

Notice of Non-key Executive Decision

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| Subject Heading: | Approval to accept the International Recruitment Fund for Adult Social Care across North East London (NEL) for 2025/2026 |
| Decision Maker: | Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People |
| Cabinet Member: | Councillor Gillian Ford, Cabinet Members for Health and Adult Care Services |
| ELT Lead: | Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People |
| Report Author and contact details: | Kate Dempsey Assistant Director Principal Social Worker Adults T: 01708 431096 E: kate.dempsey@havering.gov.uk |
| Policy context: | Havering's Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy states: 'We support the development of our workforce so that we have a workforce that is equipped with the skills that are fit for purpose, flexible, proactive, responsive and resilient and motivated to stay in Havering.' |
| Financial summary: | The Department of Health and Social care (DHSC) has allocated North East London (NEL) £487,392 for 2025/26 to continue to support international recruitment for the adult social care sector with a particular focus on supporting displaced workers. |

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| Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee: | People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee |
| Is this decision exempt from being called-in? | The decision will be exempt from call in as it is a Non key Decision |

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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

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

For the reasons stated in this report, the Strategic Director of People is recommended to:

- a. accept the International Recruitment Fund for the amount of £487,392 on behalf of all North East London boroughs and their Adult Social Care Sectors for 2025/26
- b. Enter into the respective agreement for the acceptance of the funding.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

The Havering Constitution:

Scheme 3.3.3 Powers common to all Strategic Directors

1. General

- 1.1. To take any steps necessary for proper management and administration of allocated portfolios.

5. Grants

5.1. To apply for, accept and thereafter spend / allocate any grant funding connected with their directorate provided that any match funding or residual liabilities can be met from the existing budget of the directorate. For the avoidance of doubt this delegation shall allow the acceptance of any grant offered / allocated to the Council without any application.

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Background

In March 2023, the government announced the international recruitment fund for the adult social care sector, which made £15 million available to 15 regional and sub-regional partnerships across England to develop solutions to local challenges around the use of international recruitment and strengthen safeguards against exploitation. These 15 partnerships have used the funding to develop and deliver support offers to adult social care providers in their respective areas to enable them to make use of international recruitment where this assists their workforce strategy.

Funding awarded in 2023-24 and 2024-25

Havering was awarded **£370,000 in 2023-24** and **£403,000 in 2024-25** on behalf of partners so took the lead on managing this across North East London (NEL) which includes the following London boroughs:

- London Borough of Barking & Dagenham
- City of London

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- London Borough of Hackney
- London Borough of Havering
- London Borough of Newham
- London Borough of Redbridge
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- London Borough of Waltham Forest

2023-24 funding

A programme was developed in collaboration with the NEL boroughs to allocate this funding to a variety of providers to deliver interventions around staff and management development, specialised recruitment service, project support and pastoral care packages. The vast majority of these interventions took place from January to April 2024 and the aim was to use a proportion of the new awarded funding to continue this programme into 2024-25.

2024-25 funding

Alongside an increase in international recruitment of care staff, there was a rise in reports of unethical employment practices. The government committed to continuing to use international recruitment to support the adult social care workforce but wanted to increase focus on ensuring the ethical and sustainable employment of international recruits within the care system. This was envisaged to include the following activities

- facilitate in-country matching of overseas recruits who have been displaced by unethical practices or by their employer's sponsorship licence being revoked
- strengthen ethical practices in international recruitment and the employment of staff working in adult social care
- develop shared solutions to prevent and respond to exploitative employment issues
- build on the work of the previous fund
- work has taken place in conjunction with the centralised London Mailbox and the North East London Mailbox, in terms of identifying displaced workers; and with Care Providers Voice in providing support to displaced workers; and legal international advice and support for providers.

Meetings have taken place at a regional level with North East London (NEL) leads to continue to develop the existing programme offer in line with the DHSC's newest requirements. Work is also underway to engage with care provider alliances and those that have been internationally recruited to provide valued input and feedback into this programme.

Aim of 2025-26 funding

Support to Displaced Workers

The aim is to offer both pastoral and employment support to displaced workers. The **pastoral offer** includes support from Havering's existing refugee hub contact all affected workers on the list given by UKVI to ask what help if any that is required; local workers are invited to our refugee one stop shop for basic help such as food vouchers or GP registrations etc. . For the **employment offer**: details are passed to our commissioned provider Care Providers Voice (CPV) to support with finding alternative employment or to their residing borough for further localised support if required. CPV offers access to a job board and job broker to provide tailored support to find alternative employment, helps arrange interviews, provide feedback and assist with the onboarding process. CPV's platform also offers 130+

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free social care courses in various languages for displaced workers to access. CPV are currently working on an exclusive displaced worker Job Fair.

