

Notice of Non-Key Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Permission to grant funding to NEL based care providers recruiting displaced workers
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 allocate £60,000 of this grant funding to cover immigration-related costs for NEL based providers when recruiting from the displaced worker pool. This funding will meet the costs of the Immigration Skills Charge

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	and Home Office fees, enabling providers to hire more easily while reducing overall international recruitment expenses.
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

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

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 utilise a portion of the 2025-2026 DHSC grant funding to help care providers cover immigration-related fees, supporting and promoting the local recruitment of displaced workers.

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.

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

This report is seeking approval from the Strategic Director of People to utilise a portion of the 2025-2026 DHSC grant funding to help care providers cover immigration-related fees, supporting and promoting the local recruitment of displaced workers. It is important to note that this activity is exempt under PA 23.

Background

The 2024–2025 international recruitment regional fund provides £16 million to help regional partnerships support international recruits affected by sponsorship licence revocations. Across the UK, many displaced international workers remain eligible to work until their visas are curtailed, and the DHSC encourages them to seek help from their regional partnership. Providers are also advised to consider hiring from this existing pool before recruiting overseas.

Regional support includes guidance on visa rights, help finding new sponsoring employers, access to financial assistance, and wellbeing support such as buddying and counselling. Havering continues to lead this work across North East London, strengthening the support offer through ongoing engagement with regional leaders and has received a £487,392 DHSC grant to expand the programme across 2025-26.

Current service offer

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As part of the 2025-2026 funding, all NEL boroughs agreed to commission Care Providers Voice (CPV) to support the delivery of assistance for displaced workers in line with national funding requirements. Care Providers Voice (CPV) delivers a coordinated support offer on behalf of all NEL boroughs. This includes acting as the central point for referrals, providing pre-employment preparation, offering pastoral support, and ensuring workers understand their rights and options. CPV also works with providers to promote ethical recruitment, prepare them for UKVI compliance checks, and facilitate introductions to displaced workers. Specialist legal partner Aston Brooks enhances the service with visa, immigration, and compliance support. The service includes digital infrastructure for securely sharing worker information and job opportunities, ongoing communication with partners, and targeted events to connect candidates and providers.

Recruitment issues

As of the beginning of February 2026, NEL currently has a total of 1,813 displaced workers that have made contact with the regional hub and are looking for alternative work due to their employers licence being revoked. A total of 34 displaced workers has been offered secure alternative employment. Although this figure is considered low, there are several external factors impacting the care market. Capacity constraints, such as voids in care homes and a reduction in home care referrals, combined with the comparatively high availability of workers in North East London, has resulted in providers being less inclined to recruit displaced workers. Instead, they tend to draw from the existing pool of available staff, as this approach minimises additional costs associated with onboarding displaced workers.

Proposal

Havering Council, in conjunction with the other NEL boroughs have proposed to allocate approximately £60,000 to cover immigration fees to support local providers to hire from the displaced pool. This will be available for both NEL based providers who already hold a licence but need it extending to hire additional displaced workers and those applying for new certificates of sponsorship. The funding would cover the following:

A total of £1,965 will be made available to each small provider. This covers a 3 x year sponsorship including Immigration Skills Charge (£1,440) + £525 Home Office Fee = £1,965.

A total of £4,485 will be made available to each large provider. This covers a 3 x year sponsorship including the Immigration Skills Charge (£3,960) + £525 Home Office Fee = £4,485.

Minimum requirements

There will be a set of minimum requirements embedded into this process to provide reassurance that the provider is in the best place to take on displaced workers. These requirements will be:

1. Confirm their address
As a minimum, the provider will need to provide evidence that they are based in and operate from a NEL borough.
2. CQC Registration
As a minimum, the provider will need to be registered with the CQC.
3. Evidence of vacancy
As a minimum, the provider will need to evidence that they have a minimum of 37.5 care hours available a week to align with government guidelines. No zero-hour contracts are allowed for sponsored workers.

