

Notice of Non-Key Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Approval to accept the International Recruitment Fund for Adult Social Care across North East London (NEL) for 2026/2027
Decision Maker:	Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Gillian Ford, Cabinet Member for Adults and Health
ELT Lead:	Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People
Report Author and contact details:	Sophie Barron 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) £402,569 for 2026/27 to continue to support international recruitment for the adult social care sector with a particular focus on supporting displaced workers.
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 agree to:

- a. Accept the International Recruitment Fund for the amount of £402,569 on behalf of all North East London boroughs and their Adult Social Care Sectors for 2026/2027
- b. Enter into the respective agreement for the acceptance of the funding.
- c. Enter into a memorandum of understanding with the North East London boroughs to capture the range of activities to be developed in the deployment of 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 2025-26

Havering were awarded £487,392 in the last financial year and 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
- London Borough of Hackney

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

In 2025-26, alongside increased international recruitment to support workforce pressures in adult social care, there was a rise in reports of unethical employment practices, including sponsor non-compliance and licence revocations. While the government remained committed to international recruitment, there was a clear shift towards ensuring that international care workers are employed ethically and sustainably, with a stronger focus on safeguarding, compliance and worker protection. This included facilitating in-country matching for displaced workers, strengthening ethical recruitment practices, developing shared regional responses to exploitation, and building on the infrastructure established through earlier funding.

In response, a coordinated programme across North East London (NEL) was developed in collaboration with local boroughs, building on the NEL International Recruitment Support Contract. Funding was used to commission specialist employment and recruitment support through Care Providers Voice (CPV), alongside pastoral, welfare and immigration support delivered with borough teams and specialist partners. The programme also focused on provider engagement, legal and compliance support, and workforce development, strengthening providers' understanding of sponsorship responsibilities and ethical recruitment standards. Together, these interventions supported displaced workers to move quickly into safe, ethical employment while reinforcing sustainable and compliant recruitment practices across the local care market.

Aim of 2026-27 funding

The aims of the 2026–27 International Recruitment Regional Fund are more tightly focused than previous years and centre on rapid employment outcomes and ethical recruitment practice. The fund aims to support international care workers whose sponsor licences have been revoked to move into new, ethical employment as quickly as possible, with regional partnerships expected to prioritise those workers above all others.

Alongside this, partnerships are required to proactively engage adult social care providers to encourage the recruitment of displaced workers and promote compliance with ethical recruitment standards, including the Code of Practice. Delivery should prioritise employment-ready workers with the right skills and values for adult social care, concentrate resources on provider engagement that leads directly to job opportunities, and maintain a clear focus on speed, quality and sustainability of employment, with pastoral and wider welfare support provided where this removes barriers to work and enables workers to take up roles successfully.

The deliverables for 26-27 will be as follows:

Deliverable Area	What Will Be Delivered	Focus for 2026–27	Intended Outcome
1. Rapid Employment Pathway	A regionally coordinated pathway prioritising displaced international care workers into roles	Speed of transition from displacement to employment	Reduced time out of work and faster job starts
2. Prioritisation of Displaced Workers	Clear eligibility and triage processes ensuring displaced workers are	Focus on licence-revoked	Resources targeted where impact is greatest

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	prioritised above all others	workers who are employment-ready	
3. Provider Engagement for Jobs	Proactive engagement with adult social care providers leading directly to live vacancies	Engagement activity linked to confirmed recruitment demand	Increased job opportunities for displaced workers
4. Ethical Recruitment Compliance	Promotion, support and assurance of compliance with the Code of Practice	Embedding ethical recruitment as standard practice	Reduced risk of exploitative recruitment and repeat failure
5. Employment-Ready Matching	Skills validation and role-matching to suitable, sustainable adult social care roles	Quality and sustainability of job matches	Improved retention and job sustainability
6. Outcomes-Focused Monitoring	Performance reporting focused on job starts, speed and sustainability	Outcomes over activity	Clear evidence of impact and value for money

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

A MOU will be developed for sign off by all eight local authorities for the grant, supported by a Steering Group which shall meet monthly for the duration of the grant period.

Recommendation

It is recommended that this funding is accepted and used to continue to support NEL based displaced workers find alternative work to support the UK care market.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1 – Do not accept the International Recruitment Fund Grant

This option has been considered and rejected as there are a number of displaced workers 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.

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

Name: Sophie Barron

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Designation: Senior Commissioner

Signature: 

Date: 28/04/2026

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) 20.

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 £402,569 of grant funding for 2026/27. 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.

- In gaining suitable employment for displaced international Workers.
- Ensuring Ethical recruitment
- Improving retention and Sustainability.

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 25/26 funding was £487,392, 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 2026/27 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.

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 27/28.

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

There are no HR risks or implications arising from this decision.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

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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.

<https://lbhgov.sharepoint.com/sites/SustIntranet/SitePages/Committee-Guidance.aspx>

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There is not direct health and wellbeing impact on the wider Havering residents. However, the implementation of the fund to enable the recruitment of international workers for adults social care sector 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 depending on their care.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

APPENDICES

None.

Non-key Executive Decision

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: Strategic Director of People
Head of Service title
Other manager title:

Date: 28/04/2026

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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