

## Fostering Quarter 3 Report

October-December 2023

### 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**

Below outlines the continued development across the Fostering Service through the Fostering Service Transformation Plan. The plan includes,

1. **Digital Transformation Programme** - is ongoing. The referral form for all requests for fostering, short breaks and residential placements is near completion, providing a more seamless approach to searching for placements for our children and young people, reducing delay and duplication of work for practitioners. Foster carer recording logs are now digital, enabling logs to be stored securely and providing an easier way for foster carers to record the daily events in a child's life. All forms for foster carers are now digital and are easily accessed through a digital platform which foster carers can easily access. Foster carers report through feedback that they find the digital forms easy to use and reduce delay. The focus for the next quarter is implementing an update to Liquid Logic which will provide new assessment pathways for social workers and team managers when completing assessments, to reduce delay during this process and ensure data can be reported on more easily. There are also plans to work with the Digital Transformation Team to update the foster carer training. Two Meet and Greet events have taken place in December 2023 to gather feedback from foster carers and kinship carers on what they believe their training should include as well as access to training, to co-produce an updated training plan for 2024.

2. **Recruitment of Foster Carers and Links with Communication Team**- BWD is now the lead local authority in the Northwest Recruitment Hub with the other local authority's (LA's) being Lancashire County Council, Blackpool Council, Westmorland and Furness and Cumberland Council. The aim of the Recruitment Hub will be to undertake all recruitment activity across all the LA's and offer the seamless transition of those enquiries into respective LAs who will undertake the assessment of potential foster carers. The aim is to pool resources, reduce competition, encourage local homes for local children and young people and ensure that the recruitment of foster carers is a priority and is responsive to need. Staff will have the skills and resources across multiple roles offering a consistent, warm, and welcoming approach to the start of their journey. The Recruitment Hub is based on the Stable Homes Built on Love, Social Work Reform. With the DFE recognising the significant issues nationally around foster carer recruitment and retention.

Our Hub is currently in the implementation stage and working groups across the LA's are taking place to consider all areas to co-produce the development of the hub. The Programme Manager is in post and is working with the DFE Lead in these areas. Over the next quarter recruitment to the roles within the hub will take place and an implementation plan will be co-produced across all the LA's.

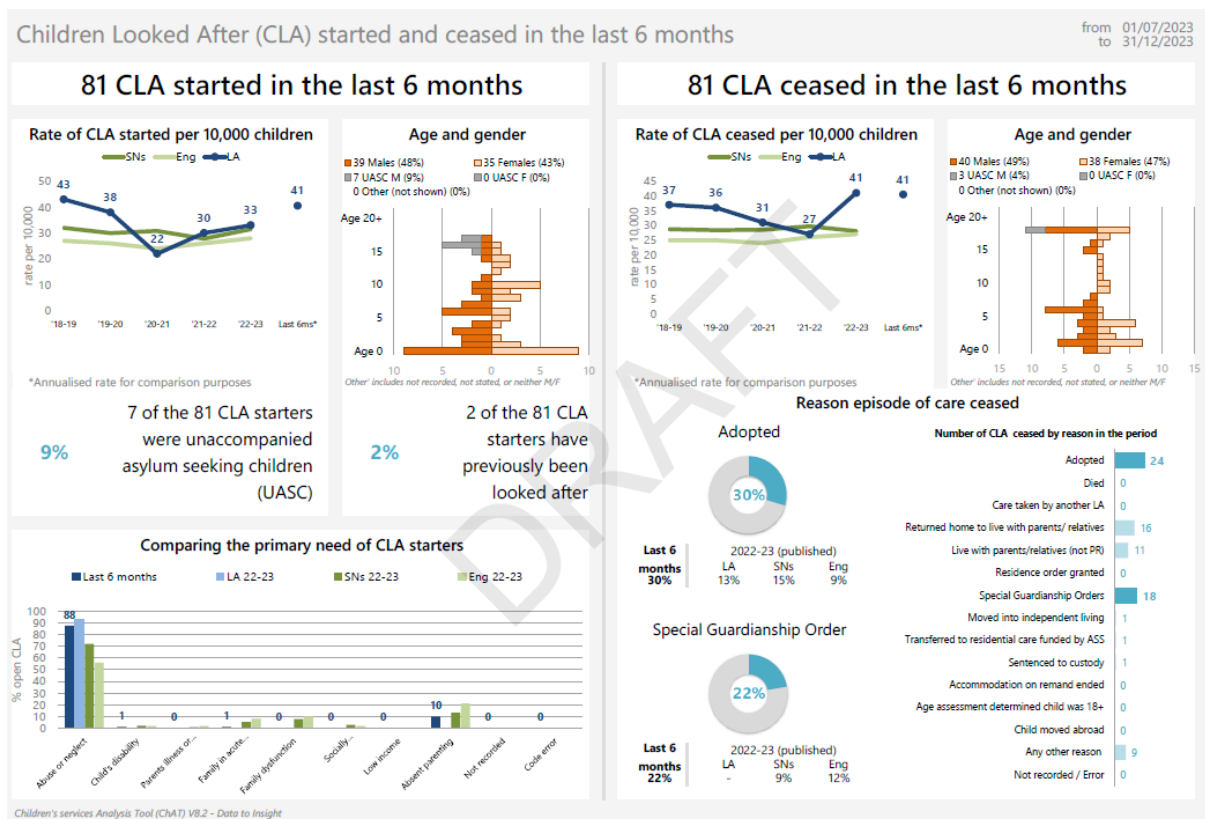
3. **Retention of Foster Carers/Allowances**- The government has just published guidance around national increases in foster carer allowances. During the next quarter work with our finance team will take place to consider this in line with our foster carer payments. There is currently a review of parent and child allowances being undertaken.

