

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/DECISION MAKER:	Cabinet			
MEETING/DECISION DATE:	12 February 2026	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: E 3682		
TITLE:	Housing Adaptations for Foster Carers			
WARD:	All			
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM				
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 – DRAFT Policy for Funding Extensions and Alterations to the Homes of Local Authority Foster Carers. Appendix 2 – Survey results Appendix 3 – Short business cases Appendix 4 – Equalities Impact Assessment				

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 Bath & North East Somerset Council (B&NES) has a shortage of foster carers, which is placing considerable pressure on children's services and social care. Currently, at least 11 children remain in residential care despite their care plan being foster care. To address this, the Council is developing a policy to fund home extensions or alterations for existing foster carers whose housing limitations prevent them from accommodating more children.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to;

- 2.1 Agree the proposal to offer housing alterations for foster carers, and note the draft policy Housing Alterations Policy for Bath & North East Somerset Foster Carers.
- 2.2 Agree the delegation of final approval for the policy and associated processes to the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.
- 2.3 Note the allocation of £500,000 of capital funding for the works which is included in the proposed capital programme as provisionally approved, delegating responsibility for the full approval of the funding to the Director of Children's

Services in consultation with the Director of Finance (S151 Officer), and to delegate decisions on each individual case to the Director of Children's Services.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 A programme has been initiated within Children's Services, which is looking at sufficiency of accommodation for children in care. Part of this programme is a workstream looking specifically at foster care.
- 3.2 The foster care workstream has a number of activities within it, one of which is to develop a policy to support foster carers to adapt their homes by having an extension / loft conversion / other alteration. This will enable them to care for more children in care.
- 3.3 This is an option which is widely offered in many authorities in England¹, and is likely to be a recommendation within the reforms being overseen by Minister MacAlister².
- 3.4 To gauge interest locally, a survey was conducted between November 2025 and January 2026 asking all foster carers registered with the Council (in-house foster carers) whether they would be interested in the possibility of having a home alteration in order to care for more children. An overwhelming majority responded positively to this.
- 3.5 The survey results are at Appendix 2. Personally identifiable information has been redacted.
- 3.6 Two foster carers have already been in discussion with the local authority for some time about the possibility of having their homes altered in order to continue to care for children they are currently supporting and we want to support this to progress as part of this scheme.
- 3.7 These have been turned into short business cases, which have been anonymised and are attached at Appendix 3. They are included in this report as examples of the type of request the council may receive, and the benefits the policy can bring to children and young people, the community, and the council.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The proposed project to provide financial support for home adaptations and extensions for foster carers must be underpinned by a robust statutory framework and take into account a range of legal and policy considerations.

4.2 Legal Power or Duty

- (1) The Local Authority's power to fund adaptations and extensions for foster carers is primarily derived from:
 - a) **Children Act 1989**, particularly Section 22G, which places a duty on local authorities to ensure sufficient accommodation for looked-after children within their area.

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/increasing-fostering-capacity-through-housing-solutions>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-pledges-to-reverse-decline-in-foster-carer-numbers>

- b) **Children and Families Act 2014**, which reinforces the importance of supporting foster carers to provide stable and appropriate placements.
- c) **Local Government Act 1972** and **Localism Act 2011**, which provide general powers of competence to support community wellbeing, including housing-related interventions.
- d) **Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010**, which require local authorities to ensure placements meet the needs of children, including physical space and safety.

4.3 Planning Considerations

- (1) Any proposed extensions or structural adaptations must comply with **Town and Country Planning Act 1990** and local planning policies.
- (2) Planning permission may be required depending on the scale of the work, and carers should be supported through this process.
- (3) Building regulations under the **Building Act 1984** must be adhered to, ensuring safety, accessibility, and energy efficiency.

4.4 Crime and Disorder

- (1) Under the **Crime and Disorder Act 1998**, local authorities must consider the impact of their decisions on crime and antisocial behaviour.
- (2) Expanding fostering capacity can contribute positively by reducing placement breakdowns and improving outcomes for vulnerable children, which in turn may reduce future involvement with the criminal justice system.

4.5 Sustainability and Natural Environment

- (1) Adaptations should align with **sustainable development principles** under the **Environment Act 2021**, promoting energy efficiency and low-carbon materials.
- (2) Consideration should be given to the impact on the natural environment, including biodiversity and green space, especially in rural or conservation areas.

4.6 Human Rights

- (1) The project must comply with the **Human Rights Act 1998**, particularly:
 - a) Article 8: Right to respect for private and family life.
 - b) Article 14: Protection from discrimination.
- (2) Ensuring children have access to suitable family-based care supports their right to a nurturing home environment.

4.7 Children

- (1) The welfare of the child is paramount under **Section 1 of the Children Act 1989**.

- (2) Providing suitable housing for foster carers directly supports the stability, safety, and emotional wellbeing of children in care.
- (3) The project should also reflect the principles of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**, particularly the right to family life and protection.

4.8 Public Health and Inequalities

- (1) The project aligns with duties under the **Health and Social Care Act 2012** to reduce health inequalities and promote public health.
- (2) Stable foster placements can improve mental and physical health outcomes for children, reducing long-term public health burdens.
- (3) Funding adaptations may also address housing inequalities among foster carers, many of whom may be limited by socioeconomic constraints.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 The project is requesting £500,000 in capital funding (£250,000 in 2026/27 and 2027/28). This has been built into the proposed capital programme within the budget and council tax 2026/27 and financial outlook report (included elsewhere on this cabinet agenda) that cabinet is asked to recommend for council to approve. Contributions to alterations for foster carers will be capped at £50,000 per fostering household.

5.2 The attached draft policy describes the scope and eligibility for the funds.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 An equalities impact assessment has been complete for the policy and is at Appendix 4.

7.2 The main areas for further work identified were to increase the voice and influence of children and young people in care within the work, and to carry out a broader EqIA for the sufficiency programme overall.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 This policy aligns with B&NES Council's commitment to environmental sustainability and climate resilience by embedding green principles into the delivery of social care infrastructure. By funding home adaptations and extensions for foster carers, the Council has a unique opportunity to promote low-carbon construction practices, improve energy efficiency in residential buildings, and reduce the environmental footprint of care provision.

8.2 Adaptations will be designed to meet or exceed current building regulations for energy performance, with a preference for sustainable materials where feasible.

This not only supports the Council's climate emergency declaration and net-zero targets but also reduces long-term utility costs for foster families, contributing to financial resilience and housing stability.

- 8.3 Moreover, enabling more children to live in family-based settings rather than residential care reduces the demand on larger institutional facilities, which typically have higher energy consumption and carbon emissions.
- 8.4 Supporting more children and young people in local homes, means that travel times to school and other settings is reduced, and social workers and other have shorter travel times. This delivers a more sustainable model of social support that is both environmentally responsible and community focused.
- 8.5 The policy also encourages adaptive reuse of existing housing stock, minimising the need for new developments and preserving greenfield sites. Where planning permission is required, environmental impact will be a key consideration, ensuring that extensions harmonise with local biodiversity and landscape character.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 This project is part of the wide-ranging Children's Transformation programme underway in Children's Services.
- 9.2 No other options related to this project have been specifically reviewed.

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The draft policy and approach has been discussed with Cllrs May and Elliot, with the S151 officer and is supported by the Director of Children's Services and Education.

Contact person	Paula Sumner, Assistant Director Children's Transformation
Background papers	None
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

Appendix 1 – Draft Policy

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

DRAFT Policy for Funding Extensions and Alterations to the Homes of Local Authority Foster Carers.

January 2026

Document Control

Date Issued:	DRAFT January 2027
Version Number:	1.1
Owner:	
Date to review policy:	Annually, January 2027

Revision History

Version	Date	Author/Reviewer	Notes
1.0	15/1/2026	Wendy Gyde / Paula Sumner	

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DRAFT

1. Scheme Description and Purpose

1.1 Bath & North East Somerset Council wants all children to be able to thrive, in homes built on love.

1.2 For our most vulnerable children, who are in care, we have made funds available to enable foster carers to extend or adapt their homes in specific circumstances. This funding is to enable foster carers to:

- keep children with them, who may otherwise have to move due to lack of suitable space,
- be able to care for more children, or
- to make it easier for a foster carer to care for a disabled child.

1.3 The funding is available to foster carers registered with Bath & North East Somerset Council (in-house foster carers) and will support children in care to have suitable accommodation.

1.4 Funding will be in the form of an interest-free grant, repayable (if required) as set out below.

1.5 This policy sets out the circumstances in which funding would be considered.

2. Policy principles

2.1 A grant must demonstrate that it will increase placement sufficiency and that without a grant a placement arrangement will be untenable.

2.2 Grants are available for:

- Home extensions or alterations to houses that increase placement sufficiency (e.g., conversion of internal spaces, extensions, garden rooms specifically for returning adult children to keep space within the home for children in care.).
- Where siblings are placed in a foster placement and the best plan for them, as endorsed via a statutory child in care review, is to remain placed together in that placement, and where such a permanence plan cannot be implemented without the provision of an extension or alteration due to an inadequate number of bedrooms.
- Where the best plan for a child, as endorsed via a statutory child in care review, is to be fostered permanently by the foster carer of a sibling of his or hers, but where this plan cannot be implemented without the provision of an extension or alternative home due to inadequate bedroom space
- Where an existing foster carer has opted to continue to offer a home to a previously fostered child under the Staying Put arrangements but in doing so no longer has bedroom space to take a foster placement and the carer would be enabled by the provision of additional bedroom space to offer further foster placements to adolescents who might otherwise be placed in independent accommodation or private sector provision. That the foster carer's circumstances match these here should be evidenced in the most recent foster care review.

- Other circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis in discussion with the Head of Service, and then by Care and Resource Panel as part of the process for approval.
- To provide/continue to provide a placement to a child in care or to provide adequate accommodation for children in an existing placement or to enable existing carers to offer an increased number of placements in line with Fostering Regulations and Minimum Standards and in line with the appropriate terms of approval as established by assessment and/or foster carer review (for the purposes of decision making, the Council will consider the cost-benefit to the Council of supporting the Applicant).
- Where it would enable a foster carer to have the capacity and approval to offer care for a child stepping across from residential, to enable them to return to the local area in a family environment.

