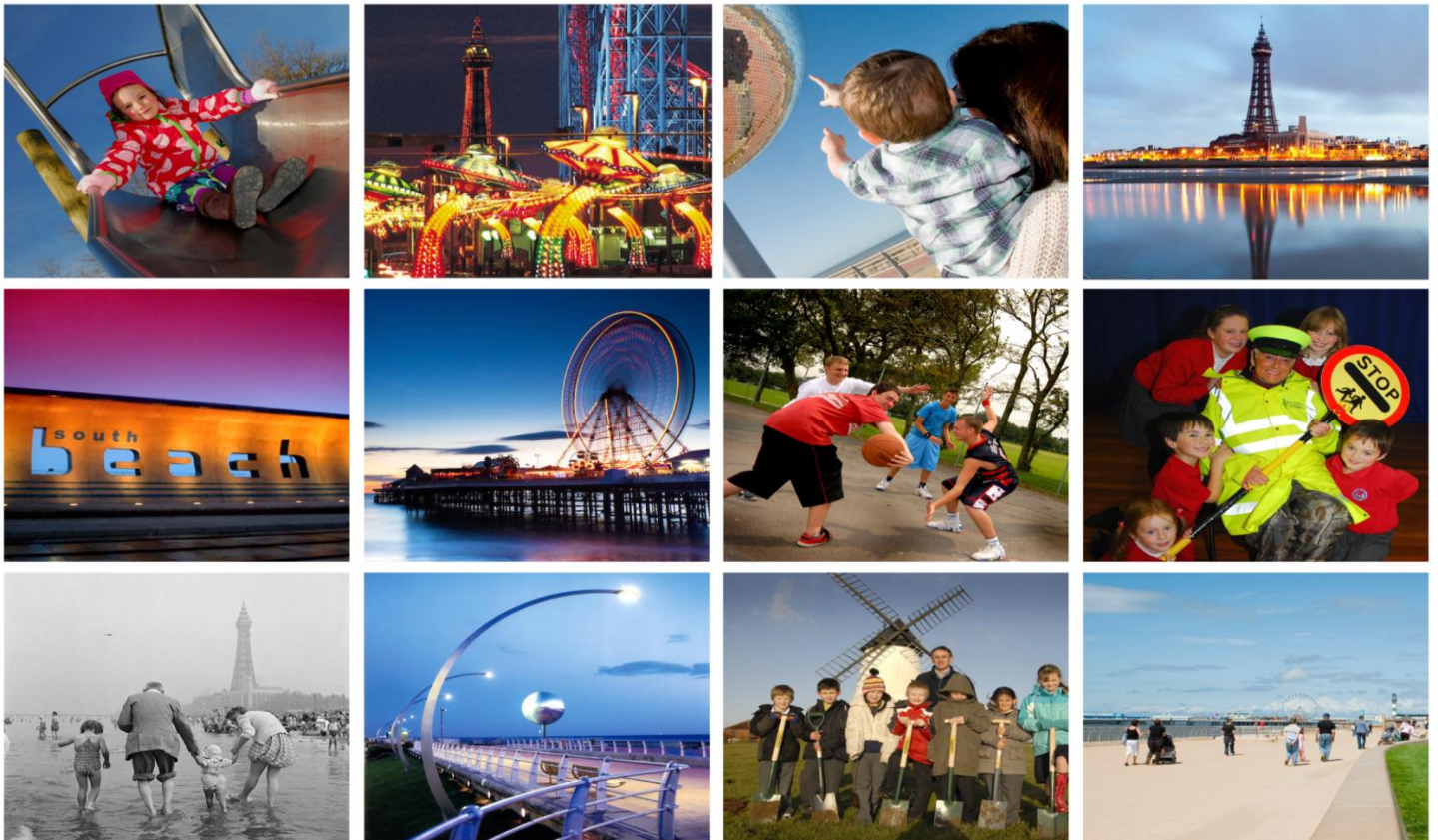




Long Term Fostering for our Children and Young People in Blackpool May 2021

Blackpool Council





Blackpool Long Term Fostering Policy

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Long Term Fostering Guidance – Ensuring Our Children and Young People’s needs are matched to foster carers’ skills and abilities

May 2021

1. Introduction: Permanence for Our Children and Young People through Long Term Foster homes

Blackpool Council Children’s services strive to ensure that wherever possible children and young people are brought up within their own family and this is explored at all points in a child and young person’s journey through services. The development of a family group conference service, promotion of family time, the use of genograms, a family tracing service and the emphasis on identifying absent fathers, is all central to this work.

However despite this work some children and young people are unable to live with, or return, to their families. Where this is the case we want to ensure that they are brought up until adulthood within safe, secure loving households that offer stability and security. This guidance sets out our approach to matching children and young people to permanent loving homes.

2 Legal Framework

- 2.1 One of the key functions of the care plan for children/young people is to ensure that they have a plan for permanence by the time of the second review, as set out in the **Statutory Guidance to the Adoption and Children Act 2002**. Achieving permanence for a child/young person will be a key consideration from the day they become ‘looked-after’ or ‘our children’. The permanence planning process will identify which permanence option is most likely to meet the needs of the individual child/young person, taking account of their wishes and feelings.

A range of options for permanence exist, all of which can deliver good outcomes for individual children/ young people:

For many of our children/young people, permanence is achieved through a successful return to their birth family and this is where it has been possible to address the factors in family life which led to them be in our care.



- 2.2 For other children/ young people routes to permanence outside of the care system may include:
- Living with family and friends as a private family arrangement (see practice guidance re private family arrangement)
 - Finding a forever family through Adoption, which for many children/ young people can offer the best route to a lifelong and legally permanent new family. Twin track or parallel planning, including concurrent planning may provide a means to securing permanence by adoption at an early stage; (see SHOPA handbook and permanence strategy)
 - Living with others supported by a legal order such as a child arrangement order or special guardianship order. (see SGO policy)
- 2.3 For those children/ young people who remain in our care, an important route to permanence is **long-term foster care**. Where a permanence care plan has been assessed as identifying long-term foster care for a child or young person this can mean within their current foster home or it could mean a new placement is identified as a result of an assessment and matching process.

Permanence Planning - Long Term Fostering

- 1.2.1 Permanence planning for children and young people where their care plan has been ratified as long-term foster care through the **Our Children's Review** process, starts by ensuring their needs are matched to the skills and abilities of foster carers in a timely way.
- 1.2.2 Children and young people have a **right to family life** and where it not possible for them to live within their birth family, they will always be afforded the opportunity to live in an alternative loving, nurturing family home.
- 1.2.3 We aim to provide foster homes for our children and young people and strive for them to achieve their very best outcomes. It is essential that our children and young people experience stability in their home environment, achieving well in education and that existing and new relationships are formed and maintained. Children and young people who are in our care can experiences unnecessary unplanned changes to their homes, schools and relationships and it is essential that the matching element of our work supports both their stability and outcomes.



1.2.4 Matching children/ young people to their long-term carers can offer children a sense of consistency and security and lessen the intrusion often felt by frequent social work intervention.

1.2.5 Long term fostering is a positive care plan for many young people who retain strong links with their birth families and do not need the formality of a legal order (**adoption/special guardianship order**).

1.2.6 Long-term fostering has the following advantages as a Permanence Plan for some children and young people:

- The local authority retains a role in negotiating between the foster carers and the birth family over a range of issues including family time.
- There is continuing social work support to the child/ young person and foster family which is regularly reviewed to ensure that the child/ young person's needs continue to be met and the carers are well supported in doing so.
- Maintain legal links to birth family who can still play a part in the decision making.

1.3 Support available to enable this permanence option

1.3.1 A clear plan of support will be outlined within the child/ young person's care plan and placement and support plan reviewed regularly at Our Children's Reviews.

1.3.2 Foster carers additionally have their own allocated supervising social worker from the Fostering Service who will have access to a range of support and training for their foster carers. This includes the PACE Training offer to all in house foster carers increasing therapeutic care to our children.

1.3.3 In house Psychology Support on a referral basis to all our children and young people and foster carers.

1.3.4 Foster carers who are supported outside of the Council by Independent Fostering Agencies offer services as part of their contract with our Commissioning Team providing a range of therapeutic support, psychological support, and access to counselling.

1.4 Consideration of Long Term Foster Care for Our Children

A child/ young person's current and future likely needs should be a central part of the assessment and planning process for long-term foster care and balanced with the capacity of the foster carer to meet these needs now and in the future.

- 1.4.1 The length of time with the foster family will vary according to the child/ young person's age including the plan regarding transition to adulthood and these factors must all be taken into account in planning for support where long-term foster care has been identified as the plan for permanence.
- 1.4.2 Before a decision is made on matching a child/ young person with long-term foster carers (whether or not this means moving to a new carer), consideration needs to be given to the ability of the identified long-term foster carer to care on this long term basis.
- 1.4.3 A process to consider the capacity of the carer to meet the needs of the child/ young person now and in the future, and to identify the likely support and services that will be needed to ensure that the current care arrangement is stable, secure and meets the child's needs to be in place. This should take account of the carer's previous fostering or other childcare experience, family make up (including birth children, adopted children and children on an SGO or on a fostering arrangement), existing relationship (if any) with the child/ young person, knowledge and skills and capacity, to care for the child/ young person.

If a permanent foster home until independence is assessed as being the most appropriate care plan, the following needs to be completed:

- A Plan of permanence for the child/young person has been ratified at an Our Children Review by IRO
- An Updated social work assessment outlining how this identified permanency option meets the child or YPs needs and enhances/improves their lived experience including consideration of other permanence options, for example, SGO to carer
- Views of the fostering supervising social worker and the IRO in relation to this proposed care plan. If no agreement, reasons for this and mitigating factors (including alternative options)
- The Completion of a matching form (attached) setting out how the child or Young person's needs will be met including the agreement of both the fostering, children's and IRO teams to this match



- Attendance at Blackpool's Fostering Panel for a discussion regarding a recommendation to match, expectation both Social Workers to attend for discussion
- If recommended for approval, ADM to ratify and approve, following this future arrangements for visits and reviews to be clearly agreed on the child /YPs record

1.4.4 Following panel this decision should be communicated clearly to the child or young person, foster carer's, the child/ young person's parents or any other person who is not a parent but has parental responsibility.

Flowchart – Long Term Fostering

Referral to Long term Fostering Inbox once LT Fostering confirmed as a care plan for a child or young person at Our Children's Review.



Confirmation from Commissioning /Fostering that this has been received.



Family finding meeting to be held within 2 weeks of receiving referral

Form 1 to be completed.

Family finding timetable to be agreed



Fostering - Long Term Match

Route to LT Match

Current Foster Carer's wish to be considered as Permanent FC's

And

Children and Young People being Matched with Long Term Foster Carers

FC's registration/matching considerations must have long term in their approval or change must be sought through Fostering Review process

Fostering Panel to be booked to agree match

Documents required:

- Form 1 (attached)
Foster Carer Response to be filled in for Panel
- FC's latest annual review or full fostering assessment if approved within the last 12 months
- The Child/young person's Child and Family Assessment updated in the last 12 months
- Evidence of IRO endorsement of proposed match



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Report to Fostering Panel – Long Term Match

Child's name:	
DOB:	
Mosaic No:	
Legal Status:	
Current Foster Carer/Residential Home:	
Date Cared for by this carer:	
School:	
Child's Social Worker: Team Manager:	
Foster Carer(s) Name(s):	
Mosaic No:	
Address:	
Foster Carer Approval Status:	
Fostering Agency:	
SSW:	

CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON – WHO THEY ARE (Child's family history, chronology of being Cared For, child as they are now)

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Foster carers response

CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON- FAMILY (why is reunification not possible with parents/family and what has been done to explore these options before pursuing a long term foster home?)

Foster carers response

CHILD'S WISHES AND FEELINGS IN RESPECT OF LONG TERM FOSTERING

Foster carers Response:



CHILD'S INTERESTS AND TALENTS

Foster carers Response: Can the foster carer's lifestyle accommodate these?

CHILD'S HEALTH NEEDS/SPECIAL NEEDS/DISABILITIES

To include future implications for inherited and genetic conditions e.g. mental health issues.

Foster carers Response: How can Long Term Foster Carer's lifestyle accommodate these?

FOSTER CARERS EXPERIENCE and TRAINING NEEDS IN RELATION TO THIS CHILD



EDUCATION

Describe child's current and future educational needs

Foster carers Response:

FAMILY TIME - Direct & indirect

Foster carers Response: Ability to Promote /Willingness to supervise

CHILDS IDENTITY - AS THEY ARE

To include ethnic, cultural and religious needs



Foster carers Response: How will carers promote these?

IRO's VIEWS IN RESPECT OF LONG TERM FOSTERING AND ANY OTHER SPECIFIC AREAS OF THE CURRENT PLAN:

PARENT'S WISHES IN RESPECT OF LONG TERM FOSTER CARE PLAN WITH THESE FOSTER CARERS

Religion, education, future aspirations

FOSTER CARERS FAMILY AND FRIEND'S SUPPORT NETWORK

Who would offer support in a crisis?

SUPPORT NEEDED FOR CHILD AND FOSTER CARERS

FOSTER CARERS COMMITMENT TO PROVIDING PERMANENCY TO THE CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON: (e.g., inclusion in Family holidays, family celebrations) and to consideration of Staying



Put arrangement for Young Person IF APPROPRIATE.

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WHATS GOING WELL

WHAT ARE WE WORRIED ABOUT AND WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN TO SUSTAIN PERMANENCY FOR THIS CHILD/YOUNG PERSON THROUGH TO ADULTHOOD WITH THESE CARERS?

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SIGNATURES

Foster Carer:	
Print name:	
Signature:	
Date:	
Foster Carer:	
Print name:	
Signature:	
Date:	
Supervising Social Worker:	
Print name:	
Signature:	
Date:	



Child's Social Worker:	
Print name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

Team Manager - Fostering:

Comments:

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Team Manager – Children's Team Comments

Comments:

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Prospective match agreed

Team Manager – Fostering:	
Print name:	
Signature:	
Date:	
Team Manager – Children's Team	
Print name:	
Signature:	
Date:	



Outcome of Fostering Panel:

Date of Permanence panel	
Comments of panel regarding the match (include any comments relating to the care plan, quality of the information provided and evidence to support the plan including attempts to rehabilitate the child/young person back to their parents/family):	
Decision of panel:	
Date:	