

## EIA Working with the Big Fostering Partnership 2022-2024

Question	Answer
Did you use the EIA Screening Tool?	Yes

### 1. Explaining the matter being assessed

Question	Answer
<p><b>What policy, function or service change are you assessing?</b></p>	<p>This EIA is assessing Surrey County Council's intention to work in collaboration with a group of local authorities to commission Big Fostering Partnership Ltd (BFP) to enable more looked after children to "step down" from (i.e. move from) residential children's homes into foster placements with families. This partnership will run until September 2024, although placements made may continue until January 2026. We estimate that around 22 children might be enabled to step-down during the lifetime of this initiative</p> <p>The collaborative work with BFP will support Surrey County Council to address the priorities identified in our "Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2020-25": Surrey homes for Surrey children; living in a family setting; a wide range of placements for diverse needs; homes of the highest quality; and support to move to independence. This work also directly aligns to Surrey's Corporate Parenting Strategy.</p> <p>Joining the BFP supports the 'Empowering Communities' priority objective of the refreshed Organisation Strategy. It does this by enabling more looked after children to live in family settings in or close to Surrey, where this is appropriate to their individual needs and circumstances. This enriches our local communities and enables better lifelong outcomes for young people as they develop their resilience and independence.</p>
<p><b>Why does this EIA need to be completed?</b></p>	<p>The EIA screening tool indicated that an assessment needs to be completed. Joining the Big Fostering Partnership has the potential to have a positive and/or negative impact on several protected characteristics and is of high public profile.</p> <p>The step-down interventions available within the BFP project have a direct impact on some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Surrey Looked After Children and potentially those that may also have an EHCP. Careful consideration of the potential impact of</p>

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Question	Answer
	<p>proposed changes in view of each protected characteristic is therefore required – noting that this opportunity is only likely to be taken up by a relatively small number of children (estimate of 22), so individualised, child-centred planning will be a key part of how any identified impacts are responded to.</p> <p>The work of BFP may also impact on Surrey County Council’s foster carers and residential children’s home staff. The potential impact on the workforce is considered to ensure a fair and inclusive working environment as set out in the Equality Act 2010.</p>
<b>Who is affected by the proposals outlined above?</b>	<p>The proposal for Surrey County Council to join BFP potentially affects the following stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Looked after children (7-17 Years)</li><li>• Looked after children with an EHCP (7-17 Years)</li><li>• Children with disabilities</li><li>• Families of looked after children</li><li>• Foster carers</li><li>• Kinship carers</li><li>• Residential care staff</li><li>• Children’s services staff</li></ul>

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Question	Answer
<p><b>How does your service proposal support the outcomes in the <a href="#">Community Vision for Surrey 2030</a>?</b></p>	<p>The aim of the BFP project is to enable more children to move from residential care to foster care, known as "step down", with evidence suggesting looked after children achieve the best long-term outcomes if they are able to live in a supportive family. To do this, the project will draw on trained foster carers employed by independent fostering agencies (IFAs), backed up by comprehensive, specialist, and holistic support, in order to support children aged 7-17 with more complex needs in family-based placements. The BFP project is aligned to Surrey's Community Vision for 2030 with a commitment to promoting the ambitions, that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children and young people are safe and feel safe and confident.</li> <li>▪ Everyone lives healthy, active, and fulfilling lives, and makes good choices about their wellbeing.</li> <li>▪ Everyone gets the health and social care support and information they need at the right time and place.</li> <li>▪ Communities are welcoming and supportive, especially of those most in need, and people feel able to contribute to community life.</li> <li>▪ Everyone has a place they can call home, with appropriate housing for all.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Are there any specific geographies in Surrey where this will make an impact?</b></p>	<p>There are no specific geographic areas in Surrey where we expect there to be a significant impact due to this change. The interventions involved will support individual children and their foster families (we estimate around 10 per year), who could be based anywhere in Surrey (for the majority) or located somewhere else in the country, where this is identified as best meeting the needs and aspirations of the child.</p>

