

## **Fostering Service Quarter 4 Report**

1<sup>st</sup> January - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020

### **Executive Report**



Quarterly reports to the Executive Board are a requirement of the Fostering Service to meet Standard 25.7 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. They are a key part of the documentation considered by OFSTED when conducting a Service inspection.

## **Introduction**

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

- The best foster carers are recruited for our children;
- All placements receive high quality support, effectively targeted according to need;
- Children are found permanent families without delay;
- Children and young people in foster care achieve the best possible outcomes.

## **Children in Our Care in Foster Care**

The period from Quarter 3 to Quarter 4 2019/20 saw a slight increase with 13 children becoming Children in our Care. The annual figures show an increase in children in our care in Quarter 4, but 2019/20 has seen a consistent reduction in children in our care in each Quarter, evidenced in the comparison chart below. There have been a number of Mother and Baby placement requests in Quarter 4, which have been the outcome of Care Proceedings due to Court decision making. There have been no new Agency placements made since October 2019, which is a huge success given the limitations of identifying placements on a National scale not just at a local level. Challenges remain over this twelve month period for the Service to meet demand for foster placements, both in house and Agency. There has been a 58% increase in the number of children and young people placed in family and friends foster placements over the past year, the highest number of such placements at 68 in Quarter 4 2020 in comparison to the last three years and this has enabled children to remain within their birth families and with connected carers.

## **Comparison Figures**

	<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2017</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2018</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2019</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2020</b>
<b>Number of Children in our Care</b>	375	377	407	<b>412</b>
<b>Number of CioC in Foster Care</b>	248 (66%)	215 (57%)	262 (64%)	<b>270 (65%)</b>
<b>Number of children in in-house foster care placements</b>	153 (41%)	118 (31%)	151 (37%)	<b>142 (34%)</b>
<b>Number of children in family and friends foster care</b>	49 (13%)	48 (13%)	43 (10%)	<b>68 (16.5%)</b>
<b>Number of children in independent fostering agency placements</b>	46 (12%)	49 (13%)	68 (16%)	<b>60 (14.5%)</b>

## **Comparison figures per Quarter for 2019/20**

	<b>Q1 June 2019</b>	<b>Q2 Sept 2019</b>	<b>Q3 Dec 2019</b>	<b>Q4 March 20</b>
<b>Number of Children in our Care</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>412</b>
<b>Number of CioC in Foster Care</b>	264 (64.7%)	269 (66.7%)	261 (65.4%)	270 (65%)

<b>Number of children in in-house foster care placements</b>	148 (36%)	143 (35.4%)	131 (32.8%)	142 (34%)
<b>Number of children in family and friends foster care</b>	50 (12%)	58 (14.3%)	67 (16.8%)	68 (16.5%)
<b>Number of children in independent fostering agency placements</b>	66 (16.2%)	68 (16.8%)	63 (15.8%)	60 (14.5%)

The gender ratio of children in our care remains higher for males, particularly in the 11 to 15 years age group, which has been a consistent pattern. The teenage cohort remain the most challenging to place and the most costly in terms of placement commissioning. Blackburn with Darwen's short break offer alongside the therapeutic support from Revive, is key to identifying, sustaining and supporting foster placements for this group of young people if residential provision is to be prevented. However, for some young people in the 11-15 years age bracket, a residential placement is the preferable option for example those with more complex emotional and mental health/therapeutic needs, or children with complex health needs and disabilities.

#### **Gender and Age Comparison as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**

	<b>All children in foster care</b>	<b>In-house</b>	<b>Family and Friends</b>	<b>Independent Fostering Agency</b>
<b>Male</b>	145	81	31	33
<b>Female</b>	125	61	37	27

<b>Age</b>	<b>All children in foster care</b>	<b>In-house</b>	<b>Family and Friends</b>	<b>Independent Fostering Agency</b>
<b>0 to 2</b>	41	22	14	5
<b>3 to 6 years</b>	50	18	<b>20</b>	12
<b>7 to 10 years</b>	50	24	11	15
<b>11 to 15 years</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>57</b>	17	<b>21</b>
<b>16 years plus</b>	34	21	6	7
<b>Total</b>	270	142	68	60

The largest group of young people in Foster Care at the end of Quarter 4 is amongst males aged 11-15 years, and this age group is a challenge to the Service when identifying in-house and Independent Foster Care placements. It is however positive for Blackburn with Darwen that 57 out of 95 young people in this harder to place group are in our own in-house foster placements.