Engagement and Offer to the provider

Current support and engagement

- CPV is a free hub that is run for providers on behalf of providers and have great connections with the provider market across NEL.
- CPV has conducted a lot of engagement with over 100 providers with a large proportion of them advising that they do not have any licences and do not plan to recruit under the scheme now or in the future. However, it was noted that the costs of obtaining licences is a barrier.
- CPV have partnered with Ashton Brookes on this project and are offering the following legal support to providers:
 - Digital mock audits
 - Dedicated advice email
 - Dedicated training sessions from providers
 - Script sheets with a breakdown of stage by stage process for skilled worker sponsorship to help promote providers employing displaced workers
 - Supporting displaced workers with relocating to other areas of the country where providers have sponsorships and vacancies

Planned support

- To introduce a one-off payment to providers who have existing sponsorships to open more vacancies – this is currently being worked through with Havering's legal team
- CPV are currently working on an exclusive displaced worker job fair. Currently gathering a list of providers with licences to maximise outcomes.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1 – Do not accept the International Recruitment Fund Grant

This option has been considered and rejected as there a number of displaced workers working across North East London that need assistance to secure employment with alternative providers. Given the national shortage of care workers, it is crucial that we support these individuals and continue attracting new talent who can live and work safely and legally in the UK to help alleviate the staffing shortfall in this sector.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

The Strategic Director of People & DASS is actively working with regional directors and NEL leads to establish robust governance. Several meetings have been held to discuss the fund and mechanisms are being implemented to ensure we meet the DHSC's outlined aims.

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NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Kate Dempsey

Designation: Assistant Director Principal Social Worker Adults

Signature: 

Date: 04/07/2025

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Council has the power to accept the grant utilising its general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual can do, subject to any statutory constraints on the Council's powers. None of the constraints on the Council's Section 1 power are engaged by this decision.

Any dealings which the Council has with the grant will need to be in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) 25.1, 25.2 and 25.4 and a procurement process will be conducted in line with CPR where any procurement is required to deliver the project. This will also need compliance with the Councils governance arrangements.

The grant agreement will set out certain conditions which officers will ensure to adhere to in order to achieve full utilisation of the funding arrangements and prevent clawback recovery of sums. Subject to the officers having an understanding the terms and conditions of the grant funding, the Council may accept the grant funding and enter into the grant agreement.

A non-binding Memorandum of Understanding will be agreed between the boroughs to assist with development and delivery of activities attributed with the funding.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The decision paper is seeking approval to accept £487,392 of grant funding for 2025/26. This funding is for NEL With the London Borough of Havering as the lead. The funding is used to develop and deliver support offers to adult social care providers to enable them to make use of international recruitment where this assists their workforce strategy.

- To introduce a one-off payment to providers who have existing sponsorships to open more vacancies – this is currently being worked through with Havering's legal team
- Care Provider Voice are currently working on an exclusive displaced worker job fair. Currently gathering a list of providers with licences to maximise outcomes.

The council has accepted and run projects for the international recruitment fund from 23/24. The funding is allocated and accepted on a 1 year basis. The 24/25 funding was £403,000 and in 23/24 £370,000.

As this funding is for one year, any agreement / contract will need to end by the end of the 2025/26 financial year. Expenditure is linked to the funding and will only take place if the grant is accepted and will not exceed the total. There should be no pressure on councils existing budgets.

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Accepting this funding provides little risk to the councils' financial position. Any unspent funding will be returned to the DHSC unless there is approval from the DHSC to carry forward in 26/27.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

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.

There are no direct changes to employment terms, staffing structures, or internal HR policies for Council employees.

The funding and associated activities are focused on external care providers and displaced international care workers, not on Council-employed staff.

While there are no direct HR risks, the programme does intersect with workforce development and support in the following ways:

Support for Displaced Workers:

Pastoral and employment support is being provided to displaced international care workers, training, and job fairs.

This aligns with workforce development goals and may indirectly influence local labour market dynamics.

Provider Engagement and Capacity Building:

Legal and operational support is being offered to care providers to encourage ethical recruitment and expand sponsorship capacity.

This could improve workforce stability and reduce turnover in the local adult social care sector.

Training and Upskilling:

Over 130 free social care courses are available in multiple languages for displaced workers, supporting skill development and integration.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising its functions. This includes to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not. This is the public sector equality duty. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

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“Due regard” is the regard that is appropriate in all the full circumstances. The weight to be attached to each need is a matter for the Council. As long as the Council is properly aware of the effects and has taken them in to account, the duty is discharged.

Our NEL International Recruitment Team currently collect demographic data on D.O.B (Age), Gender and Ethnicity of displaced persons, to inform localised support and we will consider any implications for these groups at an NEL level at the steering group.

The programme recognises that displaced international care workers may face multiple, overlapping disadvantages—such as those related to race, migration status, and socio-economic vulnerability. By combining pastoral support (e.g. food vouchers, GP registration) with tailored employment services and multilingual training, the design aims to address these intersecting barriers and promotes fairer, more inclusive outcomes across North East London.

Consideration of EDI is incorporated within the legal and operational support for providers

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[International recruitment regional fund for the adult social care sector 2025 to 2026: guidance for regional partnerships - GOV.UK](#)

APPENDICES

None

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Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Delete as applicable

~~Proposal NOT agreed because~~

Details of decision maker

Signed



Name: Barbara Nicholls

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title: Strategic Director of People

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date: 12 September 2025

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to Committee Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____

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