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Question	Answer
<p><b>Briefly list what evidence you have gathered on the impact of your proposals</b>  <i>(This could include any qualitative or quantitative data to support your analysis, such as surveys, focus groups, service monitoring, national and local datasets, reports, etc.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Feedback from care experienced young people</u> in via surveys conducted by the User Voice and Participation Team, including The Big Survey, which is conducted annually.</li> <li>• <u>Analysis of Surrey data</u> held on databases including LCS, tableau, and internal spreadsheets managed by the Data &amp; Analysis Team.</li> <li>• <u>National datasets</u> provided by the Department for Education for benchmarking against other local authority areas.</li> <li>• <u>Key sufficiency data</u> from the SouthCentral Frameworks for Independent Fostering Agencies and Residential Children’s Care.</li> <li>• <u>Market engagement</u> with Independent Fostering Agencies and providers of Residential Children’s Homes and Supported Accommodation.</li> <li>• <u>National drivers, legislation and published research</u> including The Children’s Commissioner: The children who no-one knows what to do with (2020); Newgate Research: The Local Government Association Children’s Homes Research (2021); Narey, M: Residential Care in England: Report of Sir Martin Narey’s independent review of children’s residential care ((2016); McAllister: The Case for Change (2021); Comparing Long-Term Placement Outcomes of Residential and Family Foster Care: A Meta-Analysis, Dongdong et al, 2017; The Place of Residential Care in English Child Welfare System, Hart et al (2015); DfE: Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local authorities (2015); and Department for Children, Schools and Families: Sufficiency: Statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children (2010).</li> <li>• <u>Preventing unplanned pregnancy and improving preparation for parenthood for care-experienced young people.pdf (coram.org.uk)</u></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/4">https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/4</a></li> </ul>

## 2. Service Users / Residents

There are 10 protected characteristics to consider in your proposal. These are:

1. Age including younger and older people
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Pregnancy and maternity
5. Race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
6. Religion or belief including lack of belief
7. Sex
8. Sexual orientation
9. Marriage/civil partnerships
10. Carers protected by association

Though not included in the Equality Act 2010, Surrey County Council recognises that socio-economic disadvantage is a significant contributor to inequality across the County and Looked after Children/Care leavers therefore regards these as additional factors.

Therefore, if relevant, you will need to include information on this. Please **refer to the EIA guidance** if you are unclear as to what this is.

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## 1. Age

Question	Answer
What information (data) do you have on affected service users/residents with this characteristic?	<p>BFP is designed to support step-downs for looked after children who are aged 7-15 and live-in children's homes (noting there is flexibility to consider children up to age of 17 if this is judged to be appropriate for the individual concerned), with support continuing for two years whilst a young person remains looked after.</p> <p>There are currently 140 children who are looked after by Surrey County Council that are placed in residential provision, of whom 131 are aged 7-17.</p>
Impacts	Positive

Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
What impacts have you identified?	What are you basing this on?	Actions to mitigate or enhance impacts	Due date	Who is responsible for this?
<p><b>Positive:</b> Increased numbers of looked after children aged 7-17 in family-based foster placements leading to better long-term outcomes.</p>	<p>Evidence provided by BFP, Staffordshire County Council and National Fostering Group in relation to numbers of children supported by BFP and case studies demonstrating impact.</p> <p>Published research suggests that children in foster care experience improved outcomes, for example: "Comparing Long-Term Placement Outcomes of Residential and Family Foster</p>	<p>By working in collaboration with other local authorities and an external provider with an established step-down model via BFP, we aim to maximise the number of young people who can be successfully and sustainably stepped down into a foster placement.</p> <p>We also intend to make the most of opportunities to learn throughout the duration of the partnership to strengthen</p>	<p>SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.</p>	<p>Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Head of Service – Gateway to Resources</p>

