



Cabinet – supplement: IRO Services

Monday 16 March 2015 at 2.00 pm
Granville Plus Centre, Granville Road, NW6 5RA

Membership:

Lead Member Councillors:

Portfolio

Butt (Chair)	Leader of the Council
Pavey (Vice-Chair)	Deputy Leader of the Council
Crane	Lead Member for Environment
Denselow	Lead Member for Stronger Communities
Hirani	Lead Member for Adults, Health and Well-being
Mashari	Lead Member for Employment and Skills
McLennan	Lead Member for Regeneration and Housing
Moher	Lead Member for Children and Young People

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The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting

Agenda - supplement: IRO Services

Introductions, if appropriate.

Apologies for absence.

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Ward Affected:
All Wards

Lead Member: Councillor Moher
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Date of the next meeting: Tuesday 14 April 2015



- Please remember to set your mobile phone to silent during the meeting.
- The meeting room is accessible by lift and seats will be provided for members of the public.

 Brent	<p style="text-align: center;">CABINET</p> <p style="text-align: center;">16 March 2015</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report from the Strategic Director Children and Young People.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Wards Affected: ALL</p>	
<p>Authority to award a contract for Independent Reviewing Officer Services</p>	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report requests authority to award a contract for the provision of Independent Review Officer Services to the Council as required by Contract Standing Order No 88. This report summarises the process undertaken in tendering this contract and, following the completion of the evaluation of the tenders, recommends to whom the contract should be awarded.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet award the contract for the provision of Independent Review Services for an initial contract period of two years from 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2017 to Aidhour Limited with an option for the Council to extend the contract by an additional 12 months subject to satisfactory performance.

3.0 Detail

Background

- 3.1 In line with legislation, all looked after children have a care plan, which is a written document that sets out the arrangements for their care whilst they are looked after by the local authority. This care plan has to be reviewed by an independent person known as an Independent Review Officer (IRO) in line with timescales as set out in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. As such a review should occur within 28 days of a child becoming first looked after, then at 3 months and then on a 6 monthly basis thereafter. The role of the IRO, who chairs these Looked After Children Reviews, is to have a wider overview of the case including regular monitoring and follow-up between reviews. The IRO has a key role in relation to the improvement of Care Planning for Children Looked After (CLA) and for challenging drift and delay, quality assure and scrutinize each child's care plan and ensure that the child's voice is central to decision making and planning while he/she remains looked after.
- 3.2 During the last financial year Brent had 348 looked after children and a total of 987 looked after children reviews were carried out. 97.1% of reviews were undertaken within the required statutory time scale, with individual IROs completing 20-30 reviews each in any given month.
- 3.3 The service is managed by the council's IRO manager who oversees and monitors the council's contract with the incumbent provider (Aidhour Limited), ensures that all reviews take place in a timely manner, and collates and disseminates any learning arising from the reviews. The post holder also has a key role in managing any difference of opinion between the IROs and the social work teams in relation to the care plan. In addition, the IRO manager undertakes a limited number of reviews.
- 3.4 Following a report to the Cabinet on 10 November 2014, officers were authorised to invite tenders for a contract for Independent Review Officer Services and evaluate them in accordance with the approved evaluation criteria.

4.0 The tender process

- 4.1 As a high value contract, the contract was tendered in accordance with council Contract Standing Orders.
- 4.2 A one stage or open tender process was followed. Advertisements inviting tenders were placed in the Municipal Journal and on the Council's E-procurement system, Due North. Despite a reasonable level of interest from

6 suppliers who raised questions, only one organisation, the current provider Aidhour Limited, submitted a tender by the tender return deadline date of 7 January 2015. Officers have spoken to some of the suppliers who indicated they were interested in tendering for the work but on reviewing the ITT, did not submit a tender because of financial and staff capacity restraints within their own organisations.

4.3 The tendering instructions stated that the tender would be evaluated to identify the most economically advantageous tender having regard to price and quality. The following high-level criteria were approved by Cabinet:

4.3.1 The Quality criteria listed below formed 40% of the evaluation weightings:

- Proposed business models.
- Proposed plans for ensuring effective quality management of the Services and maintenance of the Contract Standard, including self-monitoring and evaluation.
- Proposals for ensuring that the requirements of Child Protection legislation are fully applied in the delivery of the service
- Proposed approach for working in partnership with all stakeholders including the council, children, parents and their carers.
- Specific Health and safety matters relevant to the contract

4.3.2 Price consisted of 60% of the evaluation weightings.

4.4 Attached at Appendix 1 is a copy of the evaluation methodology detailing the criteria, the weighting attributable to each criterion and how the method statements forming part of the tender fed into the evaluation criteria.

4.5 Despite receiving only one bid officers carried out a full evaluation of the said bid to ensure it met all Council requirements and offered value for money and could therefore be recommended for award.

Evaluation process

4.6 Evaluation of the tender was carried out by a core panel consisting of three managers from the service area (including the Head of Service), an IRO manager and a senior social worker. Officers from Procurement, Legal, Health and Safety and Finance provided support to the evaluation panel.

- 4.7 All panel members read through the tender areas allocated to them using evaluation sheets and noted down comments on how well each of the award criteria were addressed by the tenderer.
- 4.8 The core panel then met to agree scoring. It will be noted from Appendix 2 that for the quality criteria the tenderer scored 24.16% out of a possible 40%. As the only bidder, Aidhour Limited received the maximum score of 60 per cent for price. The overall score was therefore 84.16% (see Appendix 2).
- 4.9 Officers evaluated the financial aspects of the tender rigorously to ensure it represents value for money. Tenderers had been asked to submit fixed prices for each of the first two years of the contract. Aidhour Limited's tender indicated a total price for this period of £335,100. Based on the current spend of £170k per annum or £340k over two years, this equates to a small saving of £4,900k on the current price paid.

Evaluation Conclusions

- 4.10 Having evaluated and scored the tender, Officers consider that the tender from Aidhour Limited indicates that it will be able to provide the relevant services to a high standard and deliver savings to the Council. Whilst not part of the evaluation, it should be mentioned that as the current supplier, Aidhour Limited have consistently met all targets set within the contract.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Council's Contract Standing Orders state that contracts for supplies and services exceeding £250k or works contracts exceeding £500k shall be referred to the Cabinet for approval of the award of the contract.
- 5.2 The proposed contract award to Aidhour Limited for the financial years April 2015 to March 2017 has a contract price for the service of £ £335,100 ie £167,550 per annum. The council has the option to extend the contract with Aidhour Limited for an additional 12 months up to 31st March 2018 and a new contract price for the extended period if required will be set in accordance with the terms set out in the contract.
- 5.3 The contract will be funded from the existing budget for the IRO service within the Children's Social Care budget.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 The procurement of IRO Services commenced prior to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 coming into force. As a result, the procurement was conducted in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (the “EU Regulations”).
- 6.2 The estimated value of the contract for the provision of Independent Review services exceeds the EU Regulations threshold for Services. The provision of Independent Review services are however classed as Part B Services for the purposes of the EU Regulations and as such are subject to partial application of the EU Regulations, including:
- (i). Non-discrimination in the technical specification.
 - (ii). Notification of the contract award to the EU Publications Office.

The contract is not therefore subject to the full tendering requirements of EU Regulations.

- 6.3 The estimated value of this contract is above the Council’s Standing Orders threshold for High Value Service Contracts of £250,000, and the award of the contract is consequently subject to the Council’s own Standing Orders and Financial Regulations in respect of High Value contracts. As a result, Cabinet approval is required for the award of the contract.
- 6.4 As the recommendation is to award the contract to Aidhour Limited who are the current supplier, there are no implications relating to the Transfer of Employment (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (“TUPE.”)

7.0 Diversity Implications

- 7.1 The proposals in this report have been subject to screening and Members are referred to the Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix 3. It will be noted that no negative impact on protected groups has been identified.
- 7.2 Equalities issues are a core requirement for this contract and formed an important part of the evaluation of the tendering organisations’ technical capacity through the assessment of the PQQ and in the assessment of the quality of service both in the written tenders and questions from the panel during the tenderer’s presentation.

- 7.3 Brent IRO service monitors usage of its services, and the progress and achievement that young people make, across a variety of parameters. Specific management information exists by gender, ethnicity and disability.
- 7.4. Consultation on the service is provided by annual surveys such as 'tell us what you think', feedback following looked after reviews and through the young people care in action group, looking at case studies, feedback from partners in written and verbal form, complaints and compliments.

