

Notice of Non-Key Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Permission to Direct Award the International recruitment grant to Care Providers Voice
Decision Maker:	Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Gillian Ford, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Care Services
ELT Lead:	Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People
Report Author and contact details:	Sophie Barron, Senior Commissioner – Ageing Well E: Sophie.Barron@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. North East London (NEL) boroughs have agreed to commission Care Providers Voice £181,000 to provide crucial employer introductions to enable these workers to source alternative employment. This amount will also include legal support delivered by

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	Ashton Brookes to provide mock audits of care providers.
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

This report is seeking approval from the Strategic Director of People to:

- directly award a contract to Care Providers Voice for the provision of job introduction support for international recruits across North East London (NEL) and to work with the legal firm Ashton Brookes to conduct mock UK Visa & Immigration (UKVI) service inspections on a small selection of care providers, at an estimated cost of £181,000. The contract period will be from 1st August 2025 to 31st July 2026.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Part 3 of the Council's Constitution

Scheme 3.3.3 - Powers common to all Strategic Directors

1. General

1.1 To take any steps, and take any decisions, necessary for the proper management and administration of their allocated directorate, in accordance with applicable Council policies and procedures.

4. Contracts

4.2. To award all contracts with a total contract value of below £1,000,000 other than contracts covered by Contract Procedure Rule 16.3. This delegation shall include the ability to extend or vary a contract up to and including a value of £1,000,000 (provided that the extension is in line with the existing contractual provisions).

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This report is seeking approval from, the Strategic Director of People to directly award a contract to Care Providers Voice (CPV) for the provision of job introduction support for international recruits across North East London (NEL) and to work with the legal firm Ashton Brookes to conduct mock UK Visa & Immigration (UKVI) service inspections on a small selection of care providers, at an estimated cost of £181,000.

Why a direct award is needed

Due to the urgent need to mobilise support for displaced workers and the specialist nature of the service required—particularly around immigration, licensing, and care sector recruitment—formal benchmarking has not been undertaken. The speed at which this support needed to be established, combined with the unique expertise held by CPV in this area, meant that identifying comparable providers or conducting a market exercise was not feasible within the required timeframe. CPV's proven track record, local presence, and sector-specific capabilities make them uniquely positioned to deliver this service effectively and immediately. In addition to their operational readiness, CPV already hold contracts with all NEL boroughs, meaning that formal contractual relationships are in place across the region. This not only streamlines mobilisation and delivery but also ensures consistency in service standards. For these reasons, we are

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waiving CPR rules. A waiver was delivered and agreed at GRG panel on the 30th of October 2025.

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.

Current situation

For 2024 to 2025, the [international recruitment regional fund](#) has made £16 million available to regional partnerships to set up and run support offers for international recruits to understand their rights and switch employers more easily when they have been impacted by a licence revocation.

Across every region, there is a pool of international workers already in the country who have been affected by these revocations and continue to have the right to work in the UK until their visa is officially curtailed.

The DHSC encourage all international ASC workers who have been affected by a revocation to contact their regional partnership for support. Providers looking to recruit are also advised to consider this pool of workers before looking to recruit from overseas.

Regional support can consist of:

- Advice and guidance - help with understanding visa status and employment rights
- Employment support - support in finding a new employer who can sponsor visas
- Help with accessing financial support if struggling due to job loss or unpaid wages
- Mental health and wellbeing support such as buddying schemes and help to access counselling

Current service delivery

CPV delivered The NEL International Recruitment Support Service between June 2024 to July 2025 and provided targeted employment and pastoral support to international care recruits affected by sponsorship licence revocation and promoted ethical recruitment. They operated through coordinated referral pathways, partnership working, and rigorous monitoring to ensure positive outcomes for recruits and the wider care sector.

Between June 2024 and July 2025, the service successfully supported displaced international care workers across North East London, facilitating 22 job offers and 6 new starters in secure roles. Engagement with providers was extensive, reaching 263 organisations and achieving a 100% engagement rate, with 32 providers open to sponsoring displaced workers in future. Candidate engagement was also strong, with over 1,000 individuals contacted and high conversion rates for support platforms.

The service's impact was further enhanced through targeted promotional activities, job fairs, and community events, including large coffee mornings and webinars. Provider compliance and awareness were strengthened via mock audits and training sessions, while continuous monitoring and feedback ensured ongoing improvement. Overall, the service delivered tangible

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employment outcomes, improved sector resilience, and fostered collaboration between providers, candidates, and local authorities.

Next steps

Havering is continuing to lead this project across North East London (NEL) and has engaged in multiple discussions with both regional and sub-regional leaders to further enhance the support offer for international recruits affected by revoked employer licences. Havering has received a £487,392 grant from the DHSE to expand on this initiative immediately.

Support offer

The NEL International Recruitment Partnership has engaged with CPV to develop a tailored support offer which will include the following:

1. Coordination and Oversight

- CPV coordinates IR teams across NEL and chairs the NEL Refugee and Migrant Hubs.
- Acts as the central contact for LA quality assurance, contracts, and commissioning teams.
- Promotes best practice and prompts providers to conduct mock audits for UKVI compliance.

2. Digital and Information Support

- Maintains a dedicated landing page for IR support with guidance on grant and relocation funding.
- Develops secure, GDPR-compliant solutions for sharing candidate and job opportunities across London.