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Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
	Care: A Meta-Analysis”, Dongdong et al, 2017; and The Place of Residential Care in English Child Welfare System, Hart et al (2015).	SCC’s own practice over time.		
<b>Positive:</b> Increased access to Surrey services and communities because of more 7–17-year-old looked after children enabled to live in Surrey.	In December 2021, 131, looked after children aged 7 to 17 were in residential placements. 65.4% of these placements were made out of county.	SCC will undertake a joint and pro-actively planned approach to step-downs for children, working with BFP and the National Fostering Group, to increase our access to and usage of existing capacity within Independent Fostering Agencies in Surrey.	SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.	Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting Head of Service – Gateway to Resources

Question	Answer
<b>What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2020-25</li> <li>• The range of improvement projects being delivered as part of the Placement Value and Outcomes Transformation Programme, covering SCC-run and externally commissioned fostering, residential and supported accommodation provision, alongside work to enhance our systems, processes and practice.</li> </ul>

Question	Answer
<b>Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated? Please identify impact and explain why</b>	No

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## 2. Disability

Question	Answer
<p><b>What information (data) do you have on affected service users/residents with this characteristic?</b></p>	<p>Of the 131 children aged between 7 and 17 years old that are looked after in residential care, 46% have a disability of some kind.</p> <p>Although overall numbers of children with disabilities have decreased, specific areas of need are seeing increases, which will impact on the type(s) of provision and support offers SCC will require in the coming years. This particularly includes children with disabilities with behavioural difficulties, a diagnosis of ASC/autism, impaired mobility and hear impairments.</p>
<p><b>Impacts</b></p>	<p>Positive and negative</p>

Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
<p>What impacts have you identified?</p>	<p>What are you basing this on?</p>	<p>Actions to mitigate or enhance impacts</p>	<p>Due date</p>	<p><i>Who is responsible for this?</i></p>
<p><b>Positive:</b> Increased choice and provision in county for children with disabilities who are looked after, as a result of a new step-down pathway.</p>	<p>Published research suggests that children in foster care experience improved outcomes, for example: “Comparing Long-Term Placement Outcomes of Residential and Family Foster Care: A Meta-Analysis”, Dongdong et al, 2017; and The Place of Residential Care in English Child Welfare System, Hart et al (2015).</p>	<p>SCC will work alongside BFP to enable effective step-downs for children. The well-established BFP model has been specifically designed to maximise the chances of successful and sustainable step-downs for children and their carers, built on a child-centred approach that takes account of individual needs</p>	<p>SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.</p>	<p>Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting Head of Service – Gateway to Resources</p>



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Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
	<p>Research studies which monitored and evaluated some of the early placements within family settings showed that, with the right support, family placements can be successful including those who are disabled, and that they generally lead to improvements in children's quality of life (Macaskill, 1985).</p> <p>As of December 2021, 131 of children looked after in residential provision between the age of 7 and 17 years are placed out of county. 46% have some kind of disability.</p>	<p>and circumstances, including any protected characteristics.</p>		
<p><b>Negative:</b> Depending on their individual needs, children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities may find transition or change particularly difficult.</p>	<p>Children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities may find transition or change difficult (including social links and key relationships).</p> <p><i>"I keep feeling like I don't belong. I live in a house, but it doesn't feel like home. This is because I can be moved at any time and have been moved so many times. I have lived with 14 different families. I cannot wait to have my own place, so I</i></p>	<p>A key phase in the BFP model is the pre-planning and readiness assessment that takes place for each young person considered for a step down to fostering. During this period carers are given extensive training if required, focussed on any particular additional needs of the child they will be supporting. Young people also have introductory meetings with</p>	<p>SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.</p>	<p>Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Head of Service – Gateway to Resources</p>

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Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
	<i>know that I am stable for once.” Care leaver, 18</i>	carers before the move is agreed. This ensures the best possible match for both carer and young person and supports the longer-term stability of the placement.		

