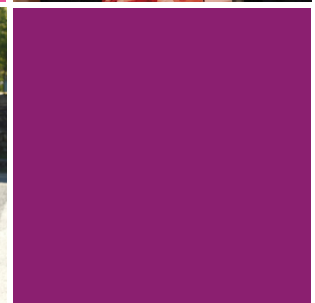
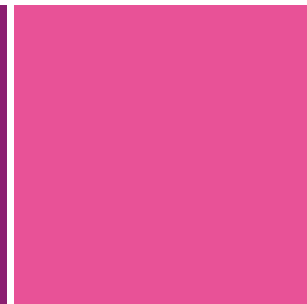
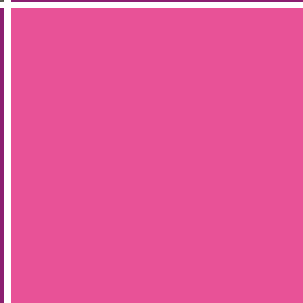
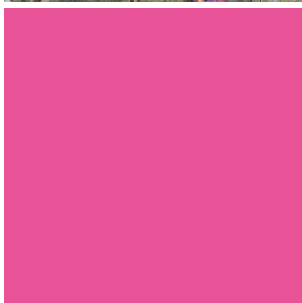


# Statement of Purpose Fostering Service

September 2021



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## 1. Introduction

It is a requirement of The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services that each fostering service produces a Statement of Purpose, including its aims and objectives, and a description of the services and facilities that are provided. This Statement of Purpose gives an outline of those requirements, how the service is managed, and its fitness to provide fostering services.

It shows the policy and performance framework that underpins our work and shows how good outcomes are achieved for all children in our care. It also demonstrates the systems that we have set in place to recruit, train, supervise and support foster carers.

This statement is available to all staff, foster carers, children, and birth parents and is publicly available on our fostering website: [www.letsfoster.co.uk](http://www.letsfoster.co.uk)

A copy of this statement is also lodged with Ofsted.

This statement is updated and amended annually.

## 2. National Legislative and Policy Framework

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service is run in accordance with the principles outlined in:

- [Children Act 1989](#)
- [The Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards \(2011\)](#)
- [Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services \(2011\)](#)
- [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Care Planning and Fostering Regulations \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) 2015](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#)
- [Training, Support and Development Standards \(TSD\) for Foster Carers](#)

## 3. Principles

Whenever possible the child is kept within his or her community, family and friendship network.

Foster care is a partnership between the foster carers, supervising social workers and the child's social worker all working together with the child, their birth and extended family

whenever possible. The focus will always be to achieve what is in the best interests of the child.

The cultural, racial, linguistic and religious identities of children, their parents and foster carers will be respected in the development of the foster care service and in making and supporting individual foster homes.

Children have the right to continuity in their lives in order to enable them to develop and maintain positive self-esteem and identity and to promote their physical and mental wellbeing and for them to achieve their full potential.

Foster carers should be consulted at every opportunity in order to develop and improve services to foster carers, their children, cared for children and their families.

### Corporate Parenting Pledges

The council acts as 'corporate parent' to all the children in its care, underpinned by the aim to ensure the best outcomes for children.

These promises have been developed by children and young people and endorsed by councillors in Blackburn with Darwen:

- We promise to involve you in decisions that affect you and to treat you with respect
- We promise to find you a safe, comfortable and caring place to live
- We promise to provide you with a quality education which meets your needs
- We promise to meet all your health needs
- We promise to encourage and support you to access leisure, learning and training facilities.
- We promise to involve you in decisions that affect you and to treat you with respect
- We promise to help you prepare for adulthood, through support and advice, as you leave care.
- We promise to provide well trained, experienced and caring staff and carers to look after you.

## 4. Aims and Objectives

The safety and welfare of the children in our care are central to the work of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. We believe that all children requiring a foster home have the right to live in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service aims to:

- Provide the highest quality of care for children through the provision of approved foster carers who can offer a safe and supportive foster home environment.
- Promote an atmosphere of partnership and co-production so that all those involved in the care of a child or young person are working together to meet their needs.



- Recruit, assess, approve and retain a wide range of foster carers who can meet the diverse needs of children in our care. This includes carers who can provide short term and long term foster homes, including carers for brothers and sisters to remain together and teenagers.
- Provide support to foster carers to fulfil their role as a full member of the team contributing to the care planning for the child.
- Provide a high-quality service to approved foster carers including training, support and supervision.
- Provide a service which is managed ethically and efficiently by those with the appropriate skills and experience and who are suitable to work with children.
- Provide a service which considers and promotes the potential of relatives and friends (connected persons) as foster carers for those children unable to live with their parents.
- Provide a range of foster carers to ensure placement choice and the placement of children and sibling groups in families who can meet their assessed needs in terms of gender, sexuality, ethnic origin, disability, culture, race, religion or language.
- Administer the fostering panel in accordance with the requirements of the current fostering services regulations and national minimum standards.
- Ensure each child/young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting his/her assessed needs.
- Consider all foster carers applications equally irrespective of the applicants' age, gender, sexuality, ethnic origin, disability, culture, race and religion, consistent with the needs of children requiring foster care.
- Provide applicant foster carers with high quality preparation groups and training which inform, educate, develop and prepare them for the fostering task; and provide ongoing training and support to approved foster carers and their families so that they can carry out their role effectively and improve their level of skills.
- Ensure the safety and protection of children from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation and ensure the provision of nurturing and loving environments which promote the foster child's sense of worth, self-esteem and emotional wellbeing.
- Provide professional support, advice and guidance enabling foster carers to:
  - Promote the child's sense of identity, including his/her racial identity; promote contact between the child and his/her family; and promote the physical and mental health of all children.
  - Provide children with opportunities and encouragement to pursue their talents, interests and hobbies; and promote the education achievements of children so that they gain maximum benefit from education, training and employment opportunities.
  - Assist children in the development of skills to deal with discrimination and bullying and to assist them to become competent to look after themselves and cope with everyday living.