8.0 Staffing/ Accommodation Implications

- 8.1 This service is currently provided by an external contractor Aidhour Limited and the proposal is to award to the same contractor. There are no implications for Council staff arising from retendering the contract and staff delivering the current contract will continue their employment with the existing contractor.

Background Papers

- Cabinet Report of 10th November 2014: Authority to invite tenders for the provision Independent Reviewing Officer Services.

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GAIL TOLLEY
Strategic Director Children and Young People

Appendix 1
Tender Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation of bids

Bids will be evaluated in accordance with the methodology set out below. The PQQ and ITT documentation will be analysed concurrently. Bidders must pass all stages as indicated in the PQQ Instructions and reach the minimum scoring thresholds set for responses to the method statements.

Overall evaluation criteria

Tenders will be evaluated to identify the economically most advantageous tender having regard to price and quality elements.

Price will carry 60% of the evaluation weightings, quality 40%.

Evaluation of Price

Price will consist of 60% of the evaluation weightings. The tenderer with the lowest evaluated price will receive the highest score; other tenderers will receive a proportional score to the lowest evaluated price.

Evaluation of Quality

The overall Quality weighting is 40%.

The criteria and their relative weightings¹ used to evaluate Quality are detailed in the table below.

Tenderers are required to complete Method Statements detailed in Tender Document (k) . The Method Statements and their relative weightings are detailed in the table below.

Criteria Number	Criteria	Weighting	Method Statement	Method Statement Weighting
EC1	Proposed business model	41%	MS 1	23%
			MS 2	5%
			MS 3	5%
			MS 4	8%
EC2	Tenderer's proposed plans for ensuring effective quality management of the Services and plan to achieve and maintain performance to Contract standards, requirements and targets including self-monitoring and evaluation	25%	MS 5	15%
			MS 6	10%
EC3	Tenderer's proposed	22%	MS 7	10%

¹ Weightings detailed are a percentage of the Quality criterion

	approach for working in partnership with all stakeholders including the children, young people and their parents, Council, and any other relevant agencies/ organisations		MS 8	10%
			MS 9	2%
EC4	Health and Safety	2%	MS 10	2%
EC5	Tenderer's proposals for adhering to Child Protection requirements	10%	MS 11	10%

Scoring system

The scoring system to be used will be as follows:

Score	Acceptability	Tenderer Response Demonstrates
0	Unacceptable	Information is either omitted or fundamentally unacceptable and/or there is insufficient evidence to support the proposal to allow the Authority to properly evaluate
1	Major Reservations	The information submitted has insufficient evidence that the specified requirements can be met and/or there are significant omissions, serious and/or raises many concerns
2	Some Reservations	The information submitted has some minor omissions against the specified requirements. The solution achieves basic minimum standard in some respects but is unsatisfactory in others and raises some concerns
3	Satisfactory	The information submitted meets the Authority's requirements and is acceptable in most respects, and there are no major concerns
4	Good	The information submitted provides good evidence that the specified requirements can be met. It is a full and robust response, and any concerns are addressed so that the proposal gives confidence
5	Outstanding	The information submitted provides strong evidence that the specified requirements will be exceeded, and provides full confidence with no concerns

For each method statement tenderers must score a minimum of 2.in order for the tender to be considered further.

Tenderers should note that word limits for method statements will be strictly applied and words beyond the specified limit will not be taken account of in the evaluation scoring.

Should a Tenderer fail to achieve a score of 55% for Quality criteria, this will preclude further consideration of the tender.

Evaluation panel

Tenderers responses will be evaluated by a team of Council officers, stakeholders and advisers drawn together by the Council with expertise in the delivery of these services.