Question	Answer
<b>What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2020-25</li> <li>• The range of improvement projects being delivered as part of the Placement Value and Outcomes Transformation Programme, covering SCC-run and externally commissioned fostering, residential and supported accommodation provision, alongside work to enhance our systems, processes and practice.</li> </ul>

Question	Answer
<b>Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated? Please identify impact and explain why</b>	No

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## 3. Gender Reassignment

Question	Answer
<b>What information (data) do you have on affected service users/residents with this characteristic?</b>	Individual looked after children may have experienced or be in the process of gender reassignment. There is some published research that suggests that higher rates of looked after children access gender identity development services than their non-looked after peers, but this is limited in scope and based on historical data: Gender Dysphoria in looked-after and adopted young people in a gender identity development service, Matthews et al (2018).
<b>Impacts</b>	Positive and negative

Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
What impacts have you identified?	What are you basing this on?	Actions to mitigate or enhance impacts	Due date	<i>Who is responsible for this?</i>
<b>Positive:</b> Increased placement choice within Surrey for children looked after, including those who may undergo gender reassignment, as a result of a new step-down pathway.	Published research suggests that children in foster care experience improved outcomes, for example: “Comparing Long-Term Placement Outcomes of Residential and Family Foster Care: A Meta-Analysis”, Dongdong et al, 2017; and The Place of Residential Care in English Child Welfare System, Hart et al (2015). It is noted that this research does not specifically talk about the	SCC will work alongside BFP to enable effective step-downs for children. The well-established BFP model has been specifically designed to maximise the chances of successful and sustainable step-downs for children and their carers, built on a child-centred approach that takes account of individual needs and circumstances, including any protected characteristics.	SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.	Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting Head of Service – Gateway to Resources

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Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
	experience of children with this protected characteristic.			
<p><b>Positive and/or negative:</b> The level of carers' knowledge and understanding of gender reassignment and identity might lead to a positive or negative impact on children who step-down.</p>	Where children are effectively matched with their carers and moves are well-planned, children will benefit from being understood, accepted, and supported by care givers. If this is not the case, a negative impact could also be felt by the young person.	SCC will work alongside BFP to ensure that appropriate matches are made for children and that enhanced training is in place for carers, to ensure any skills gaps are identified, before the placement move is finalised. This helps in ensuring carers are confident and able to meet the needs of the children they will be caring for.	SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.	<p>Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Head of Service – Gateway to Resources</p>

Question	Answer
<p><b>What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents?</b> <b>Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2020-25</li> <li>• The range of improvement projects being delivered as part of the Placement Value and Outcomes Transformation Programme, covering SCC-run and externally commissioned fostering, residential and supported accommodation provision, alongside work to enhance our systems, processes and practice.</li> </ul>

Question	Answer
<p><b>Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated? Please identify impact and explain why</b></p>	No

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## 4. Pregnancy & Maternity

Question	Answer
What information (data) do you have on affected service users/residents with this characteristic?	Provision could potentially include placements for both looked after young people who are parents or pregnant, including children in parenting assessment placements and parent and child residential placements. It is noted however that a relatively small number of young people overall will be considered as part of the project and the number of children who are parents or pregnant is also likely to be small.
Impacts	Positive and negative

Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
What impacts have you identified?	What are you basing this on?	Actions to mitigate or enhance impacts	Due date	Who is responsible for this?
<b>Positive:</b> Increased placement choice within Surrey for children looked after, including those who are pregnant or young parents, as a result of a new step-down pathway.	Published research suggests that children in foster care experience improved outcomes, for example: “Comparing Long-Term Placement Outcomes of Residential and Family Foster Care: A Meta-Analysis”, Dongdong et al, 2017; and The Place of Residential Care in English Child Welfare System, Hart et al (2015).	SCC will work alongside BFP to enable effective step-downs for children. The well-established BFP model has been specifically designed to maximise the chances of successful and sustainable step-downs for children and their carers, built on a child-centred approach that takes account of individual needs and circumstances, including any protected characteristics.	SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.	Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting Head of Service – Gateway to Resources