#### Ethnicity of Children in our Care:

Of the 412 children and young people in our care, 332 were from a white, British ethnic origin. There were 48 from the Asian ethnic group, 1 from a black ethnic origin, 18 mixed and 13 recorded as 'other' in terms of their ethnic origin according to Government recommended grouping definitions.

#### Children with disabilities in Foster Care

There are 7 children and young people in our care who have disabilities. This is a low figure in comparison to our North West Local Authority neighbours, and is largely due to the supportive and preventative packages that Blackburn with Darwen provide for children with complex needs and disabilities. Short breaks, both commissioned and our 'Local Offer', assist families to support their children within their own home as opposed to requiring alternative accommodation.

It remains a continual challenge for the Service to identify in-house or Independent Fostering Agency placements for children with disabilities specifically; largely due to the more complex needs of young people being referred for placements but also the practical and environmental factors impacting upon potential Foster Carers, where adaptations to accommodate the young person may be required. Foster carers are provided with the relevant training and support to meet the specific needs of the child they have in placement and are able to access support from the Children with Disabilities Team with aids and adaptations, Disability Links registration and information and advice where needed. Children with disabilities primarily are placed in residential placements out of Borough.

### **Placement Stability and Sufficiency.**

The Department uses a definition of placement stability based on 3 or more placements in a 12 month period that is calculated on a cumulative basis over the year and is demonstrated in the table below with 2018/19 being the comparable Authority average at 9.6%:

Performance Over time	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Performance to Date	Comparable Authority Average 2018/19	North West Average 2018/19	England Average 2018/19
% Stability of LAC placements	6.4%	8.8%	11.4%	13.1%	9.6%	10.4%	10.4%

Blackburn with Darwen is slightly higher than the North West average of 10.4% in terms of placement stability and reasons to explain this were summarised following an audit of children who had three placements or more within a two year period. The age group with the highest number of placement moves is the 0-2 year group and 11-15 year group. Babies removed at birth, then placed in parent and child assessment units, progressing to a permanence plan of SGO or Adoption demonstrates how 3 placements in a short time frame could be achieved. The teenage cohort experience a higher level of placement moves due to emotional instability, being placed out of area for example, or not investing in their placement following their experience of placement disruption early in their journey in the care system. This is not an issue specific to the Fostering Service in Blackburn with Darwen, but reflects instability for all types of placements and is a national challenge certainly in terms of placement sufficiency.

The placement framework is competitive for both fostering and residential provision, with Local Authorities competing for placements and both foster carers and Independent providers being able to 'take their pick' of referrals which is a challenge, especially when placing children who are in their teenage years with significant emotional or mental health needs.

Blackburn with Darwen have been involved in the DfE fostering Seed-funding partnership with Blackpool, Cumbria and Lancashire (Consortium known as BBCL), a partnership working together with Outcomes UK to improve commissioning and sufficiency planning. This is a feasibility study aimed at improving the fostering offer by looking at collaborative approaches to recruitment, training and commissioning. The Market Position Statement outlined that the number of children beginning to be looked after each year in BwD has increased from 93 in 2015 to 171 children in 2019, however the number of children in Local Authority Care stabilised in the first 6 months of 2019-2020. The Consortium of BBCL are working towards new ways of working such as the possibility of a BBCL framework, and Exchange Days to promote children and young people requiring long term foster placements and good quality matching processes.

Disruption meetings are held in order to identify learning and inform future planning for any child whose placement has been disrupted. These meetings are chaired by an Officer from Quality and Assurance.

### **Matching and Ethnicity**

In Quarter 4 there have been six transracial placements. These have been 4 White British children placed with Asian foster carers, and likewise 2 Asian heritage children with White British foster carers. Cultural and dietary needs have been discussed at the point of placement and have not proven problematic.

### **Engagement with Children & Young People and the VOICE Group**

The VOICE group recommenced in February 2020 and was facilitated by the Participation Officer for both the Senior and Junior groups held at Blackburn Youth Zone. There continue to be Participation Champions for children in our care and care leavers, from each area of Service. Participation Champion Network Meetings take place every Quarter with the aim to deliver the ideas and aspirations of young people within each Service area.

### **Feedback from Children in Foster Care:**

The views of children and young people are gathered via:

- The Voice Group
- Participation in the recruitment of staff/interview process
- Support Groups for Children/Events
- Foster Carer Annual Review Feedback
- Feedback from Social Workers/Supervising Social Workers
- The Investors in Children process

The following comments have been made by children and young people in Foster Care:

'I love living with my foster carers they make me feel included'

'I love going on holiday to the caravan and to the beach'

'She talks to me when I feel sad about my Mum'

'I wish I could stay up later at bedtime!'

'I am loved and cared for'

### **Social Workers said;**

'The feedback about the young person as part of the Annual Review was so thoughtful'

'They go over and above the extra mile for her'

### **Birth Children of Foster Carers said:**

'She looks up to me; I like to help her with homework when she gets stuck'

'He can be a bit annoying sometimes, but we get along'

### **Promoting Children's Health, Emotional Development, Education and Leisure:**

Foster families are provided with pre and post-approval preparation and training on the importance and availability of health, education and leisure services to enable them to help children achieve their potential and enhance their emotional wellbeing.

Looked After Children and young people are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities in which they can succeed and are supported in achieving better outcomes. All local Looked After Children and care leavers are provided with a Leisure Membership Card which enables them to access free sport and leisure activities within the Borough. Foster carers are also provided with a MAX Card, which offers heavily discounted access to a range of leisure parks and facilities around the North West. This is funded by the Fostering Service in partnership with

the Foster Carer Association. A new initiative is the discounted corporate gym membership offer being extended to foster carer households, promoting their physical and emotional health needs.

Children in foster care have regular medicals at the statutory frequency appropriate for their age. There is a Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, who takes an active role in following up health issues and assisting with health promotion work. Foster carers have a Health Passport for each child in their care, which is a record of all of the child's health details.

In relation to emotional wellbeing, Looked After Children have access to Clinical Psychology and related services through REVIVE and the East Lancashire Child and Adolescent Service (ELCAS) also known as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The REVIVE Service is a partnership between Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Children's Services and East Lancashire Hospital Trust to provide emotional health support for children known to the Local Authority and is based at Duke Street. REVIVE delivers consultation to Foster Carers, training and direct intervention on emotional health and well-being.

Revive saw some changes in staffing over Quarter 3 and 4, with the Clinical Psychologist leaving for pastures new, and the recruitment of a new Clinical Psychologist who will join the Team in August 2020. The Service will also say farewell to their Play Therapist in July 2020, but the post will be advertised. The introduction of new staff in the coming months is an opportunity to review and re-launch the service to ensure as many children and young people in our care as possible can receive consultation and direct work around their emotional well being and foster carers will continue to be supported with placement stability. There were 25 new referrals made to the REVIVE Service in Quarter 4, with 10 being Looked after Children.

In line with Standard 8 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, the Department implements a written Education Policy prepared in partnership with the Virtual Head Teacher and the Education Manager for Children in Our Care. The Virtual Head's role is to ensure that the educational needs of all Children in our Care are being met and that levels of achievement and aspiration among our children and young people are raised. Termly briefings are held with a group of social workers, managers and Designated Teachers and Head Teachers to consider ways to improve achievement and attainment.

The Pupil Premium allowance, previously paid to schools to support Children in our Care to achieve in school, is managed by the Virtual Head who has a system in place to administer and ensure the money is spent appropriately to further their educational achievements. The Virtual Head quality assures all Personal Education Plans (PEPs).

The Education Manager, where necessary, actively intervenes with Schools to promote the needs of children in Foster Care. As part of the preparation and assessment process and through the Foster Carer Agreement, Foster Carers are set a clear expectation that they will promote and support children's educational attainment. The ways in which Foster Carers meet children's educational needs are monitored through the foster carer review process and supervisory visits. Foster Carers regularly receive training 'Promoting Educational Achievement for Children in Our Care'.

Quarter 4 saw the annual extra tuition provided at the Kip McGrath Centre being well accessed, mainly by children in our care in Years 6, 10 and 11. School attendance overall continues to be very good with average attendance at 94%.

### **Transitions**

Children and young people in foster care are supported to make a positive transition to adult life and foster carers attend training on 'Transitions' which focuses on their role in developing young people's skills to live independently as they progress towards adulthood. The Children in Our Care Team and the Fostering Team encourage carers and young people to consider 'staying put' and the Leaving Care Service also delivers courses for foster carers to develop their understanding of this. The training has been positively evaluated by carers and most indicate a willingness to work with 'staying put'. The Leaving Care Service attends Reviews to discuss Staying Put with foster carers for young people aged 17 years.

The Leaving Care Service has the Investing in Children Award, and is also working hard to encourage and support care leavers into apprenticeships. There are currently several young people on apprenticeships across the workforce.

The Leaving Care Service has achieved more Staying put placements this year overall, and continues to offer supported lodgings and supported accommodation which increases choice for young people leaving foster care and residential placements in favour of semi-independence. Participation levels continue to be good with young people being involved in interviewing and various training programmes.

The Leaving Care Service has eight advisors. Three advisors are working with the 16 to 18 year old age group resolving issues with accommodation, education, training and employment and staying put. Five advisors are providing advice and guidance to the 21 to 25 year old age group.

Children and young people with disabilities who are in our care are also referred at 17 years of age to Adult Social Care for an assessment of need, and there is a period of twelve months for planning to be undertaken around post 18 years provision.

### **Care Planning**

The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015 provide a revised definition of 'permanence' for Children Looked After, including for the first time the definition of a long term foster placement. The responsibilities of the Local Authority in assessing the ability of the foster carer to meet the needs of the child now and in the future, and identifying any support services needed to achieve this are also set out. Local Authorities are required to achieve long term matching within reasonable timescales. The Permanence Tracking Panel meets frequently to discuss and monitor progress for Care Orders at Home, Special Guardianship Orders, Section 20 Accommodated and both non-matched and long term matched placements. There is an emphasis given to achieving a formal matching decision for those children and young people in long-term foster placements, to promote their emotional stability and achieve a permanence plan.

### **The Fostering Service**

The Fostering Service is structured into three teams including a Permanence Team, which was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018. The Permanence Team completes all assessments of family members/connected persons from Child Protection to Public Law Outline pre-proceedings and Care Proceedings for which there were 105 assessments in Quarter 4. There are 5 full time Social Workers and one working four days per week. The Special Guardianship Social Worker is part time and continues to experience capacity issues. One Social Worker commenced maternity leave in Quarter 4 and this post is being covered by an Agency worker.

The Permanence Team has been successful in ensuring that family members/connected persons are assessed within PLO pre-proceedings and court timescales avoiding delay, but also that the appropriate Social Workers are completing the assessments with the most appropriate skill base, knowledge and experience. The number of assessments within the Team is consistently high in terms of caseloads and many are long distance.

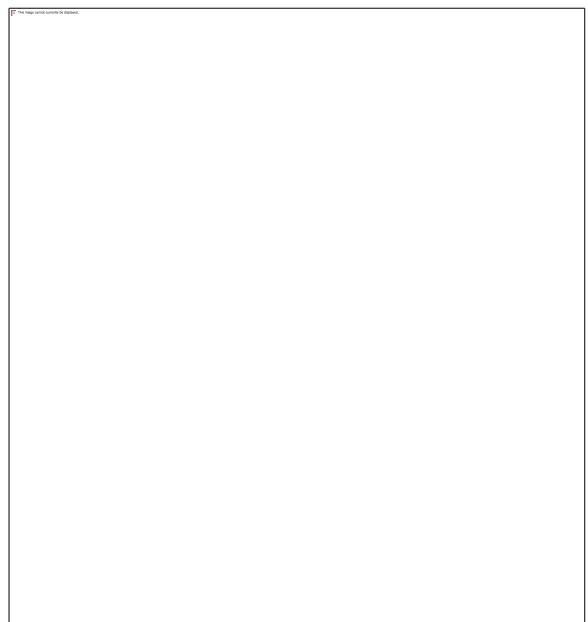
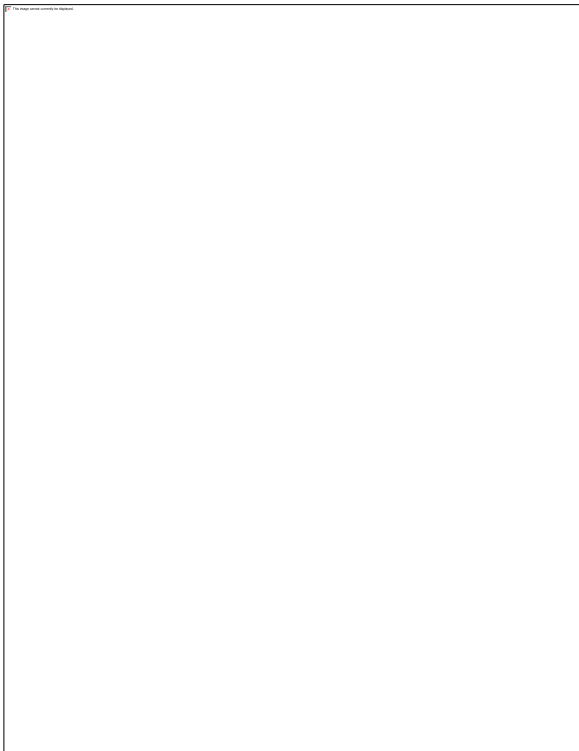
There are two mainstream Fostering Teams in the Service, with Quarter 4 seeing one of the Team Managers taking flexible retirement, moving into a reduced hours post in the Leaving Care Team. The Service is under review and restructure, with a proposal to disestablish one Team Manager post in favour of a Deputy Manager role working alongside just one Team Manager for both teams. The Fostering Support Officer also moved on from her post this Quarter, and the role is being recruited to with the new staff member commencing in Quarter 1 of 2020. There will also be a new role of Deputy Team Manager in the Permanence Team commencing at the same time. The objective is to achieve more of a 'one team' approach within the mainstream side of the service.

## Foster Carer Recruitment

The recruitment of mainstream foster carers was an increasing challenge over 2019/20 and this has led to looking at new ideas in terms of recruitment campaigns. There were only 5 mainstream fostering households approved this year, but this has been addressed in the following ways:

- Review of foster carer pay and support offer with a 2% pay increase this year
- Proposal to offer a foster carer retainer fee for up to a month for those without placements
- matching the corporate gym membership offer for all foster carers
- increasing our spend on Google ads
- plan for Quarter 1 2020 advertising on Heart North West Radio for 12 months

Quarter 4 also saw the new bus stop recruitment campaign with eye-catching posters advertising our fostering offer and highlighting our need for foster carers for teenagers. It is hoped that this would attract interest to be seen in Quarter 1 onwards in our enquiries.



The past 12 months saw leaflet drops in the Borough, online advertising, a boost to our online advertising and making the BwD foster carer support and finance package as appealing as possible despite these challenging times.

The low number of mainstream approvals for 2019/20 will place a focus on having a more successful 2020/21 and combining digital marketing and recruitment alongside some more traditional methods of advertising. From discussions with other North West Local Authorities, recruitment has been a significant challenge over the past months. Despite receiving enquiries, it has been challenging to convert these into approvals, due to the level of competition.



The 'Fostering Front Door' offer from the You Can Foster pilot involving North West Authorities came to an end at short notice during Quarter 4, and resulted in the loss of a Social Work presence as the first point of contact at enquiry stage. While losing You Can Foster involvement was not significant, the loss of the 'Front Door' offer was a challenge. Long-term plans are being considered, and at present the Fostering Service are managing enquiries and registrations directly.

### **Foster Carer Retention**

The Recruitment and Retention Strategy has been amended, and uploaded to the Council website. In Quarter 4, there were 12 resignations, however 9 of those were family and friends foster carers who had successfully achieved a Special Guardianship Order for the child in their care. Two foster carers took retirement and one fostering household resigned and is considering a move to an Independent Fostering Agency. The support 'package' for foster carers is something that is regularly reviewed in order to attempt to be as competitive with other Authorities and IFAs as we possibly can be.

### **Short Breaks Fostering**

There are 12 approved short break carers in Quarter 4 with one resignation, some of which are providing short term/long-term placements alongside providing short break support. Short break placements have provided stability for children and young people who have had a variety of additional needs, and have provided emergency short breaks, support for mainstream placements, unaccompanied asylum seekers and planned short breaks. A short break carer support group session was held on 10<sup>th</sup> March prior to Covid-19 restrictions, and as of 23<sup>rd</sup> March, all short breaks were suspended due to the pandemic. This will continue to be reviewed in line with Central Government guidance.

### **Foster Carer Training**

Quarter 4 saw many foster carers completing online training, with First Aid held in January as a classroom based course and 8 foster carers attended. Two further training dates, which were classroom based, planned for the end of March were postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions.

### **Fostering Panel**

Over the past 12 months, there has been a drive to recruit more panel members which has been a success when evaluated at the end of Quarter 4. There are professionals from various services and backgrounds, alongside independent members. The Panel continues to be chaired by an Independent Social Worker/Manager as part of a commission with Adoption Matters. The Panel meets once, sometimes twice monthly. Quarter 4 saw no mainstream approvals but 5 family and friends foster carers were approved. The Panel Advisor role continues to be undertaken by the Fostering Team Manager.

### **Review Panel**

Annual Review Panel saw 27 reviews in Quarter 4, and towards the end of March these were held without Panel attendance for foster carers due to Covid. The Review Panel will resume once the restrictions are eased. The Panel has been attended by the Service Lead and Team Manager for the latter period of Quarter 4. Foster Carers are asked to provide their feedback to be considered as part of their review paperwork.

### **Complaints**

During Quarter 4 there has been one complaint received from a fostering household in respect of changes to their Supervising Social Worker due to sickness within the Service. This complaint was taken to Stage 1 and investigated by the Service Lead. The number of complaints over the year as a whole is 2 in total.

### **Compliments**

Quarter 4 saw 1 compliment from a birth parent regarding the care and presentation of her children while placed with their foster carers. There have been 11 compliments received in the year overall.

### **Allegations**

There were no allegations received in Quarter 4, with the figure for the year in total being 4.

The LADO is consulted in line with safeguarding procedures for allegations in respect of foster carers.

### **Specific Incidents and Restraints**

In Quarter 4 there were 9 incident reports received, with a total of 43 for the year overall.

### **Serious Illness and Accidents**

Quarter 4 saw 3 reports of accidents with Hospital admissions, consisting of a car accident, and two young people with suspected fractures which following x-ray were no cause for concern. The year saw 26 illness and accident reports overall.

### **Missing from Home**

Quarter 4 saw 9 reports involving five young people. The year overall saw a total of 32 missing from home reports and the procedure is to report these to the Engage Team. Triggers for the young people are identified and return home interviews when undertaken can assist with this.

### **Bullying:**

Quarter 4 saw one report of bullying involving a young person attending youth club and this was reported and dealt with accordingly. There have been 2 reports of bullying over the year as a whole.

### **Exemptions**

There has been one continued exemption which has enabled a sibling group of 3 to remain together in placement and this was still in place at the end of Quarter 4. There have been 4 exemptions for the year overall. Additional support considerations are made at the point of placement should this be required for foster carers caring for over three children.

### **Engagement with Foster Carers**

Blackburn with Darwen has a Foster Carer Association (FCA), which meets regularly and has an Elected Committee. Members of the Committee meet the DCS, senior managers and the Executive Member on a quarterly basis. The Chair of the FCA sits on the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group. The FCA has its own website, which has been increasingly used to communicate messages and news.

At the request of foster carers, membership of the Fostering Network moved to Foster Talk that provides similar services to support foster carers. Foster carers also have access to independent support commissioned from the Fostering Network to provide support and advocacy services in the event of complaints or allegations.

A small group of foster carers are recruitment champions, who help drive recruitment forward and are involved with planning events, Skills to Foster preparation training, and manning recruitment stands and events.

