

Children's Service Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Questionnaire

1. Details of function, policy, procedure or service:	
Title of what is being assessed: Impact of proposed new Special Guardianship Order financial offer	
Is it a function, policy, procedure or service?: Policy	
Department and Section: Family Services	
Date assessment completed: 15 April 2016	
2. Names and roles of officers completing this assessment:	
Lead officer	Paulette Thompson-Omenka
Stakeholder groups	Special Guardians, Children under a Special Guardianship Order, Foster Carers, Children in Care
Representative from internal stakeholders	Paulette Thompson-Omenka
CS Equalities Network rep	Lindsey Hyde
HR rep (for employment related issues)	N/A
3. Full description of function, policy, procedure or service:	
<p>We know that Barnet is a great place to live for most families, children and young people. Our vision is focused on making Barnet an even better place to live for all families - whether a couple with dependent children, a single-parent family, a foster family, a blended family or a family with Special Guardians to children in care.</p> <p>We have chosen a theme of resilience to drive our ambition for strong communities in which children can thrive and achieve. Resilience is used to describe a situation when good outcomes occur for individuals or families in the face of adversity.</p> <p>Barnet is committed to enhancing resilience for children who are no longer able to live within their birth family through appropriate and secure permanent placement options such as Special Guardianship. This paper puts forward recommendations for amendments</p>	

relating to Special Guardianship Order (SGO) support and allowance.

Barnet currently pays its Special Guardians an allowance that is significantly higher than the Department for Education (DfE) recommended London minimum rates.

This paper proposes a reduction of the allowances to correspond to the DfE rates as follows:

Age of child under SGO	0-2	3-5	10	11-15	16-17 ¹
Current Barnet rates per week	£185 (0-12)			£244 (13-17)	
Proposed DfE London rates per week ²	£142	£145	£163	£184	£216

Between 1 March 2014 and 29 February 2016, Barnet had 153 children under a Special Guardianship Order. Since the introduction of Special Guardianship Orders in 2005, the number of children provided with permanence through SGOs has steadily increased nationally and locally. This increase is expected to continue, putting increased pressure on resources.

Statutory guidance states that the means-tested allowance given to SGOs for care of the child must take into account the allowance that foster carers receive, which is reinforced by recent case law.

Foster carer allowances in Barnet are made up of two separate elements, a maintenance allowance and a fee payment. It is the maintenance element that Barnet are proposing to reduce for foster carers in order to bring about savings for the SGO cohort. Foster Carers who have undertaken fostering training and are approved would not experience a net reduction in rates as a result of these changes, because of other allowances in place. However, the 17 Kinship Carer households who are not approved foster carers would experience a reduction in rates.

If this proposal is approved at Committee, Special Guardians will be consulted with on the proposal. The proposed consultation will

¹ In rare circumstances a child will be under an SGO past their 18th birthday; in this case the 16-17 rate applies.

² Based on the DfE recommended minimum fostering rates for London (refreshed 31 March 2016)

provide further opportunity to understand needs of stakeholders and provide mitigation against any unintended consequences. Affected carers will be informed of the proposals before the paper goes to CELS Committee and will receive communications regarding how they can make their views heard during the consultation period.

Current and future cohorts of stakeholders will benefit from a more robust offer that is in line with DfE recommendations and therefore more sustainable in the shorter and longer term. Special Guardians will benefit from a clear policy that sets out Barnet's refreshed offer.

Needs of the affected stakeholders have been taken into account in the drafting of the proposal and these are reflected in this Equalities Impact Assessment. The EIA will be updated following the completion of the consultation.

4. How are the equality strands affected? Please detail the effects on each equality strand, and any mitigating action you have taken so far

Equality Strand	Affected?	Explain how affected	What action has been taken already to mitigate this?
Race	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>Children under SGO³</u></p> <p>There is no disproportionate impact anticipated.</p> <p>Children of White ethnicity are slightly under-represented in the child SGO population (52% SGO compared to 55% in borough).</p> <p>The BAME population of the SGO population is very similar (44% SGO compared to 45% in borough).</p> <p><u>Children in foster care⁴</u></p> <p>There is no disproportionate impact anticipated, as the BAME and White cohorts in the fostered child in care population correspond to the borough's</p>	<p>The rates proposed are the recommended DfE rates for London, so a negative impact is not expected on children of any ethnic background, or carers of any ethnic background.</p> <p>However, if there is any disproportionate negative impact, steps will be taken to address this as required within the service area.</p>

³ Child under SGO cohort between March 1st 2014 and February 29th 2016.

⁴ Child in foster care cohort as at March 31st 2016. Includes the following cohorts: children in local authority foster care, children looked after by foster relative or friend, children looked after through a foster agency. For 34% of children in care Religion was not stated; the EIA has therefore been completed using the data only from those children where a religion was stated.

		<p>population.</p> <p><u>Special Guardians</u>⁵</p> <p>There will be a disproportionate impact on Special Guardians of White ethnicity.</p> <p>Special Guardians of White ethnicity are overrepresented against the whole borough population (71% of Special Guardians are White compared to 65% of Barnet residents).</p> <p>Special Guardians of BAME ethnicity are slightly underrepresented against the whole borough population (29% of Special Guardians are BAME compared to 35% in the wider borough).</p> <p><u>Foster carers</u>⁶</p> <p>There will be a disproportionate impact on Foster Carers of BAME ethnicity.</p> <p>Foster carers of BAME ethnicity are overrepresented against the whole borough population (40% of Foster Carers are BAME compared to 35% in the wider borough).</p> <p>Foster carers of White ethnicity are therefore underrepresented in the Foster Carer population (60% in the Foster Care population compared to 65% across the whole borough).</p>	
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⁵ Special Guardian cohort as at March 31st 2016. For 75% of Special Guardians, religion was 'Not Stated', the EIA has therefore been completed using the data only from those Special Guardians where a religion was stated. 45% of ethnicity of Special Guardians was 'Not Stated'.

⁶ Summary Of Registered Main Carers (only) Who Have At Least One Active Approval As At 06/04/2016. For 46% of Foster Carers, marital status was 'Not recorded'; the EIA has therefore been completed using the data only from those Foster Carers where marital status was recorded. 32% of religion of Foster Carers was 'Not Recorded'.

<p>Gender</p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><u>Children under SGO</u></p> <p>There will be a disproportionate impact on females, as these are over-represented in the child SGO population.</p> <p>Females are overrepresented in the SGO population (56% SGO compared to 49% in the borough populations).</p> <p>Males are therefore underrepresented in the SGO population (44% SGO compared to 51% in the borough population)</p> <p><u>Children in foster care</u></p> <p>There will be a disproportionate impact on males, as these are overrepresented in the fostered child in care population (61% in fostered CIC population compared to 51% in the borough population).</p> <p><u>Special Guardians</u></p> <p>There will be a disproportionate impact on females, as these are significantly overrepresented in the Special Guardianship population (89% of Special Guardians are female, as opposed to 52% in the borough population).</p> <p>Males are therefore significantly underrepresented in the SGO population (11% male as opposed to 48% in the wider borough).</p> <p><u>Foster Carers</u></p> <p>There will be a disproportionate impact on females, as these are significantly overrepresented in the Foster Carer Population (95% of main Foster Carers are female, as opposed to 52% in the borough population).</p>	<p>The rates proposed are the recommended DfE rates for London, so a negative impact is not expected on children of any gender.</p> <p>However, if there is any disproportionate negative impact, steps will be taken to address this as required within the service area.</p>
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		Males are therefore significantly underrepresented in the foster carer population (5% males as opposed to 48% in the wider borough).	
Disability	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>Children under SGO</u></p> <p>There is no disproportionate impact anticipated.</p> <p>Young people with disabilities are slightly underrepresented within the SGO cohort (2% SGO compared with 3% borough population).</p> <p><u>Children in foster care</u></p> <p>A disproportionate impact is expected, as 12% of children in foster care are disabled compared to 3% in the borough population.</p> <p><u>Foster Carers and Special Guardians</u></p> <p>Disability information is not available for Foster Carers and Special Guardians</p>	<p>The rates proposed are the recommended DfE rates for London, so a negative impact is not expected on children with a disability.</p> <p>The Special Guardianship Order should be accessible to all young people and rates of disabled children under an SGO will be reviewed within the service area.</p> <p>Barnet will seek to ensure that support services provided to Special Guardians and Foster Carers are tailored to meet the needs of those with a disability.</p>
Age	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>Children under an SGO</u></p> <p>There will be a disproportionate impact on children aged 0-4, as they are heavily over-represented in the SGO population (48% SGO compared to 30% borough)</p> <p>Children aged 5-9 are slightly overrepresented in the SGO population (31% SGO compared to 28% borough)</p> <p>Young people aged 10-14 and 15-18 are underrepresented in the SGO population.</p> <p><u>Children in foster care</u></p> <p>There will be a disproportionate impact on young</p>	<p>The rates proposed are the recommended DfE rates for London, so a negative impact is not expected on children with from any particular age group.</p> <p>However, if there is any disproportionate negative impact, steps will be taken to address this as required within the service area.</p>

		<p>people aged 15-18, as this cohort is significantly overrepresented in the child in foster care cohort (45% in the fostered CiC cohort compared to 18% in the borough).</p> <p>The 10-14 age group is slightly overrepresented in the fostered CiC cohort. The 0-4 and 5-9 age groups are underrepresented.</p> <p><u>Special Guardians</u></p> <p>There will be a disproportionate impact on Special Guardians aged 50-64, as this group is significantly overrepresented (53% of Special Guardians fall into this age category compared to 21% of Barnet residents).</p> <p>The majority of other age groups are underrepresented within the Special Guardian population.</p> <p><u>Foster Carers</u></p> <p>There will be a disproportionate impact on Foster Carers aged 50-64, as this group is significantly overrepresented (52% of Foster Carers fall into this age category compared to 21% of Barnet residents).</p> <p>All other age groups are underrepresented within the Foster Carer population.</p>	
<p>Sexual orientation or gender reassignment</p>	<p>Unknown</p>	<p>There is no data available on the sexual orientation or gender reassignment of young people in foster care or under an SGO.</p> <p>This data is also not available for Special Guardians or Foster Carers.</p>	<p>Barnet will seek to ensure that support services provided to young people are tailored to meet specific needs, including sexual orientation or gender reassignment, or that young people are signposted to other appropriate services for support where needed.</p>

			<p>Barnet will seek to ensure that support services provided to Special Guardians and Foster Carers are tailored to meet the needs of those adults, taking into account sexual orientation or gender reassignment as required.</p>
<p>Religion or belief</p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><u>Children under an SGO</u> There is no data available on the religion or belief of children under an SGO.</p> <p><u>Children in foster care</u> Muslim children are overrepresented in the fostered child in care population (22% of children in foster care compared 13% in the borough population. Other cohorts are similar.</p> <p><u>Special Guardians</u> Christians are significantly overrepresented within the Special Guardian population (64% in the SG population compared to 49% in the Barnet population). The Jewish population is similar to the borough population, and Muslims are underrepresented.</p> <p><u>Foster Carers</u> Christians are significantly overrepresented within the Foster Carer population (71% in the SG population compared to 49% in the Barnet population). The Jewish population slightly underrepresented in the Foster Carer population and the Muslim Foster</p>	<p>The rates proposed are the recommended DfE rates for London, so a negative impact is not expected on children or carers from any religious background.</p> <p>However, if the disproportionate impact is negative, steps will be taken to address this as required within the service area.</p> <p>Family Services does currently and will continue to ensure that appropriate advice and guidance is given to support young people in view of their religion or belief.</p>

		Carer population is similar to the borough population.	
Pregnancy/maternity (including teenage parents)	Unknown	<p>There is no specific data available on the pregnancy and maternity of young people in foster care and under an SGO and therefore this impact is difficult to quantify.</p> <p>Data is not available for Special Guardians and Foster Carers. However, given the overrepresentation of these cohorts in the 50+ age category, it is likely that pregnancy/maternity is underrepresented in these populations and therefore a disproportionate impact would not be expected.</p>	<p>The rates proposed are the recommended DfE rates for London, so a negative impact is not expected on pregnant women.</p> <p>The service does currently and will continue to ensure appropriate advice and guidance is given to support children in care in relation to their pregnancy and maternity.</p>
Marital status	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>Children in foster care or under an SGO</u></p> <p>There is no data available on the marital status of young people in foster care or under an SGO. However, it is unlikely that this will be of direct relevance to the majority of this cohort (see age profile above).</p> <p><u>Foster Carers</u></p> <p>There will be a disproportionate impact on married couples, as they are overrepresented in the Foster Carer population (67% of foster carers are married, compared to 47% in the Barnet population)</p> <p>There are similar proportions of Divorced and Single adults in the Foster Carer population to the Barnet population, so no disproportionate impact is expected on these cohorts.</p> <p><u>Special Guardians</u></p>	<p>The rates proposed are the recommended DfE rates for London, so a negative impact is not expected.</p> <p>The service does currently and will continue to ensure appropriate advice and guidance is given to support children in care in relation to their marital status.</p> <p>Barnet seeks to ensure that support services provided to Special Guardians and Foster Carers are tailored to meet the needs of those adults, taking into account their marital status as required.</p>

		<p>This data is not available for the Special Guardian population.</p>	
<p>Those on low incomes</p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><u>Children in foster care and children under an SGO</u></p> <p>This category does not apply to children in foster care or under an SGO, as their maintenance is paid for through their placement.</p> <p><u>Foster Carers</u></p> <p>This data is not available for the Foster Carer population.</p> <p><u>Special Guardians</u></p> <p>This data is not available for the Special Guardian population, although it is likely that Special Guardians accessing allowances are on lower incomes as this is means-tested.</p>	<p>The rates proposed are the recommended DfE rates for London, so a negative impact is not expected.</p> <p>The fostering allowance, which is available to Foster Carers, and the fee which is provided when training is undertaken, ensure that residents from all incomes can become Foster Carers.</p> <p>Special Guardians receive a means-tested allowance, which ensures that residents from all incomes can become Special Guardians.</p>

5. What will be the impact of delivery of any proposals on satisfaction ratings amongst different groups of residents

It is not envisaged that the delivery of this proposal will have an impact on satisfaction ratings amongst the wider group of Barnet residents.

Satisfaction ratings amongst Special Guardians and Foster Carers may decrease in the immediate term, in light of the proposed rate reduction to carers receiving means-tested allowances.

However, the proposal will lead to a more sustainable offer in the longer-term. It includes a refreshed SGO policy that sets out an attractive offer that will assist recruitment and retention.

Ongoing communication and any future Residents Perception Survey will enable the Council to gauge how satisfied residents are with services delivered by or on behalf of the Council and will form part of the ongoing monitoring of the impact of these proposals. This EIA will be updated following the completion of the consultation and the views of Special Guardians, foster carers and children and young people will be incorporated where applicable.