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Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
<p><b>Negative:</b> Potential for negative impact on a young person who is pregnant at time of placement change, for example due to maintenance of relationships and/or access to antenatal care.</p>	<p>Young people who are pregnant will require access to scheduled antenatal appointments. This could be disrupted if placements were to change.</p> <p><i>“I find it hard to maintain relationships including romantic and friendships because I might have to move away from them at any time without warning.”</i></p> <p><b>Looked after child, 17</b></p>	<p>Extensive pre-planning is a key feature of the BFP model, to ensure the readiness of a young person to step-down and the preparedness of foster carers to meet their needs. In the event a young person was pregnant, this would be taken into consideration as part of this rigorous planning, to ensure appropriate antenatal support was maintained.</p>	<p>SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.</p>	<p>Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Head of Service – Gateway to Resources</p>
<p><b>Negative:</b> Potential for a negative impact on young people who are also parents, for example due to maintenance of relationships and/or access to postnatal care.</p>	<p>Young people who are new parents may also require postnatal support. This could be disrupted if placements were to change.</p> <p>It is noted that a relatively small number of young people overall will be considered as part of the project and the numbers of young parents is also likely to be small.</p>	<p>Extensive pre-planning is a key feature of the BFP model, to ensure the readiness of a young person to step-down and the preparedness of foster carers to meet their needs. In the event a young person was also a parent, this would be taken into consideration as part of this rigorous planning, to ensure appropriate support was provided.</p>	<p>SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.</p>	<p>Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Head of Service – Gateway to Resources</p>

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Question	Answer
<b>What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implementation of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2020-25</li><li>• The range of improvement projects being delivered as part of the Placement Value and Outcomes Transformation Programme, covering SCC-run and externally commissioned fostering, residential and supported accommodation provision, alongside work to enhance our systems, processes and practice.</li></ul>

Question	Answer
<b>Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated? Please identify impact and explain why</b>	No

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## 5. Race including ethnic or national origins, colour, or nationality

Question	Answer
What information (data) do you have on affected service users/residents with this characteristic?	The ethnic breakdown of the Children Looked After population in Surrey is: 72% White British, 9% Mixed Race, 7% Asian, 5% Black, 4% White Other, 2% Other, 1% Traveller, 1% Chinese.
Impacts	Positive and negative

Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
What impacts have you identified?	What are you basing this on?	Actions to mitigate or enhance impacts	Due date	Who is responsible for this?
<b>Positive:</b> Increased placement choice within Surrey for children looked after, including those who are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, as a result of a new step-down pathway.	Published research suggests that children in foster care experience improved outcomes, for example: “Comparing Long-Term Placement Outcomes of Residential and Family Foster Care: A Meta-Analysis”, Dongdong et al, 2017; and The Place of Residential Care in English Child Welfare System, Hart et al (2015).	SCC will work alongside BFP to enable effective step-downs for children. The well-established BFP model has been specifically designed to maximise the chances of successful and sustainable step-downs for children and their carers, built on a child-centred approach that takes account of individual needs and circumstances, including any protected characteristics.	SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.	Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting Head of Service – Gateway to Resources



