suitable job opportunities that align with their skills and interests.
- 6.1.6. **On-the-Job Support:** Provide ongoing person-centred support and coaching to help individuals succeed in their employment.
- 6.1.7. **Community Partnerships:** Collaborate with internal community organisations within Havering local authority to create a network of support for individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people in the workplace.

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Equality & Health Impact Assessment (EqHIA)

Document control

Title of activity:	Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities
Lead officer:	Bradley Ramsey, Learning Disabilities and Autism Manager, Havering Integrated Team at Place.
Approved by:	Patric Odling-Smee, Director of Live Well.
Date completed:	14/07/2025
Scheduled date for review:	To be advised

Please note that the Corporate Policy & Diversity and Public Health teams require at least **5 working days** to provide advice on EqHIAs.

Did you seek advice from the Corporate Policy & Diversity team?	No
Did you seek advice from the Public Health team?	No
Does the EqHIA contain any confidential or exempt information that would prevent you publishing it on the Council's website?	No

Please note that EqHIAs are **public** documents and must be made available on the Council's [EqHIA webpage](#).

Please submit the completed form via e-mail to EqHIA@havering.gov.uk thank you.

1. Equality & Health Impact Assessment Checklist

Please complete the following checklist to determine whether or not you will need to complete an EqHIA and ensure you keep this section for your audit trail. If you have any questions, please contact EqHIA@havering.gov.uk for advice from either the Corporate Diversity or Public Health teams. Please refer to the Guidance in Appendix 1 on how to complete this form.

About your activity

1	Title of activity	Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities		
2	Type of activity	This is a strategic internal policy relating to human resources, recruitment and retention. Implementation of an employment charter to enable more inclusive recruitment and retention practices within Havering Council. The activity is specifically aimed towards increasing the employment of autistic people and people with learning disabilities within Havering Council.		
3	Scope of activity	Implementation of an employment charter to enable more inclusive recruitment and retention practices within Havering Council. The activity is specifically aimed towards the employment of autistic people and people with learning disabilities.		
4a	Are you changing, introducing a new, or removing a service, policy, strategy or function?	Yes	If the answer to <u>any</u> of these questions is 'YES', please continue to question 5.	If the answer to <u>all</u> of the questions (4a, 4b & 4c) is 'NO', please go to question 6.
4b	Does this activity have the potential to impact (either positively or negatively) upon people (9 protected characteristics)?	Yes		
4c	Does the activity have the potential to impact (either positively or negatively) upon any factors which determine people's health and wellbeing?	No		
5	If you answered YES:	Please complete the EqHIA in Section 2 of this document. Please see Appendix 1 for Guidance.		
6	If you answered NO:	<i>Please provide a clear and robust explanation on why your activity does not require an EqHIA. This is essential in case the activity is challenged under the Equality Act 2010.</i> <i>Please keep this checklist for your audit trail.</i>		

Completed by:	Bradley Ramsey, Learning Disabilities and Autism Manager, Havering Integrated Team at Place.
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Date:	14/07/2025
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2. The EqHIA – How will the strategy, policy, plan, procedure and/or service impact on people?

Background/context:
The Learning Disabilities and Autistic Employment Steering Group was established to provide a specific focus in developing a robust approach to increasing the employment of autistic people and people with learning disabilities within the borough of Havering. The group has developed a several phased approach to achieve this aim with the first phase aimed at optimizing Havering Council's position as one of the largest employers in the borough with over 8000 employees. The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is aimed at embedding inclusive practices into the recruitment and retention processes within the council. Subject to Human Resource policies being updated and approved, the implementation of the charter identifies five key actions that the council should undertake to achieve this aim. Implementation of the charter is expected to have a positive effect on the employment of people with learning disabilities and autistic people within Havering that are directly employed by the council. <i>*Expand box as required</i>

Who will be affected by the activity?
This activity will affect working aged adults who are autistic or who have a learning disability who apply to work at Havering Council. Whilst this is expected to have a primary impact on individuals within those categories with reside within the borough, it would also impact on individuals with these protected characteristics who apply for employment opportunities with the council but reside in other geographical locations. <i>*Expand box as required</i>

Protected Characteristic - Age: Consider the full range of age groups		
<i>Please tick (✓) the relevant box:</i>		Overall impact:
Positive		The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is unlikely to impact on any citizens on Havering due to their age.

Neutral	☒	
Negative	☐	

**Expand box as required*

Evidence:

All recruitment and retention policies within Havering align with relevant legislation and statutory guidance relating to recruitment. This legislation and statutory guidance applies equally and proportionately to all age groups.

**Expand box as required*

Sources used:

The Equality Act 2010
Local Government and Housing Act 1989

**Expand box as required*

Protected Characteristic - Disability: Consider the full range of disabilities; including physical mental, sensory and progressive conditions		
Please tick (✓) the relevant box:		Overall impact: The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is likely to have a direct impact on Havering citizens due to their disability.
Positive	☒	
Neutral	☐	
Negative	☐	

**Expand box as required*

Evidence:

The charter sets out how to positively impact recruitment and retention of individuals with learning disabilities and autism. Individuals in either of these categories would be protected under the Disabilities Act 2010. Nationally the paid employment rate for working age autistic people ([3 in 10 in employment, The Buckland Review 2024](#)) unemployment rate) and people with a learning disability ([26.7%, Mencap, The Big Learning Disability Survey 2022](#)) is significantly lower than other types of long-term disability ([5 in 10, The Buckland Review 2024](#)) and the general population ([7 in 10, The Buckland Review](#)). People with either of these long-term conditions are more likely to be in receipt of benefits and be in contact with multiple council services i.e. social care, housing, benefits, etc.

The Havering JSNA 2025 highlighted that these individuals are even more likely to be economically inactive with largest employment gaps in Havering for adults aged 18 to 64 years being those with learning disabilities, with a difference of 80.7% against the

employment rate of the general population (2022/23). This compares to 70.5% across London and 70.9% across England ([LBH Havering JSNA 2025 - Living Well, Ageing Well & Dying Well](#)).

The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is aimed at embedding inclusive practices into the recruitment and retention processes within the council. This is expected to increase the number of individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people employed by the council and develop a more inclusive work environment within the council.

**Expand box as required*

Sources used:

The Buckland Review 2024
LBH Havering JSNA 2025 - Living Well, Ageing Well & Dying Well
Mencap – The Big Learning Disability Survey 2022.

**Expand box as required*

Protected Characteristic - Sex/gender: Consider both men and women

Please tick (✓)
the relevant box:

Positive

Neutral

Negative

Overall impact:

The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is unlikely to impact on any citizens of Havering because of their sex or gender.

**Expand box as required*

Evidence:

All recruitment and retention policies within Havering align with relevant legislation and statutory guidance relating to recruitment. This legislation and statutory guidance applies equally and proportionately to males and females.

**Expand box as required*

Sources used:

The Equality Act 2010
Local Government and Housing Act 1989

**Expand box as required*

Protected Characteristic - Ethnicity/race: Consider the impact on different ethnic groups and nationalities		
Please tick (✓) the relevant box:		Overall impact: The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is unlikely to have a significant impact on any citizens of Havering because of their ethnicity.
Positive		
Neutral	✓	
Negative		
		<i>*Expand box as required</i>
Evidence: The prevalence of autism nationally is estimated at 1.8%. There is evidence in a discrepancy in prevalence across ethnicities with a national study by Cambridge University in 2021 highlighting that prevalence in those of black ethnicity was higher at (2.1%) and lowest in Roma/Irish Traveller people (0.85%). There is presently limited equivalent data in in Havering, but it is acknowledged that this discrepancy may be present. Data from the 2021 census highlighted that ethnic minorities account for only 24.7% of the population in Havering which is lower than the london average. Due to the relative sizes of the population and cross over between autism and BME groups, it is unlikely that the implementation of the charter will have an impact on individuals based on ethnicity, but there may be a small net positive.		
With this in mind, the Learning Disabilities and Autism Employment Steering group will ensure that consideration continues to be given to issues affecting all categories across the local demographic.		
		<i>*Expand box as required</i>

**Expand box as required*

**Expand box as required*

Sources used:

Census data 2021.

LBH Havering JSNA 2025 - Living

Well, Ageing Well & Dying Well

Association of Race/Ethnicity and Social Disadvantage With Autism Prevalence in 7 Million School Children in England, Roman-Urrestarazu et al, 2021. JAMA Pediatr

Published Online: March 29, 2021

Protected Characteristic - Religion/faith: Consider people from different religions or beliefs including those with no religion or belief

Please tick (✓)
the relevant box:

Positive

Neutral

Negative

Overall impact:

The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is unlikely to have a significant impact on any citizens of Havering because of their religion.

**Expand box as required*

Evidence:

There is limited demographic data available specific to the religions of people with learning disabilities and autism. All recruitment and retention policies within Havering align with relevant legislation and statutory guidance relating to recruitment. This legislation and statutory guidance applies equally and proportionately to all religious groups.

**Expand box as required*

Sources used: The Equality Act 2010 Local Government and Housing Act 1989	<i>*Expand box as required</i>
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Protected Characteristic - Sexual orientation: Consider people who are heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual	
Overall impact: The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is unlikely to have a significant impact on any citizens of Havering because of their sexual orientation.	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	
Evidence: There is limited demographic data available specific to the religions of people with learning disabilities and autism. All recruitment and retention policies within Havering align with relevant legislation and statutory guidance relating to recruitment. This legislation and statutory guidance applies equally and proportionately to people who are heterosexual, lesbian, gay and bisexual.	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	
Sources used: The Equality Act 2010 Local Government and Housing Act 1989	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	

Protected Characteristic - Gender reassignment: Consider people who are seeking, undergoing or have received gender reassignment surgery, as well as people whose gender identity is different from their gender at birth	
Overall impact: The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is unlikely to have a significant impact on any citizens of Havering who are seeking, undergoing or have received gender reassignment surgery, or anyone whose gender identity is different from their gender at birth.	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	

Evidence: All recruitment and retention policies within Havering align with relevant legislation and statutory guidance relating to recruitment. This legislation and statutory guidance does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of their gender identity. <i>*Expand box as required</i>
Sources used: The Equality Act 2010 Local Government and Housing Act 1989 <i>*Expand box as required</i>

Protected Characteristic - Marriage/civil partnership: Consider people in a marriage or civil partnership		
Please tick (✓) the relevant box:		Overall impact: The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is unlikely to have a significant impact on any citizens of Havering who are in a marriage or civil partnership. <i>*Expand box as required</i>
Positive		
Neutral	✓	
Negative		
Evidence: All recruitment and retention policies within Havering align with relevant legislation and statutory guidance relating to recruitment. This legislation and statutory guidance applies equally and proportionately to families where carers and parents are in a marriage or civil partnership, or in neither. <i>*Expand box as required</i>		

Sources used: The Equality Act 2010 Local Government and Housing Act 1989 <i>*Expand box as required</i>

Protected Characteristic - Pregnancy, maternity and paternity: Consider those who are pregnant and those who are undertaking maternity or paternity leave

Please tick (✓) the relevant box:		Overall impact: The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is unlikely to have a significant impact on any citizens of Havering who are pregnant or relating to matters of maternity and paternity. <i>*Expand box as required</i>
Positive		
Neutral	✓	
Negative		

Evidence: All recruitment and retention policies within Havering align with relevant legislation and statutory guidance relating to recruitment. This legislation and statutory guidance does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of pregnancy, maternity or paternity. <i>*Expand box as required</i>
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Sources used: The Equality Act 2010 Local Government and Housing Act 1989 <i>*Expand box as required</i>

Socio-economic status: Consider those who are from low income or financially excluded backgrounds

Please tick (✓) the relevant box:		Overall impact: The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is likely to have a significant impact on any citizens of Havering who are from low income or financially excluded backgrounds. <i>*Expand box as required</i>
Positive	✓	
Neutral		
Negative		

Evidence: The charter sets out how to positively impact recruitment and retention of individuals with learning disabilities and autism. Individuals in either of these categories would be protected under the Disabilities Act 2010. Nationally the paid employment rate for working age autistic people (3 in 10 in employment, The Buckland Review 2024) unemployment rate) and people with a learning disability (26.7%, Mencap, The Big Learning Disability Survey 2022) is significantly lower than other types of long-term disability (5 in 10, The Buckland Review 2024) and the general population (7 in 10, The Buckland Review). People with either of these long-term conditions are more likely to be in receipt of benefits and be in contact with multiple council services i.e. social care, housing, benefits, etc. The Havering JSNA 2025 highlighted that these individuals are even more likely to be economically inactive with largest employment gaps in Havering for adults aged 18 to 64 years being those with learning disabilities, with a difference of 80.7% against the employment rate of the general population (2022/23). This compares to 70.5% across London and 70.9% across England (LBH Havering JSNA 2025 - Living Well, Ageing Well & Dying Well). The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is aimed at embedding inclusive practices into the recruitment and retention processes within the council. This is expected to increase the number of individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people employed by the council and develop a more inclusive work environment within the council. <i>*Expand box as required</i>
Sources used: The Buckland Review 2024 LBH Havering JSNA 2025 - Living Well, Ageing Well & Dying Well Mencap – The Big Learning Disability Survey 2022. <i>*Expand box as required</i>