The Fostering Service holds a Foster Carer Forum every six months. This is planned for April 2020 but will now be postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions and a virtual forum will be considered.

## **Budget**

Current placement pressures in-house and across the independent fostering agency landscape continue to place the commissioning budget under pressure, as increasingly adolescents and children with disabilities are placed in costly residential placements due to the lack of foster placements across the region and at a national level. It is however positive to note that from October 2019 to the end of Quarter 4, an Agency Residential placement has not been made. The commissioned placements budget remains a concern due to demand and costly placements both in the independent residential and fostering sectors. In 2019/2020 the commissioned placements budget saw expenditure of £8.753m against an annual budget of £4.739m, an overspend of £4.014m.

## **Commissioned Placements**

In Quarter 4, the pressure and challenge upon the Local Authority to identify foster placements and in-house residential provision has remained significant. The requests for commissioned residential placements in Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 have seen some reduction. The Service continues to be as creative as possible and is offering short breaks to maintain existing placements and prevent disruption where this is achievable, albeit the impact of Covid-19 will be reported regarding the impact upon placement stability and sufficiency in Quarter 1 2020.

There is an evident peak in children and young people placed at home on Care Orders or Supervision Orders increasing from 62 in Quarter 1 to 70 in Quarter 4. Requests for parent and child placements and assessment units, placing sibling groups and the age group 11-15 years, remain the most challenging for the Service. For the latter part of 2019/20, Lytham Road Residential Children's Home (BwD) has remained at full capacity with 4 young people in placement consistently. The newly commissioned Nightsafe at St Silas has also been well utilised for post 16 years young people and the referral process is overseen by Leaving Care Manager and the Commissioning Panel.

<b>End of Quarter 1 2019</b>	<b>End of Quarter 2 2019</b>	<b>End of Quarter 3 2019</b>	<b>End of Quarter 4 2020</b>
Independent Agency Residential Placements 25	Independent Agency Residential Placements 28	Independent Agency Residential Placements 28	Independent Agency Residential Placements 24
Independent Agency Fostering Placements 67	Independent Agency Fostering Placements 68	Independent Agency Fostering Placements 68	Independent Agency Fostering Placements 60

## **New Service Priorities for 2020/21:**

1. The Service has a target of recruiting 20 new fostering households over the coming year.
2. A Team Development Day will be an annual event to value and support the staff, and ensure specific training and development areas are actioned. This will coincide with two new Deputy Team Managers commencing their new roles in September 2020.
3. The Revive Team will be reviewed in terms of staffing, workload capacity and developing a review process for evidencing that outcomes are being met and the impact of their therapeutic involvement. This will enable the Service to manage the referrals and to identify when their involvement can cease

as outcomes and objectives are met. The Revive Team will also see two new Psychologists and a Play Therapist recruited into existing posts.

4. Foster Carer training will continue to develop, led by a Fostering Team/Deputy Manager. The Service will focus on the development of online training in the current climate, and the overall training offer in line with Foster Carer requests such as mental health/self-harm and transgender awareness. The objective is to increase engagement and attendance. Nurturing Attachment sessions will be delivered by Revive with the aim to enable all newly approved foster carers to access this early in their fostering journey.

5. The management team will continue to monitor compliance with Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards and will increase the number of case file audits completed each month to support this.

6. Placement sufficiency and stability will continue to be a key area of focus, with areas for learning taken from disruption meetings and case auditing. Blackburn with Darwen are part of the cohort of North West Authorities' collaboration for the DfE SEED funding and research project, which looks specifically at recruitment, retention, sufficiency and producing a Market Position Statement. The aim is to form a new local commissioning framework and hold regular Exchange Days to focus on long term matching opportunities.

7. The Fostering Front Door/You Can Foster has now ceased. The interim plan has seen this service brought back in-house and managed via the Fostering Service and Business Support. A review of the duty/placement referral system and fostering commissioning process will be undertaken.

8. Recruitment will focus upon emergency and short break foster carers, to respond to the increasing demand for urgent placements for teenagers. This will also enable a support package of short breaks to be considered for those young people who are more challenging to place and/or in fragile placements currently and will seek to assist with placement stability alongside our Revive offer.

Pamela Price  
Service Lead, Placements