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Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
<p><b>Positive or negative:</b> Potential for positive or negative impact on children looked after from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, due to carers level of knowledge and understanding of their cultural needs.</p>	<p>Published research has noted the importance of culturally appropriate placements, particularly for children in foster care (Ofsted, 2019).</p> <p>Under the Children Act 1989, Local Authorities are required to consider the wishes and feelings of any child in its care in decisions made about that child, including those under the age of 16. In addition, foster carers are required to be trained and confident in dealing with issues relating to a child's ethnic and/or cultural background and be able to involve external professional advice as necessary.</p> <p><i>"The one thing I would do differently is ensure that all CYP are getting their needs met and also CYP being matched with the best placements possible."</i> <b>Care leaver, 18</b></p>	<p>Extensive child-centre pre-planning is a key feature of the BFP model. This would involve careful consideration of the appropriateness of any foster carers proposed, taking account of the child's ethnic or cultural background, and appropriate training for foster carers (as needed) to enable these needs to be met. This ensures the best possible match for both carer and young person and supports the long-term stability of the placement. Flexible support will also be offered to the foster carers and young person as part of the BFP model.</p>	<p>SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.</p>	<p>Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Head of Service – Gateway to Resources</p>
<p><b>Positive or negative:</b> Potential impact of placing children and young people in particular geographical areas, with differing ethnic profiles.</p>	<p>There is a varying regional ethnic diversity across the country the most ethnically diverse region in England and Wales was London (GOV.UK).</p> <p>The ethnicity breakdown of the Children Looked After population in</p>	<p>As part of the extensive pre-planning phase, SCC will work alongside BFP to ensure location considerations arising from a child's ethnic and cultural background are taken into</p>	<p>SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children</p>	<p>Head of Service – Gateway to Resources</p>

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Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
	Surrey is: 72% White British, 9% Mixed Race, 7% Asian, 5% Black, 4% White Other, 2% Other, 1% Traveller, 1% Chinese.	account before identifying a foster carer.	running until January 2026.	

Question	Answer
<p><b>What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2020-25</li> <li>• The range of improvement projects being delivered as part of the Placement Value and Outcomes Transformation Programme, covering SCC-run and externally commissioned fostering, residential and supported accommodation provision, alongside work to enhance our systems, processes and practice.</li> </ul>

Question	Answer
<p><b>Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated? Please identify impact and explain why</b></p>	No

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## 6. Religion or Belief including lack of belief

Question	Answer
<b>What information (data) do you have on affected service users/residents with this characteristic?</b>	Whilst there is limited data available on the religious belief or lack of belief of looked after children in Surrey, there are now clear duties on SCC in this area. In January 2020, the following was added on the duty of the local authority under the Children Act 1989 to consider the wishes and feelings of any child in its care in decisions made about that child. If the wishes and feelings of a child about engagement in religious practice are different to those held by individuals with parental responsibility, the child's views must be duly considered, taking into account the age and level of understanding of the child.
<b>Impacts</b>	Positive and negative

Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
What impacts have you identified?	What are you basing this on?	Actions to mitigate or enhance impacts	Due date	<i>Who is responsible for this?</i>
<b>Positive</b> - Increased placement choice within Surrey for children looked after, including those with religious belief or lack of religious belief, as a result of new step-down pathway.	Published research suggests that children in foster care experience improved outcomes, for example: "Comparing Long-Term Placement Outcomes of Residential and Family Foster Care: A Meta-Analysis", Dongdong et al, 2017; and The Place of Residential Care in English Child Welfare System, Hart et al (2015).	SCC will work alongside BFP to enable effective step-downs for children. The well-established BFP model has been specifically designed to maximise the chances of successful and sustainable step-downs for children and their carers, built on a child-centred approach that takes account of individual needs and circumstances, including any protected characteristics.	SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.	Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting Head of Service – Gateway to Resources

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<p><b>Negative</b> – potential negative impact in cases where religious belief or lack of belief of children stepping down is not adequately considered, including carer’s understanding of religious beliefs or lack of belief and access to appropriate places of worship.</p>	<p>Under the Children Act 1989, Local Authorities are required to consider the wishes and feelings of any child in its care in decisions made about that child, including those under the age of 16. In addition, foster carers are required to be trained and confident in dealing with issues relating to religious belief or the lack thereof and be able to involve external professional advice as necessary.</p>	<p>By working alongside BFP, SCC will ensure that issues relating to the child’s religious belief or lack of religious belief are considered through a child-centred approach to planning and matching. Flexible support will also be offered to the foster carers and young person as part of the BFP model.</p>	<p>SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.</p>	<p>Head of Service – Gateway to Resources</p>
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Question	Answer
<p><b>What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2020-25</li> <li>• The range of improvement projects being delivered as part of the Placement Value and Outcomes Transformation Programme, covering SCC-run and externally commissioned fostering, residential and supported accommodation provision, alongside work to enhance our systems, processes, and practice.</li> </ul>