2.3 Whilst the welfare of the child(ren) is of the highest importance, there is a finite amount of capital funding available, and the grant must demonstrate that it is financially justified in terms of a high benefit/cost ratio and low risk assessment to ensure that capital funding is used effectively to increase placement sufficiency.

3. Eligibility criteria

3.1 Foster carers

- Approved in-house foster carers who own their own home.
- In the majority of cases, funding would not be released until the foster carers had been an approved foster carer for over 6 months. This is at the discretion of the AD or DCS.
- This policy does not cover, Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) or (in most cases) Permanence carers, or supported lodgings hosts.

3.2 Properties

- Grants are available for those that want to adapt a property they own.
- The policy does not apply to foster carers who are in rented accommodation or social housing.

4 Definitions

3.1 Looked After Children/Children in Care – looked after children are all those children who are cared for by the local authority, either as a result of a Court Order authorising the Local Authority to care for a child or by voluntary agreement of the child's birth parents. They are known as children in care in B&NES.

3.2 Permanence – this refers to the plan for a child to remain with a carer for the remainder of their childhood and into adulthood.

3.3 Staying Put – Staying Put refers to circumstances where a child in care in a foster placement who turns 18 remains living with the same foster carer, no longer as a child in care, but as an adult, as occurs in many birth families.

3.4 Statutory Looked after Children Review, known as the Children in Care Review in B&NES – this refers to the independent review of for each child in care, to ensure their needs are being met and the Local Authority is providing everything that they need. There is a legal requirement for these reviews to be held regularly and for the reviews to challenge and endorse plans being made for children in care.

3.5 Home alterations – conversion of internal spaces, extensions, garden rooms specifically for returning adult children to keep space within the home for children in care.

4. Legal Framework

4.1 The Local Authority has a duty to provide sufficient accommodation for children in care as set out in the Children Act 1989. Section 22G of the 1989 Act requires local authorities to take strategic action in respect of those children they look after and for whom it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation within their local authority area. In those circumstances, section 22G requires local authorities, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for those children that meets their needs and is within their local authority area.

4.2 The power to provide funding for home extensions in this case is to be found in The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

4.3 The Local Authority has a duty to provide sufficient accommodation for children in care. There is also a requirement for the Local Authority to make reasonable efforts to ensure that children in care are placed in foster homes with their siblings, unless there is a child welfare reason not to do so.

5 Conditions of the grant

Legal charge for property owners

4.1 Carers would need to enter into a contract with Bath & North East Somerset Council for the grant. The grant is secured against the property with a legal charge. The legal charge must be signed and registered before any money is paid out. This charge will be removed after 5 years.

4.2 A grant will only be awarded if it can be proven that the property is in sufficiently positive equity to be able to recover the grant in its entirety, at the point the grant would be awarded.

4.3 Carers must confirm with their mortgage lender whether or not they need to obtain consent to the legal charge being lodged against the property.

4.4 The property must be insured to its full value, including the capital works once completed.

4.5 All foster carers will be required to access independent legal advice before signing the legal agreement and before funds can be released. The Local Authority will fund this one-off legal expense for any foster carers up to the cost for 2 hours' legal advice at pre-approved rates and to a maximum cost of £240.

Provision of Funding

4.6 Any building works must be compliant with current planning law and Building Regulations, the responsibility for ensuring this is with the foster carer. As the home

owner, the foster carer is responsible for identifying an architect and for submitting the relevant planning and building regs applications. The council will not become involved in these arrangements. The foster carer will provide copies of the planning and building regs approval as required.

- 4.7** The grant amount can include costs for planning applications and technical drawings.
- 4.8** Funding will be provided on the condition that the works are carried out only by Council approved building contractors following a competitive process. Quotes from a minimum of three different contractors will be required to be shared with the Local Authority before agreeing any works or payments.
- 4.9** Funding will only be provided to cover the costs of the most cost-effective way to achieve the required additional living space.
- 4.10** Where the foster carer is able to partially fund, then this must be the preferred course of action and the Council will then partially fund the remainder, subject to the relevant approvals.
- 4.11** The Council will be required to validate the foster carers ability to fund the remainder of the works via a due diligence process.
- 4.12** If the property needs to be vacated during the renovations, it is the responsibility of the homeowner (foster carer) to source suitable accommodation, and to ensure it is suitable for any children already placed with them, and compliant with fostering regulations.

Repayment

- 4.13** Any funding agreed will be subject to legally binding contracts between the foster carers and B&NES with a sliding scale of payback should the increased capacity not be delivered or in the event of placement breakdown or carers terminating their registration.
- 4.14** In the event that the foster carers have children placed with them and then, at their initiative, cease to offer the child placement/s for which the funding had been provided within a period of 5 years following the provision of funds the monies will be repayable to the Council on the following basis:

1st year -	100% repayable
2nd Year -	80% repayable
3rd Year -	60% repayable
4th Year -	40% repayable
5th Year -	20% repayable
6th Year -	0% repayable

5. Approval

- 5.1** All applications for funding via this scheme will require consideration by the Head of Service for Care Outcomes and with their agreement, a business case presented for discussion at Care & Resource panel outlining the following:
 - How the carer meets the eligibility criteria
 - The impact of not offering the funding
 - Benefit/cost evaluation

- Risks

5.2 Applications are then required to be presented to the Director of Children's Services (DCS) for final approval, if recommended by Care and Resource Panel.

5.3 A maximum contribution of £50,000 will be provided.

5.4 Where funding is agreed it will be provided directly to the foster carer. Payments may be released in parts.

DRAFT

Housing alterations for foster carers survey results and analysis

Introduction

The survey was sent to all in-house foster carers via direct email and also promoted through the regular newsletter sent by the fostering service. It was designed to gauge the interest and feasibility of housing alterations. These alterations would aim to optimize homes for fostering by increasing the number or size of bedrooms, therefore increasing the number of children that could be cared for.

The survey was live between 17th November 2025 and 9th January 2026.

Summary

- 21 x foster carers have responded (they didn't all answer each question)
- The majority of foster carers live in either BA2 or BA3 postcode areas.
- The majority of respondents (72%) have fostered for over 2 years, 43% have fostered for more than 5 years
- **Foster carers are not clear about what needs they have been approved for**, but most respondents have been approved for 0 – 18 and have children over the age of 12 with them
- 3 didn't have foster children with them
- Majority of respondents own their home either with or without mortgage (81%) and 85% have 3 or more bedrooms
- **43% of respondents thought they could convert spaces inside their homes, and 84% said they had external space suitable for an extension**
- 43% said they would consider moving house to increase the space for children in care
- 90% of respondents said 'yes', or 'would like more info', to the question "*If the council was to partially fund any extension/conversion, would you be interested in doing this to take additional children into your care?*"
- **53% of respondents said they would commit to an extra 10 years of fostering, should B&NES fund an adaptation.**

Analysis

General responses

21 foster carers responded to the survey. B&NES has 49 mainstream fostering households, so assuming there is just one registered foster carer at each address (which won't be the case), this represents a minimum 43% response rate.

Many of the foster carers responding have been fostering for more than 2 years, which shows a level of commitment to both young people and to being an in-house foster carer. This could be used to advantage when devising recruitment strategies.

The geographical spread of foster carers should be compared to the general population, and also the areas of highest need for foster carers. Can targeted recruitment campaigns in certain areas be considered? Does the wider community in those areas have particular

needs which could be targeted by commissioned services which may prevent children from coming into care?

The responses to the question around training seemed to indicate a lack of awareness of what training levels carers had received. This could be reviewed and training provided to match the needs of the young people coming in to care, for example cultural training in relation to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people (UASC), and training in supporting emotional and mental wellbeing.

In terms of the specific questions around the ages of children that foster carers have been approved for, most seem to have been approved for a wide range of ages, which provides flexibility, but there could also be an opportunity for specific training in the older age groups, in particular UASC and older teenagers.

There are also 3 x foster carers who do not currently have a child or young person placed with them which should be investigated.

Housing alterations specific responses

Responses indicated a high degree of owner occupiers, with a majority already having 3 or more bedrooms. There were more responses indicating an external extension would be feasible, rather than internal changes to create an additional bedroom.

There was an interest in moving house to support more children and young people, this would be outside the scope of the policy currently being developed, but a response to this should be considered.

A significant majority of respondents indicated they would be interested in extending their homes to look after more children, or to learn more about it. This should be investigated with some urgency, as the majority of respondents indicated they would be willing to commit to an additional 10 years of fostering if supported to extend their home.

Recommended actions

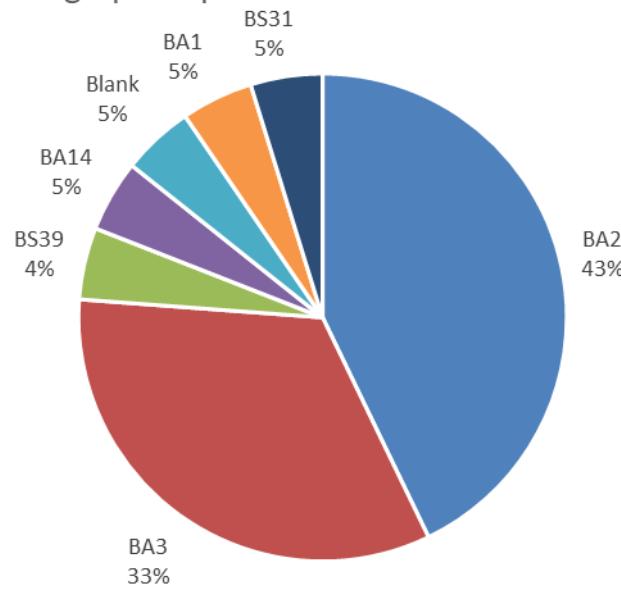
- Review geographical locations of children in care and compare to foster carers.
- Review the training provided, what specific training is provided around SEMH and UASC needs and experiences, how this is recorded, and how it is communicated to foster carers.
- Understand why the 3 x foster carers do not have a child with them at the moment, and whether they could be matched with someone in a residential placement.
- Follow up with urgency all foster carers who indicated they were interested in alterations to understand in more detail what could be feasible, taking into account the current occupants of the home and matching requirements.
- Develop thinking around supporting foster carers to move house in order to support more young people – what would the SWOT analysis of this look like? Should an options appraisal be developed for this?

Responses

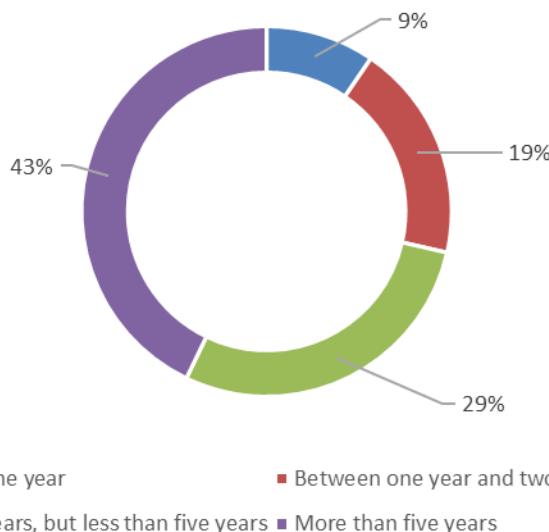
Detail from some of the responses are as follows³:

³ The full table of responses is in the Appendix.
Printed on recycled paper

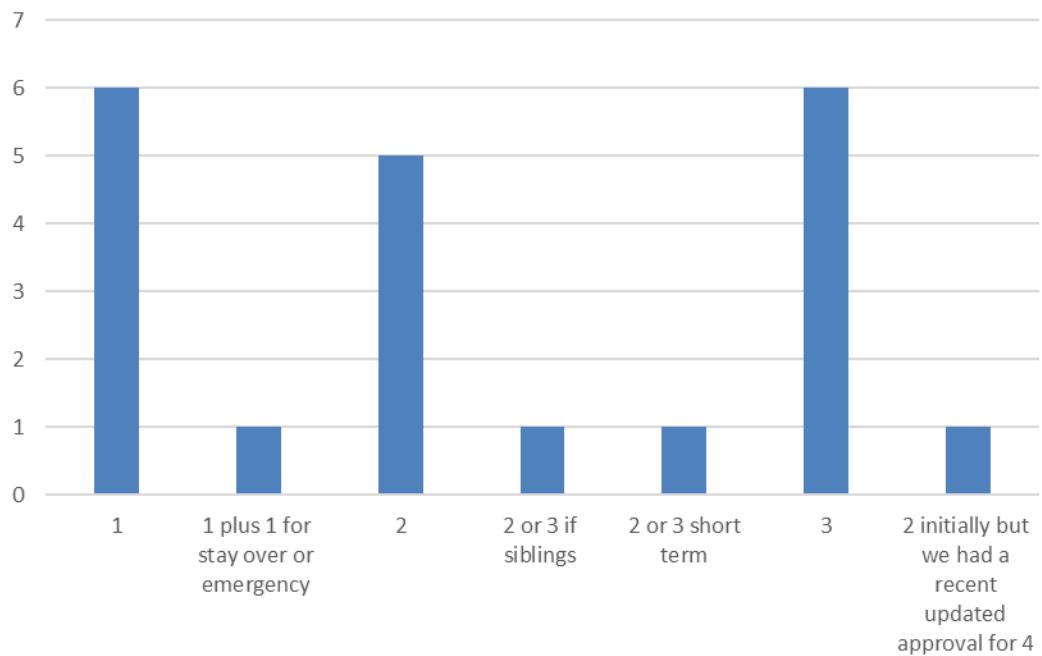
Geographic spread of foster carers



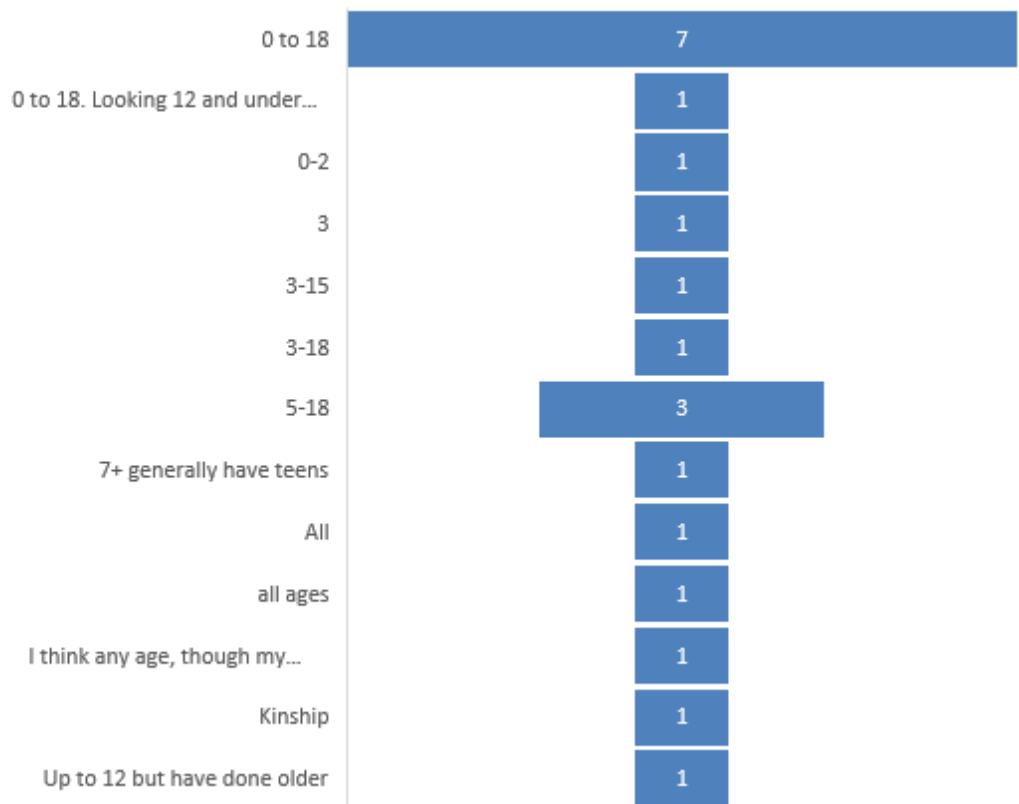
How long have you been fostering in B&NES?



How many children are you approved to foster?



What ages have you been approved for?



What needs have you been approved for? (Have you had any specialist training?)

Fostering plus

Attended all required training

Additional training on line covering, drug and alcohol addiction, gambling addiction, understanding autism

No

Tier 3 carer

BSL

What needs have you been approved for? (Have you had any specialist training?)

Not yet

Not sure. I only provide respite care. The first child I had for a year and he had SEND. The other two also had special needs, but not as severe and they only stayed one weekend.

No specific needs and no specialist training

Up to but not including severe special needs

Epilepsy Training

Autism Training

makaton

ADHD

Sensory difficulties

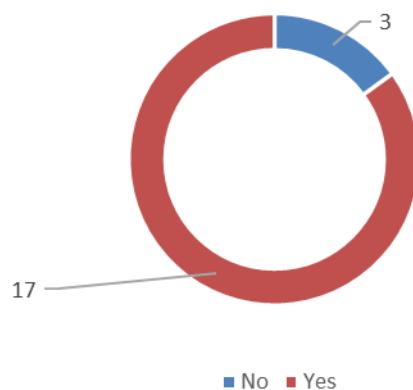
Therapeutic parenting

N/A

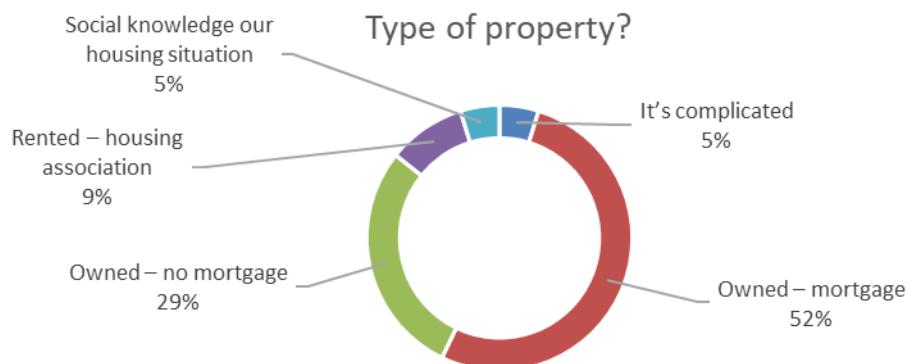
All

Special needs is not my forte. I like siblings, new into care, through the court process, into long term homes. I have done extensive attachment training in the past.

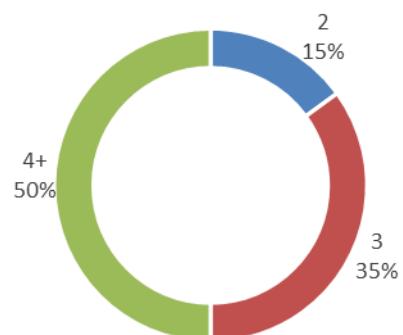
Do you currently have a foster child / children living with you?



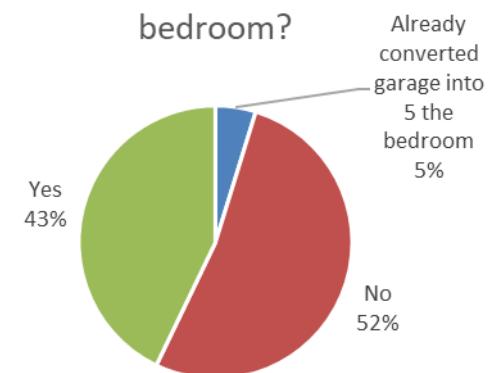
Type of property?



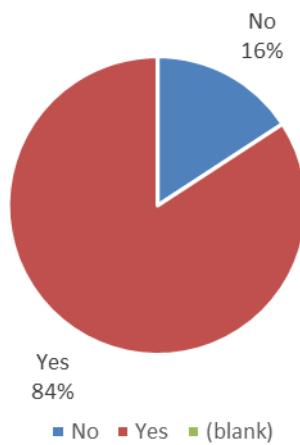
Current number of bedrooms in your property



Do you have any more space in your home that could potentially be converted to make an extra bedroom?

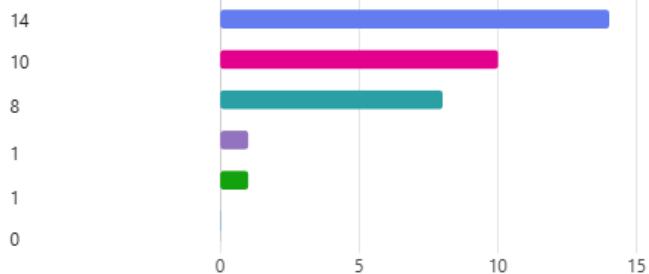


If you don't currently have any space in your home to convert, do you have space around your home where an extension could be built to create an additional bedroom?



15. Which of the following space adaptations, if any, could your property potentially accommodate? Please remember we are just assessing coping potential at this stage, and no budgets have been agreed. Please select all that apply:

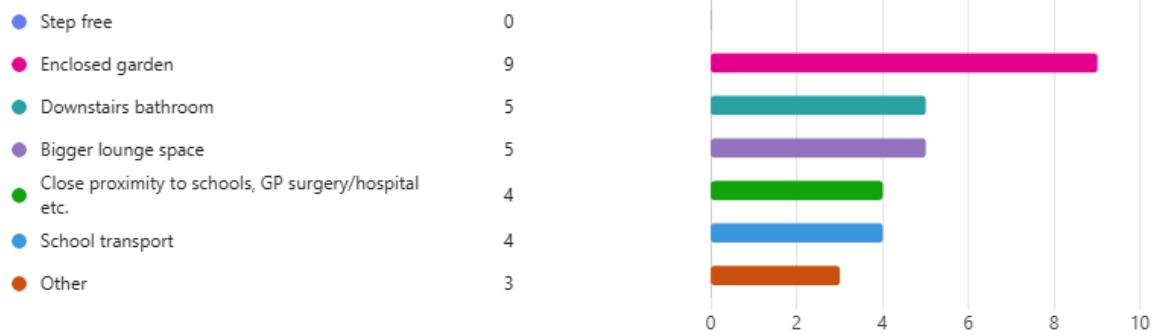
- Extension
- Loft conversion
- Garden room (for example to accommodate adult children who leave away from home for...
- Room division (dividing one room to create a second)
- None
- Other



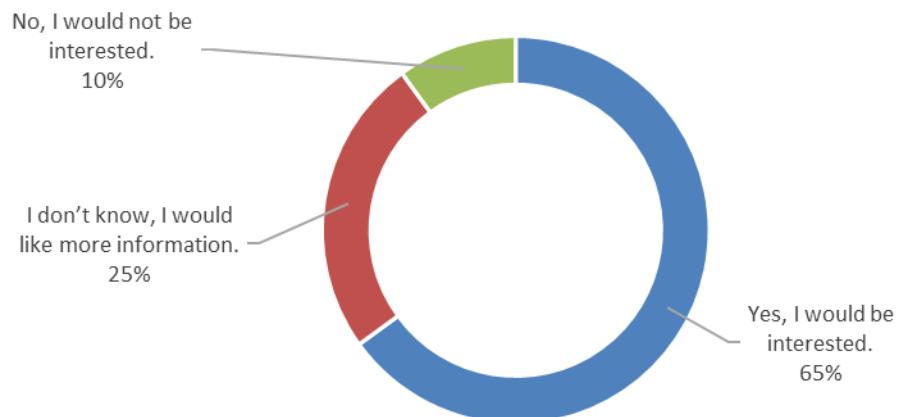
16. Would you consider moving house to increase the space that you had for children in care?



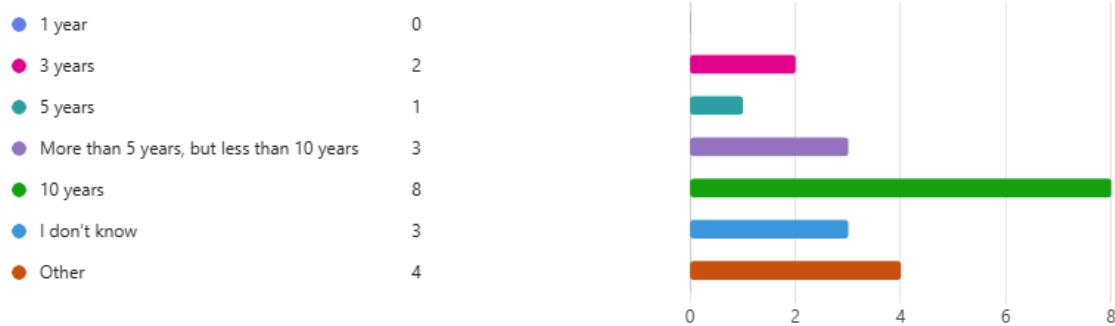
17. If yes, what would you need a new house to provide?



If the council was to partially fund any extension/conversion, would you be interested in doing this to take additional children into your care?



20. How many additional years of fostering do you feel you could commit to if you agreed to house adaptations funded by B&NE S?



If the necessary changes to your home were approved, are there any other reasons that would prevent you from fostering more children? Please explain briefly.

None

Had this been a option when we started fostering 17 years ago , we would have definitely extended the house , especially as it would have allowed us to keep a sibling group of 3 together

Boundaries around caring for a child need to be addressed more than their housing needs!

We are kinship carers that will continue into mainstream foster care when the children move on in later life! Space is of a premium at the moment and we have considered and discussed several times ways to make more space most recently talking about an out building for the eldest but he is to young apparently

None

No

no as we just need more space to foster more children.

If I have a 8 week gap between placements I loose my Universal Credit which means I would need to immediately get a full time job.

Dipping in and out of a full time job that is secure enough to provide a sustainable income is not possible and an eight week gap in placement would be the end to me fostering. I want to say I'm in it for the long hall but the insecurity of not having a placement immediately effects my ability to continue.

Just need 2 rooms in attic and bathroom happy to work towards everyone having their own space

No

Increasing age :)

Our age

I would of loved to stay in previous home but had no way of making an extra bedroom so I had to double on my

As long as the child fit into our schedules I don't see any issues - we both work so schooling would be important

This would be about being able to continue to foster 2 children as birth children got older and needed their own rooms

Appendix – full survey results table

(redacted as contains personal information)

Appendix 3 – Short business cases

Business Case: Capital Funding for AA Foster Home Adaptations

Background & Need

The local authority is experiencing a shortage of foster placements, particularly for sibling groups and children with complex needs. Without adaptations, the carer cannot increase capacity, which may result in:

- Children being placed outside the local area.
- Increased costs for independent fostering agencies.
- Children placed in a residential setting where their plan is foster care.
- Disruption of sibling relationships.

This business case seeks approval for capital funding of £30,000 to enable foster carer AA to adapt their home. FURTHER DETAIL REDACTED AS PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE.

Objectives

- Increase placement capacity within the local authority.
- Maintain stability for children and keep siblings together.
- Reduce reliance on costly external placements.

Proposed Adaptations

- Current proposed building work is for approximately £125,000, but not yet finalised until planning permission is confirmed. The works would result in an extension, with an additional bedroom for fostering and a second bathroom. The additional room capacity would be for non-fostering (hence asking for not all of the money).
- AA is not asking the LA for all of this. We previously discussed £30K.
- Modifications to meet safety and space requirements. All works will comply with building regulations and fostering standards.

Benefits

- Quantitative:
 - +1 additional fostering places. It will be for short term / reunification, including children at risk of residential placement.
 - An adaptation which supports a child to be placed in an in-house foster placement (£510p/w) rather than a placement with an independent fostering agency (IFA) (£958 p/w) would avoid an increase of £448 in weekly costs per child. Based on an average utilisation of 75%, this equates to £17,519 p/a.
 - The additional bedroom would create capacity for an additional short-term placement suitable for teenagers that would alternatively go to residential or are stepping down from residential. Cost avoidance at 75% usage would be £292,700, payback in 1.5 months.

- Qualitative:
 - Improved outcomes for children through local, stable placements.
 - Supports family and community connections.

Financial Summary

- Cost to the Local Authority of adaptations: £30,000
- Alternative cost:
 - External IFA placements mode average £958 per child per week (compared to £510pw in-house foster care).
 - External placements average £7,995 per child per week.
- Value for money:
 - Adaptations pay back within 33.6 months of placement (2.8 years).
 - Adaptations pay back within 1.5 months of placement.

Risks & Mitigation

Risk description	Proposed mitigations
Foster carers may cease fostering once approved funding.	A payback sliding scale will be agreed which foster carers will have to sign. A charge will be placed on their property for the duration of the payback period.
Costs exceeding quote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed-Price Contract: Secure a fixed-price agreement with the builder to prevent cost escalation. • Contingency Budget: Include a contingency allowance (10–15%) in the approved funding to cover unforeseen costs. • Detailed Scope: Ensure the quote is based on a comprehensive specification to minimize ambiguity and reduce variation risk. • Variation Approval Process: Require any additional costs or changes to be formally approved by the local authority before work proceeds. • Progress Monitoring: Implement regular cost and progress reviews with the builder and local authority to identify overruns early. • Builder Vetting: Use a contractor with a proven track record for accurate quoting and timely delivery, ideally vetted by the local authority.
Business case not	Works scheduled during school term to minimize

approved	disruption, approvals take place ASAP.
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Timeline

- **Approval:** tbc
- **Works start:** Once planning approval received
- **Completion:** tbc post planning approval

Recommendation

- Approve £30,000 capital funding to enable adaptations, ensuring compliance with statutory duties and delivering long-term savings.

Business Case: Capital Funding for BB Foster Home Adaptations

Background & Need

The local authority is experiencing a shortage of foster placements, particularly for sibling groups and children with complex needs. Without adaptations, the carer cannot increase capacity, which may result in:

- Children being placed outside the local area.
- Increased costs for independent fostering agencies.
- Children placed in a residential setting where their plan is foster care.
- Disruption of sibling relationships.

This business case seeks approval for capital funding of £30,000 to enable foster carers BB to adapt their home. FURTHER DETAIL REDACTED AS PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE.

Objectives

- Increase placement capacity within the local authority.
- Maintain stability for children and keep siblings together.
- Reduce reliance on costly external placements.

Proposed Adaptations

- Loft conversion.
- BB was quoted £60-70K in 2024.
- Modifications to meet safety and space requirements. All works will comply with building regulations and fostering standards.

Benefits

- **Quantitative:**
 - Prevention of residential placement.
 - Supporting a child to be placed with an in-house foster placement rather than a residential placement would avoid an increase of c. £7,485 per week (based on the current mode average cost of a residential placement £7,995.). Based on 75% utilisation, this equates to £292,700 p/a.
- **Qualitative:**
 - Improved outcomes for children through local, stable placements.
 - Supports family and community connections.

Financial Summary

- **Cost of adaptations:** £30,000
- **Alternative cost:** External placements average £7,995 per child per week.
- **Value for money:** Adaptations pay back within 1.5 months of placement.

Risks & Mitigation

Risk description	Proposed mitigations
Foster carers may cease fostering once approved funding.	A payback sliding scale will be agreed which foster carers will have to sign. A charge will be placed on their property for the duration of the payback period.
Costs exceeding quote	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fixed-Price Contract: Secure a fixed-price agreement with the builder to prevent cost escalation.• Contingency Budget: Include a contingency allowance (10–15%) in the approved funding to cover unforeseen costs.• Detailed Scope: Ensure the quote is based on a comprehensive specification to minimize ambiguity and reduce variation risk.• Variation Approval Process: Require any additional costs or changes to be formally approved by the local authority before work proceeds.• Progress Monitoring: Implement regular cost and progress reviews with the builder and local authority to identify overruns early.• Builder Vetting: Use a contractor with a proven track record for accurate quoting and timely delivery, ideally vetted by the local authority.
Business case not approved	Works scheduled during school term to minimize disruption, approvals take place ASAP.

Timeline

- **Approval:** December 2025
- **Works start:** Once planning approval received
- **Completion:** tbc post planning approval (to be confirmed)

Recommendation

Approve **£30,000 capital funding** to enable adaptations, ensuring compliance with statutory duties and delivering long-term savings.

Appendix 4

Equality Impact Assessment / Equality Analysis (Version 4)

Item name	Details
Title of service or policy	Housing Extensions and Modifications for Foster Carers
Name of directorate and service	Children's Services and Education
Name and role of officers completing the EqIA	Paula Sumner, Wendy Gyde

Date of assessment	1 st December 2025
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Equality Impact Assessment (or 'Equality Analysis') is a process of systematically analysing a new or existing policy or service to identify what impact or likely impact it will have on people and different groups within our community. The main aim is to identify any adverse impacts (i.e. discriminatory or negative consequences for a particular group or sector of the community, and to identify areas where equality can be better promoted). Equality impact Assessments (EqIAs) can be carried out in relation to services provided to customers and residents as well as employment policies/strategies that relate to staffing matters.

This toolkit has been developed to use as a framework when carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) or Equality Analysis. **Not all sections will be relevant – so mark N/A any that are not applicable.** It is intended that this is used as a working document throughout the process, and a final version will be published on the Council's website following relevant service lead approval.

1.1 Identify the aims of the policy or service and how it is implemented

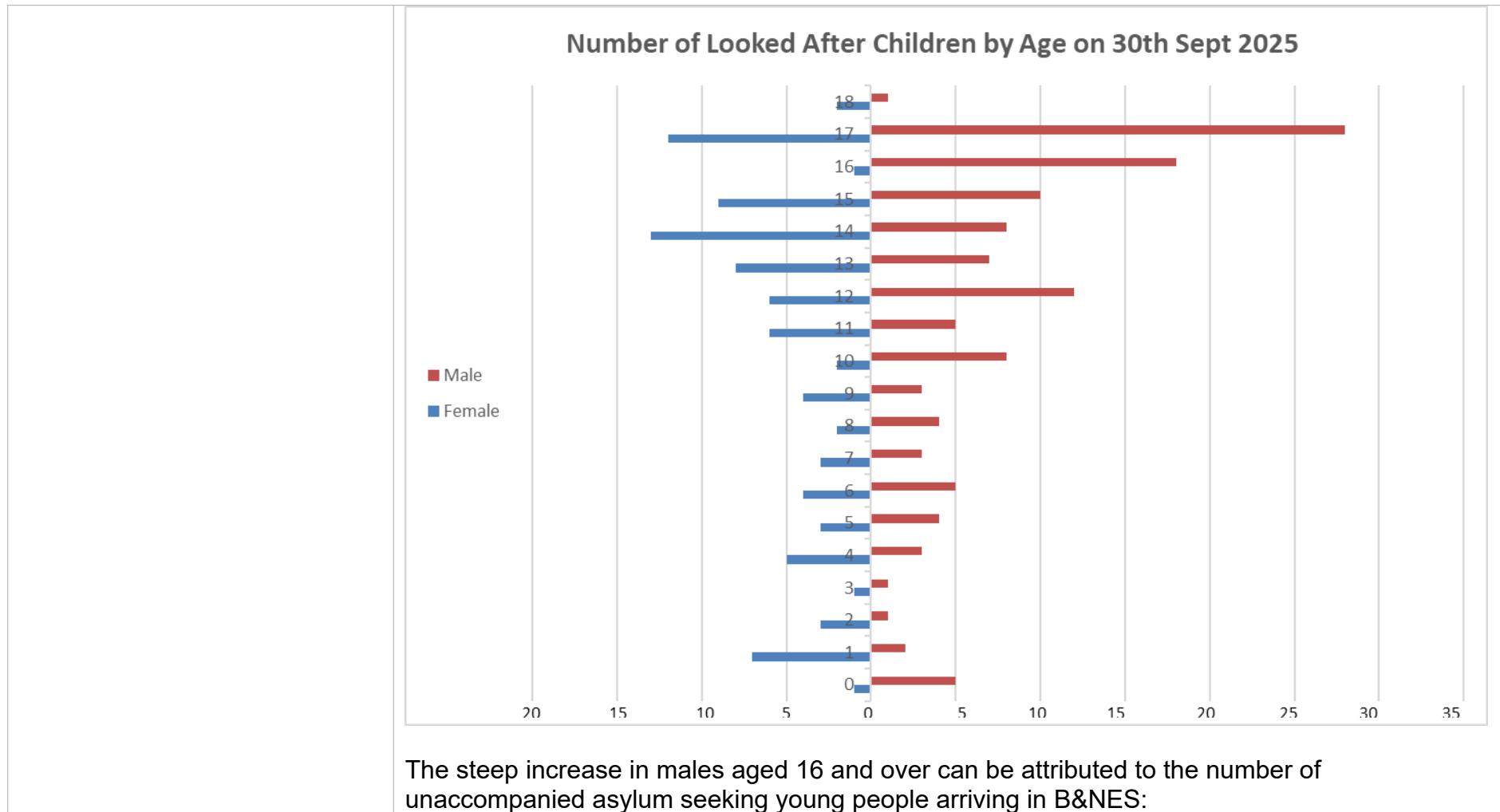
Key questions	Answers / notes
<p>1.1 Briefly describe purpose of the service/policy e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How the service/policy is delivered and by whom ● If responsibility for its implementation is shared with other departments or organisations ● Intended outcomes 	<p>The project aims to review the existing cohort of children and young people in foster care to understand their needs and their reasons for being in foster care. It will also review our existing foster care provision, including geographical location, costs, accessibility, needs it can meet, capacity and available free beds. Finally, it will look at our current offer to foster carers, how this offers across our neighbouring authorities and how this could be maximised to improve recruitment and retention.</p>

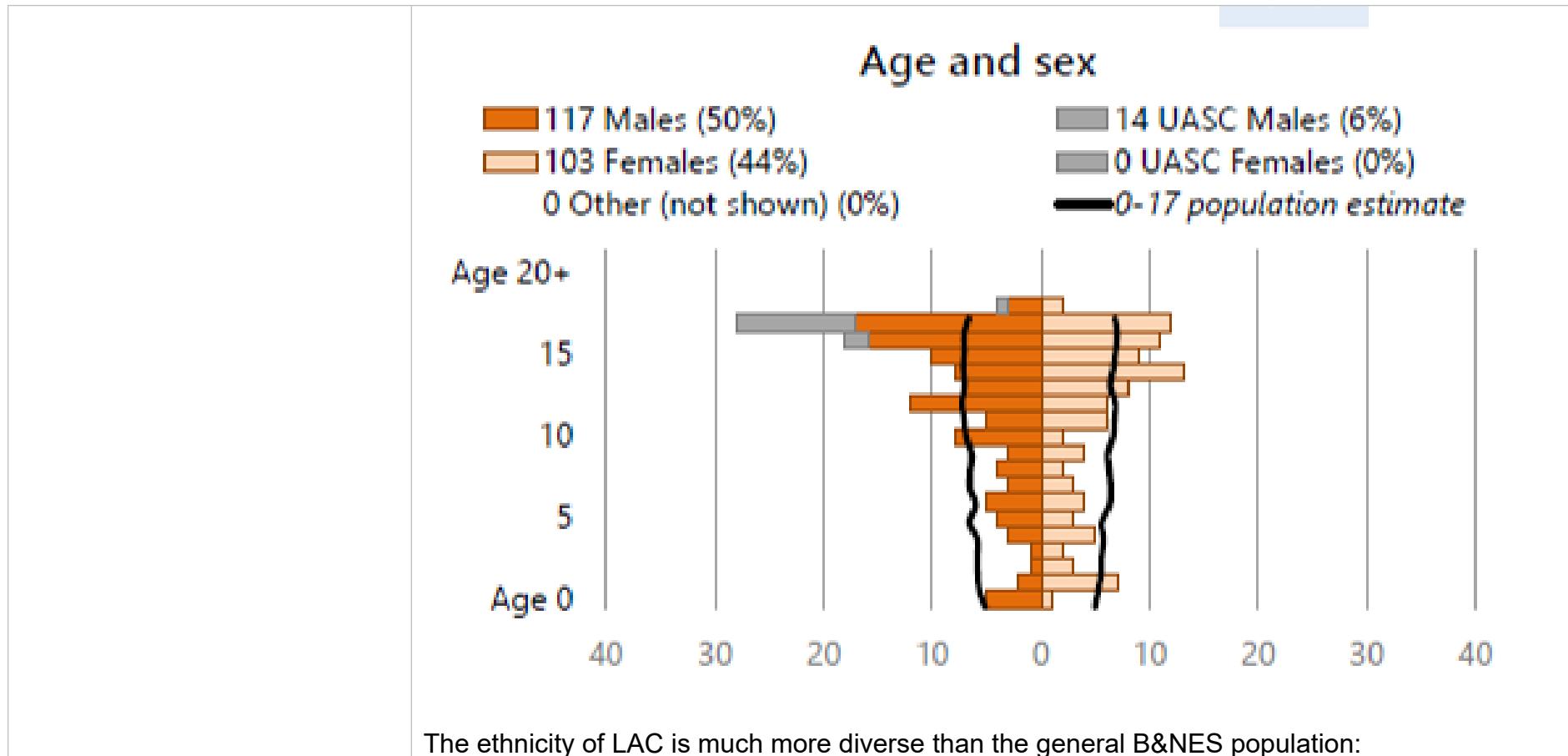
	<p>The project will use this analysis to forecast projected needs for foster care, and will support, if indicated, the delivery of a business case to further support the recruitment of in-house foster carers for looked after children in B&NES. It will also develop a policy, process and business case for housing adaptations for foster carers, to increase the number of children and young people they can support.</p> <p>In scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looked after children and young people aged 0 – 18 who have a care plan of foster care • Care experienced young people aged up to 21 (or 25 with SEND) • Unaccompanied children who are seeking asylum who are without settled status • Foster carers • Kinship carers who are supporting children and young people who have a care order or permanence order • Supported lodgings carers <p>Out of scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with disabilities who are not Looked After or care leavers • Children and young people who are living with family members under a private family arrangement, without a care order or permanence order
1.3 Do the aims of this policy link to or conflict with any other policies of the Council?	The aims of this policy should complement and not conflict with other council and partner policies.

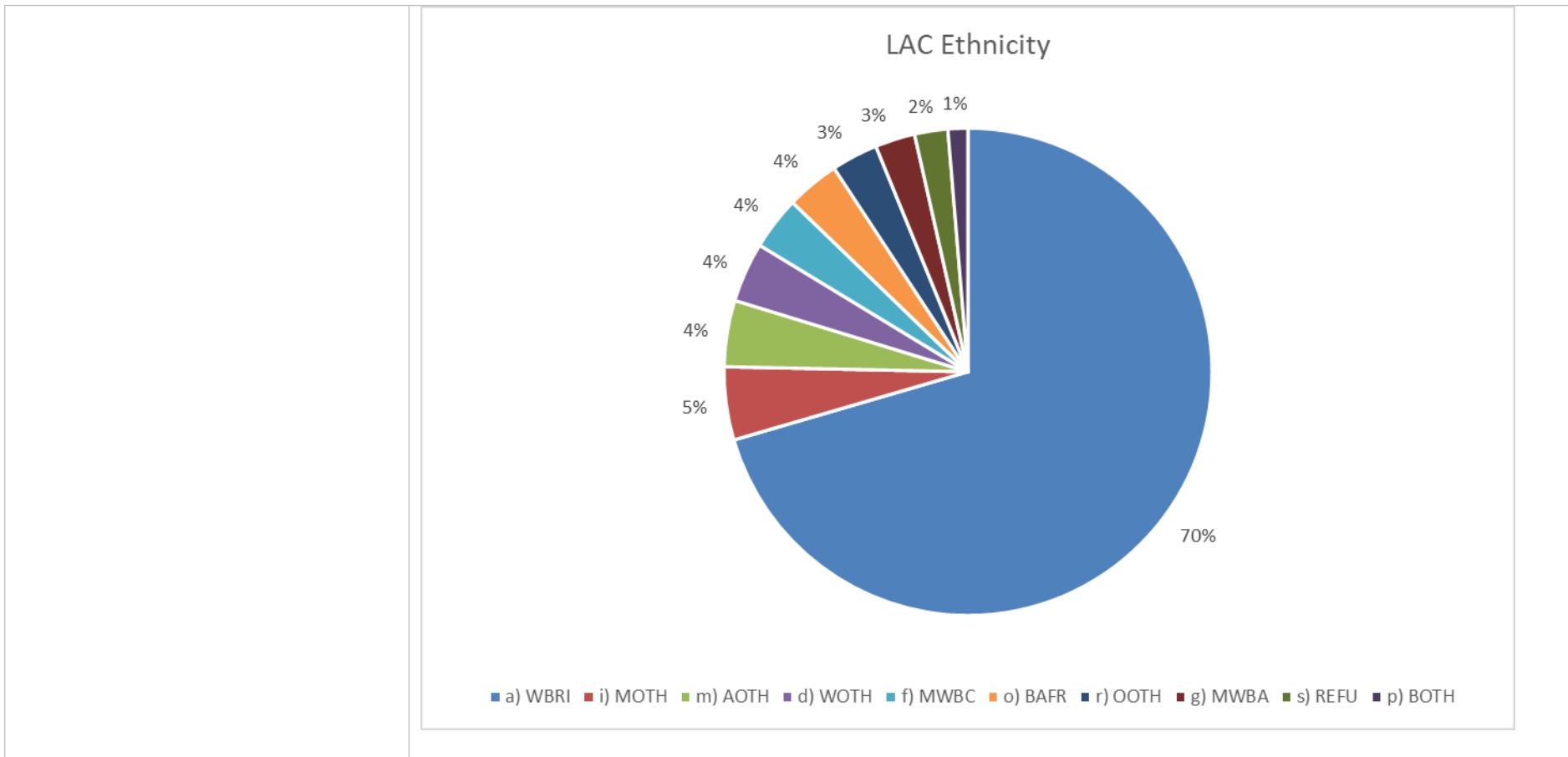
2. Consideration of available data, research and information

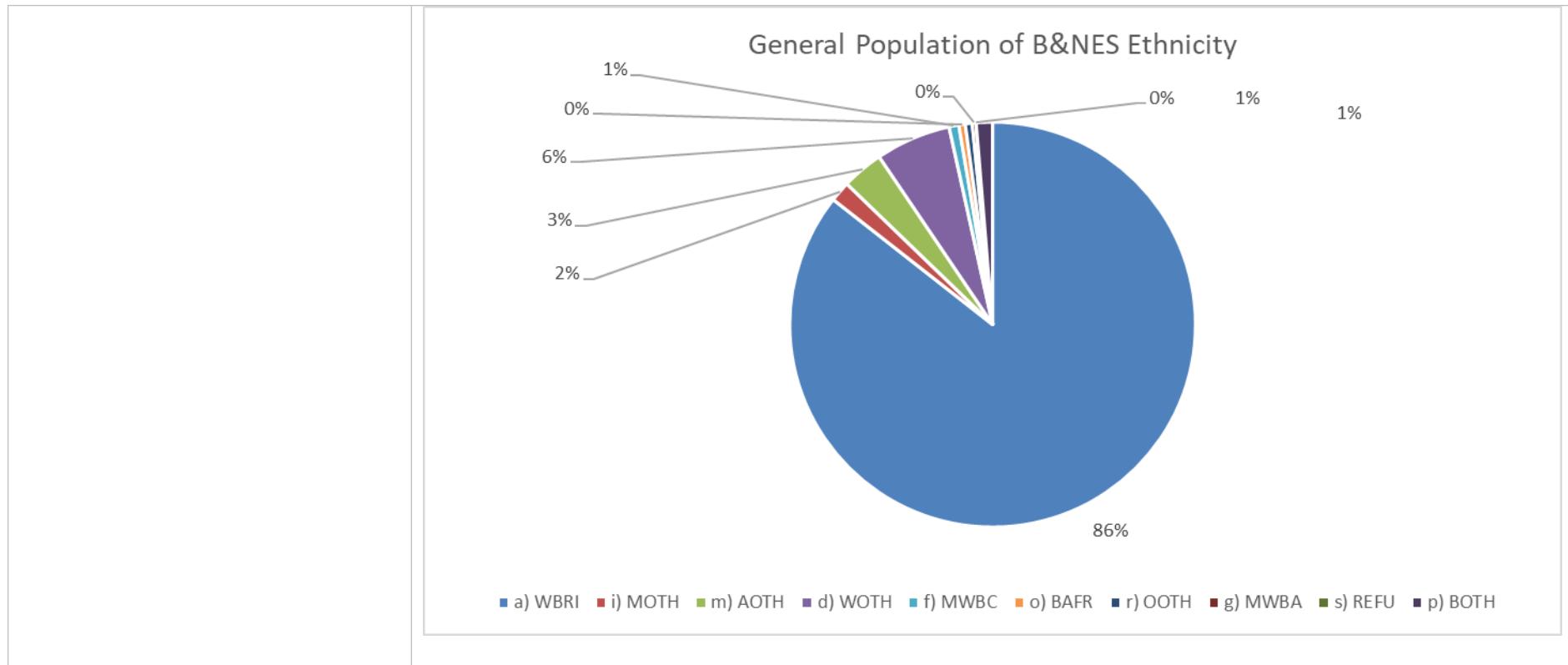
Key questions	Data, research and information that you can refer to
2.1 What equality focussed training have staff received to enable them to understand the needs of our diverse	Annual Equalities training is completed by all staff as part of their requirement of employment with the council.

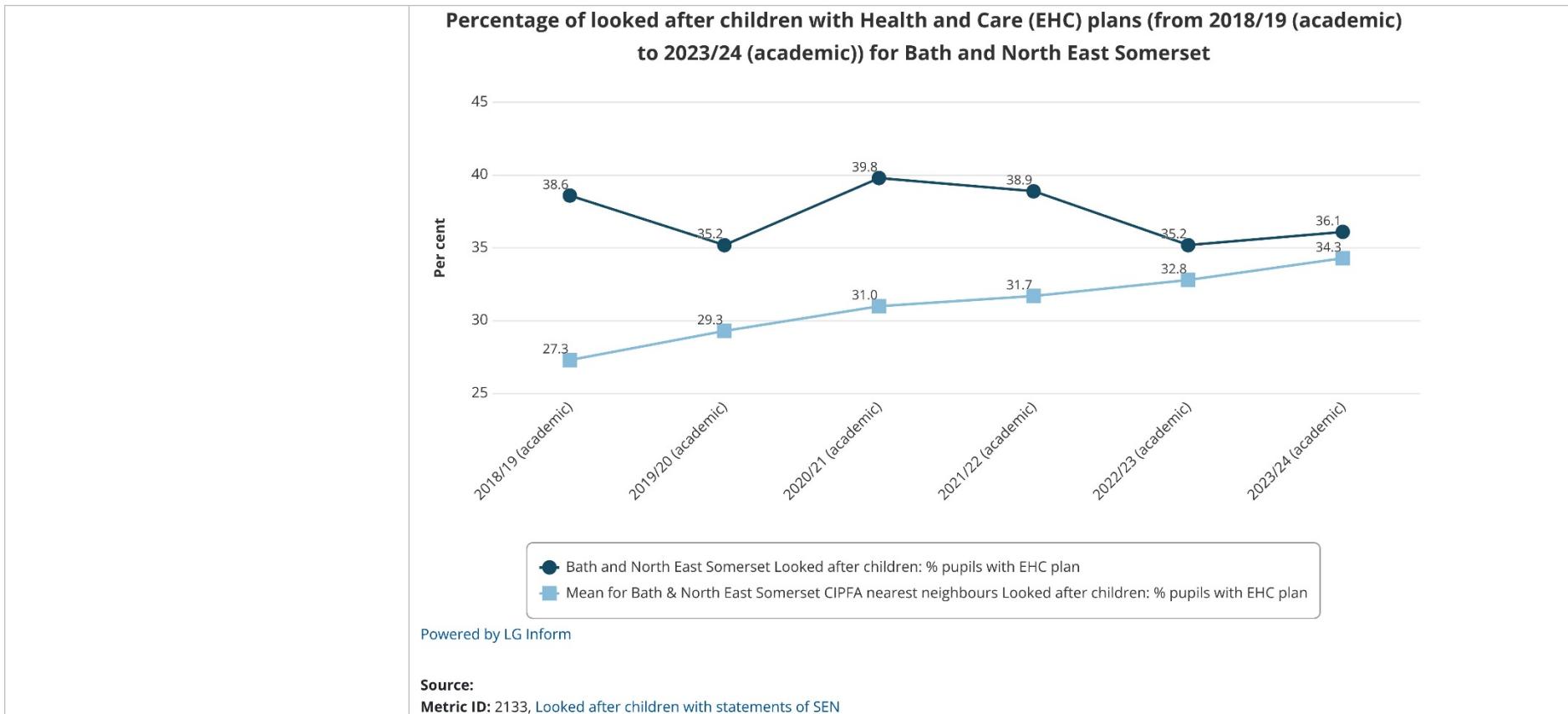
community?	
2.2 What is the equality profile of service users?	The total number of Looked After Children (LAC) by age and sex as of 30 th September 2025 was as follows:

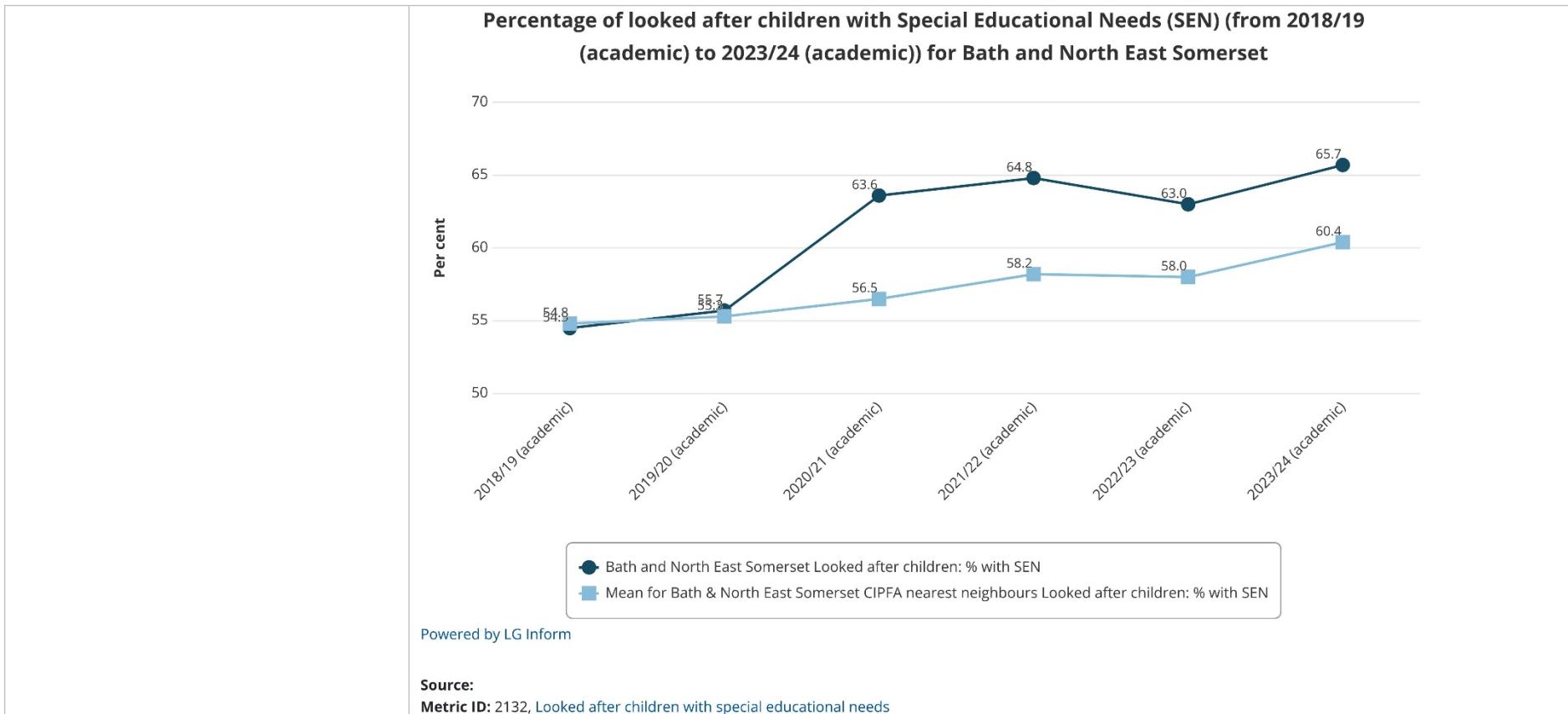












<p>Comparing the primary need of CLA starters</p> <p>Legend: Last 6 months (dark blue), LA 23-24 (light blue), SNs 23-24 (green), Eng 23-24 (light green)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Primary Need</th> <th>Last 6 months (%)</th> <th>LA 23-24 (%)</th> <th>SNs 23-24 (%)</th> <th>Eng 23-24 (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Abuse or neglect</td> <td>52</td> <td>65</td> <td>58</td> <td>56</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Child's disability</td> <td>7</td> <td>0</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parents illness or...</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Family in acute...</td> <td>7</td> <td>15</td> <td>12</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Family dysfunction</td> <td>5</td> <td>0</td> <td>12</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Socially...</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low income</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Absent parenting</td> <td>0</td> <td>10</td> <td>18</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not recorded</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Code error</td> <td>27</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Children's services Analysis Tool (ChAT) V9.8 - Data to Insight</p>	Primary Need	Last 6 months (%)	LA 23-24 (%)	SNs 23-24 (%)	Eng 23-24 (%)	Abuse or neglect	52	65	58	56	Child's disability	7	0	3	2	Parents illness or...	2	0	3	2	Family in acute...	7	15	12	10	Family dysfunction	5	0	12	10	Socially...	0	0	0	2	Low income	0	0	0	0	Absent parenting	0	10	18	20	Not recorded	0	0	0	0	Code error	27	0	0	0
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Not recorded	0	0	0	0																																																			
Code error	27	0	0	0																																																			
2.3 Are there any recent customer satisfaction surveys to refer to? What were the results? Are there any gaps? Or differences in experience/outcomes?	There are no satisfaction surveys that have been sent to Looked After Children. A stronger focus on this will form part of the plan for this project.																																																						
2.4 What engagement or consultation has been undertaken as part of this EIA and with whom? What were the results?	<p>Engagement has taken place with the ICB via the Children's Transformation Steering Group, and with foster carers through a survey.</p> <p>The survey was sent to all in-house foster carers via direct email and also promoted through the regular newsletter sent by the fostering service. It was designed to gauge the interest and feasibility of housing alterations.</p> <p>The survey was live between 17th November 2025 and 9th January 2026. Summary findings are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 x foster carers responded (they didn't all answer each question) • The majority of foster carers live in either BA2 or BA3 postcode areas. 																																																						

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of respondents (72%) have fostered for over 2 years, 43% have fostered for more than 5 years • Foster carers are not clear about what needs they have been approved for, but most respondents have been approved for 0 – 18 and have children over the age of 12 with them • 3 didn't have foster children with them • Majority of respondents own their home either with or without mortgage (81%) and 85% have 3 or more bedrooms • 43% of respondents thought they could convert spaces inside their homes, and 84% said they had external space suitable for an extension • 43% said they would consider moving house to increase the space for children in care • 90% of respondents said 'yes', or 'would like more info', to the question "<i>If the council was to partially fund any extension/conversion, would you be interested in doing this to take additional children into your care?</i>" • 53% of respondents said they would commit to an extra 10 years of fostering, should B&NES fund an adaptation.
<p>2.5 If you are planning to undertake any consultation in the future regarding this service or policy, how will you include equality considerations within this?</p>	<p>No further direct consultation is planned currently.</p>

3. Assessment of impact: 'Equality analysis'

Based upon any data you have considered, or the results of consultation or research, use the spaces below to demonstrate you have analysed how the service or policy:

- Meets any particular needs of equalities groups or could help promote equality in some way.
- Could have a negative or adverse impact for any of the equality groups

Key questions	Examples of what the service has done to promote equality	Examples of actual or potential negative or adverse impact and what steps have been or could be taken to address this
3.1 Issues relating to all groups and protected characteristics	<p>“Care Experienced” is now considered as a protected characteristic by B&NES, and as such, this policy is designed to reduce negative impacts on this protected characteristic. Currently, some sibling groups who have been assessed as being able to be placed together, are being split up because foster carers do not have enough space.</p> <p>This policy will also increase local provision for foster care, meaning children and young people will be able to remain in their local schools, with their friends.</p>	<p>Being separated from siblings can add to the trauma and attachment difficulties children and young people face. Being able to increase foster carer capacity in existing fostering households would reduce the number of sibling groups split up where it is not assessed that this is in their best interest.</p> <p>There are currently (Nov 2025) 11 children and young people who are in residential care who have a plan of foster care. They are all in residential care because there is a lack of capacity within local fostering homes. This policy will increase local capacity, and will enable more children and young people to remain within their schools and networks.</p>
3.2 Sex – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on women and men.	<p>Foster carers are carefully matched to children and young people wherever possible. This ensures the safety and wellbeing of both the child / young person and the foster carer, and should support</p>	<p>The new capacity that this policy should create may need to discriminate between female and male looked after children for reasons such as the safety and needs of the young person, or other children and</p>

Key questions	Examples of what the service has done to promote equality	Examples of actual or potential negative or adverse impact and what steps have been or could be taken to address this
	the success of the placement.	young people the foster carer is currently supporting.
3.3 Pregnancy and maternity	<p>If the young person is pregnant, then it is more likely that the placement being sort would be a parent and baby unit which would support their parenting.</p> <p>If a foster carer is pregnant or on maternity leave, their request for an extension / adaptation would be considered in the same way as a foster carer who is not pregnant or on maternity leave. Matching requirements would still apply.</p>	When matching, some young people are not able to be placed in a home with a baby due to risks to babies and young children.
3.4 Gender reassignment – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on transgender people	The service would not discriminate on the basis of gender reassignment, when considering a request for an adaptation / extension. Matching requirements would still apply.	
3.5 Disability – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on disabled people (ensure consideration of physical, sensory and mental health needs/differences)	The disability of the child / young person or foster carer would not affect the application or decision making process for an adaptation / modification, as they will already be approved carers.	Foster carers who have a disability would need to be carefully matched to a child or young person, and vice versa. This would not impact any decisions on any adaptations that may be made.
3.6 Age – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on different age groups	Foster carers can be approved for a grant without having been matched to a child, so the age of the child will not be a factor in the decision making process. Matching	There may be discrimination based on age, due to the requirement to pay back the grant. This may be mitigated by the charge that will be placed on the

Key questions	Examples of what the service has done to promote equality	Examples of actual or potential negative or adverse impact and what steps have been or could be taken to address this
3.7 Race – identify the impact/potential impact on across different ethnic groups	<p>requirements would still apply.</p> <p>The race of the child / young person or foster carer would not affect the application or decision making process for an adaptation / modification, as they will already be approved carers.</p> <p>Foster carers can be approved for a grant without having been matched to a child, so the race of the child will not be a factor in the decision making process. Matching requirements would still apply.</p>	<p>property.</p>
3.8 Sexual orientation – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, questioning people	<p>The sexual orientation of the child / young person or foster carer would not affect the application or decision making process for an adaptation / modification, as they will already be approved carers.</p> <p>Foster carers can be approved for a grant without having been matched to a child, so the sexual orientation of the child will not be a factor in the decision making process. Matching requirements would still apply.</p>	
3.9 Marriage and civil partnership – does the policy/strategy treat married and civil partnered people equally?	<p>Foster carers will already be registered as carers, either as single, married co-habiting etc. So decisions on adaptations / modifications would not be impacted by their marital status.</p>	

Key questions	Examples of what the service has done to promote equality	Examples of actual or potential negative or adverse impact and what steps have been or could be taken to address this
<p>3.10 Religion/belief – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on people of different religious/faith groups and also upon those with no religion.</p>	<p>The religion / belief of the child / young person or foster carer would not affect the application or decision making process for an adaptation / modification, as they will already be approved carers.</p> <p>Foster carers can be approved for a grant without having been matched to a child, so the religion / belief of the child will not be a factor in the decision making process. Matching requirements would still apply.</p>	
<p>3.11 Socio-economically disadvantaged* – identify the impact on people who are disadvantaged due to factors like family background, educational attainment, neighbourhood, employment status can influence life chances</p> <p>(this is not a legal requirement, but is a local priority).</p>	<p>This policy could support foster carers who are socio-economically disadvantaged, as value would be added to their homes and the additional income from fostering additional children could be beneficial.</p>	
<p>3.12 Rural communities* identify the impact / potential impact on people living in rural communities</p>	<p>This option could support looked after children from rural / remote communities to stay more locally, by adapting local homes.</p>	<p>There could be difficulties in adapting certain homes within B&NES due to the high number of listed buildings.</p>
<p>3.13 Armed Forces Community ** serving members; reservists; veterans and their families, including the</p>	<p>Foster carers who are from the armed forces community would already have been approved as foster carers. This</p>	

Key questions	Examples of what the service has done to promote equality	Examples of actual or potential negative or adverse impact and what steps have been or could be taken to address this
<p>bereaved. Public services are required by law to pay due regard to the Armed Forces Community when developing policy, procedures and making decisions, particularly in the areas of public housing, education and healthcare (to remove disadvantage and consider special provision).</p>	<p>status would not impact any decisions around home adaptations / modifications.</p>	
<p>3.14 Care Experienced *** This working definition is currently under review and therefore subject to change:</p> <p>In B&NES, you are 'care-experienced' if you spent any time in your childhood in Local Authority care, living away from your parent(s) for example, you were adopted, lived in residential, foster care, kinship care, or a special guardianship arrangement.</p>	<p>"Care Experienced" is now considered as a protected characteristic by B&NES, and as such, this policy is designed to reduce negative impacts on this protected characteristic. Currently, some sibling groups who have been assessed as being able to be placed together, are being split up because foster carers do not have enough space.</p> <p>This policy will also increase local provision for foster care, meaning children and young people will be able to remain in their local schools, with their friends.</p>	<p>Being separated from siblings can add to the trauma and attachment difficulties children and young people face. Being able to increase foster carer capacity in existing fostering households would reduce the number of sibling groups split up where it is not assessed that this is in their best interest.</p> <p>There are currently (Nov 2025) 11 children and young people who are in residential care who have a plan of foster care. They are all in residential care because there is a lack of capacity within local fostering homes. This policy will increase local capacity, and will enable more children and young people to remain within their schools and networks.</p>

*There is no requirement within the public sector duty of the Equality Act to consider groups who may be disadvantaged due to socio economic status, or because of living in a rural area. However, these are significant issues within B&NES and have therefore been included here.

** The Equality Act does not cover armed forces community. However, the Armed Forces Bill (which came in on 22 Nov 2022) introduces a requirement to pay 'due regard' to make sure the Armed Forces Community are not disadvantaged when accessing public services.

***The Equality Act does not cover care experienced people. B&NES adopted this group as a protected characteristic in March 2024 alongside over 80 other Local Authorities. Although we have data for care leavers and children/young people who are currently in the care of B&NES we do not have wider data on disadvantage experienced through being in care.

4. Bath and North East Somerset Council Equality Impact Assessment Improvement Plan

Please list actions that you plan to take as a result of this assessment/analysis. These actions should be based upon the analysis of data and engagement, any gaps in the data you have identified, and any steps you will be taking to address any negative impacts or remove barriers. The actions need to be built into your service planning framework. Actions/targets should be measurable, achievable, realistic and time framed.

Issues identified	Actions required	Progress milestones	Officer responsible	By when
A requirement to bring the voices of Looked After Children into the development of plans and policies which affect them	Action to be added to the Sufficiency Board, for agreement on how best to take this forward alongside other engagement activities, in the context of the Children's Transformation and the Families First Programmes.	TBC	Paula Sumner	TBC
A requirement for an EqIA reviewing sufficiency overall.	Action to be added to the Sufficiency Board, for agreement on how best to take this forward alongside other engagement activities, in the context of the	TBC	Paula Sumner	TBC

	Children's Transformation and the Families First Programmes.			

5. Sign off and publishing

Once you have completed this form, it needs to be 'approved' by your Divisional Director or their nominated officer. Following this sign off, send a copy to the Equality Team (equality@bathnes.gov.uk), who will publish it on the Council's website. Keep a copy for your own records.

Signed off by:

(Divisional Director or nominated senior officer)

Date: