

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 Graham Day, Cabinet Member for Adults & Health
ELT Lead:	Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People
Report Author and contact details:	Sophie Barron, Senior Commissioner Adults 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. North East London (NEL) boroughs have agreed to commission Care Providers Voice £250,452 to provide crucial employer introductions to enable these workers to source alternative employment. This amount will also include legal support delivered by Aston

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	Brooke to provide mock audits of care providers. The remaining funds will be spent on a combination of regional and London wide admin support, financial support for providers hiring displaced workers, relocation and emergency payments as well as funding for outreach and recruitment events.
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

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 direct 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 Aston Brooke's to conduct mock UK Visa & Immigration (UKVI) service inspections on a small selection of care providers, at a cost of £250,452. The contract period will be from 1st August 2026 to 31st July 2027.

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 direct 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 £250.452.

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 waiving CPR rules. A waiver was delivered and agreed at GRG panel on the 14th of May 2026.

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

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across England to develop solutions to local challenges around the use of international recruitment and strengthen safeguards against exploitation. Between 2023 to April 2026, these 15 partnerships have used the annual 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.

Aim of 2026-27 Funding

The 2026–27 financial year represents the final year of grant funding for the International Recruitment Regional Fund. The aim of this final year of funding is to consolidate delivery, maximise employment outcomes, and ensure a managed and sustainable approach to supporting international adult social care workers displaced due to sponsorship licence revocations.

Similar to last year, the aim of the 2026–27 International Recruitment Regional Fund is to support rapid, ethical, and sustainable employment outcomes for international adult social care workers displaced because of sponsorship licence revocations. Funding is intended to ensure that displaced workers are prioritised above all other recruitment groups, supported to move into alternative employment as quickly as possible, and protected from further exploitation or employment risks.

The key objectives for 2026–27 are to:

- Enable employment-ready displaced workers to transition swiftly into new roles within the adult social care sector
- Support adult social care providers to recruit from the displaced worker pool in a way that is compliant, ethical, and financially viable
- Embed adherence to the Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health and Social Care Personnel
- Concentrate activity on provider engagement that directly leads to job opportunities, rather than general activity or promotion
- Deliver clear, outcomes-focused monitoring, prioritising job starts, speed of placement, and sustainability of employment

Current service delivery

CPV is currently delivering The NEL International Recruitment Support Service which ends in July 2026. The service provides targeted employment and pastoral support to international care recruits affected by sponsorship licence revocation and promoted ethical recruitment. They operate through coordinated referral pathways, partnership working, and rigorous monitoring to ensure positive outcomes for recruits and the wider care sector.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, the service successfully supported displaced international care workers across North East London, facilitating 34 job offers and 9 new starters in secure roles. Engagement with providers was extensive, reaching 79 organisations and achieving a 35% engagement rate, with 7 providers open to sponsoring displaced workers in future. Candidate engagement was also strong, with over 1,762 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 employment outcomes, improved sector resilience, and fostered collaboration between providers, candidates, and local authorities.

Next steps

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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 £402,569 grant from the DHSC to expand on this initiative immediately.

Support offer

The NEL International Recruitment Partnership has engaged with CPV to deliver a final-year, outcomes-focused support offer, building on the established regional delivery model and ensuring maximum impact from remaining grant funding. This will include the following:

1. Regional Coordination and Oversight

- CPV coordinates international recruitment activity across NEL and chairs the NEL Refugee and Migrant Hubs.
- Acts as the central point of contact for displaced workers, providers, and local authority commissioning, quality assurance, and contracts teams.
- Supports consistent operational practice and information sharing across participating boroughs.
- Escalates emerging risks, barriers, and trends to the NEL Steering Group.

2. Provider Engagement and Job-Led Recruitment

- Proactive engagement with NEL-based adult social care providers to identify live vacancies suitable for displaced workers.
- Support for providers to understand sponsorship requirements, workforce planning implications, and ethical recruitment responsibilities.
- Promotion of incentives and support available to reduce financial and administrative barriers to hiring displaced workers.

3. Employment-Ready Matching and Pre-Employment Support

- Triage and prioritisation of displaced workers whose sponsors have had licences revoked.
- Assessment of employment readiness, skills, experience, and role suitability.
- Delivery of structured pre-employment support, including:
 - Interview preparation and competency-based guidance
 - Workplace expectations, punctuality, and professional behaviours
 - Strengths-based coaching and personal development support
- Targeted matching to roles that meet minimum hours and pay

4. Digital and Information Infrastructure

- Maintenance of a dedicated international recruitment support landing page with clear information for workers and providers.
- Secure, GDPR-compliant systems for sharing candidate information and job opportunities across London and NEL.
- Clear signposting to funding, guidance, and support pathways.

5. Quality Assurance, Ethical Recruitment and Compliance

- Ongoing promotion of compliance with the International Code of Practice.
- Support for providers to meet UKVI sponsor duties and prepare for compliance inspections.
- Delivery and coordination of mock UKVI audits and compliance checks in partnership with legal specialists.
- Close working with local authority QA and commissioning teams where concerns are identified.

6. Specialist Immigration Support – Aston Brooke

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The programme continues to be enhanced by CPV's partnership with Aston Brooke's, providing:

Delivery of 50 digital UKVI audits

Audits follow a two-stage process, including a comprehensive review of sponsored worker records and a simulated UKVI interview aligned to real inspection practices, ensuring providers are fully prepared for compliance visits.

Delivery of 12 local authority briefing sessions and forums

These sessions provide an open platform for care providers to receive expert guidance on international recruitment, sponsorship, visas and UKVI compliance. Sessions can be tailored to provider needs or led in partnership with the local authority, supporting knowledge sharing, compliance awareness and sector-wide best practice.

Delivery of 12 webinars

Covering key areas of international recruitment and immigration compliance, including the current UKVI landscape, sponsorship requirements, reporting duties, UKVI inspections, right to work checks, and common risks leading to licence suspension or revocation.

Advice Line

Dedicated advice line for providers, offering access to specialist immigration support via a named email service. Providers can submit queries and receive responses within 24 hours, ensuring timely guidance on sponsorship, visas and UKVI compliance, with the service fully operational and ready for immediate use.

7. Monitoring, Outcomes and Continuous Improvement

- Outcomes-focused monitoring prioritising:
 - Job starts
 - Speed from referral to employment
 - Retention at key milestones
- Regular reporting to the NEL Steering Group.
- Capture of feedback and case studies to inform service improvement and future commissioning decisions.

This support offer represents the final year of delivery under the International Recruitment Regional Fund and a continuation of an established, regionally agreed model. The proposed approach ensures continuity, value for money, and rapid delivery of employment outcomes for displaced workers while maintaining robust assurance around ethical recruitment and provider compliance.

Budget breakdown

International Recruitment Fund Total = £402,569			
Provider	Service offer	Amount	Total
Care Providers Voice	Employment support	£144,732.00	£250,452.00
	Compliance support	£105,720.00	

The remaining funds will be allocated across a range of activities, including regional and London-wide administrative support, financial assistance for providers recruiting displaced workers, and relocation and emergency payments. Funding will also support targeted outreach initiatives and recruitment events to maximise engagement and uptake.

Timescales

The service will operate from the 1st August 2026 until 30th April 2027.

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Impact of Not Direct Awarding

If the contract is not directly awarded, there is a significant risk that the support offer for displaced international care workers will be delayed or disrupted at a critical point in the final year of DHSC funding. A competitive procurement exercise would require additional lead-in time, reducing the period available to deliver employment outcomes, provider engagement and compliance support. This could leave displaced workers without timely access to job introductions, pre-employment support and specialist immigration advice, increasing the risk of unemployment, exploitation and loss of skilled workers from the adult social care sector. It would also limit the ability of North East London boroughs to respond quickly to workforce pressures, make full use of the grant allocation within the required timeframe, and maintain continuity of the established regional delivery model already in place through CPV and its partners.