Appendix 2

Aidhours Limited - Quality Criteria		Quality Criteria Weighting		Quality Criteria Sub Weighting	Moderated score	Weighted Quality Score
Proposed business model	EC1	41%	MS1	23%	3.00	13.8%
			MS2	5%	3.00	3%
			MS3	5%	3.00	3%
			MS4	8%	2.00	3.2%
Tenderer's proposed plans for ensuring effective quality management of the Services and plan to achieve and maintain performance to Contract standards, requirements and targets including self-monitoring and evaluation	EC2	25%	MS5	15%	3.00	9%
			MS6	10%	3.00	6%
Tenderer's proposed approach for working in partnership with all stakeholders including the children, young people and their parents, Council, and any other relevant agencies/ organisations	EC3	22%	MS7	10%	3.00	6%
			MS8	10%	4.00	8%
			MS9	2%	4.00	1.6%
Health and Safety	EC4	2%	MS10	2%	2.00	0.8%
Tenderer's proposals for adhering to Child Protection requirements	EC5	10%	MS11	10%	3.00	6%
Total Quality Score						60.4%

Appendix 2

	Aidhours Limited
Total Price Score	100
Scores with Quality and Price Weightings	
Weighted Quality scores (out of 40%)	60.4 x 40% weighting = 24.16%
Weighted Price Score (out of 60%)	100 x 60% weighting = 60.00%
Total score	84.16%

**Appendix 3
Brent Council Equality Analysis Form**

1. Roles and Responsibilities:	
Directorate: Children and Young People Service Area: Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	Person Responsible: Name: Sarah Alexander Title: Head Of Service Contact No: 07789 196343 Signed: Sarah Alexander
Name of policy: Independent Reviewing Policy & Procedures	Date analysis started: October 2014 Completion date January 2015 Review date:
Is the policy: New <input type="checkbox"/> Old <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Auditing Details: Name : Title: Partnership Equality Policy Officer Date Contact No: Signed:
Signing Off Manager: responsible for review and monitoring Name: GRAHAM GENONI Title: Operational Director Children's Social Care Date: 20.2.15 Contact No: Signed: 	Decision Maker: Committee: Cabinet Date: 16.3.15

2. Brief description of the policy. Describe the aim and purpose of the policy, what needs or duties is it designed to meet? How does it differ from any existing policy or practice in this area?

Brent's Independent Reviewing Officer team (IRO) for Looked After Children is part of the Brent Safeguarding and Quality Assurance service. The main function of the team is to chair Looked After Children Reviews, quality assure the care planning and review process, monitor the local authority's performance as corporate parent, and ensure that the child's wishes and feelings are fully considered. The IRO service currently consists of one permanent IRO, an IRO manager and eight IROs provided by Aid Hour, a not for profit organization which is contracted for this purpose..

This EIA is in respect of the development and tendering of the Independent Reviewing Officer service for looked after children and children with disabilities. Appendix One provides an overview of the demographic profile of looked after children and children with disabilities, taking account particularly of protected characteristics relevant to gender, age, disability and ethnicity.

As a result of the high staff turn over in front line social work currently experienced by many London local Authorities including Brent the IRO tend to be the most consistent person in many of the looked after children's life , therefore they play a vital role in assisting the local authority discharge its corporate parent responsibility.

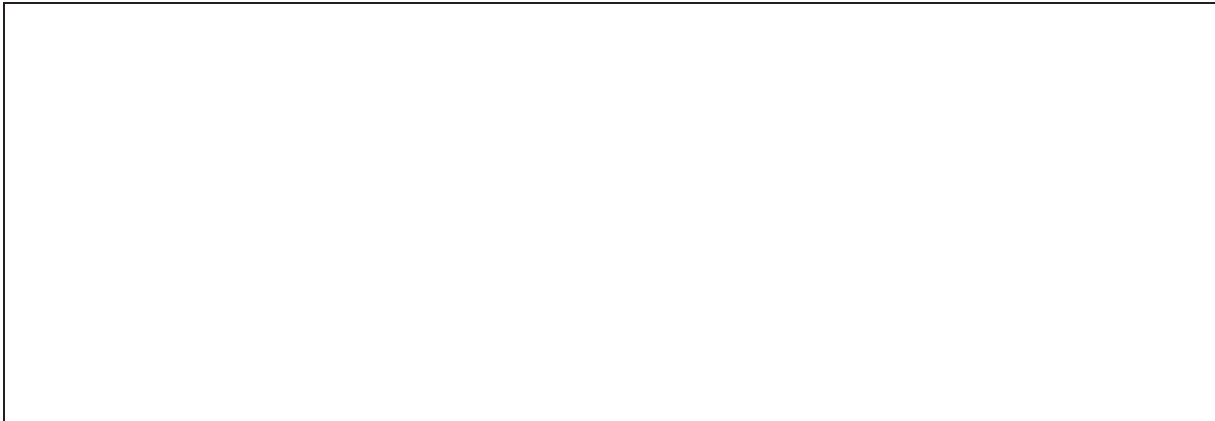
The focus of the IRO service will remain, to

- monitor future planning and permanency,
- identify problems and gaps in arrangements for children looked after,
- know the child and ensure that his/ her voice is heard,
- act as a bridge between the parents , extended family and the local authority and
- Keep things on track and provide continuity.

This includes

- Regular reviews, liaison and discussion with children, social workers, parents, Children Guardians and other practitioners such as health and education.

Part of the IROs role is also to escalate any unresolved issues in liaison with social workers and team managers. A recent research carried out by the University of East Anglia on the role of the IRO has shown that children and young people, social workers, parents see the IROs work in a positive light , contributing to a good outcome for Children Looked After.



3. Describe how the policy will impact on all of the protected groups:

The service continues to impact positively on protected groups particularly in relation to disability, age, sex and ethnicity. To some extent, the service will also positively impact (where relevant) on religious affiliation and sexual orientation, although broadly speaking the service would be described as neutral with respect to these characteristics. Given the age profile of the end user, the service is not expected to have any role in relation to marriage/civil partnerships, gender reassignment with only a very small role in pregnancy/maternity.

IROs play an important role in preventing issues from escalating or drift in planning for a child's life. The review takes children's age, disability, language, and ethnicity and, where appropriate, the sex, sexual orientation and faith of the child or young person into consideration to determine what a child's long term plan should be.

The earlier a care plan for a child is finalized the greater the likelihood of securing permanency and positive outcome for looked after children and this can include return home to their family.

During the year 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014, 348 children were Looked After by Brent. The team of IROs including those permanently employed and those commissioned through Aid Hour as of the 31st of March 2014 comprises of seven (54.8%) male and nine (56.2%) females. Of the children looked after on the same date 193 (55%) were male and 155 (45%) were female. The ethnic identity age of the cohort of children looked after as of 31 March 2014 was as follows:

Ethnicity		
White	79	22.6%
Mixed	77	22.06%
Asian or Asian British	40	11.4%
Black or Black British	116	33.5%
Other	36	10.3%
Total	348	100%

Children in Care by Age & Gender		
	Male	Female
0-4 years	27	28
5-9 years	32	24
10-12 years	21	18
13-15 years	42	45
16 and over	71	40
Total	193	155

The service is intended to monitor and review care plans of looked after children, provide support, advice and guidance to practitioners working with looked after children including children with disabilities, ensure that their particular needs are met, making sure the voice of the child is at the center of all decision making process at all times.

The service will also support practitioners and families, where appropriate, in ensuring that looked after children recommendations are followed and tracked through the review process regularly. Where there are concerns they are escalated using Brent's escalation policy.

During the year ending 31st of March 2014 amongst the main issues raised by the IRO's were:

- Frequent change of social workers
- Paper work and care Plans not completed in time for the review.
- IRO's not always been consulted when care plans are changed and children and young people move placement.

Please give details of the evidence you have used:

IRO legislation and statutory guidance sits within a policy framework which reinforces the importance the Government places on local authorities to improve outcomes for looked after children. The provision of good emotional and mental health services across the lifespan of an individual taking account the specific needs and circumstances of the individual.

The Children and young Person Act 2008 extends the IRO's responsibilities from monitoring the performance by the local authority of their function in relation to the child's review to monitoring the performance by the local authority in relation to the children's cases, as set out in section 25A-25c of the 1989 Act (inserted by section 10 Of the 2008 Act). The intention is that these changes will enable the IRO to have an effective independent oversight of the child's case and ensure that the child's interests are protected through out the care planning process (IRO hand book)

- The House of Lords Judgment in 2012 concluded that a local authority that failed in its duty to a looked after child could be challenged under the Human Rights Act 1998, most likely under Article 8 of the European convention on Human Rights relating to family life. The judgment recognised that some

children with no adult to act on their behalf may not have any effective means to initiate such a challenge.

- *Brent Corporate Strategy* with prioritisation of early intervention to secure positive health and wellbeing outcomes for children looked after.
- *Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability*
- *Children Act 1989* – remains the major piece of legislation for children’s social care and prioritises steps to reduce the risk of escalation of problems amongst more vulnerable children and young people. The Children and Families Bill, published on 5 February 2013, contains provisions to improve services for vulnerable children and support strong families.
- *Children and Young Persons Act 2008* – implements the provisions within Care Matters to improve outcomes for looked-after children, or those at risk of being looked after; amending aspects of the Children Act 1989
- *Promoting the Quality of Life for Looked After Children and Young People, NICE and SCIE, October 2010* - sets out how agencies and services in a complex, multi-agency environment can improve the quality of life for looked-after children and young people through more effective collaboration that places them at the heart of all decision making.

The safeguarding service in Brent oversees the work of the IRO’s. Regular contractual monitoring meeting are held with Aid hour (current provider) and twice a year meeting with all IRO’s who chair Brent LAC reviews.

The team has remained stable with only one change during the year 1st April 2013 and 31st of March 2014 ; this has led to continuity of IRO’s for many children. Some IRO’s have known the children for more than 10 years contributing to stability and consistency and better outcomes for children.

The ethnic make up of the current IRO’s is less diverse. However All IRO’s are very experienced and services are provided with an equal opportunities framework and all IRO’s are expected to adhere to the Health and care Professionals council code of conduct and Brent’s internal policy and procedure.

4. Describe how the policy will impact on the Council’s duty to have due regard to the need to:

(a) Eliminate discrimination (including indirect discrimination), harassment and victimisation;

For each individual child, we take opportunities to reduce the risk of, and exposure to harassment and victimisation as part of our approach to care and placement planning for looked after children and children with disabilities.

Given that we work with some of the most vulnerable children and young people in

Brent, we recognise that many of our young people may have experienced isolation, racism and victimisation. This may contribute to anger, behavioural difficulties, frustration and other adverse impacts, such as low educational attainment, Instability of placement.

The IRO service seeks to assist in improving outcomes and life chances of looked after children, build practitioner skills and track care plans in order to expedite permanency for Brent's Looked after population. The service will also work with parents and other stake holders contributing to a consistent and supportive approach to children looked after.

It is an expectation of the Service Provider to ensure staffs are appropriately skilled and qualified to address the needs and wellbeing of looked after children and address any aspects that arise from discrimination, harassment and victimisation. We have been explicit in our service specification that the Service Provider must meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and that the Provider shall deploy staff which are appropriately qualified, competent, trained, skilled and experienced and these staffs shall ensure that all staff are properly instructed and supervised in the provision of the Service.

(b) Advance equality of opportunity;

The review process provides a service that is highly personalised responding to the requests and needs of looked after children while also carrying the role of quality assurance, working with social workers and other multiagency practitioners giving advise, guidance and consultation about addressing effectively the health , educational and wellbeing needs of individual looked after children. As a highly personalised service, this takes account of relevant protected characteristics particularly disability, ethnicity, age and where relevant, sex, religious affiliation and sexual orientation.

In this way, we are ensuring that all looked after children (irrespective of any protected characteristics) are equally able to take up particular opportunities relevant to their needs, interests and capabilities. This Service provides support, advocacy and monitoring of care plans for looked after children and children with disabilities so they can participate on an equal basis in the decision making process, avoid delay and escalation of problems in their care plan.

(c) Foster good relations

The service is intended to operate as the medium between children and young people, Parents, carers, the local authority and other stake holders such as Guardians, minimise delay in care planning and decision making by carrying out regular reviews.

Where a young person is demonstrating challenging behaviours in their interactions with other members of the community e.g. homophobia, racism etc., the looked after review would recommend a referral to relevant agencies such as CAMH service in order to support the young person develop more healthy attitudes and positive community relationships.

5. What engagement activity did you carry out as part of your assessment?

i. Who did you engage with?

Engagement has been with:

- (a) Social workers based on their experience of working with IRO's and foster carers.
- (b) LAC as part of Care in Action Group
- (c) Children's Social Care Senior Management and Heads of Service, specifically the Operational Director, Head of Localities and CWD and Head of Care Planning and Commissioning and Placements Service
- (d) Brent Council Legal Department

ii. What methods did you use?

A mixed method engagement strategy that has included directly consulting LAC through Care in Action (supported by LAC participation officers), meetings with social workers, Legal and Social Care Management and Heads of Service, and preparation and provision of draft service specifications for an iterative process of comment/review/re-drafting. There have been four revisions to the draft specifications on the basis of engagement with stakeholders.

iii. What did you find out?

All the LAC consulted had either accessed the IRO service previously or currently have one who chairs their review. Their experiences varied with some children and young people identifying very positive experiences. Key characteristics of 'positive' experiences were consistency and reliability; in some cases the children have known their IRO for more than ten years. Children see IRO's taking a robustly independent approach in order to address issues of care planning, permanency and other needs of Looked after children. They see their IRO as supportive, friendly, non-judgemental appreciate the opportunity of seeing their IRO on their own before each review and in some instances between reviews. Some children felt that the frequency of the review which takes place every six months (with the exception of the initial and second review) was too long.

Their accounts often focused on personal qualities and their knowledge of the particular IRO who chairs their review. They often described their IRO as some one who helps them to 'move things on' 'helping to plan for the Future. Where children and young people felt a clearer sense of what the IRO does is because of a concrete out come such as sorting out housing and placement issue, assisting in sorting out clothing grant, getting contact set up etc. They see their IRO as the crucial person who would be able to move matters forward and ensure the local authority discharges its duty as a corporate parent.

The positive contribution of the IRO service was spoken of by social workers, Team managers, Foster carers and other stake holders.

How have you used the information gathered?

The findings have all fed into the development and finalisation of the service specification.

iv. How has it affected your policy?

These elements have all been integrated into the service specification for the Provider. Outcome measures have also been established in the service specification that specifically relate to ensuring that the needs of all Looked After children are met including the needs of children and young people with disabilities when reviewing their care plan.

The service specification also specifically requires the Provider to offer support that is wholly built around the needs of Looked after children i.e. individual children and young people and their families (where relevant) and multiagency practitioners. This includes specifying that reviews take place in a range of venues that suite the child's need and, that different methods are used to ensure the child's voice is at the centre of the decision making.

At the very heart of the service specification is also that the IROs who are already engaged with LAC children and young people should be skilled and confident in identifying and supporting young people with all their needs including Education , health , contact, placement and that delay in permanency and poor practice is challenged through the appropriate channels and that children and young people are visited between reviews where necessary.

6. Have you identified a negative impact on any protected group, or identified any unmet needs/requirements that affect specific protected groups? If so, explain what actions you have undertaken, including consideration of any alternative proposals, to lessen or mitigate against this impact.

Not applicable.

Please give details of the evidence you have used:

7. Analysis summary

Please tick boxes to summarise the findings of your analysis.

Protected Group	Positive impact	Adverse impact	Neutral
Age	✓		
Disability	✓		
Gender re-assignment			✓
Marriage and civil partnership			✓
Pregnancy and maternity			✓
Race	✓		
Religion or belief			✓
Sex	✓		
Sexual orientation			✓

8. The Findings of your Analysis

Please complete whichever of the following sections is appropriate (one only).

No major change

Your analysis demonstrates that:

- *The policy is lawful*
- *The evidence shows no potential for direct or indirect discrimination*
- *You have taken all appropriate opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations between groups.*

Please document below the reasons for your conclusion and the information that you used to make this decision.

The service provision will:

- Improve outcomes for looked after children.
- Improve the skills and confidence of multiagency practitioners in working alongside looked after children and children and young people and assist in resolving delay in care planning and conflict at the earliest possible time, so reduce risk of escalation and avoid drift in care planning amongst this most vulnerable group of children and young people.

The IRO service is necessary to ensure we do everything we can to remove barriers and eliminate adverse impact on any specific group and improve outcomes and life chances of Looked after children.