3. Pre-Employment and Candidate Support

- Delivers a structured pre-employment programme covering:
 - Presentation and appearance (with partners)
 - Punctuality and workplace behaviours
 - Interview skills and competency-based questions
 - Strengths and weaknesses analysis
 - Access to the “Flourish” programme for personal/professional development

4. Promotion and Engagement

- Promotes IR opportunities and best practice via events, newsletters, and the website.
- Hosts targeted IR events for candidates, providers, and support services.

5. Quality Assurance and Compliance

- Coordinates and delivers mock UKVI audits with legal specialists.
- Works with LA QA and commissioning teams to ensure compliance and improvement.
- Supports providers in meeting UKVI sponsor requirements and the Code of Practice.

6. Partnership with Aston Brooks

- Aston Brooks offers:
 - Drop-in surgeries and skilled worker visa support
 - Provider forums and a bespoke immigration platform
 - UKVI mock audits, webinars, and immigration training
 - Dedicated email platform and LA information sessions

7. Additional Support and Innovation

- Explores and pilots solutions for barriers like driving licences and vehicle access.
- Embeds feedback mechanisms and case study collection for service improvement.

Budget breakdown

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International Recruitment Fund Total = £487,392			
Provider	Service offer	Amount	Total
Care Providers Voice	Employment support	£85,000	£181,000
	Legal mock audits	£50,000	

Timescales

The service will operate from the 1st August 2025 until 31st July 2026.

Recommendation

It is recommended that a contract is directly awarded to Care Providers Voice for the delivery of the International Recruitment Support Service, at a cost of £181,000 from the allocated £487,392 grant monies from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

CPV is a well-established organisation in Havering, with a proven track record of supporting the care sector across North East London (NEL) through its successful Jobs Hub and robust network of local partners. Their deep understanding of Home Office and UKVI licensing and visa processes, combined with hands-on experience in recruiting and supporting international candidates, uniquely positions them to meet the urgent needs of displaced workers. CPV's provider-led alliance ensures strong relationships with local care providers, enabling rapid and effective job brokerage, workforce development, and access to free training resources for candidates.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1 – Do Nothing

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.

Option 2 – Source an alternative provider to deliver job matching support

This option has been considered and rejected as there are currently approximately 1,972 displaced workers across North East London that have been affected by suspensions and revocations that need support to find alternative work. Care Providers Voice are well established in Havering and operate a successful jobs hub across NEL. CPV have strong relationships with care providers and have a good understand of the Home Office and UKVI licencing and visa processes, including having previous experience in hiring international recruits. CPV are the only local provider that can provide bespoke employment advice and job introductions to those directly affected. We are at risk of having displaced worker being exploited if we do not have a support offer stepped up.

In addition to their operational readiness, CPV already hold contracts with all NEL boroughs, meaning that formal contractual relationships are in place across the region. This not only streamlines mobilisation and delivery but also ensures consistency in service standards.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

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The Strategic Director of People & DASS has implemented monthly steering group meetings with NEL colleagues to monitor the progress, implementation and outcomes of the support offer. Approval to proceed with commissioning CPV for this offer has been attained by all NEL boroughs.

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

Name: Sophie Barron

Designation: Senior Commissioner – Ageing Well

Signature: 

Date: 02/12/2025

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Council has the power to award the contract under s111 of the Local Government Act 1972, which permits the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions.

The Council also has a general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual may generally do subject to any statutory limitations. The recommendation sought within this report is in accordance with this power.

The total estimated contract value is below the threshold for Light Touch contracts under the Procurement Act 2023 (PA 2023). As such, the contract is not subject to the full implications of the PA 2023.

The Council is a Best Value authority and has a duty to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness”.

In line with the Council’s Contracts Procedure Rules (CPR), officers are seeking to waive the competition requirements under rule 14.3(i), and are satisfied that awarding the contract to Care Providers Voice represents best value for the Council.

In light of the above, the Council may proceed with awarding the contract.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

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.

North East London (NEL) boroughs have agreed to commission Care Providers Voice £181,000 to provide crucial employer introductions to enable these workers to source alternative employment. This amount will also include legal support delivered by Ashton Brookes to provide mock audits of care providers.

This decision paper is seeking approval to waive the Council’s Contract Procedure Rule (CPR) 9.9 and direct award £181,000 to Care Provider Voice.

Waiving the Council’s contract procedure Rules carries financial risks with less assurance on value for money. However, CPV’s proven expertise and ability to mobilise quickly make them uniquely positioned to deliver urgent support for displaced care workers, helping stabilise the sector.

These costs will be fully funded from the grant funding and therefore there is no risk to the council’s financial position as a result of entering into this direct award.

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

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There are no human resources implications or risks arising from this decision. The service will be delivered by an external provider (Care Providers Voice) using grant funding, with no impact on Council staffing, structures, or accommodation requirements.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Havering has a diverse community made up of many different groups and individuals. The council values diversity and believes it essential to understand and include the different contributions, perspectives and experience that people from different backgrounds bring.

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, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council demonstrates its commitment to the Equality Act in its decision-making processes, the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and employment practices concerning its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing of all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

An EqHIA (Equality and Health Impact Assessment) is normally completed but is not required in this instance.

The Council seeks to ensure equality, inclusion, and dignity for all in all situations. There are no equalities and social inclusion implications and risks associated with this decision

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Support offer to international ASC workers whose employer's sponsor licence has been revoked - GOV.UK](#)

APPENDICES

N/A

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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

Details of decision maker

Signed



Name: Barbara Nicholls

CMT Member title: Director of People Services

Date: 3 December 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 _____