

WORKING WELL WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN LANCASHIRE

Blackpool Part Three – Information about
Services and Support in Blackpool

Guide for staff

How to support families, children and young
people who experience challenge



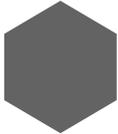
**Lancashire
Constabulary**
police and communities together

Blackpool Council



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PART THREE – SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

This guide is for everyone who works with children and young people and their families in Blackpool. It should not be read in isolation – it sits alongside Parts 1 and 2 of the Working Well with Children and Families guide which is for everyone working in Lancashire.

It is publicly available for anyone to access, and is particularly key for organisations including

- Health
- The Police
- Local Authorities
- Schools
- Colleges
- Nurseries & Childminders
- Voluntary and peer group organisations working with children and families
- Providers of support for children and families.

The guide is about families, children and young people, but it is relevant to staff working in a wide range of service areas such as adult mental health, community health, adult social care, substance misuse, probation, community safety, housing and leisure.

This guide talks about how we work with families in Blackpool to build on their strengths and come together across agencies to put the child at the centre of our work. It is designed to ensure that we give families who are experiencing challenges the advice, information and support they need that helps them make a positive difference to their lives. In Blackpool we have developed with our families a series of principles that guide our work and we call this “Blackpool Families Rock”.



Heart: Feeling

We are all human
We can all make mistakes
Trustling relationships are important
Respect each other
Be kind
Let's be brave together
Never give up on me
See me (I am unique)
See the good things
Share the power

Head: knowledge, culture and thinking

Don't be nosy (ask yourself if you really need to know this)
Use plain language
Share a knowledge
Take care in how you talk and write about us
Share what you know about us
Be non-judgement
Walk in my shoes

Hand: the doing of what we think and feel

See our strengths
Find out what works for us
Show you've listened by your actions
Be clear about expectations
Get to know me
Know who is important to me
Support us to develop our own plans and solutions
Have meaningful meetings
Celebrate positive changes
Make time for me
Be honest

Above you can see the Head, Hearts and Hands model described by our co-production group when we worked together to develop the principles that underpin our approach to working with children and families. We have used this to expand on how we will work with our families with beliefs, values and behaviours. Our approach when we work with children and families will be –



- Strengths based
- Restorative
- Solution focussed
- Mindful and transparent about risks and worries, but focus on safety planning
- Child focussed, but family aware

In Blackpool we believe –

- Children can achieve better outcomes when they are supported by their families and community, and that every child has a fundamental right to family life.
- Social Workers and partnership agencies need time and space to build trusted relationships and feel empowered to support families.
- It is the responsibility of everyone who works with children to make sure they are supported by their families and community.
- Support for families should come from within their communities and support networks and be focussed on improving their daily life experience and creating the capacity to change.
- Blackpool families who are really struggling are more able to keep their children safe when they are supported by trusted, empowered social workers and family practitioners that focus on the whole family strengths.

- Everyone who works with children in Blackpool can and should play a role in helping families stay together and feel empowered.

In Blackpool our Values are –

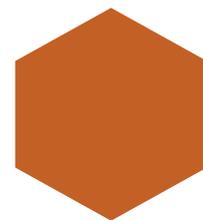
- We are **accountable** for delivering on the promises we make and take responsibility for our actions and the outcomes achieved.
- We act with **integrity** and we are **trustworthy** in all our dealings with people and we are open about the decisions we make and the services we offer.
- We are **compassionate**, caring, hard-working and committed to delivering the best.
- We take pride in delivering **quality** services that are community focussed and are based on listening carefully to what people need services that we can with a positive and collaborative attitude.
- We are committed to being **fair** to people and treat everybody we meet with dignity and respect.

Our beliefs and values influence our behaviours. In Blackpool we

- Work 'with' families, not 'do things to them'.
- Are child focussed, but support the whole family via our strengths based approach.
- Build and nurture trusted relationships with children and families.
- Are consistent and do what we say we will do.
- Ensure that when formal intervention is required, we manage it at the lowest possible level.
- Support our workforce and challenge them to deliver a great service.
- Encourage our families and communities to be aspirational for themselves and each other.
- Respect differences in families and communities and ensure we are inclusive.
- Are transparent and objective in our decision making.
- Learn from what works and what does not work and keep developing our services to build on the things that deliver the right outcomes.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES WITH EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

All children in Blackpool have the right to live and grow up in a safe environment in which they are protected from harm, nurtured to build their resilience to any adversity that they may face and supported to achieve their aspirations. Some children will need additional help and protection to achieve this and this document provides the multi-agency framework by which all practitioners who work alongside children and families provide the right support, at the right time and in the right place.



Central to this approach is the provision of effective early help, rather than reacting later when more harm has been caused. Early help is everyone's responsibility and typically best provided or co-ordinated by the organisations already working with the child and their family. Support delivered by practitioners with established positive relationships will always have greater chance of engaging children and families and maximising positive outcomes. Practitioners should make use of conversations within and outside their own organisation to ensure that their assessment is accurate and clearly reflects the voice of the child and family. Any subsequent action plan should be co-produced, with the child and family at the heart of discussions, to ensure the best chance of success.

The Blackpool approach is underpinned by Resilient Therapy. This recognises that every child and parent or carer has the ability to overcome adversity and flourish, given the right environment. It is centred on a resilience framework that strategically sets resilient moves that practitioners can make to build the resilience of children and families. A key principle is for practitioners to work alongside children and families, accepting their starting point, conserving and building on existing strengths, making a commitment to stick with them for as long as is needed and enlisting the help of others where appropriate. In this way, children and families become part of the solution and not just a problem to be solved. The model actively seeks out the potential positive influences in a child and family's life and builds their capacity to provide sustainable support in the longer term.

Contacting Blackpool Families Rock Request for Support Hub Line

The Advice Line on 01253 478959 gives professionals in all agencies and services that come in to contact with children and families direct access to a Social Worker for advice and guidance, without sharing identifiable information. The Advice Line is open to all schools in the town, including independent schools, early years settings and pupil welfare; all health services such as midwives, health visitors, school nurses and CAMHS; probation, youth offending, prisons, police, children's centres, fire services, drug services, housing, etc.

The Advice Line provides advice and support to partner agencies to support you to identify the most appropriate service to meet the child and family's needs. During consultation you **will not need to share the personal details of children and their families** as the advice line is for advice and support only.

The advice line is NOT the direct route to request support from Children's Services. If you would like to request support from Children's Social Care you should read part one and two of this document and discuss your concerns with the safeguarding lead in your organisation. If you are unsure having done this whether a request for support should be made, you and/ or your safeguarding lead may find it helpful to then contact the advice line. The social worker can advise whether you need to request support from Children's Services and help you ensure that you share all the relevant information to support good decision making when the request for support is received.

You can access a request for support [form here](#)

If you suspect or believe that a child is currently suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm or any form of mistreatment or abuse, you should report your concerns immediately by making telephone contact with the Blackpool Families Rock Request for Support Hub (MASH) Tel: 01253 477299.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN BLACKPOOL

FYI online directory

The [FYI online directory](#) provides information about the range of services that are available to support families, children and young people in Blackpool. It is available for practitioners and for families to use directly.

On the FYI directory you will be able to find information about the support available from local family hubs, including timetables for activities, information about nurseries, schools, foodbanks and access to support to get furniture and essential items for families who are experiencing hardship. Advice and contact details are available for services to support victims of domestic abuse, for people experiencing addiction or living with someone who is addicted to drugs or alcohol. There is information on services to support emotional and mental health and wellbeing. There is also the full “local offer” for families with children with additional needs. You can search for services by postcode and activity type.

Lots of organisations and peer support groups exist in Blackpool, and we are finding new ones all the time that people tell us are helpful in supporting families. If you have any suggestions about services that you do not see on FYI but you know are available, you can suggest that they are added.

Family Hubs & Children’s Centres

Blackpool Council’s family hubs and children’s centres act as a one-stop shop for a variety of services.

They are somewhere children can make friends and learn as they play. A place parents and carers can get professional advice on health and family matters, learn about training and job opportunities or just drop in for a chat.

Large children’s centres (locally known as Family Hubs) are developing enhanced services for all residents of all ages, and extended opening hours.

The new larger children’s centres bring services into the community making them more inclusive and accessible. These include:

- Housing support
- Birth registration
- Expert advice on healthcare, parenting and family support
- Mental health drop-in sessions
- Adult learning courses and much more.



There are three Hubs in Blackpool – these are at Revoe School, Talbot and Brunswick and Grange Park Family Hubs. There are lots of locally delivered services available from locations around these Hubs within communities across Blackpool. If you are working with a family who are struggling financially, with emotional or mental health issues, have concerns about housing, want help to return to work or access training, the Family Hubs can help.

Betterstart – supporting families with young children

All Better Start services have been created with Blackpool parents, for Blackpool parents. They range from antenatal classes at the local Family Hubs and Children’s Centres, to services that help with weightier problems like addiction and anger in the home. Blackpool Better Start offer a variety of programmes and activities that help lighten the load and support families to raise happy, healthy children. Details of all the programmes available and the contact details can be found at <https://blackpoolbetterstart.org.uk/>

Families in Need

The team sits within Children’s Services and provides packages of whole family intervention utilising the troubled families’ outcomes framework. Working with a **strengths based** approach the team aims to target early support to families to improve outcomes and prevent escalation to statutory services. The **team work** in a tenacious and assertive way delivering evidence based interventions as part of a plan that is co-produced with the family. The team deliver a number of **evidence based** interventions and programmes including Triple P parenting, Video Interactive Guidance, Parents as Partners as well as practical support for building positive routines and boundaries and supporting families to positively and consistently access services.

For Baby's Sake

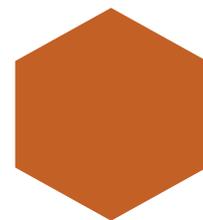
Funded by A Better Start Blackpool the team deliver an intensive **evidence based** programme for expectant parents who want to bring an end to domestic abuse and create the best possible start in life for their baby. The intervention addresses the cycle of domestic violence and abuse (including the impact of parents' own childhood experiences of abuse) and seeks to improve mental health and parent-child attachment outcomes.

Young people's substance misuse and sexual health services

Family practitioners from children's services provide the commissioned substance misuse and sexual health services. They will provide brief interventions and 1:1 therapeutic support for young people at risk of poor sexual health outcomes and for young people misusing substances.

Support for 16/17 Year Olds at Risk of Homelessness

Late adolescence can be a **challenging times** for families and sometimes, it can feel so stressful that there is a heightened risk of family breakdown and young people feel they can no longer live at home. Children's Services and Housing Options work together to support young people and their families where this is a risk and support families through mediation and provide practical support so that children can remain in the family home. Where this is not possible, there is a joint protocol to support a thorough assessment with young people so that they can make informed decisions about where they live and what support they need. Family Workers (NEET) provide support to homeless young people identified as part of a joint assessment, track young people not in education, training or employment and provide whole family support where necessary.



Making a Request for Support to Children's Services in Blackpool

New requests for support from Blackpool Council Children's Services should be made to the Blackpool Families Rock Advice and Support Hub. The Hub accommodates the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), which brings multi-agency professionals together to gather and share information when there are concerns. Unless there is a reason to dispense with consent (see Part Two, Consent) you should have the consent of the family to make a request for service.

The primary task of the Hub is to provide advice, support and triage/screen requests for support and phone calls to children services. It is our "one front door" to Children's Services and is designed to ensure that referrals are signposted to the appropriate service in line with the Levels of Need

Agencies requesting a service from the Request for Support Hub will use the online Request for Support referral form. The agency requesting the service will clearly show on the form whether or not the worries being raised is in relation to safeguarding at level 4 on the level of need or a request for support under Level 2 Universal Plus or Level 3 intensive needs.

You can access a request for support form [here](#).

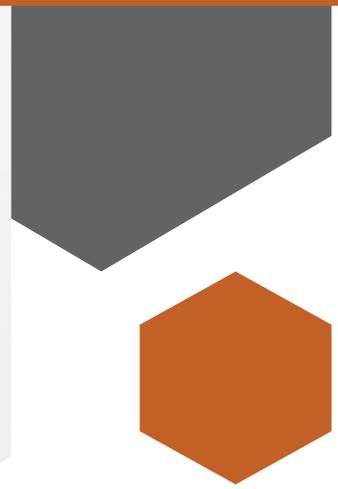
If you suspect or believe that a child is currently suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm or any form of mistreatment or abuse, you should report your concerns immediately by phone to the Blackpool Families Rock Request for Support Hub Tel: 01253 477299.

If there is an immediate safeguarding concern please call the police in the first instance Tel: 999

Principles – the information gathering in the hub should ensure that there is rigorous and effective practice to consider the right response to concerns about children and families. The right decisions should ensure a prompt response where there is need, and protect families from a formal statutory assessment process where the indicators of need for assessment and intervention are not met.

What do they do?

- **Receive and consider**
 - o When receiving a request for support from a partnership agency, the question that the team will seek to answer is "does this family need support to keep their children safe or meet their needs?"
 - o Receive information about children who have been reported missing from home or a care placement and ensure that clear protocols are followed.
 - o Manage requests for information and advice from other authorities and public bodies about families.
- **Gather information and make decisions in context**
 - o The team will bring together information including the known history from key organisations (the Police, Schools, and Health etc.)
 - o The team might arrange for someone to visit the family if they need more information to make their decision.



- **Decide on the next step**

- If the family need support – the team will consider whether the kind of support that is needed requires a statutory assessment or an Early Help Assessment.
- If the family need support due to worries about significant harm the request will be sent to the Assessment and Support team for them to consider a statutory assessment. Exceptions to this may arise for children who have been open to the Strengthening and Supporting Families team within the last 6 months, when they will return to this team to ensure consistency in relationships for the child; or for specialist assessments, e.g. by the children with complex needs team.
- If the family need support because they are struggling the team will look at sending the request to the Early Help Hub to agree which agency is best placed to offer an Early Help Assessment and support.
- There are Early Help specialists in the Hub who can work with families to identify local services in their community that can offer help, which could include support from children's services.
- If an assessment is not required, the family will be supported to access help directly and this will be recorded.
- If the family does not want support and there is no significant harm, this will be respected.

- **Determine what kind of assessment is appropriate**

- If a statutory assessment is required to support planning with the family, this might be through
 - A Child and Family Assessment (CAFA)
 - A Section 47 Enquiry
 - A specialist assessment (e.g. from the Supporting Children with Complex Needs team)

Why will they do this?

- So that decision about whether a family would benefit from and meet the threshold for intervention from social care are made in context and using the relevant information.
- To ensure that only those families who meet the threshold are subject to an assessment.
- To ensure that assessments from specialist teams are facilitated promptly.
- To make sure that information about children who are missing from home or care is followed up consistently.
- To make sure that there is a clear and professional response to requests for information from others.

We prioritise our referrals, working within local and national policies and procedures, and statutory obligations to promote the safety and wellbeing of service users and carers. We work with other partner agencies that can help in emergencies including police, health and housing. We respond to situations that require an immediate out of hours response:

This may happen if:

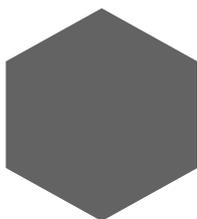
- A child or vulnerable adult is at risk from immediate, significant harm
- The carer of a vulnerable person is suddenly taken seriously ill and no-one else is able to provide care
- A person needs an urgent mental health act assessment
- Homelessness

Out of hours emergency services for children's and adults' social care

The Emergency Duty Team (EDT) operates a service outside office hours during the week and continuously over weekends and bank holidays. The team consists of experienced social care practitioners who are skilled in both adult and child safeguarding and provide the Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) role in response to mental health crisis.

Core teams in Children's Social Care

If you are working with children and families who are known to Social Care, it can be helpful to understand how the services are designed to support them, the names of different service areas and what they do.



Assessment and Support teams

Principles – The primary assessment stage will deliver an assessment which is in line with the Blackpool Families Rocks way of working and ensure families and children are well supported, including providing short term interventions that build assets, reduce harm and improve relationships during the period of assessment.

What will they do?

- Decide what kind of assessment is appropriate
- In cases where there has been significant harm, or it is suspected and the risk is current, there will be a section 47 inquiry.
- In cases where it has been determined that the family needs support there will be a Child and Family Assessment (CAFA)
- Assess families in line with the Blackpool Social Work Practice Model, make a meaningful plan with them and, if appropriate, organise support during the assessment process, reviewing progress with the family regularly.
- Coordinate the engagement of a wider partnership in the assessment and planning process, if required.
- Determine Next Steps
- If during the assessment it is clear the family are no longer in need of support, they do not need to progress further with Social Care interventions. The child might be closed to the service during, or after, the assessment or be stepped down to Early Help or Universal services. Clear and defensible decision making will be recorded by the Team Manager.

- If the family do need further support, this will usually start at the Child in Need (CiN) level. Exceptionally, cases will progress directly to the Child Protection/ Looked After level using clear transfer protocols.
- Where appropriate, to maximise effective relationships, work with families at Child in Need (CiN) level for up to three months using the Blackpool Social Work Practice Model to support long lasting and impactful change.

Why will they do this?

- So that the right assessments are carried out with the right families at the right time and there is a clear focus on the child and their needs.
- To ensure that families are supported through the assessment process to make changes which remove the necessity for statutory involvement.
- To reduce the number of unnecessary transfers of workers for children and families and ensure that when the plans for children and families are transferred, a clear and effective process is followed.
- To ensure that assessments from specialist teams are facilitated promptly.

Outcomes from this period of support may include 'stepping down' children and families to supportive services with clear decision making where, following assessment and short periods of support, the threshold for statutory intervention is no longer met. If this is not possible, and following an assessment statutory support is required, this will be managed alongside the family through one of the following –

- A Child in Need (CiN) plan
- A Child Protection (CP) plan or
- The child coming into our care.

Where this is the case, the family will usually be supported by the **Strengthening and Supporting Families Service**.

Strengthening and Supporting Families

Social workers in the Strengthening and Supporting Families teams work with families on longer term Child in Need and Child Protection Plans. They will develop a professional and productive relationship with the child and their family, using creative and evidence based practice and direct work to support positive change that families can maintain. Families will not be on plans longer than they need to be and there will be strong and visible ownership and reflective case supervision from managers.

When the threshold for statutory intervention is no longer met, and at the right time for the family, they will be stepped down to supportive services. There will be clear and transparent decision making to support this process. There will be active and effective participation in planning and service delivery from partner agencies that will be visible to the child and family. When, despite a high level of support and intervention, the children cannot be protected from significant harm within their immediate family, a clear and timely process for the child to become looked after will be followed. Placements for children who are looked after will usually be in a family environment and usually in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast.

What will they do?

- Get to know a family well and ensure time spent together is purposeful and has a direct benefit for the child(ren).
 - Support families to access support that helps them to improve their parenting capacity (housing, health etc.)
 - Challenge families to be aspirational for themselves and their children.
 - Work with the family to develop a purposeful plan that they can deliver.
- o In most cases, this plan should start at the lowest level and be focussed on achieving change.

- Reassess the balance of protective factors, assets and threats to the family using the model of social work practice on a regular basis and reflect on progress and achievements.
- o Families should not stay on plans 'just in case'. When the plan outcomes have been met, the case should step down.
 - o Cases should only escalate when the harm escalates

Why will they do this?

- So that the children and families are supported to stay together and achieve good outcomes.
- To ensure that families are supported with an effective plan that they can own that helps them to make changes which remove the necessity for statutory involvement.
- To reduce the number of unnecessary transfers of worker for children and families.

Families Together

Our commitment to strengthening families and improving relationships is focussed on enabling children to continue living within their family home safely and sustainably. Whether it's to limit the risk of children being moved into care, to address complex multiple needs across a family unit or to support the re-unification of families who have been separated, this service develops and delivers innovative and impactful solutions that improve the lives of children and families.

What will they do?

- Provide structured, evidence-based brief solution focused interventions that enable families to develop problem solving skills, build resilience and achieve positive, sustainable behaviour change.
- Provide a rapid response to children and families in crisis, enabling them to address and overcome the difficulties that have led to the family being at risk of breakdown, and prevent further escalation into care proceedings, working alongside the Families Together Meetings team.
- Hold Family Together meetings

Why will they do this?

- Because we believe that children and young people should be supported in their family home by their families wherever possible, and that if we can prevent family breakdown, we should.

If support for families is unsuccessful in mitigating or removing the harm for children, they may become looked after. Support for children who are Looked After is managed by the **Supporting our Children Team**.

Family Together Meetings

In Blackpool our Family Group Conferences are called Family Together Meetings. A Family Together Meeting is a family led decision making process, using the **evidence based** model of Family Group Conferencing. It is a transparent, culturally sensitive, solution focused and restorative process. It provides families with an opportunity to come together to make safe and achievable plans for their children. The Families Together process compliments our model of practice 'Blackpool Families Rock'. Family Group Conferencing principles are based on the fact that families have knowledge about themselves that professionals cannot easily match and are therefore able to make better decisions in relation to themselves. This empowering process enables them to make decisions about their children by giving them the opportunity, information and support to do so. Referrals are made via the allocated social worker who attends a consultation session with the Families Together Coordinator.

Awaken (Exploitation and Missing From Home Service)

Awaken is a team of social care, health and police professionals who work together to reduce the prevalence and impact of child exploitation in Blackpool. Awaken work with children who are being exploited (whether that is sexual or criminal exploitation, trafficking or modern day slavery), or are at risk of exploitation to make timely assessments of need and protection and to formulate supportive targeted plans and interventions to keep children safe. Plans are informed by the Child Exploitation 2 (CE2) Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Planning Tool, the multi-agency support plan is then incorporated into the child's relevant plan (child in need, child protection, our care plan, pathway plan or Children in the Care of other Local Authorities plan).

Partnership working and timely intelligence and information sharing is facilitated by the Daily Exploited and Missing (DEM) meeting in which professionals discuss day to day business along with the management of risk. Professionals from partner agencies contribute and participate in the meeting ensuring the right services have the right information at the right time to enable effective working together to safeguard children. The DEM considers all children who have been missing from home or care (MFH) overnight, including those currently missing, along with all relevant Police logs and intelligence. This enables all professionals across all services working with children in Blackpool to improve awareness of current hotspots; addresses of concern and what disruption is in place or needs to be progressed, considering criminal and civil orders.

The MFH process has strengthened significantly from the front door right through to Awaken, where return home interviews are coordinated across the service, including those for Blackpool children placed out of area. There is a clear process in place that professionals understand and complies with the current Pan-Lancashire Missing Protocol. Return home interviews are delivered in accordance with Blackpool Families Rock principles and information gleaned from interviews is used to map and understand local concerns.

What will they do?

- Work with children, young people and their families to reduce the risk of exploitation and disrupt the activities of people who seek to exploit children.
- Support professionals across Blackpool to identify and mitigate the risk of exploitation to children of exploitation

Why will they do this?

- So that Blackpool is a safe place for children and young people to thrive without being exploited

Supporting children with complex needs

The Social Workers in the Supporting Children with Complex Needs team work with children with Special Educational Needs, (EHC plan) and their families. The team work with Children and Young through all areas of the care planning process.

The team have an inclusive approach to children with complex needs and support them to access the same opportunities and experiences as other children.

The children supported by this service can have wide and varied needs and, as such, we try to provide support to families so that they can continue to support children in their own homes. The team support children and young people from the ages of 0-25, and there is a commitment towards supporting young people into adulthood through a robust transition planning.

If families need an increased level of support and advice in order to meet the increased needs of their children, we tailor our involvement to reflect this and we also support families through safeguarding processes if this becomes necessary. On occasion parents are no longer able to care for their child, and we identify alternative families and specialist settings to nurture, care for and assist children's development.

What will they do?

- Listen to children and families with complex needs and help them to access coordinated support for life at home, education and plan for their future.
- Work closely with a range of agencies including educational psychology, virtual school, health and voluntary agencies and develop holistic plans with families to ensure children and young people receive the right support at the right time, without feeling like they have to tell their story lots of times.

Why will they do this?

- So that children with complex needs have the same opportunities and aspirations as their peers.

Supporting Our Children

The team will work with children that the local authority is looking after and help them to find a stable place to live and make plans with them for their future. No child will be looked after by the local authority in Blackpool if there are more appropriate people in their lives and reuniting children with their families will always be explored and relationships with families maintained, wherever possible.

What will they do?

- Listen to and work with children who are not with their families and make sure that they are well cared for, in a comfortable environment that meets their needs.
- Listen to the needs and wishes of children and ensure that their voice is amplified and influences what happens while they are in our care.
- Maintain links with children's birth families and support reunification whenever possible.
- Strive to support children to find the right long outcome that provides stability and support.

Why will they do this?

- So that the children and families are supported to be together and achieve good outcomes.
- To ensure that children who are in our care are in stable and supportive placements that meet their needs.
- To make sure that our children feel listened to and feel that they are able to influence what happens to them and their family.
- To make sure that children who are leaving care are supported to develop their independence by people they trust and who step in to help when needed.

The "Together Team" will ensure that children who are away from home in the care of the local authority have time with their families that is rewarding, safe and supportive, wherever possible.

What will they do?

- Listen to and work with children who are not with their families to make sure that the time they spend together is positive.
- Support, through supervision, observation and objective reporting, the ongoing assessment and planning process for children and families.

Why will they do this?

- So that the children and families are supported to be together and achieve good outcomes.
- To make sure that our children feel listened to and feel that they are able to influence what happens to them and their family.

Leaving Care

The Leaving Care service supports 'Our Children and Young People' with care experience to achieve their potential, to prepare for independence and support them to return home, if feasible. All young people with Care Experience aged 15 ³/₄ and above receive support from their Personal Advisor to ensure a positive transition to adulthood. The team's priorities are to ensure that young people are living in suitable accommodation, engage in aspirational education, employment or training opportunities and are able to contribute positively within their local communities.

Fostering

The fostering team recruit and support families who can provide our children with a loving, safe and secure environment when they cannot be with their own families. They assess and support not only mainstream foster carers, but also undertake assessment of connected/ Special Guardianship carers.

What will they do?

- Hold recruitment events to provide advice and answer questions for those interested in helping Blackpool children.
- Support families through a robust assessment process to make sure that they are able to provide great care for children and young people.
- Work closely with other teams to ensure foster families are meeting the needs of children

Why will they do this?

- So that we can support our children and young people in family environments in and around Blackpool, whenever this is possible.
- So that foster families feel supported and valued for the great work they do.

Adoption

The adoption service for Blackpool is provided by the Regional Adoption for Blackpool and Lancashire. They support families who wish to adopt through a rigorous assessment and suitability process, and help children who cannot return to their own families find a home for life.

What will they do?

- Support families who wish to adopt to understand the process and make informed decisions.
- Support families through a robust assessment process to make sure that they are able to provide great lifelong care for children.
- Support children and families through a careful matching process

Why will they do this?

- So that we can support our children and young people to leave care at the right time with an adopted family.



Safeguarding Quality and Review service

Child Protection

The Child Protection Chairs work with children and families using the principles of Blackpool Families Rock. Child Protection Conferences are facilitated to support families and professionals to be able to discuss and understand the concerns that have triggered the conference, the impact of these on the children and to recognise and build on the strengths of the family. Depending on the decision of the conference, the Chairs will then co-produce with the family and professionals a purposeful and meaningful Child Protection or Child in Need plan, with a focus on securing positive outcomes for the children. Review Child Protection Conferences are timely and work with the family to consider the impact the plan has had on the children and whether they are safer.

To ensure that children will not be on plans for longer than they need to be, Child Protection Chairs review progress between conferences to prevent any drift and delay. Child Protection Chairs provide a consistent footprint on children's records, evidencing their work and the impact that this is having on the progression of the plan.

Our Children

The Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) are the champions of Our Children in Blackpool. They work with Our Children, their social workers and partner agencies to ensure that the care plan meets the individual child's needs and has high, achievable aspirations. The IROs oversee and review the plans through Our Children's reviews and review and quality assure the plan and support between meetings.

What will they do:

- Build a relationship with children and, where appropriate, families to encourage active participation in their meetings.
- Have high aspirations for the children and families of Blackpool, which is evident through the plans.
- Work with partner agencies to enable meaningful discussions within the conferences and reviews to resolve any barriers within partnership working for plans progressing.
- Maintain a consistent threshold of significant harm within child protection conferences and plans, supporting families' and partner agencies' understanding of the threshold.
- Review the effectiveness of child protection plans for children using Blackpool Families Rock principles
- Be the champion for Our Children and children on a child protection plans.
- If **necessary**, use the issues resolution procedure for children with children's social care and partner agencies to support the progression of plans.

WHAT OUR CHILDREN TELL US THEY NEED FROM US At the first concern (at school, at home, at nursery etc.)

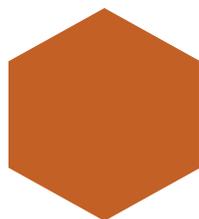
When someone notices that I am not thriving and thinks that I might need some additional support, they look at how they can help me and my family **before they tell everyone else**. I am asked about my thoughts and feelings and these are clearly recorded and taken account of. If my family don't want to engage in the assessment and planning process, this is respected and unless the risk factors are sufficient to indicate risk of significant harm, nothing more will happen.

When my family engages

The people working with me and my family understand consent and make sure that we feel in control of what is happening. **Information about me and my family will be shared only with those people who need it to know to help us**. If the risk indicators that are causing concern are applied to the Continuum of Need and do not meet the indicators for intervention from children's services, my family and I will be helped to access the right support from a universal service if we agree to it. The people working with me might seek advice and guidance about what services might be available in my area from different agencies – but they won't share all my personal details in doing so and those agencies won't create records about me.

No one we are working with will assume that if we choose not to engage, or if universal/early help services don't have a radical impact on the things that they were planned to support, the risk should be escalated.

When a plan is developed, it will be done with me and my family. My needs, and any concerns and personal/family assets are part of an assessment and planning process that is proportionate to the presenting issues and might not be shared with anyone else. If the plan requires the support of more than one agency, the right people from different agencies will work together to help my family produce a plan and are to achieve a positive outcome. Meetings will happen where and when all the right people can attend, including me and my family. I will understand what is happening and feel that I have some control. If I am at school or nursery they will be involved in developing and supporting the plan, and making sure my attendance is maintained as a priority.



ALL OF THIS WILL HAPPEN IN MY COMMUNITY AND WILL NOT INVOLVE SOCIAL CARE.

Prevention

If risk escalates (not if it just stays the same) and the continuum of need means that more complex and coordinated assessments and support are required, the people I am working with will share my assessment and plan with the Blackpool Families Rock Request for Support Hub. I will understand why this is happening, my family will be involved in the decision making, and the same people will work with us, but some people from the Assessment and Support Team will become involved to refresh my assessment and help to develop a new plan. I may become a Child in Need, and if so, my family and I will have the additional support of a social worker for as long as we need it.

Everything will be done with my family and I to make the most of the assets we have to meet any challenges and my welfare and wellbeing will be at the centre of all assessments, plans and outcome measures.

If I have experienced trauma this will be **recognised** and therapeutic support will form part of my plan.

If I am at risk of exploitation the people working with me will recognise the indicators and will talk to me about it. If they need expert help to make sure I get the support I need, then they will be able to get this for me. I will be supported to understand how I can take steps to protect myself and no matter how many times I say I do not need **help**, the offer will never go away.

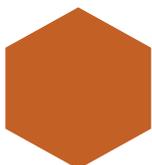
Support will be available from people who I am already working with as well as specialist groups.

The people working with me will help to reduce the risk of my becoming a victim of exploitation and support me to exit abuse by addressing the risk factors head on.

Safeguarding

If the risk escalates further, despite good planning and interventions, or if I am highlighted as suddenly at risk of serious harm and I become subject to a Child Protection Plan, there will be a structured introduction to a social worker. They will be a specialist in managing safeguarding concerns and will be working with me and my family to make a rapid decision about how the risks can be managed, without me becoming a child who is looked after.

If I have had support from Early Help services the people who have been working with me up until now won't just disappear, some will stay with me. If there is a risk that I cannot stay at home the team will work with me and my family to make a contingency plan, which will look to the family resources and assets first. Good 'edge of care' services will form part of either a management or contingency plan to make sure that no big decisions need to be made, if they can be prevented, in an emergency.



Because there is a risk to my wellbeing at home, there will be consideration by people who know me well about what kind of support I would need to access outside the home 'just in case'. My wider family network will be the first consideration and if discussions and assessments are required to make them part of my contingency plan these will be done before a crisis point is reached.

If there isn't a sound contingency plan within my family network that can be used, my social worker will work with the team who know what foster families are offering support in their home. If this does then need to be arranged, there is every chance that the placement will meet my needs and I will feel safe and secure.

If I have brothers or sisters, every effort will be made to keep us together if we become looked after unless this is unsafe for me or them.

Only if I have needs that cannot be met in a local family setting will a residential placement be part of my contingency plan. There will be a good quality range of provision available for my team to access on my behalf.

If I become looked after I will understand why and I will be part of the decisions about what happens next. A home will be found which is well matched to me and I will be supported to meet the people who I will be living with by people that I know and trust. I can expect that everyone who is working with me is making sure that I am supported to keep accessing education from the same place unless this is unsafe for me, and that there is a clear plan to keep everyone informed about what is happening. I will know what is happening and will be visited regularly to make sure that I am OK and to listen to me. Spending time with my family, if it is right for me, will be supported by skilled people in a setting which is welcoming, private and gives me time with my family.

If I do have to leave my family home for my safety, I will be part of considering what the long term arrangements for my care will be and plans to make this happen will start to be realised without delay.

If my family need to make some changes so that I can return home to live with them, there will be a clear, targeted plan of support to help them do this

If this is not possible, this will be explained to me.

I can expect that if and when my welfare is put before a court to make a decision about my long term future it is really clear what my thoughts and feelings are and that they are communicated. I can expect that the people working with me will respond quickly to what the court asks of them, and that plans to make permanent arrangements in my best interests are made within my timescales.

I will only be looked after for the length of time needed to find the right long term outcome for me. Whether it is adoption, Special Guardianship or returning home with my family everyone working with me will be making sure there is no delay in making it happen as soon as possible. When I do stop being looked after, this will be a supportive process and I will be helped to make sure the plan works.

While I am looked after I will feel well supported and have a stable and secure place to live. I will be able to keep going to school and access all of the opportunities available to my peers. No one will know I am looked after unless they need to know, or I chose to tell them.

If I am still looked after when I am approaching 16, a personal advisor will work with me to make sure I have all the skills and opportunities any child approaching adulthood has. They will help me find the right route to independence, whether this is to stay in education, start an apprenticeship or get a job, and find the right housing offer for me. They will stay in touch with me and help me whenever I need it. I will be able to access the same support as any other young person and I will be helped to develop responsibility for my actions, money and belongings.

A child with additional needs

If my family, or someone working with me, believes that I would benefit from an assessment for support because I have a long term health problem or disability which makes accessing every day activities challenging then I will be assessed by someone who is part of a team who work with children with additional needs. My health, education and social support will be considered in the round and my parents and siblings will be included in the assessment.

If I need support me and my family will be in control of how it is delivered, and any eligibility criteria will be explained clearly to us. I will be treated fairly, and supported to achieve the same outcomes as my peers.

Plans will change regularly as I grow, and will make sure that there is a focus on independence and engagement with my community. Different professionals who are working with me will work together to make sure that there are no contradictions in my plans or outcomes.

As I approach adulthood I will be supported to understand the different support options and responsibilities that I will have, so that I can make choices at the right time for me and transition away from services which are designed for children when it is right to do so.

If there are safeguarding concerns about me, the people working with me will continue to do so, but the specific planning required to keep me safe may be overseen by a specialist social work team.

NOTES



WORKING WELL WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN LANCASHIRE

**Including, Blackburn with Darwen,
Blackpool and Lancashire Local
Authorities**

Blackpool Part Three – Information about
Services and Support in Blackpool