The DHSC International Recruitment Regional Fund is a Section 31 Grant. It is therefore up to the regional partnerships to determine how the funding is best spent to achieve the aims of the fund, as set out on the GOV.UK page:

[International recruitment regional fund for the adult social care sector 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK](#)

DHSC are content that regional partnerships may use the grant funding for direct awards, where this supports timely delivery of the fund's objectives.

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 £250,452.00 from the allocated £402,569 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 understanding 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

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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.

Alternative local or national providers were considered; however, these organisations typically offer generic employability services and do not possess the specialist expertise in adult social care recruitment, UKVI sponsorship compliance, or displaced worker safeguarding required for this cohort. They also do not have the established sub-regional coordination mechanisms, trusted provider relationships, or existing infrastructure currently in place with the NEL International Recruitment Hub.

A full procurement process was not considered proportionate for the final year of funding, as it would require significant lead-in time (typically 3–6 months) and introduce duplication, set-up burden, and delivery risk. Given the limited remaining programme duration, this would substantially reduce the time available for delivery and limit overall impact and value, without clear additional benefit.

Given that 2026–27 is the final year of DHSC funding, the need to maximise outcomes within a limited timeframe, and the importance of maintaining continuity of support for a vulnerable workforce, awarding the contract to CPV represents the most proportionate, effective, and value-for-money approach. This approach ensures continuity, minimises risk, avoids fragmentation, and enables focus on delivery, consolidation, and assurance in the final year of the programme.

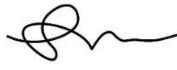
PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

The Strategic Director of People & DASS has implemented monthly steering group meetings with NEL colleagues to monitor the progress, implementation and outcomes of 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 Adults

Signature: 

Date: 29th July 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 may generally do.

Additionally, the Council has the power to procure a contract under Section 111 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 services are light touch services for the purposes of the Procurement Act 2023. The value of the contract is below the PA23 light touch threshold and the contract is not caught by the full PA23 regime.

Award of the contract must comply with the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules. CPR 13 requires contracts at this value to be competed. CPR 37.2.1.1 permits a strategic director to waive these requirements where direct award is considered necessary due to being in the best interest of the Council and best value can be demonstrated. As set out in this report, officers confirm these criteria are met.

For the reasons given above, the contract can be awarded.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This decision paper is seeking approval for a direct award of £250,452 to Care Provider Voice to provide crucial employer introductions to enable these workers to source alternative employment. This amount paid to Care Provider Voice will also include legal support delivered by Aston Brooke to provide mock audits of care providers.

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.

Allocations were being made to regions with Havering being the lead for North East London. A bid was submitted and approved and NEL was allocated £402,569 for 2026/2027.

The £250,452 allocation to Care Provider Voice will be fully funded from this allocation. The remainder of the funding will be spent in accordance with the bid submitted.

The contract will be fully funded from the external funding bid and therefore there are no financial risks to LBH as a result of the decision.

A waiver has been approved at GRG panel on 14th May 2026 for the direct award to Care Provider Voice on the basis of it being in the best interests of the Council. A direct award reduces competitive tension and therefore limits assurance of value for money. In this case, the approach is justified due to the urgent need to mobilise support for displaced workers and the specialist immigration and care sector expertise required, which could not be sourced through a timely competitive process

Any underspend of the International Recruitment Fund would need to be returned to the DHSC.

**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.

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 and disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, 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 usually carried out and on this occasion, this isn't required.

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

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable environmental implications.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There is not direct health and wellbeing impact on the wider Havering residents. However, the implementation of the grant to support the recruitment and retention 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; compliance of regulations; and the wellbeing of the very workers and those depending on their care.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

[International recruitment regional fund for the adult social care sector 2026 to 2027: 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

Details of decision maker

Signed



Name: Barbara Nicholls

Cabinet Portfolio held:

ELT Member title: Strategic Director of People

Head of Service title:

Other manager title:

Date:

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 _____