



**Lancashire County Council  
Fostering Statement of Purpose  
2020 - 2022**



## **1. Introduction**

Lancashire County Council Fostering Service's Statement of Purpose is prepared in accordance with the Fostering Services England Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The regulations and guidance set out the requirement that each fostering agency produces a Statement of Purpose, which includes its aims and objectives, a description of the service it delivers and the facilities that are offered and provided.

The Statement of Purpose also links with the A – Z Children's Guide for being Looked After which is provided to all children, subject to the child's age and understanding at the point they move in with Lancashire County Council Fostering Families.

This statement is available to all members of staff, foster carers, children and birth parents and is publicly available on our fostering website. A copy of this statement is also lodged with Ofsted.

This Statement of Purpose is approved by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools.

This Statement of Purpose should be read in conjunction with Lancashire County Council's Children, Young People and Families Partnership Vision and Practice Statement.

The Statement of Purpose, Children and Parent's Guides are available on Lancashire County Council's website.

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## **2. Welcome by County Councillor Cosima Towneley, Cabinet Member for Children and Families.**

As new the Cabinet Member for Children and Families for Lancashire County Council I am extremely proud of the development and improvement of fostering services. Our fostering service ensures children who are unable to remain safely living in their families can have warm, stable and safe care within a fostering family. Exciting initiatives have been developed during the last 12 months to support foster carers in Lancashire and to enable foster carers to continue making a difference so our children can grow up in a happy and loving environment. Lancashire County Council has created a fostering academy to support new and existing foster carers, a mentoring programme which links new foster carers with experienced foster carer mentors and our fostering communities project which develops supportive

networks between foster carer peers . In addition to these supportive measures we now offer incentives to help drive forward the recruitment of new foster carers which I am pleased to support as this allows our children to remain in their local communities. Lancashire children who live with fostering families may need additional emotional and therapeutic support to reach their full potential and it is a tremendous credit to Lancashire that our service continues to provide this excellent support to our children and fostering families. In my role as Cabinet Member for Children and Families I am committed to the development of our fostering service and I am looking forward to seeing how the fostering service build on these successes which enable more of our children to live and grow up locally within Lancashire .

County Councillor Cosima Towneley, Cabinet member for Children and Families

### **3. Principle aims and objectives**

#### **Aims**

Lancashire County Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children within Lancashire. The Fostering Service is committed to achieving continuous improvements and delivering the best possible outcomes for our children in our care by providing a range of high quality foster families for the children to help them achieve and meet their potential within a safe and secure environment.

Lancashire's Fostering Service has developed a comprehensive service plan that incorporates priorities and objectives for the coming year as well as individual plans for each fostering service area which are further detailed below.

Our main aim is to provide an excellent fostering service that not only supports and values our foster carers but ensures that our children feel safe and well cared for within their fostering families. Whilst we are a large Fostering Service we aim to provide local support to our fostering families and our children that is personalised to their individual needs.

#### **Objectives**

To help us achieve our aims we have 5 key objectives we feel are imperative for our children in our care and the fostering families who care for them:

- Our first objective is to ensure that wherever possible children are able to remain within their extended families or with adults who know them and can provide continuity of care. We aim to work with families, listen to children's voices and consider what support both in the interim and longer term is needed to make such family arrangements successful.
- Where children cannot remain within their families, we aim to ensure that we recruit each year as many suitable alternative fostering families to meet the needs of the children in our care. Our priority for 2021/2022 is to further increase the number of fostering families who can care for brothers and sisters,

older children and young people, children who have additional needs and foster carers who can help support birth parents to care for their children within a family environment.

- We seek to support all our fostering families to help improve the outcomes for the children they are caring for through individual, high quality, and local support. We listen to the voices of our children in care, our foster carers and their families to continually improve our support to them. We have a dedicated team of emotional health practitioners who work with our staff and foster carers to understand and use therapeutic parenting approaches that support our children and fostering families to feel safe and secure.
- We strive to ensure that our fostering families feel supported and valued so that they continue to foster with us and ensure stability and security for our children. We will discuss further some of our new initiatives to support this objective below.
- We aim to achieve permanence at the earliest opportunity for all of the children in our care in Lancashire and to ensure the best match possible with a family who can meet their needs on an emergency, short or permanent basis. Where children require permanent alternative care for the duration of their childhood, we aim to ensure stability and happiness until they are ready for independence in adulthood through supporting pathway planning and staying put arrangements where this is what our children need.

In order to meet our aims and objectives we ensure our Fostering Service meets Fostering Regulations, National Minimum Standards and Guidance whilst continuing to strive to be a forward thinking and intuitive Fostering Service that strives to improve outcomes for our children.

A key focus on all of the Fostering Service objectives is to offer and support permanence for children at the earliest opportunity with foster carers who can meet their needs.

In addition, we are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and providing a service that is sensitive to individual's ethnicity, culture, beliefs, sexuality, gender and disability. We recognise the cultural, religious and racial origins of children for whom we are responsible and celebrate these origins. We value and respect the children we look after for individuality and unique personality. We have high aspirations for all the children we look after.

## **Services and Facilities**

Lancashire County Council's Fostering Service is part of the Fostering, Adoption, Residential and Child and Youth Justice Service which has one dedicated Head of Service. Within the Fostering Service are three service areas of delivery:

## **Recruitment and Assessment & Supporting children and young people together (SCAYT)**

Our Recruitment and Assessment Team and SCAYT team has one Senior Manager responsible for both individual team functions.

Our Recruitment and Assessment Team consists of 3 Team Managers, 12 Social Workers and 2 Support Workers. The function of the team is to recruit, prepare and assess prospective mainstream foster carers. The team works closely with our communication team in order to produce promotional campaigns that seek to not only recruit more fostering families but fostering families who can care for the children in our care in Lancashire. The team undertakes training and preparation throughout the assessment process and is inclusive and non-judgemental of all applicants considering the strengths and life experiences that they have to equip them to care for our children. This year there is a specific focus on recruitment of fostering families to care for our children who we find it harder to identify families for such as brothers and sisters, older children, children and their parents, children with additional needs and children who are remanded to the care of the Local Authority.

Our SCAYT (Supporting Children and Young People Together) Team consists of 1 Team Manager, 10 Emotional Health Workers and 2 part time Children's Psychologists. This team provides therapeutic support to staff and foster carers through training and targeted intervention that promotes a nurturing attachment approach to help carers to support children to overcome early adverse experiences. This team also offers support to adoptive families within Adoption Lancashire and Blackpool.

### **Assessment with Family and Friends**

Our Assessment with Family and Friends team consists of 1 Senior Manager, 5 Team Managers, 27 Social Workers and 4 Support Workers. The team works closely with families to support them in considering whether they are able to care for children who may be a relative or friend on a permanent basis in the event they cannot return to birth parents' care. The ethos of the team is to work collaboratively with families to make realistic informed decisions for our children and their own futures with permanence at the forefront. The team works closely with colleagues in Children's Teams, Legal and the Courts in supporting timely permanence decisions for children. Again, children's views and voices are central to all of our assessments.

### **Support to Permanence and Family Finding Teams**

Our Support to Permanence and Family Findings teams consist of 1 Senior Manager and 6 Team Managers. 5 Team Managers are responsible for a local Support to Permanence team (North Lancashire, Central Lancashire, South and West Lancashire, Hyndburn, Rossendale and Ribble Valley and Burnley and Pendle). These teams have 29 Social Workers and 9 ½ Support Workers in total who are split across the local areas to provide local support to local fostering families. These teams provide the supervision and support to fostering families including one to one support and supervision as well as local targeted support groups. The teams work closely with colleagues in children's teams, health, education and other partner agencies to

support the children to achieve their potential. They support fostering families to help children moving on. They work with leaving care services to support transitions to independence and where appropriate enable staying put arrangements. The teams also work closely with Adoption Lancashire and Blackpool to support children's moving on to adoptive families.

Our Family Finding team consists of 1 Team Manager and 1 Support Worker supported by the support to permanence teams on a duty rota basis for each locality. The team is responsible for matching fostering families to children requiring this type of care. This includes emergency arrangements, short term planned moves and long-term matches to care for our children until they reach adulthood. The team works closely with both our Recruitment and Assessment team and Support to Permanence teams to enable children to be matched with fostering families who can meet their needs at the earliest opportunity.

### **New Service Initiatives**

Lancashire County Council's Fostering Service highly values our fostering families and the children that they care for and we strive to be an excellent service in terms of the support and services we provide to our carers, children, their families and agencies who we work in partnership with. To further support our retention of fostering families and improve security and stability for our children we have over the last 12 months developed a number of new initiatives which we are proud to share as part of our updated statement of purpose as well as our more established service offers to support children, families and our carers.

Fostering Academy: As a Fostering Service we recognise the importance of support and training to our fostering families in particular recognising the initial days, weeks and months of becoming a foster carer can be incredibly daunting. Our fostering academy is a specialist training and mentoring programme that supports applicants in assessment and throughout their first year of their fostering journey. This includes an excellent package of training that builds upon their preparation in assessment as well as a dedicated mentor who is an experienced foster carer who is buddied to each new fostering family to offer mentoring and informal support throughout their first year. Each mentor is local to the fostering family and ideally will be matched to support with individual needs such as if the new fostering family have their own children, they are connected carers or they may be specifically seeking to care for children and their birth parents.

Fostering Communities: Our Fostering Communities pilot is a hybrid model of the Mockingbird Project which in Lancashire we are seeking to initially trial over a 12 months period. A Senior Social Worker and two Support Workers are leading on this project which is in its infancy. There are 5 fostering community co-ordinators who have been appointed in each of the 5 areas of Lancashire to support 4 fostering families each. The aim of the project is to assess the success of the communities in developing support networks for fostering families and the children in their care; this includes advice and guidance, informal babysitting and building friendship groups for fostering families who need this. If successful we aim to implement this on a wider scale to offer increased support to our fostering families and children.

LIFT (Lancashire Intervention for Families Team): Our LIFT carers offer support to both birth families and foster carers where they need specific support in meeting children's needs. The aim is to reduce the number of children entering care by offering support and guidance to birth families and also to prevent breakdowns in fostering families. Our LIFT programme is established and offered across the whole county.

Training: We offer a comprehensive range of training each year to our foster carers to develop their skills, knowledge and interests. Our foster carers can access training available for our social work teams. Our training is delivered locally to our carers and flexibly around school hours, holidays and also online. We work closely with our learning and development team to ensure that our training remains relevant and up to date.

## **Facilities**

Our Recruitment and Assessment team, Assessment with Family and Friends team and Family Finding team are County wide teams who are based at County Hall in Preston. They cover the whole of Lancashire and our surrounding borders including further afield for our family and friend's team where required.

Our five Support to Permanence teams are in office bases local to the foster carers we support. Our office bases are in Lancaster, Accrington, Preston, Clayton-le-Woods and Burnley. Our social workers can also access office bases in other areas of Lancashire as required and are also provided with equipment for homeworking. Our Fostering Service is particularly proud of our response to Covid 19 whereby we have responded with flexibility to support our teams, foster carers and the children in their care. We have continued to undertake face to face visits where it has been safe to do so and have ensured that our social workers have the necessary PPE. We have continued to recruit foster carers throughout the pandemic and have adapted our training and support groups to be virtual to ensure our foster carers continue to receive high quality training and support that promotes the best outcomes for our children.

We also value participation across the North West and with leading charities.

## **Complaints, Comments, Compliments and Allegations**

The Fostering Service is a continuously learning organisation. Complaints, comments, compliments and allegations can provide opportunities to review services and promote service developments. We reflect on complains and comments to develop our practice. We regularly share compliments. Any allegations or complaints regarding care provided are dealt with in partnership and safeguarding with partner agencies.