Justification for taking these measures also stems from:

- *Brent Corporate Strategy* with prioritisation of early intervention to secure positive health and wellbeing outcomes for children most vulnerable to escalating problems.
- *Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations (2012)* – consolidates all requirements on these topics – emphasis on effective assessment, planning, intervention and review, with a focus on the child’s voice and experience. It is based on the child’s journey through care, helping them to get the right support and good outcomes.
- *Children Act 1989* – remains the major piece of legislation for children’s social care and prioritises steps to reduce the risk of escalation of problems amongst more vulnerable children and young people. The Children and Families Bill, published on 5 February 2013, contains provisions to improve services for vulnerable children and support strong families, including with more focus on early intervention. The bill began committee stage in the House of Lords on 9 October 2013.
- *Children and Young Persons Act 2008* – implements the provisions within Care Matters to improve outcomes for looked-after children, or those at risk of being looked after; amending aspects of the Children Act 1989.
- *IRO Handbook (statutory guidance for independent reviewing officers and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for looked after children*

Adjust the policy

This may involve making changes to the policy to remove barriers or to better advance equality. It can mean introducing measures to mitigate the potential adverse effect on a particular protected group(s).

Remember that it is lawful under the Equality Act to treat people differently in some circumstances, where there is a need for it. It is both lawful and a requirement of the public sector equality duty to consider if there is a need to treat disabled people differently, including more favourable treatment where necessary.

If you have identified mitigating measures that would remove a negative impact, please detail those measures below.

Please document below the reasons for your conclusion, the information that you used to make this decision and how you plan to adjust the policy.

NOT APPLICABLE

Continue the policy

This means adopting your proposals, despite any adverse effect or missed opportunities to advance equality, provided you have satisfied yourself that it does not amount to unlawfully discrimination, either direct or indirect discrimination.

In cases where you believe discrimination is not unlawful because it is objectively justified, it is particularly important that you record what the objective justification is for continuing the policy, and how you reached this decision.

Explain the countervailing factors that outweigh any adverse effects on equality as set out above:

NOT APPLICABLE

Please document below the reasons for your conclusion and the information that you used to make this decision:

Stop and remove the policy

If there are adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated, and if the policy is not justified by countervailing factors, you should consider stopping the policy altogether. If a policy shows unlawful discrimination it must be removed or changed.

Please document below the reasons for your conclusion and the information that you used to make this decision.

NOT APPLICABLE

9. Monitoring and review

Please provide details of how you intend to monitor the policy in the future.
Please refer to stage 7 of the guidance.

The Provider is expected to provide quarterly reports that provide details about individual cases and the aggregate caseload. The service specification emphasises that the Provider will provide the following

- Collate performance monitoring information in line with the performance indicators for Looked after review (indicators laid down in 6.2 and 6.3 of the service specification) All monitoring reports will be submitted to the Commissioner no later than two weeks prior to the scheduled monitoring meeting.
- The Service Provider will work with the Commissioner to complete an Annual report at the end of each financial year, in line with the format provided by Brent Council.
- The Service Provider shall give assistance to the compilation of data required for and by the evaluation process of this Service.
- The Service Provider shall respond to reasonable requests for information from the Children and Families Department, Brent Council. The Service Provider may also be required to attend meetings with any nominated external or national evaluator for Brent Council, as required.
- The service provider should ensure that all IRO's attend twice a year meeting with Brent council

These reports will be complemented with the quarterly meetings between the Provider and the relevant Heads of Service where in depth discussions regarding cases and reviews of performance/ addressing any lessons learned from implementation of the service specification generally will occur.

The Provider is also expected to have an externally audited quality assurance framework in place. This quality assurance framework will emphasise key objectives in terms of equality of access, including making provision for different types of engagement to enable equal access (e.g. conducting reviews at placement, from schools, community facilities if deemed appropriate). The Provider is expected to provide reports about compliance with all elements of the quality assurance framework.

10. Action plan and outcomes

At Brent, we want to make sure that our equality monitoring and analysis results in positive outcomes for our colleagues and customers.

Use the table below to record any actions we plan to take to address inequality, barriers or opportunities identified in this analysis.

Action	By	Lead	Desired outcome	Date	Actual outcome

	when	officer		completed	
Ensure continued use of interpreters where required	On going	G Mebrahtu			
All IRO's continue to receive training on cultural competency	On going	G Mebrahtu	Ensure that IRO's have an understanding of the wider cultural issues of LAC		

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