Question	Answer
<p><b>Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated? Please identify impact and explain why</b></p>	<p>No</p>

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## 7. Sex

Question	Answer
What information (data) do you have on affected service users/residents with this characteristic?	55% of looked after children are male and 45% are female. There has been an increase in females becoming looked after due to mental health needs. We would expect the step-down placements to reflect this data with slightly more male than female children.
Impacts	Positive

Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
What impacts have you identified?	What are you basing this on?	Actions to mitigate or enhance impacts	Due date	<i>Who is responsible for this?</i>
<b>Positive</b> – Increased placement choice within Surrey for children looked after, including males, females and those who identify as non-binary, as a result of a new step-down pathway.	Published research suggests that children in foster care experience improved outcomes, for example: “Comparing Long-Term Placement Outcomes of Residential and Family Foster Care: A Meta-Analysis”, Dongdong et al, 2017; and The Place of Residential Care in English Child Welfare System, Hart et al (2015).	SCC will work alongside BFP to enable effective step-downs for children. The well-established BFP model has been specifically designed to maximise the chances of successful and sustainable step-downs for children and their carers, built on a child-centred approach that takes account of individual needs and circumstances, including any protected characteristics.	SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.	Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting Head of Service – Gateway to Resources

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Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
<p><b>Positive or negative:</b> Potential for positive or negative impact on looked after children who identify as non-binary, due to carers level of knowledge and understanding.</p>	<p>Some children and young people may identify as non-binary (an umbrella term for gender identities that are neither male nor female).</p> <p>Some nationally published research indicates looked after children are less likely to receive a diagnosis of gender dysphoria compared with young people living in their birth family, but this is limited in scope and based on historical data: Gender Dysphoria in looked-after and adopted young people in a gender identity development service, Matthews et al (2018).</p> <p>It is noted that a relatively small number of young people overall will be considered as part of the project and the number identifying as non-binary is also likely to be small.</p>	<p>Extensive child-centre pre-planning is a key feature of the BFP model. This would involve careful consideration of the appropriateness of any foster carers proposed, in light of the child's gender identity, and appropriate training for foster carers (as needed) to enable these needs to be met. This ensures the best possible match for both carer and young person and supports the long-term stability of the placement.</p>	<p>SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.</p>	<p>Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting Head of Service – Gateway to Resources</p>

# Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Answer
<b>What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implementation of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2020-25</li><li>• The range of improvement projects being delivered as part of the Placement Value and Outcomes Transformation Programme, covering SCC-run and externally commissioned fostering, residential and supported accommodation provision, alongside work to enhance our systems, processes and practice.</li></ul>

Question	Answer
<b>Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated? Please identify impact and explain why</b>	No

# Equality Impact Assessment

## 10. Carers Protected by Association

Question	Answer
<p><b>What information (data) do you have on affected service users/residents with this characteristic?</b></p>	<p>There are approximately 190 in-house Foster Carers in Surrey currently who may be protected by association.</p> <p>There are 19 Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) with carer households in Surrey. In March 2021, there was a capacity of 139 potential IFA foster placements in Surrey covered by the South Central Framework (the main route available to SCC to secure foster placements), with only 22% of these currently filled by children referred by Surrey County Council. Please note – the actual number of foster caring households will be lower than 139, due to some households having more than 1 placement available.</p>
<p><b>Impacts</b> (Delete as applicable)</p>	<p>Positive</p>

