



Statement of Purpose Fostering Service

June 2024



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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 (2011) 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. The Blackburn with Darwen (BWD) Statement of Purpose gives an outline of those requirements, how the service in BWD is managed, and its fitness to provide fostering services to our children and young people.

The Statement of Purpose shows the policy and performance framework that underpins our work and demonstrates how positive 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 and kinship carers.

This statement is available to all staff, foster carers, kinship carers, children, and birth parents and is publicly available on our fostering website: 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](#)
- [The Special Guardianship Regulations 2005](#)
- [Children Act 1989: family and friends care - Statutory Guidance for local authorities about family and friends providing care for children who cannot live with their parents](#)
- [Training, Support and Development Standards \(TSD\) for Foster Carers](#)
- [Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation, Childrens Social Care Reform 2023](#)

3. Principles

Whenever possible our children and young people remain within his or her community, family, and friendship network.

Foster care is a partnership between the foster carers, kinship carers, supervising social workers, child's social worker and corporate partners, 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, with the child being at the centre of all we do.

The cultural, racial, linguistic, and religious identities of children, their parents, kinship carers 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 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 and kinship carers are consulted at every opportunity to develop and improve services to carers, their children and children who are cared for and their families.

Corporate Parenting

The council acts as 'corporate parent' to all the children in its care, underpinned by the aim to ensure the best outcomes for children. The BWD Corporate Parenting Strategy has been developed and co-produced with our children and young people and will be published this summer.

4. Aims and Objectives

The safety and welfare of the children in our care are central to the work of BWD. We believe that all children requiring a foster or kinship home have the right to live in a safe, stable, and loving home as outlined in Stable Homes, Built on Love.

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

- Provide the highest quality of care for children through the provision of approved foster and kinship carers who can offer a safe, loving, and supportive 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 and kinship carers who can meet the diverse needs of children in our care. This includes carers who can provide kinship care, short term and long-term care and parent and child placements. At BWD there is an emphasis on keeping siblings together, keeping children local and ensuring there is targeted recruitment for teenagers.
- Provide support to foster and kinship 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 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 kinship care in the first instance 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 or kinship 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.
- Ensure that permanence for children and young people is the focus of care planning at the earliest and appropriate opportunity, with a drive for permanence through private law orders such as Special Guardianship Orders. Long term matching for our children with foster carers is achieved in a timely way when this is the agreed permanence plan for children.
- Provide professional support, advice and guidance enabling foster and kinship 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

BWD is committed to driving our TRACK values forward in all areas. Our new values were launched in December 2022 to send a powerful message to everybody involved in the care of our children and young people including foster and kinship carers. Our new values help to ensure everyone is working towards a common purpose, so it is important to know what they are, how they influence our behaviour and how they will help to make decisions.

Our values are:

Trust – We believe in and can rely on each other.

Respect – We embrace diversity and value our differences.

Ambition – We have the courage to try new things and strive to be better.

Collaboration – We achieve more by working together.

Kindness – We are self-aware and considerate in all that we do.

These values are the guiding principles in all that we do and will help keep us on track. That way, as employees we all know what we can expect from each other.

Children

- Children are valued as individuals.
- Children feel 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 and Kinship Carers

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

Parents

- Parents and 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 and work collaboratively with our

partners and professionals in a transparent manner.

- 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 and kinship 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, foster and kinship 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 has created a Children's Guide, in collaboration with our cared for children. The guide is for children at the point of being cared for by one of our foster or kinship carers. Foster and kinship carers will explain the content of the Children's Guide in a way that is accessible and can be understood. The Children's Guide includes 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 coming into the care of the local authority. 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 including kinship carers.
- Short-term planned and emergency placements for children who need to be cared for 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.
- Where children are being cared for by kinship carers, support is offered to achieve permanence through private law orders such as Special Guardianship Orders. Continued support is offered through the Kinship Care Team should a private law order be issued.
- Family finding for children identified as in need of long-term or permanent foster placements.
- A managed matching process for 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 and kinship carers
- A comprehensive training programme for approved foster and kinship 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. There have been significant challenges in the recruitment of foster carers on a national level. As a result, the Department of Education has launched plans for fostering recruitment hubs across the country. The Northwest Recruitment Hub - 'Foster with Us', of which BWD is the lead authority, will undertake all recruitment activity across all the Local Authorities' (Lancashire County Council, Blackpool Council, Westmorland and Barrow and Furness) and feed out enquiries for LAs (Local Authority's) to undertake assessments of potential foster carers. The aim is to pool resources to ensure that recruitment of foster carers is a priority within one hub, with sufficient skills and resources across multiple roles. The Recruitment Hub is based on the Stable Homes Built on Love, Social Work Reform, with the Department for Education recognising the significant issues nationally around foster carer recruitment and retention.