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4. Evidence of meeting minimum hours and hourly rate of pay
As a minimum, the provider must evidence that the displaced worker will be paid at least £25,000 per annum or £12.82 per hour.
5. Access the toolkit of best practice and code of practice
As a minimum, the provider needs to confirm they have read and understood both the International Code of Practice and the Skills for Care toolkit of best practice. This will provide reassurance that they understand their roles and responsibilities before they consider taking on a displaced worker.

[International Code of Practice](#)
[Skill for Care Toolkit of Best Practice](#)

How providers access funds

Providers will be notified of the offer through our partnership with CPV. There will be a dedicated website page with information on the amounts available and what the funding covers. In addition, there will be a form hosted on the CPV website that providers will need to complete. This will include the list of minimum requirements previously mentioned in the section above.

The form will also include a list of provider responsibilities section to make clear statements around provider behaviour such as:

- Ensuring ethical recruitment
- Maintaining UKVI compliance
- Not charging displaced workers recruitment fees
- Providing pastoral support
- Reporting back on employment outcomes

When the provider completes the form, it will be sent to the Lead Commissioner who will evaluate the response and seek approval from the NEL Lead (Havering People Director) to award funds.

A PO will be raised on Fusion which will be shared with successful providers to invoice against. The Workforce Development Manager will ensure that the invoiced amount does not exceed the amount listed dependant on the size of the provider's company.

Process flow overview

1. Provider submits application with required evidence
2. CPV conducts initial verification
3. NEL/Havering officer conducts final checks
4. Approval granted by Strategic Director
5. Funding released
6. Post-award monitoring/audit
7. Reporting to NEL Steering Group

Monitoring and compliance

Providers who are successful in securing this funding will need to report on the following outcomes:

- Report recruitment outcomes (e.g. whether the displaced worker started with them)
- Retention reporting after 3, 6 and 12 months.

Lead Commissioner will report against the following expected outcomes:

- Number of displaced workers hired
- Number of providers engaged in the process

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Recommendation

It is recommended that we utilise this funding allocation to support NEL-based care providers recruiting displaced workers. Not only does this align with our regional commitment to stabilising the workforce, but we also currently hold an underspend within the wider programme, which strengthens the case for deploying these resources now to maximise impact. By releasing this funding, we can remove key financial barriers that prevent providers from offering sponsorship, thereby increasing opportunities for displaced workers to secure safe, legal employment. Providers will continue to receive specialist support from Care Providers Voice and our legal partner, Aston Brookes, ensuring robust compliance, ethical recruitment, and high-quality pastoral guidance throughout the process.

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 local providers. Given the immigration-related costs put on care providers, it is crucial that we support NEL based providers to hire from the displaced worker pool and support displaced workers to live and work safely and legally in the UK.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

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

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

Name: Sophie Barron

Designation: Senior Commissioner

Signature:



Date: 30/03/2026

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Council has a 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 s.1 power are engaged by this decision.

The spending must comply with the terms of the DHSC Grant terms, including any reporting requirements thereunder.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This decision paper is seeking approval to allocate £60,000 of the International Recruitment Grant Funding to help local providers meet the immigration costs involved in recruiting displaced workers.

The funding will be allocated to providers, with small providers eligible for £1,965 and large providers for £4,485 after submission of an evidence based claim. The scheme will be administered by Havering, with all expenditure restricted to this purpose and contained within the allocation.

Expenditure will be monitored to ensure it remains within the £60,000 envelope. The funding is intended to reduce financial barriers to recruitment and support workforce stability across the NEL area.

There is sufficient funding to cover these costs within the 2025/2026 International Recruitment Grant funding. As the expenditure will take place in 2026/2027 approval has been obtained to carry forward the 2025/26 grant. There are no adverse financial implications for LBH as a result of this decision.

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

There are no HR risks or implications relating to the proposed decision.

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.

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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.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There is no direct health and wellbeing impact on the wider Havering residents. However, the implementation of the grant to enable the recruitment and retention of the displaced workers can indirectly improve health and wellbeing outcomes of the residents through maintaining the capacity of trained care workers; and the wellbeing of the very workers and those dependent on them.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

APPENDICES

Appendix A	None.
Appendix B	None.
Appendix C	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

Details of decision maker

Signed



Name: Barbara Nicholls

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title: Strategic Director of People

Other manager title:

Date: 30 March 2026

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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