

Lancashire County Council - Fostering Friendly Draft Policy

Introduction

Lancashire County Council recognises and values the contribution that Foster Carers make to society and especially the lives of children in care. We understand that Foster Carers who do other work in addition to Fostering need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order to meet the needs of their Fostered child.

Lancashire County Council will actively promote Fostering to all employees who are successfully recruited, all appointed employees will be asked "what they can do for our children" and a Fostering assessment will be offered when the formal offer of employment is made.

Lancashire County Council will actively engage our current workforce by prioritising Fostering marketing within existing communication channels and each Directorate will be responsible for providing a Senior Leader who is able to deliver new opportunities for Fostering marketing.

There will be recruitment events for the workforce on a regular basis. Line managers should ensure that they free up employees where this does not have a direct impact on service delivery to allow employees to attend.

A Social Value clause will be added to each contract with external providers which provides a commitment to promoting Fostering for Lancashire.

Lancashire County Council is committed to support any employee who is a Foster Carer or an approved Kinship Carer.

We will do this, wherever possible, by creating a Fostering Friendly Organisation that offers flexible working arrangements which respond to the needs of all Foster Carers or approved Kinship Carer employees to enable them to meet the requirements of the role of a Foster Carer.

The process of seeking approval to become a Foster Carer is a lengthy one and places a number of reasonable but demanding expectations upon prospective Carers, particularly in relation to the training, assessment and approval process.

Wherever possible we will extend the terms of this policy to prospective Foster or Kinship Carers who have begun the formal process of seeking approval and registration as Carers.

Aim

Lancashire County Council offers employees the opportunity to work flexibly where this is compatible with the demands of their job. Our flexible working, child placement leave, emergency time off for dependents and parental leave policies all apply to Foster Carers and approved Kinship Carers.

This policy sets out the additional benefits that we will offer prospective and existing Foster Carers and Kinship Carers, as part of being a Fostering Friendly organisation.

Eligibility

This policy applies to employees who:

- are applying to become Foster Carers;
- are approved Foster Carers and have a child in placement (or have had a child in placement for 75% of the previous 12 months) or are an approved Kinship Carer;
- have been employed by Lancashire County Council for 3 months.

Time off

Lancashire County Council values and will support Foster Carers and approved Kinship Carers by increasing the Special Leave that can be taken to ensure that mandatory training linked to the role of a Foster Carer can be undertaken, and that important statutory meetings relating to the children in their care can be attended.

This proposed additional time from work to undertake the role of a Foster Carer will be applied to both employees who directly Foster for Lancashire County Council, and also for those who Foster for Independent Fostering Agencies.

Procedure for requesting time off

The request for leave should outline the reason and the amount of leave required.

The employee should send the request for leave for authorisation by their line manager. Line managers are encouraged to support the request from the employee where possible to allow Foster Carers to provide care for our looked after children, particularly when Foster Carers are asked to look after children who need a home on the same day.

Working Flexibly Policy and Procedure

Lancashire is proud to embrace a culture of working flexibly with a focus on outputs and quality, and not necessarily focusing on how and when the work is undertaken. Employees who are applying to be Foster Carers or who are approved Foster Carers should be directed to the Working Flexibly Policy to consider whether they wish to request one of the Working Flexibly options to support their role as a Foster Carer. Line Managers should consider all requests made by Foster Carers and prospective Foster Carers to utilise a flexible working option unless there are clear service delivery and/or customer needs defined by the line manager that mean this is not possible.