6. How does the proposal enhance Barnet's reputation as a good place to work and live?
<p>The proposal demonstrates the council's commitment to ensuring a robust and sustainable offer to children who are no longer able to live with their birth parents.</p> <p>This may enhance Barnet's reputation as the provision of services are being thoroughly reviewed and consulted upon to ensure that resources are being used in the best way possible and that services are achieving the best possible outcomes for Barnet's children and young people.</p>
7. How will members of Barnet's diverse communities feel more confident about the council and the manner in which it conducts its business?
<p>This Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken in line with this policy change proposal to understand any unintended impact and put actions in place to mitigate this.</p> <p>Clear communication, consultation and engagement is taking place through the proposed consultation events and survey to help ensure the views of Barnet's diverse communities are taken into account.</p> <p>All communities will be reassured that Barnet is taking measures to ensure a sustainable, robust offer for children who are unable to live with their birth families. This proposal brings Barnet's rates in line with the DfE recommended rate for Inner London to ensure greater parity across London's communities.</p>
8. What measures and methods have been designed to monitor the application of the policy or service, the achievement of intended outcomes and the identification of any unintended or adverse impact? <i>Include information about the groups of people affected by this proposal. Include how frequently will the monitoring be conducted and who will be made aware of the analysis and outcomes? Include these measures in the Equality Improvement Plan (section 13)</i>
<p>Special Guardians, Foster Carers and children under all of the relevant legal orders will be affected.</p> <p>Application of the rates will be monitored through the service area and through the Finance service area.</p> <p>Complaints, Compliments and Comments regarding the refreshed offer will be directed to the relevant team. As part of quarterly monitoring, emerging themes will be addressed by Family Services officers as appropriate.</p>

9. How will the new proposals enable the council to promote good relations between different communities? *Include whether proposals bring different groups of people together, does the proposal have the potential to lead to resentment between different groups of people and how might you be able to compensate for perceptions of differential treatment or whether implications are explained.*

The proposal suggests rates that are in line with Inner London rates as suggested by the DfE, leading to greater parity for Special Guardians across the London boroughs.

Special Guardianship Orders can help a child remain within their wider family or cultural community. This is conducive to the child or young person's sense of identity and development.

10. How have residents with different needs been consulted on the anticipated impact of this proposal? How have any comments influenced the final proposal? *Please include information about any prior consultation on the proposal been undertaken, and any dissatisfaction with it from a particular section of the community.*

Consultation is planned in the 6 weeks following Committee approval of the recommendations. It is proposed that this consultation exists of 2 events, as well as a survey for affected Special Guardians and Foster Carers.

All views raised will be considered before the final proposal is drafted.

11. Decision:

No Impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral Impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Negative Impact or Impact Not Known ⁷ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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12. Comment on decision

Across the cohorts of children under a Special Guardianship Order, the following groups are most likely to be affected:

- Females
- Children aged 0-4

Across the cohorts of children in care, the following groups are most likely to be affected:

- Children with a disability
- Young people aged 15-18

Across the cohort of adult Special Guardians, the following groups are most likely to be affected:

- White adults
- Females
- Adults aged 50-64

Across the cohorts of adult Foster Carers, the following groups are most likely to be affected:

- BAME adults
- Females
- Adults aged 50-64
- Christians

⁷ 'Impact Not Known' – tick this box if there is no up-to-date data or information to show the effects or outcomes of the function, policy, procedure or service on all of the equality strands.

- Married adults

13. Equality Improvement Plan

Please list all the equality objectives, actions and targets that result from the Equality Impact Assessment (continue on separate sheets as necessary). These now need to be included in the relevant service plan for mainstreaming and performance management purposes.

Equality Objective	Action	Target	Officer responsible	By when
Take measures to ensure that no child or carer is disproportionately impacted because of protected characteristics on a case-by-case basis as a result of the proposals	Engage with carers during and post-consultation and respond to any cases where it is clear that a case is disproportionately affected by the characteristics with mitigating factors	Ensure that no child or carer is disadvantaged beyond the scope of the proposal as a result of their characteristics.	Paulette Thompson-Omenka	August 2016
Managing negative equalities impacts from the proposals	Continue to monitor contract performance to track the delivery and effectiveness of services to vulnerable families and to take appropriate actions. This will include working within the service mitigate the impact to groups most likely to be affected by proposals.	Identify any negative impacts and take appropriate action to address these. For example, by developing appropriate action plans.	Paulette Thompson-Omenka	October 2107
Consulting with those affected	Clearly communicate the views received from those affected and the decision made by the council.	Ensure that Barnet's diverse communities feel confident about the council and the manner in which it conducts its business.	Paulette Thompson-Omenka	August 2016

1st Authorised signature (Lead Officer)	2nd Authorised Signature (Member of SLT)
Date:	Date: