

Inter Authority Matching Guidance

This guidance will set out how to respond to a request for a Fostering Home from another Local Authority. It is important that we continue to work with our colleagues across the Northwest to ensure suitable matches are in place, and that we support where we can. Understandably, we can sometimes feel cautious about releasing capacity to other authorities, particularly as we are increasingly reliant on external providers due to limited resources for Lancashire children.

It is proposed that matches that are able to be defined as 'surplus to immediate requirements' are those most appropriately identified as potentially suitable for inter-authority matches, this may include:

- Carers who have current or regular periods with a vacancy
- Carers whose approval status or preference is limited to younger children (particularly pre school aged)
- Carers with specific cultural backgrounds/language skills
- Carers whose geographic location (proximity to neighbouring Local Authorities, transport links) is appropriate
- Carers able to offer matches to those children whose needs require a home out of their Local Authority area (i.e. proximity to specialist day education, to promote family time, or for safeguarding reasons).

Primarily, foster carers providing homes for children from other North West Local Authorities should be identified by their willingness and ability to meet the necessary care and support arrangements on this basis. Fostering services should treat these considerations as paramount in offering and supporting such inter-authority matches. Core considerations should include:

- Requirements for foster carers to support delivery of relevant aspects of a care plan and any additional support, including financial, that this may require. This will include, but not be limited to, maintaining engagement with current education provision and promoting and facilitating family time.
- Supervision should continue to be offered by the 'host' authority as part of the provision of an inter-authority match. Consideration should be given to joint supervision arrangements where this would provide proportionate and effective support to individual foster carers. The 'home' Local Authority should ensure timely and appropriate contribution to annual foster carer review processes.
- Foster carers attendance at relevant meetings and other engagements with the children's Social Worker and other professionals should be agreed, including aspects of financial support.
- Access to routine training and development opportunities should come throughout the period of any inter-authority match.
- Normal access to formal and informal support networks, often cited by foster carers as a significant factor in their decision to foster for a specific Local Authority, should be maintained throughout the match.
- Clear support out of hours and in emergencies, including access to EDT and Fostering Advice Line; arrangements for children missing from education and/or care; or services for children at risk of sexual exploitation.
- Clear arrangements for delegated authority to foster carers should be in place at the point of the child or young person being placed. Particular regard should be given to this aspect, given the scope for differentiated approaches across Local Authorities.

Referral and Management

Referrals can be shared directly between authorities. On receiving a referral, consideration should be given as to the information received about the child, and whether we could potentially have suitable options without taking away a valuable resource i.e. if our vacancy list only had one carer available for siblings, we would not then consider another authority referral for siblings as this would limit our resources further.

If it is considered that we may be able to identify a positive match, then a search is completed by either our Family Finding worker or the locality teams. If a match cannot be identified, then an email should be sent to the referrer advising that we have no suitable matches at this time. Consideration should be given as to when a match is needed by, and whether the search can continue to be considered given that the vacancy list changes each day. The search is to be added to the 'Daily Allocation' list for continued oversight.

If a match is identified for a child or young person, then a matching document is sent to the referrer with a draft version of the Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) which will include the agreed cost. The IPA should be



completed and finalised by the 'home/purchasing' authority, with agreement from the Head of Service or equivalent before the match is formally agreed. Ideally the IPA should be signed before a match is progressed, and certainly within 10 days of the IPA being issued, this should include the agreed costs for the match and timescales for sharing information with the Supervising Social Worker and Foster Carer.



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Email to purchasing

Inter-Authority Foster authority re IPA.msg

The child will need to be set up on LCS in order to enable costs to be set up and for the match to be reflected on the Foster Carers LCS record. In order to do so, an email will need to be sent to MASH so that a contact record can be generated, this will include the details of the child, and information from the referral. It should be clear that this is being set up for the purpose of an inter-agency fostering match.

Once the child's record has been generated on LCS, a Child In Need status needs to be added 'CLA' and the start date.

An email will need to be sent to County Case Support Finance Team in order for an unplanned CPLI to be set up to enable costs to the foster carer.

The completed IPA should be sent to CYP General Fostering Support so that this can be added to their tracker and invoices generated. The IPA should also be saved to DMS on the child's LCS record.

The IPA should be reviewed annually in relation to the needs of the children in the home and changes to Local Authority fees.