Impacts identified	Supporting evidence	How will you maximise positive/minimise negative impacts?	When will this be implemented by?	Owner
<p>What impacts have you identified?</p>	<p>What are you basing this on?</p>	<p>Actions to mitigate or enhance impacts</p>	<p>Due date</p>	<p><i>Who is responsible for this?</i></p>
<p><b>Positive:</b> Additional wrap-around support available to foster carers matched to children stepping down.</p>	<p>The BFP model provides enhanced support to foster carers and young people, particularly in the first weeks and months of a placement, to support enable children to settle into their new home.</p>	<p>SCC will work alongside BFP to enable effective step-downs for children. The well-established BFP model has been specifically designed to maximise the chances of successful and sustainable step-downs for children and their carers, including extensive holistic support in</p>	<p>SCC intends (subject to a Cabinet decision) to join the BFP from 1 April 2022, with placements for some children running until January 2026.</p>	<p>Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting Head of Service – Gateway to Resources</p>



# Equality Impact Assessment

		the early weeks and months of a placement – maximising the chance of step-downs being sustained and enabling the best outcomes for children and their carers.		
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Question	Answer
<p><b>What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2020-25</li> <li>• The range of improvement projects being delivered as part of the Placement Value and Outcomes Transformation Programme, covering SCC-run and externally commissioned fostering, residential and supported accommodation provision, alongside work to enhance our systems, processes and practice.</li> </ul>

Question	Answer
<p><b>Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated? Please identify impact and explain why</b></p>	No

## 4. Amendments to the proposals

CHANGE	REASON FOR CHANGE
What changes have you made because of this EIA?	Why have these changes been made?
No significant changes have been made – but the importance of effective joint-work between SCC and BFP to ensure a child-centred approach to planning, which considers an individual's protected characteristics, is emphasised.	Not applicable

## 5. Recommendation

Based your assessment, please indicate which course of action you are recommending to decision makers. You should explain your recommendation below.

Outcome Number	Description	Tick
<b>Outcome One</b>	<b>No major change to the policy/service/function required.</b> This EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or negative impact, and all opportunities to promote equality have been undertaken	
<b>Outcome Two</b>	<b>Adjust the policy/service/function</b> to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better advance equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments would remove the barriers you identified?	X
<b>Outcome Three</b>	<b>Continue the policy/service/function</b> despite potential for negative impact or missed opportunities to advance equality identified. You will need to make sure the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You need to consider whether there are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sufficient plans to stop or minimise the negative impact</li> <li>• Mitigating actions for any remaining negative impacts plans to monitor the actual impact.</li> </ul>	
<b>Outcome Four</b>	<b>Stop and rethink</b> the policy when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination  (For guidance on what is unlawful discrimination, refer to the <a href="#">Equality and Human Rights Commission's guidance and Codes of Practice on the Equality Act</a> concerning employment, goods and services and equal pay).	

Question	Answer
<b>Confirmation and explanation of recommended outcome</b>	This EIA has not highlighted any negative impacts on individuals with protected characteristics, resulting from SCC deciding to join the Big Fostering Partnership, that cannot be mitigated by appropriate planning, partnership working and social work practice.

# Equality Impact Assessment

## 6a. Version control

Version Number	Purpose/Change	Author	Date
1.0	Initial draft	Tracey Stokes	09.12.2021
1.1	Update following review of draft	Tracey Stokes / Chris Tisdall	18.01.2022

The above provides historical data about each update made to the Equality Impact Assessment. Please do include the name of the author, date and notes about changes made – so that you are able to refer to what changes have been made throughout this iterative process. For further information, please see the EIA Guidance document on version control.

## 6b. Approval

Approved by*	Date approved
Hayley Connor, Director - Commissioning	20/01/2021
Executive Director	21/01/2021
Cabinet Member	24/01/2021

EIA Author	Tracey Stokes
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\*Secure approval from the appropriate level of management based on nature of issue and scale of change being assessed.

## 6c. EIA Team

Name	Job Title	Organisation	Team Role
Tracey Stokes	Commissioning Officer	Surrey County Council	Corporate Parenting - Commissioning
Chris Tisdall	Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting	Surrey County Council	Corporate Parenting - Commissioning

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