- Ensure that each child with a disability receives the services and support to help him/her to maximise his/her potential and to lead as full a life as possible.

## 5. Values

### Children

- Children are valued as individuals
- Children feel and are safe and protected, free from fear and danger
- Children are physically and emotionally healthy
- Children enjoy their childhood and are given the opportunity for social engagement in their communities.
- Challenge discrimination and celebrate diversity
- Ensure children's voices are heard and that they have the right to participate in decisions about their care.
- Support young people in making a smooth transition towards adult life and in shaping their own future.

### Foster Carers

- Value working with foster carers as partners
- Support and enable foster carers to be competent and confident in meeting the required standards.
- Recruit as many foster carers as possible to meet the diverse needs of children in our care.

### Parents

- Parents/legal carers should be treated with respect and fairness irrespective of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnic origin, disability, culture, race, religion or language.
- Parents have a right to full information regarding the plan for their child; to participate in the decision-making process; and to have account taken of their wishes and views.
- Parents have the right to make representations and complaints and to have information on how to do so.

### Work as a Team

- Embrace a multi-disciplinary approach to our work
- Be receptive to feedback
- Be prepared to go the extra mile in pursuit of excellent care

## Lead by Example

- Act with integrity
- Listen and act professionally
- Be receptive to new ideas
- Communicate effectively
- Be creative and flexible in seeking solutions
- Expect high quality performance always
- Strive to exceed standards
- Work with a range of partners to ensure good standards of care for our children

## 6. Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest

Foster carers are provided with full information about the children placed with them and are expected to observe high standards of confidentiality. As a service, we maintain records on carers and children in care that are subject to General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Staff and foster carers are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest. Where a conflict of interest arises, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service will prepare a risk assessment to manage the risk.

## 7. Children's Guide

The Fostering Service are creating a Children's Guide for children at the point of being cared for by one of our foster carers, and foster carers will explain the content of the Children's Guide in a way that is accessible and can be understood. The Children's Guide will include a summary of what the fostering service will set out to do for our children, and how a child can contact their Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Commissioner and Ofsted.

## 8. Services Provided

The Fostering Service aims to develop and maintain a range of foster homes to meet the needs of children and young people.

Many of the children placed have experienced abuse or neglect before being fostered. Blackburn Borough Council's Fostering Service assess, approve and support a wide range of carers to provide a range of placements to match children's diverse needs:

- Recruitment, training and assessment of prospective foster carers
- Short-term planned and emergency placements for children who need to be looked after by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

- Short break placements for children with disabilities, children whose families need additional support and to support the main foster placement.
- Long-term and permanent foster care placements for children who cannot return home, where this has been identified as the most appropriate care plan.
- Family finding for children identified as in need of long-term or permanent foster placements.
- A managed matching process for the placement of children with long-term or permanent foster carers that ensures that the child's needs have been fully considered in relation to the placement.
- Support, supervision and review of foster carers
- A comprehensive training programme for approved foster carers
- Organisation and administration of the council's Fostering Panel
- Provision of information, advice, consultation and training for other professionals on fostering issues.
- Contribution to policies, procedures and practice guidance in relation to children looked after and fostering.
- Commissioning of foster placements in the independent and voluntary sector and liaison with agencies in relation to services provided for the Directorate.

## 9. Recruitment of Foster Carers

There is a need for more placements for teenagers. There is also a need for more placements for children requiring long-term care, children with disabilities, those who are part of a sibling group or are from a black or minority ethnic group.

The Fostering Services has an ongoing recruitment strategy that uses a variety of media to recruit new carers. The strategy is informed by research on the most successfully employed advertising methods and is targeted to help ensure all children have a placement choice.

The Fostering Team has developed a range of materials in order to aid the recruitment of foster carers. The website provides a comprehensive and wide range of information for potential foster carers including a questions and answers page and it has an on-line application registration link: [www.letsfoster.co.uk](http://www.letsfoster.co.uk)

## 10. Approval and Assessment Process

People of any age may apply to become foster carers with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service. Prospective carers who wish to have further information will be visited by a suitably qualified social worker from the Fostering Service to explore further the process of becoming a foster carer. All applicants are assessed by a social worker.