Health & Wellbeing Impact: Consider both short and long-term impacts of the activity on a person's physical and mental health, particularly for disadvantaged, vulnerable or at-risk groups. Can health and wellbeing be positively promoted through this activity? Please use the Health and Wellbeing Impact Tool in Appendix 2 to help you answer this question.		
Please tick (✓) all the relevant boxes that apply:	Overall impact: Positive	The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is likely to have an impact on the health and wellbeing of citizens of Havering.
Positive	✓	
Neutral		
Negative		
		<i>*Expand box as required</i>

		Do you consider that a more in-depth HIA is required as a result of this brief assessment? Please tick (✓) the relevant box Yes ☐ No ☒
Evidence: There is evidence that engaging in employment and other meaningful activities has a positive effect on mental health and wellbeing. Individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people are also at greater risk of being socially isolated. Strategies to improve employment and retention of individuals is likely to positively impact their overall health and wellbeing. <i>*Expand box as required</i>		
Sources used: PHE - Health matters: health and work – 2019 WHO healthy workplace framework and model: background and supporting literature and practices - 2010 <i>*Expand box as required</i>		

3. Outcome of the Assessment

The EqHIA assessment is intended to be used as an improvement tool to make sure the activity maximises the positive impacts and eliminates or minimises the negative impacts. The possible outcomes of the assessment are listed below and what the next steps to take are:

Please tick (✓) what the overall outcome of your assessment was:

✓	1. The EqHIA identified <u>no significant concerns</u> OR the identified <u>negative concerns</u> have already been <u>addressed</u>	➔	Proceed with implementation of your activity
	2. The EqHIA identified some <u>negative impact</u> which still needs <u>to be addressed</u>	➔	COMPLETE SECTION 4: Complete action plan and finalise the EqHIA
	3. The EqHIA identified some <u>major concerns</u> and showed that it is <u>impossible to diminish negative impacts</u> from the activity to an acceptable or even lawful level	➔	Stop and remove the activity or revise the activity thoroughly . Complete an EqHIA on the revised proposal.

4. Action Plan

The real value of completing an EqHIA comes from the identifying the actions that can be taken to eliminate/minimise negative impacts and enhance/optimize positive impacts. In this section you should list the specific actions that set out how you will address any negative equality and health & wellbeing impacts you have identified in this assessment. Please ensure that your action plan is: more than just a list of proposals and good intentions; sets ambitious yet achievable outcomes and timescales; and is clear about resource implications.

Protected characteristic / health & wellbeing impact	Identified Negative or Positive impact	Recommended actions to mitigate Negative impact* or further promote Positive impact	Outcomes and monitoring**	Timescale	Lead officer
Disability	Positive	Appropriate review of the charter and workforce development policies within the council to improve recruitment and retention. Promotion of inclusive recruitment practices via staff training.	Increase in the number of people employed with learning disabilities and autistic people by the council. This will be monitored and reported in the workforce data.	Within three months of agreement to proceed with the implementation. Changes expected within 12 months and reported annually continuously	Dan Dubec

Add further rows as necessary

* You should include details of any future consultations and any actions to be undertaken to mitigate negative impacts

** Monitoring: You should state how the impact (positive or negative) will be monitored; what outcome measures will be used; the known (or likely) data source for outcome measurements; how regularly it will be monitored; and who will be monitoring it (if this is different from the lead officer).

5. Review

In this section you should identify how frequently the EqHIA will be reviewed; the date for next review; and who will be reviewing it.

Review:

This EqHIA will be reviewed six months after the implementation of the new tri-borough BHR Safeguarding Partnership and annually thereafter.

Scheduled date of review: April 2026

Lead Officer conducting the review: Bradley Ramsey, Learning Disabilities and Autism Manager for the Havering Integrated Team at Place.