4. **Commissioning and Contract**- the Fostering Front Door's focus remains on ensuring that when we cannot place our children in in-house placements, that the BBCL (Blackpool, Blackburn, Westmorland and Furness and Cumberland, and Lancashire) Framework is utilised to ensure our children are placed locally and with placements that are identified early with foster carers that are experienced, meet the national minimum standards and can offer stability and permanence.

5. **Workforce Development-** There has been several recruitments to vacant posts over the last quarter which has provided more stability across the fostering service. TRACK values remain a priority with workforce development and retention.

**Children in our Care and Fostering Overview:**

In the last 6 months the number of children becoming cared for by the local authority is 81 however, we have seen 81 children leave the care of the Local authority. The number of children being cared for in Blackburn with Darwen is above the average nationally. The main reason for these children becoming looked after is due to abuse or neglect. There has been an increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.



**Placement Stability**

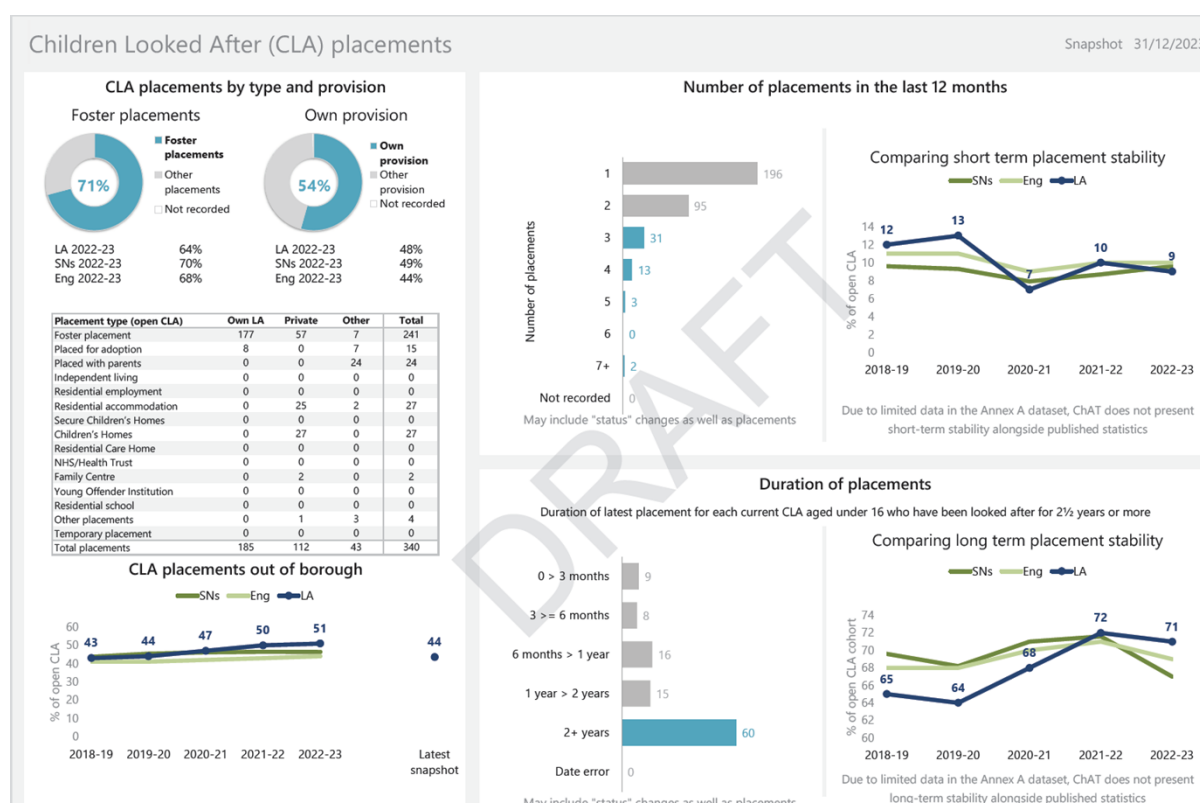
The Department uses a definition of placement stability based on 3 or more placements in a 12-month period that is calculated on a cumulative basis over the year.