Interest is welcomed from all members of the community, regardless of relationship status, employment situation, class, gender, sexuality, culture, ethnicity or religion.



Full statutory checks and references are undertaken on all applicants and DBS checks on any member of the household over the age of 18 years.

All applicants are invited to attend a course of pre-approval training as part of the assessment process. The preparation training covers areas such as child development; separation and loss; working together, managing complex behaviours and safe care. The assessment process involves completion of the Blackburn with Darwen assessment form and is compliant with the Fostering Regulations and Statutory Guidance.

The assessment of a foster Carer takes place in the applicant's home over a period of six to eight visits, plus reference interviews and interviews involving other relevant parties. The social worker will assess past and present experiences, any significant relationships, family dynamics and the characteristics of the foster carers to inform the assessment.

The assessor will also use this process to assess the applicant's suitability to foster children with differing needs. The assessment is then presented to the fostering panel. Applicants are encouraged to attend Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service panel with their assessing social worker. All information gathered is shared with the applicants prior to the panel.

The Fostering Panel makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker who then makes a final decision. Any appeals can be made within 28 days and may either make further representation to the fostering panel or have their assessment considered by the Independent Review Mechanism which in turn will make a recommendation back to the agency.

## 11. Supervision, Support and Training of Foster Carers

- All foster carers are supported and supervised by a supervising social worker. Foster carers may also contact Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service for advice and support.
- Foster carers can still access support from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council outside of office hours.
- Foster carers have access to a developing network of support groups and forums including the Foster Carers association.
- Foster carers who are assessed as needing respite on a planned basis can access respite services with other foster carers.
- On approval, foster carers are required to undertake a programme of continuing professional development and are offered training that reflects their knowledge, skills and developmental needs.
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service is a part of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and the wider Council offers many services that can be accessed by foster carers, children and young people.

## **12. Reviews of Foster Carers**

All foster carers are subject to an annual review of their status as foster carers. This is a formal review of the work they have undertaken during the year and includes an opportunity to reflect on achievements and learning. Annual reviews are undertaken by an independent reviewing officer and will hope to draw on contributions from a wide range of other people who contribute to the care they provide.

A report is presented to the Fostering Panel in the case of all first reviews, significant changes to the carers' registration or cases of concern.

## **13. Safeguarding and Allegations**

If the fostering service believes there is a safeguarding concern they will adhere to the safeguarding procedures of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's and notify the children's social work team as a matter of priority.

Please ask to see Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Safeguarding Procedures.

All allegations in relation to foster carers are investigated by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on behalf of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board in line with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Safeguarding Procedures.

Foster carers are offered independent support during this process.

## **14. Profile of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service**

As at August 2021, there was 69 approved mainstream fostering households, 34 approved friends and family fostering households, and 6 approved 'short breaks only' households. At this time, an additional 11 friends and family fostering households were under assessment.

As at September 2021, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service was caring for 178 children, of which 113 were living in 'in-house' foster placements and 65 were living in agency foster placements.

## **15. Monitoring Performance**

Overall responsibility for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service rests with the Director of Children's Social Care. Overall accountability for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service rests with the Service Lead. Overall accountability for all social work and practice matters rests with the Team Manager.

The performance of Blackburn Borough Council's Fostering Service will be monitored at several levels and in a variety of ways:

- Ofsted inspects Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service to ensure it complies with legislation and statutory guidance which focuses 'on the things that matter most to children's lives'.
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service overall business performance is monitored by the Service Manager who provides reports for the council's senior managers, the Corporate Parenting Executive Board and the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group.
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service operates a variety of mechanisms to monitor fostering practice and ensure it continually improves.
- Individual staff performance is monitored in staff supervision and annual appraisals

## 16. Staffing

The Mainstream Fostering Team Manager holds a relevant management and professional qualification, BA (Hons) in Social Work and ILM Level 5 in Management.

The team has a deputy team manager and the equivalent of 6.5 FTE social workers and staff are supported by administrative staff.

There is also a full time Marketing and Recruitment officer.

The Family and Friends Team Manager holds a relevant management and professional qualification, a BA (Hons) in Social Work and a post-qualifying award in Social Work Leadership.

The team also includes a Deputy Team Manager, and the equivalent of 6.5 social workers, alongside a Fostering Support Worker and an SGO Support Worker.

## 17. Complaints

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service has a complaints procedure.

The procedure is made available to all children, parents and foster carers. A guide to making complaints is also available for children who are placed with foster carers.

You can contact us at:

10 Duke Street  
Blackburn  
BB2 1DH

Telephone: 01254 666400  
Email: [feedback@blackburn.gov.uk](mailto:feedback@blackburn.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.blackburn.gov.uk](http://www.blackburn.gov.uk)

All complaints made to the service are subject to a monitoring procedure. This assists the service to develop. Foster carers and children are also able to make complaints to Ofsted.

An inspector from Ofsted can be contacted at:

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231  
E-mail: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## 18. Questions About This Statement

If you any questions or queries, please contact us at:

10 Duke Street  
Blackburn  
BB2 1DH

Telephone: 01254 666 400