10. Approval and Assessment Process for Mainstream and Kinship Foster Carers.

Mainstream Fostering

Anybody over the age of 18 may apply to become mainstream foster carers with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service, however they need to be over 21 to be approved. 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. A young person who is cared for by the local authority attends this training to provide a valuable insight for potential foster carers. The assessment process involves completion of the Blackburn with Darwen assessment form and is compliant with the Fostering Regulations and Statutory Guidance.

Kinship Fostering

Placement during assessment (Regulation 24)

When a child does become looked after by the local authority, the first point of call will be to see if a kinship placement is considered appropriate. A social worker from the Kinship Care Team which sits within the Fostering Service, will undertake a Regulation 24 assessment of capacity to care for the child. Basic checks will be undertaken. Regulation 24 placements are where the carer is given 'temporary approval' as a foster carer, normally for up to 16 weeks. Exceptionally, this period may be extended by up to eight weeks if more time is needed for the assessment to be concluded.

Combined Assessments

A combined assessment considers both the outcome of approved kinship fostering or as a Special Guardian under a Special Guardianship Order. For either outcome, the combined assessment assesses to care for the child on a long term, permanent basis. The assessment and process are the same for both kinship foster carers or special guardians. For special guardians there will be an individual support plan that considers what support is required for the child and the SGO family. The local authority will fund independent legal advice on the support plan, which includes financial support.

Both mainstream and kinship assessments are 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. A care experienced young person is a panel member and their contribution to this process provides their unique perspective. 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 and Kinship Carers

- All foster and kinship carers are supported and supervised by a supervising social worker.
- Foster and kinship carers can still access support from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council outside of office hours through the Emergency Duty team.
- Foster and kinship carers have access to a developing network of support groups and forums including the Foster Carers association.
- Foster and kinship carers who are assessed as needing short breaks on a planned basis can access this service with other carers.
- On approval, foster and kinship carers are required to undertake a programme of continuing professional development and are offered training that reflects their knowledge, skills and developmental needs. The service offers a wide range of both mandatory and voluntary training.
- 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 and Kinship Carers

All foster and kinship 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 taken to an annual review panel which consists of an independent chair, social workers and independent panel members.

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 and exemptions.

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 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 and kinship carers are investigated by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on behalf of the Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership in line with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Safeguarding Procedures.

Foster and kinship carers are offered independent support during this process from Foster Talk.

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

In June 2024, there are 64 approved mainstream fostering households, 28 approved kinship households, and 4 approved 'short breaks only' households. At this time, an additional 37 friends and family fostering households and 9 mainstream households were under assessment.

In March 2024, 238 children were living in foster homes of which 164 were living in 'in-house' foster placements.

15. Monitoring Performance

Overall responsibility for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service rests with the Strategic Director of Children's Service and Education. Overall accountability for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service rests with the Service Lead for Placements. Overall accountability for all social work and practice matters rests with the Team Managers.

The performance of Blackburn with Darwen 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 Lead for Placements who provides reports for the council's senior leadership team, the Corporate Parenting Executive Board and the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group.
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Fostering Service is part of the quality assurance framework which drives positive change and development and informs systemic practice.
- The Fostering service has a development plan created in collaboration with the fostering team to identify key priorities in line with the overall improvement plan. This further informs staff performance through annual personal plans and supervision.

16. Staffing

The mainstream fostering team is split into two teams, a support and supervision of carers team which consists of 3 FTE social workers as well as one FT Team manager. The second team is the recruitment and assessment of mainstream foster carers team that consists of 1.5 FTE social workers alongside a full time Marketing and Recruitment officer, as well as a FT SW who is responsible for the Front Door Duty Service. This is managed by one FT Team Manager. There is one FT Advanced Practitioner post covering both teams on the mainstream fostering team.

There are two Kinship Care Teams that are responsible for assessment of kinship carers, supervision and support which includes SGO support. There are 6.5 FTE social workers, a fostering support worker as well as an SGO Support worker, alongside a FT Advanced Practitioner who are managed by two FTE Team Managers.

All social workers and team managers hold relevant professional social work qualifications.

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
Website: 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

18. Questions about This Statement

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

10 Duke Street
Blackburn
BB2 1DH

Telephone: 01254 666400