Senior Managers meet with the Fostering Service to look at placement availability, data, vacancies and placement stability, utilising the Foster Carer Register which is produced weekly. The fostering service continues to utilise the 'Fostering Front Door' offer whereby an experienced Social Worker coordinates placement searches both in-house and on the BBCL framework. This model has been positive in that the Social Worker has a solid overview along with the Team Manager of the

placement vacancies in the team and will liaise directly with foster carers, offering at times an enhanced support offer to them at the point of placement.

Placement stability has increased during the past 12 months with a reduction in both planned and unplanned placement disruptions. Reasons for placement instability includes behaviours that can be displayed by teenagers which are significantly challenging for foster carers to manage as well as consistent missing from home episodes, which can impact on family life within the fostering household. We continue to place large sibling groups which places pressure on fostering households and placements however, we always endeavour to keep siblings placed together wherever possible.

It remains the case that babies and under 2's are placed in parent and child placements which include specialised fostering placements and assessment units, these are often for the duration of care proceedings whilst assessments of parents are ongoing.



Teenagers remain a high percentage group who have three or more placements, consistently due to a high level of needs through behaviours because of their life experiences. These needs remain a challenge for foster carers to manage in the longer term. Changes in educational placements also impact significantly upon placement stability, this is mainly due to the child investing in secure teacher and peer relationships and then suffering the loss of these. It can also be challenging for the young person to emotionally invest in further foster placements when the first has disrupted. Education needs are closely overseen as part of the care planning process with Individual support offered through the education service and through our in-house therapeutic service Revive.

The development around the process of Disruption Meetings has taken place and will be launched in the new year. The aim is to ensure there are consistent disruption meetings that are collaborative and follow the Systemic Model. The Independent Review Service will lead on this process with collaboration from the fostering service the Children in Our Care Service and other parties such as

family, foster carers, other professionals and children and young people where possible. The aim of this disruption process is to provide detailed analysis on placement disruptions across the service to inform future learning to prevent further placement disruptions. Disruption Meetings are planned to take place across all placements including short- and long-term foster placements, Kinship Care placements including SGO placements.

### **Engagement with Children and Young People**

The VOICE group meet both in person and virtually with children in our care and care experienced young people to gather views, ideas, and feedback. Young people and care leavers are regularly involved in the recruitment to social care posts and consist of a panel which provides information to the interview and recruitment process. Young people are involved in the 'Journey to Foster' training. We have recruited a care experienced young person as a fostering panel member and have introduced a care experienced young person to the assessment process where they will visit potential foster carers with the social worker to provide insight and guidance on experiences of being in foster care. We have two designated Participation Champions from the Mainstream and Kinship Care Teams who attend the Voice Participation Group. We are currently in consultation with our young people around the co-production of the Corporate Parenting Strategy. During this quarter social workers and managers from both teams have attended the junior and senior weekly voice groups.

Feedback is gathered from children in our foster placements regularly as part of the foster carer annual review, and at other events. Feedback is gathered to support the co-design of service delivery and to ensure children and young people with lived experience help shape services now and, in the future, that services are fit for purpose and appropriately meet need.

### **Feedback from children and young people...**

One child provided feedback that he felt happy in his foster placement and enjoyed taking the dog out for walks going out for days out. He stated that he will approach his foster carers for help, support and advice and does not want to live anywhere else.

A child aged 7 stated that his favourite activity is climbing trees, water fights and walking the dog, he knows that he may not be in this placement long term, but he is happy to live there for now.

One young person aged 17 has provided feedback on his long-term foster placement, stating that he enjoys the conversations he has with his foster carer, he feels well supported from everyone around him.

### **Feedback from Kinship Carers**

The Kinship Care Support Group met on Wednesday 08/11/2023. Service Lead for Placements, Louise Helm and Deputy Director for Education, Michelle Holt attended. Carers in attendance discussed issues around education for children placed under SGO. We are currently pulling together our offer within SGO regarding education, working alongside the lead member on this. Feedback from this group was that carers found it helpful and valuable to have members of the senior Leadership Team attend as well as gaining advice around education.

The first Kinship Care Kinship Christmas party took place in December, this was very well attended by many Kinship Care families who provided very positive feedback on the event stating that this was very well organised, was a fantastic atmosphere which all the children enjoyed. It was also noted that Kinship Carers felt more recognised and valued in their own right.

Feedback from SGO carers has been positive in relation to the new contact arrangements where they can email direct and telephone direct to the Kinship Team to access support.

One Kinship Carer provided feedback on being frustrated around the court timescales in obtaining an SGO for the child in their care however, praised their Kinship Social Worker who they have found easy to contact and supportive in terms of advice and guidance through the process.

One Kinship Carer reported feeling well supported during their application to obtain an SGO for the child in their care and is very happy that her niece is now placed in her care permanently. This carer spoke very highly of all professionals involved.

Another Kinship Carer reported that they have felt supported during their journey and is happy that the SGO assessment has started.

#### **Feedback from mainstream foster carers:**

One Foster Carer spoke very highly of the Front Door Duty Worker, stating that he as a long-standing member of staff is always there if needed. The foster carer recognised that there has been changes in social workers on the fostering team and when needing any advice or support he is always available stating "he is a credit to fostering". The impact of this is around FC's feeling confident and reassured by the front door service, this will support in FC's accepting placements and developing relationships and confidence with duty.

#### **Engagement with Foster Carers:**

Blackburn with Darwen has a Foster Carer Association (FCA), they meet regularly. The Corporate Parenting Advisory Group and Board was under review and in the New Year, combined and became one partnership meeting. A member of FCA will be invited to attend.

In December 2023, two carer feedback events took place with the Fostering Service, the Digital Transformation Team, and carers to gather feedback on changes within the service, the digital transformation and feedback around foster carer training. The events were held in 2 of the new family hubs, as a way of introducing carers to the family hubs. The Events were well attended with the Strategic Director of Childrens Service and Education as well as members of the Senior Leadership Team participating. It has been agreed that these events will continue during 2024, as carers state they welcome and enjoy attending, as well as being a valuable way of gathering feedback and ensuring co production.

There continues to be ongoing user feedback regularly through the Digital Transformation Team who have been able to develop positive relationships with carers since the transformation work began. This involves exit interviews for carers who choose to leave, feedback during the recruitment process and ongoing feedback across the service.

An online, digital link has now been launched across the service which provides a simple and effective way for carers to provide feedback, this has been welcomed by carers who have utilised this service.

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

Letterbox Club has continued this quarter for all CIOC from Reception to Y6 to encourage reading at home. Books, games etc are sent out monthly which are age appropriate. Again, feedback has been

very encouraging from the children who have stated that they enjoy receiving their parcels and carers have stated that they are encouraging their children to read.

We have 22 children and young people attending the extra provision provided by Kip McGrath services.

Thanks to the efforts of our carers, attendance at school continues to be good for CIOC. Overall attendance last term was 93%.

The annual Celebration of Achievement Event took place at Ewood Park on the 22nd of November. Children and young people in care and care leavers who attended were nominated for awards by their carer's schools, and Children's Services staff in the categories of, academic achievement/progress, attendance, behaviour, sport, arts, resilience, and determination and making a positive contribution. In addition, there were several special awards for those who have particularly excelled in these areas. We also celebrated those who are now university students and those who have gained apprenticeships including within the council. The Premier Suite was full, comprising children and young people in care and care leavers, foster carers, parents, school staff, Executive Member for Children's Services, Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services, and a range of officers from Children's Services Department. Our special guest for the evening was singer Kiki Deville who presented the awards and provided some great entertainment. We were also treated to very special singing performances from 2 of our care experienced young people who have written and produced their own songs. The John Bury Trust kindly sponsored one of the special awards and all our award winners received a certificate and gift voucher.

There is a Designated Nurse, 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 the child's health details. Foster carers are provided with the relevant training and support to meet the specific needs of the child in placement, and they can access support from the Children with Disabilities Team with aids and adaptations, Disability Links registration, information, and advice where needed.

In relation to emotional wellbeing, Children in our Care 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. The Team consists of Clinical Psychologists, a Play Therapist and Mental Health Practitioners. See information on the activity from Revive below,

Revive figures for Oct-Dec 2023

	Activity	Oct'23	Nov'23	Dec'23	Total for quarter
<b>Children accessing therapeutic interventions</b>	Referrals to the team	17	15	14	46
	Assessment sessions	3	4	2	9
<b>Foster carers and parents having access to support through consultation, training and direct therapeutic work</b>	Therapeutic intervention sessions with young people inc. play therapy)	45	46	43	134
	Carer/parent intervention sessions (therapeutic parenting)	26	17	21	64
<b>Wider system staff having access to training and regular support, which can include consultation and supervision</b>	Training sessions	3	0	0	3
	Consultations	15	18	11	44
	Drop ins for staff	3	4	2	9
	Revive practitioner attendance at multi agency meetings	15	15	13	43
	Case discussions with system staff	2	4	9	15
	Reflective practice group (YJS)	0	0	1	1
	Training (To social workers & FSW)	1	1	0	2

## Transitions

We have 19 care experienced young people in Staying Put accommodation. We are looking to progress further placements in January 2024. There is a direct link with care leavers in Staying Put accommodation and their attendance at university. Out of the 19 care leavers in Staying Put placements, 10 are in university.

Transitions from the Children in Our Care (CIOC) team to the Leaving Care Service:

We have a new transition process with CIOC for children transitioning to the Leaving Care Team at 18yrs. From September to December 23 there have been 11 young people transitioned to the Leaving Care Service. We are working alongside Head of Service and Service Leads in Childrens Social Care with Head of Service and Service Leads in Adult Social Care to devise a transition process to adult social care. We are writing a Leaving Care Accommodation Framework with an aim of tackling placement sufficiency and to ensure we have accommodation that meets all our individual young people's needs.

## The Fostering Service

### Workforce

There has been some movement with the workforce across the fostering service over the past three months, with 2 new Supervising Social Worker's (SSW) joining the team. We have recruited to 1 full-time post and 1 post has been reduced from full-time to part-time 4 days. This will provide us with a full cohort of 6 SSWs on the team, however due to their ASYE status and the reduction in hours there will be less capacity within their caseloads. The agency SSW covering one of these posts has left in



December 2023. The vacant SGO Social Worker post has also been appointed, this has increased to a full-time position (37 hours), she is due to start on 08.02.2024.

The Fostering Support Officer and Social Work apprentice returned from her student placement in September however, she was successful in obtaining a social work post in Adult Services and left to begin this role on the 28.10.2023. This vacancy was appointed to subject to positive DBS and references, and was due to start in December 2023, however, the social worker withdrew. This post has again been appointed to and references and DBS checks commenced in January 2024. The Social Work apprentice began on the 04.12.2023. The SGO Support Worker has been successful in a position within the Engage service and is due to leave in February, this role is currently being recruited to.

## **Kinship Care**

At the end of this quarter, there are 38 family and friend fostering households, 23 fully approved and a further 15 households approved under Regulation 24. This is only 2 more households in terms of figures from the last quarter however it has been a busy quarter, there has been plenty of movement across the service with new Regulation 24 assessment and kinship assessments.

There have been 5 new Regulation 24 households approved over the past three months, providing placements for an additional 6 children. Similarly, in total during this quarter, 4 households have ceased to be approved under Regulation 24; 2 of these placements experienced disruption, 1 child returned home, and 1 ceased due to SGO being granted. Additionally, 6 Regulation 24 carers have become fully approved family and friends fostering households.

There have been 52 referrals and initial assessments (IA) completed within this quarter, this is 5 more from quarter two, with much pressure on the need for Regulations 24 placements over IA's. 22 referrals have progressed to combined assessments, the same as quarter two. Assessments continue to take place all over the UK for e.g. Lancashire, Liverpool, Fylde, Bolton, Birmingham, and Manchester.

In total there have been a further 8 households where SGO's have been issued in relation to the children placed during this quarter, 3 from kinship fostering households, 1 from a Regulation 24 placement, 1 from a Section 38.6 placement, 1 from an IFA and 2 private law applications, providing permanence for 15 children.

SGO support – we have a RAG rating system in place, whereby cases that have the potential to breakdown are rated 'Red' those needing quite a bit of support 'Amber' and those rated lower are green. At the end of September, there were 17 open cases. We currently have no cases that are rag rated red which is positive and an improvement from previous quarters. There is an action plan in place to identify and pre-empt SGO disruptions. Part of the plan is the development of the SGO Support offer which includes, training, direct support, access to The Adoption Support Fund, escalation to other services and the development of the Kinship Care Support Group. These support groups are now in place and are taking place monthly. The attendance at these groups has been high with collaboration with attendees to develop the group going forward.

The SGO panel is held every fortnight to consider all assessments where the permanence plan is that of SGO. This includes assessments during care proceedings, the PLO (Public Law Outline) process and for children placed under a care order. The Kinship Care Team Manager's attend this panel and the Service Lead for Placements chairs the panel which is also made up of other professionals and partners including health and education, the IRO Service Manager and a legal representative.

## Analysis of ethnic and religion breakdown of carers

### **Ethnicity of Fostering Households**

83% of our fostering households are White British

17% of our fostering households are Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Asian, Other)

### **Religion of Fostering Households**

13% of our foster carers are recorded as Muslim.

51% of our foster carers are recorded as Christian.

36% of our foster carers are recorded as undisclosed or not recorded.

92% of our fostering placements are culturally matched.

8% of our fostering households are transracial.

### **Focus on any issues that have arisen from ethnic matching.**

During the matching process for our children to fostering households, consideration is given to individual cultural and religious needs. If we are not able to identify a cultural match and the Social Workers agreed, discussions are initiated to ensure that the Foster Carer understands and recognizes the importance of meeting the individual needs of the child. This may identify training that would be useful for the foster carer to complete alongside potential utilization of the support of a 'buddy' who has experience and a good understanding of a particular culture. It is positive that 92% of our placements are culturally matched and evidences the work undertaken within the matching process.

### **Foster Carer Recruitment and Assessment**

Recruitment remains ongoing for foster carers to care for children with disabilities, who are primarily placed in residential settings as opposed to fostering. There is an ongoing campaign to try to recruit foster carers for children with Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND), but this remains a local and national challenge. The Fostering Team are working in collaboration with the Children with Disabilities Teams to be creative and solution focussed and to also look at how adaptations can be utilised to expand the choice of foster placements, for example for children with physical needs.

There is also ongoing recruitment of carers who wish to provide PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence) and Remand placements. This has been an area of significant struggle, which again is a challenge nationally and not specific to BWD. Despite these challenges, it remains positive that most of our children who are looked after in Blackburn with Darwen are placed in foster care locally.

	Month	Enquiries	ROI		IV		Approval
Q3	Oct-23	14	3	21%	2	14%	
	Nov-23	26	4	15%	3	12%	
	Dec-23	27	12	0%	4	0%	1

There is a concern over the number of enquiries that do not progress to initial visit or assessment. In speaking to other local authorities this is also a consistent theme in all areas and not specific to BWD. There is the concern that the uplift in spend by IFAs and other LAs in the region has impacted on our

recruitment of foster carers as we can evidence that our recruitment activity has been strong with a high level of activity within this quarter.

The Digital Transformation Team alongside the Fostering Service are currently undertaking a service user feedback task to attempt to understand the conversion rate and the challenges in this. It is hoped that the implementation of the Recruitment Hub will help to further understand the challenges around the conversion rates of recruitment and from a northwest perspective.

In terms of marketing, social media had a reach of 181,136 hits for quarter 3. Although engagement was positive, the conversation to conversion was challenging. Information evenings have been well attended over the quarter with 1 household from these events going forward to assessment which is positive. Facebook saw a boost in December with the Opening Doors to Fostering campaign. We saw a total reach of 19,118 on Facebook and 22,185 on Instagram over the quarter with the majority of these coming in December. These posts had 239 clicks and we had 629 minutes of viewed video. The campaign was branded BwD Lets Foster, and the videos received positive feedback. 24 local authorities across the country came together to share a video we could all use each day to showcase what our foster carers do to make Christmas special for the children and young people in their care.

There was attendance at BWD staff briefings to engage with our workforce for potential fostering applicants.

Adverts also ran over this quarter in The Pigeon Carrier, focusing on Teenagers. Adverts were also in 1Voice magazine focusing on family. New artwork highlighting Let's Foster is now in place at Blackburn Hawks, this includes large format banner in the rink and is also being advertised at Blackburn Rovers where Let's Foster for Blackburn with Darwen has taken over the family stand. All the advertising boards in that area are now exclusive to BWD Let's Foster. We also have large format advertising on their big screen during the games.

### **Fostering Panel**

The Service coordinates two fostering panels, the main fostering panel, and the annual review panel. The 4 Team Managers across the service act as Panel Advisor and maintain the panel members list along with panel members training and appraisals. The two panels are independently chaired. Feedback and evaluation are collated from both panels to inform service delivery, there has recently been a focus on obtaining feedback from attendees at panel. Feedback forms are sent to all attendees including the child's social worker, the assessing social worker, as well as the applicants attending panel. Since the focus on obtaining feedback, we have seen the return rate improving with the feedback being overall positive. Panel members continue to provide positive feedback regarding the quality of assessments and verbal presentation of the social workers. Meetings are now taking place regularly with the Independent Panel Chairs, Panel Administration, Team Managers and the Service Lead for Placements to inform learning and development for the panels and the Fostering Service.

During this quarter, 2 households were presented to panel with a recommendation for approval as family and friends' carers. There have been 14 fostering households presented to panel for annual review. There have been 2 mainstream fostering households resign, a foster carer has moved overseas to join her husband and the second household resigned as they were granted an SGO for 3 children they care for providing positive permanence outcomes for those children.

### **Training for Foster Carers:**

During this Quarter period, our carers continue to access the online training offer through Me-Learning, The Scils and Eils online training continues to be offered, along with mandatory safeguarding training. The Essentials of Fostering training was delivered to 24 foster carers. Health colleagues delivered Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked after Children on Thursday 28th September and attendance was particularly good. (25 carers)

In the new year, the training offer for all carers including foster carers, kinship carers and parent and child carers is being reviewed with the support of the digital transformation team. From the carer feedback sessions undertaken in December 2023, carers provided feedback around what they would like in the new training offer and how they would like training to be undertaken. This feedback included a variety of suggestions for training not currently offered, training specific to kinship carers, training specific to parent and child carers and suggestions on how to provide mandatory training which can often feel repetitive. Feedback was significant in stating that carers would prefer face to face training as well as the option of online training with the need to ensure that training is offered in a way that is practical and meets all needs of carers, in relation to digital skills and childcare. This feedback will inform the reviewed training offer for all carers which will be developed and launched in 2024.

### **Complaints**

There has been one new complaint during this quarter, the carer was frustrated at a perceived delay in progressing an SGO assessment, this has now been resolved.

### **Compliments**

The service has received 4 compliments during this quarter from in-house foster carers regarding the quality of the support they have received from the Fostering Service.

### **Allegations**

There have been 3 allegations during this quarter,

- 1, The allegation was investigated through the allegation's procedure with the outcome of the investigation and decision from the LADO being substantiated.
- 2, The allegation was investigated through the allegations procedure and the LADO found the allegation was unsubstantiated and no further action was taken.
- 3, This allegation was investigated through the allegation's procedure and the outcome of the LADO was substantiated.

### **Specific Incidents and Restraints**

There have been 2 specific incidents, both incidents have been managed appropriately through the service.

### **Bullying Reports**

There have been no reports of bullying during this quarter.

### **Serious illness and accidents**

There has been no serious illnesses or accidents during this quarter.

### **Exemptions**

During this quarter we have 1 fostering household with an ongoing exemption, this will cease in January 2024. We have 2 foster homes with a new exemption.

### **Short Break Placements**

There are currently 9 approved short break households. During this quarter we have had 11 children accessing short breaks.

### **Commissioned Placements and Budget**

All children and young people placed in commissioned placements are part of the Case Tracking and Commissioning Panel which continues to have strategic oversight and monitoring of placements. This panel also provides oversight and planning to ensure that there are robust plans for those children and young people that could be brought back to in-house provision, as well as ensuring timely decision making to achieve permanence.

There continues to be significant pressures due to challenge of recruiting and securing placements for teenagers and large sibling groups both in fostering and residential placements. The financial position across both areas is closely monitored throughout the year.

The local authority continues to take its quota of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) (0.1% of the population). There are referrals at least bi-weekly, via the Northwest Regional Strategic Migration Partnership. We currently have 22 UASC cases open to Children in Our Care (CIOC), all who are living in appropriate accommodation. These children are placed with IFA and residential placements due to there not being enough foster care placements in house. Although the local authority receives funding for UASC, this does not necessarily cover the weekly costings of their placements and places additional financial pressure on the commissioning budget.

### **Total number of commissioned foster placements used in this period – 68.**

**40 x** Non long term matched including: -

- o **7 x** Where children are placed under Interim Care Orders's including 3 sibling pairs, and 1 parent/child placement which ended with the child moving to an inhouse foster placement.
- o **1 x** placement where the child seeking asylum who was placed under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
- o **4 x** Placements where children are placed under Placement Orders including:
  - **1** single child awaiting adoption panel match.
  - **1** single child awaiting adoption placement but possibility of long-term fostering due to needs.
  - Sibling pair awaiting an adoption placement being identified.

**28 x** Placements where children are cared for under Care Orders's, including:

- o 14 children with a plan to be matched long term in their fostering placement.
- o 2 children seeking asylum (uncle/nephew)
- o 3 siblings who were placed with father, but issues led to move to foster care.
- o 1 parent and child placement where long-term permanence plan yet to be determined.
- o Sibling group of 4 with potential rehabilitation plan to return to parents' care.
- o Sibling pair awaiting SGO with their carer which was granted in mid-November 2023.
- o Sibling pair who moved to an inhouse foster placement in Nov.

### **Number of new commissioned foster placements made in this period – 5.**

- o Sibling group of 3 – placed under Care Orders who moved from care of father.

- o Sibling pair – placed under Interim Care Orders who moved from a family assessment unit with Mother.

#### **Number of ended commissioned foster placements in Q3 – 5**

- o 1 long term matched placement ended due to young person turning 18. This placement converted to Staying Put in October 2023 and will be in place until mid-2024 whilst she completes her studies.
- o 1 child whose foster carers who moved from an Independent Fostering Agency to be approved as BWD Foster Carers in November 2023.
- o Sibling pair fostering placement ended due to SGO's being granted.
- o Single child under Interim Care Oder in parent/child placement
- o Sibling pair under Care Orders's

#### **Number of long-term matched commissioned foster placements used in Q3 – 28**

- o There were 2 new long-term matches made within this period for a sibling pair.
- o 1 long term matched placement, converted to Staying Put in October.
- o 1 child whose foster carers who moved from an Independent Fostering Agency to be approved as BWD Foster Carers in November 2023.

There were **35** ongoing non-long-term matched placements at the end of Q3:

- o 24 x placements under Care Orders's
- o 6 x placements under Interim Care Orders
- o 4 x placements under Placement Order's
- o 1 x placement under Section 20

There are **26** FCO's in long term matched placements at the end of Q3.

#### **Service Priorities for the Next Quarter. These priorities remain the same as the previous quarter.**

1. 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.
2. The transformation plan for the fostering service remains a priority. This plan and the key priorities will drive forward placement sufficiency and stability as well as recruitment and quality assurance.
3. Placement sufficiency and stability will continue to be a key area of focus. The relationships with independent fostering providers are the key element which will be the area of development in the next quarter to ensure that we are able to provide local placements to our children and young people within this framework.
4. Recruitment will focus upon our offer to potential foster carers for us to be competitive. The recruitment drive will focus on foster carers who can support teenagers, to respond to the increasing demand for urgent placements. 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.

5. Our Fostering Hub to continue to prioritise coproduction with our partners, foster carers and young people. Job adverts to be marketed to attract the right candidates with the right skills.

6. Collaborative working with the coach from Foster Carer Network and the Service Lead and Team Managers from Fostering will begin the implementation stage of the Mockingbird Model.