

	Action/Date
Title/Status-	Policy
New document or revised	Revised April 2018
Date approved SMT	25/07/2019
Responsible Head of Service	Children in Care
Date review	April 2020
Date SMT approved.	

Leicestershire

Permanence Passport: The Fostering, Adoption and Connected Care Support Offer

Applies to-

All children

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Purpose of the policy

Leicestershire's Fostering and Adoption Service works in partnership with children and young people, their families and careers to provide safe, caring homes which value the differences in children and young people and help them to achieve their full potential.

We believe in our children and young people's ability to succeed in all areas of their life and aim to provide the advice and support they need to do this, with a particular focus on their emotional wellbeing and education.

In 2013 the Department of Education published the *New 'Passport to Support' for adopters*, setting out expectations about what support should be available to adopters. This original passport is available on the [First4Adoption](#) website.

Leicestershire County Council recognizes that all children in permanent homes including adoption, fostering and those living with connected carers, experience a range of difficulties because many of these children have developed coping strategies that mean they find it difficult to form relationships and can display challenging behaviour. Leicestershire's *Permanence Passport* provides an overview of the support that adopters, connected carers and foster carers are entitled to and the additional support offered by Leicestershire County Council.

This document is written to support practitioners' understanding of the support adoptive parents, foster carers and connected carers are able to access with support of the child's social worker.

Should you have queries about the support available or how to access the support, please contact the Service Manager for Fostering or the Team Managers for Adoption and Connected/Kinship Care.

Legal Framework and Statutory Guidance includes:

The Children Act 1989
The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (2015).
The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2015
The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services (2010)
The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
Fostering and Adoption Services: National Minimum Standards (2011).
Children and Social Work Act 2017
Promoting the education of looked after children 2014
Adoption and Children Act 2002 and supporting Regulations including the Adoption

Leicestershire's Adoption Permanence Passport:

Adoption Assessment of Need

Adoptive families – parents of adoptive children aged 0-17 years of age living in Leicestershire for whom Leicestershire County Council has a duty (excluding children placed by another authority where it is not yet three years post the making of the adoption Order) - have a legal right, as and when they request it, to a Statutory Assessment of Need from the local authority responsible for their post-adoption support. For the first three years after the adoption order is granted, the local authority responsible for placing the adopted child is responsible for the statutory assessment. After that, the responsibility lies with the local authority where the adoptive family lives (except in respect of financial support where decision made prior to Adoption).

Local authorities must also undertake assessments of need for adoption support at the request of the following:

Children who may be adopted, their parents or guardians

Persons wishing to adopt a child

Adopted persons, their parents, birth parents and former guardians

Other children of adoptive parents (whether they are adopted)

Birth siblings of adopted children

Relatives of the adopted child or other persons with whom the child has a beneficial information.

Further information can be found in [Leicestershire Procedures](#)

Parents can self-refer or a professional can refer on their behalf, with parental consent. In Leicestershire, this assessment is completed by a social worker who has access to the advice and support of therapists should this be needed. The social worker is responsible for advising the family of the outcome of the assessment and for providing the parents (and child where appropriate) with a copy of the report.



Adoption families have a legal right, as and when they request it, to a Statutory Assessment of Need from the local authority responsible for their post-adoption support.

Families who are ineligible for an assessment will receive advice about how to access support from other services and/or will be advised how to contact the responsible authority.

Adoption Support Plan Reviews

Once a proposed Adoption Support Plan has been approved, a copy will be sent to the recipients of support who can then consider the proposal and respond within 10 days.

Where adoption support is in place prior to the Adoption Order, the plan should be reviewed at the reviews of the adoptive placement, or at any time if there is a significant change in circumstances (within 4 weeks of notification of the change).

After the Adoption Order has been made, the plan will be reviewed if a change in circumstances is brought to the attention of the local authority.

Settling-in grants and Discretionary Payments

New adoptive parents and foster carers (including Connected Carers) may be eligible for a settling-in grant to help pay for large items such as a bed for your child's bedroom, or car seats. The adoptive parent or carer can ask their social worker how to apply for it. The settling-in grant is discretionary.

Most discretionary decisions (except those made on an emergency basis to secure a child's safety) to make these payments are made by Permanence Panel on a case by case basis, considering the child or young person's need, care plan and family circumstances that may impact on that need.

Essentially, the service becomes aware of the child's identified need through several ways e.g. from the foster carer or the adoptive parent. At this point the Supervising Social Worker or Adoption Social Worker will explore and assess the need. Assuming agreement that the need requires the additional payment, the foster carer or adoptive parent/s completes the Additional Payments form to notify the service of the need, how the need will be met and the cost of doing so. The Team Manager will review the submission and will either turn down the

request or will recommend payment to Panel for consideration.

Rejection of the request for the discretionary payment attracts an automatic right of appeal to the Service Manager for the Fostering and Adoption Service.

Other important points:

Exemptions to the above payment exist and include emergency accommodation of children, additional holiday payments to foster carers and capital loans.

Discretionary payments cannot be used to commission services that are otherwise the responsibility of another authority such as education or health services.

Previously, LCC operated a system of grants to meet this need. This is no longer the case.

Adoption support fund from your local authority

Although the local authority is legally required to carry out the assessment, they are currently not legally required to provide the support that an assessment may reveal they need. If Leicestershire County Council decides to provide post-adoption support, the support can be delivered directly or commissioned from another agency. The means of delivery may be subject to pre-existing commissioning arrangements. The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) is available for children living in England up to the age of 21 or 25 where a young person has an Education Health and Care Plan, who are adopted and previously in LA care, adopted from overseas or subject of an SGO and previously looked after. It will pay for the therapeutic services, helping children to recover from their previous experiences and bond with their adoptive families.

“A very high proportion of parents (using the fund) believe that the ASF had helped their child... with the greatest improvement being the parents’ understanding of their child’s needs”

Evaluation of the ASF 2017



Applications to the Adoption Support Fund are directly and specifically related to assessment of emotional need and the provision of appropriate therapeutic support to adoptive families and those caring for children with other permanence orders (such as [Special Guardianship Order](#) and [Child Arrangements Order](#)).

Life Story Work

Life story work helps children separated from their birth families to make sense of their past experiences. Some children may be too young to remember or understand what happened in their lives. Information about their past and heritage may be missing or forgotten. A life story book is prepared by a social worker or support worker, the foster carer and the permanent carer (adoptive parent or other carer). The book includes:

- Significant events in the child’s life
- Significant information like descriptions of their family, where they were born and care history.

The Life Story work may also take the form of or include a scrapbook, photo album, collection of personal items and [Signs of Safety](#) work like Words and Pictures.

The child’s social worker is expected to start Life Story Work when the child has a plan for adoption or permanency away from the birth family. At the point of the Adoption Order being made; the adoptive parents and child should be in receipt of the Life Story work and Letter for Life.

Life Story work is an important part of a child’s journey and helps the child understand where they have come from and who they are. Adoptive parents will be supported by the adoption social worker to understand the importance of this work and how best to use it as

the child grows and their emotional needs change.

“Life story work is so much more than just completing a book that outlines events in a child’s life... life story work should make a child feel supported and nurtured.”

Community Cares 5 June 2017



Self-help offer for all children and young people living in Leicestershire

During 2016 the Council worked with partners across Leicestershire to identify services to help parents and children access support independently. For this reason, [Kooth](#) was launched in Leicestershire. Kooth is an online counselling and emotional well-being support service for children and young people available free. The service offers a team of accredited counsellors, therapists and support workers who provide guided and outcome-focused support for each individual.



“It means a lot to know Kooth is there even if others can’t be,” Jessie, 12 years old

Therapeutic Consultation sessions

In 2016 we introduced consultation sessions, delivered by CAMHS for social worker and carers, to promote understanding of our children’s emotional needs and how to meet these needs. These sessions have proven to be very popular with general feedback indicating that the advice received enables the child’s network to understand their needs and how best to meet these needs.



This service continues to be offered and social workers can book a consultation session by sending an email request to fpsadmin@leics.gov.uk quoting reference: Booking Consultation Session in the email subject header.

Therapeutic support

Leicestershire County Council recognizes that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot be taken when working with children and young people who have had difficult life experiences and have experienced multiple losses. We also recognize that not all children and young people need the specialist services of CAMHS and quite often, need help to make sense of their experiences before permanence (with whom they will be living) has been decided. This support helps the child or young person prepare for their new family and the changes they will need to make.

As such, when it is identified through assessment that a child or young person or their families will require therapeutic services, consideration needs to be given about how best to meet this need i.e.

- Through community services
- Mentors /Pastoral staff /Key adults /ELSA trained Learning Support Assistant /Pastoral team etc.
- Completion of life story work or Words and Pictures by the child's social worker or another worker
- The Adoption Team, therapeutic worker
- CAMHS
- Another provision (There will be times when the need will be best met through a private provider).

To meet an assessed emotional or behavioral need where it is felt that a provider outside the County Council's direct provision is best placed to meet the need, a therapeutic intervention fund has been created. After approval by Panel or a designated manager, £450 per child or family member per year for therapeutic intervention will be assigned. In each case, and where the therapist recommends that further work is required, an additional £450 may be allocated for continued intervention (subject to approval by Panel or the designated manager).

The social worker will work with the carer or parents and where appropriate, the child or young person, or the school to identify the therapist best suited to the need and to ensure that the therapist is appropriately accredited. The social worker, parent or carer and school should always consider the Strengths and Difficulties (SDQ) Score, where this has been completed (children aged 3-16). The SDQ is a short behavioral screening questionnaire. It is used within research, evaluating treatment outcome and as part of clinical assessment to examine a child's emotional well-being.

The role of the therapeutic worker in the adoption team

Pre and post adoption support is provided in a number of ways within Leicestershire for a number of reasons, such as to help our adopter parents in a way that takes into consideration the trauma their children have suffered or the impact that care has had on their child's health and development.

The adoption social worker offers support up to three years post adoption order, especially in cases where adoption disruption has taken place or disruption is a threat. These referrals come directly to the permanence team, through First Response. After this 3-year period, referrals are taken through First Response and a fieldwork social work service is available to families at risk of adoption disruption – this includes active intervention, signposting to support networks and providers, and respite or accommodation of the child or children in the most extreme cases.

Some adopted children and their families require specialist counselling and therapy to help them make sense of their experiences and losses. Some of the most complex cases may be worked by fieldwork social work or early help teams with advice from the Post Adoption Support Worker depending on the level and complexity of need.

Referrals to the Adoption Support Fund can be made through the allocated fieldwork social worker with the support and guidance from the Post Adoption Social Worker. Once the assessment of need is completed and a specific proposal of therapeutic intervention identified, the application will be processed through the Post Adoption Support service.

Adoption child care support worker

This worker visits the adoptive parents and child/ren 6 weeks after the point of placing and will provide a series of contacts or visits to ensure that adopters feel supported in nurturing their relationship with their children, and any early vulnerabilities and difficulties can be

quickly identified, and support put in place to support the carers. Telephone contact will also be made with adopters at 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, 24 months, 30 months and 36 months. The purpose of these calls is to maintain long arm support contact with adoptive/SGO/CAO families where the local authority has been a party. Offering advice and support around post adoption/SGO support services, training and our regular post support meet ups, for example the summer picnic or Christmas party. In addition to this, these calls offer an opportunity to carers for discussing any presenting needs before crisis point so that interventions can be inputted to maintain stability in placements. The Adoption Support Plan will be routinely reviewed throughout this period to ensure that it remains appropriate and relevant to the needs of the child and supports adopters to meet those needs.

Adoption Birth Records Counselling

Providing birth record counselling and access to information is of vital importance in enabling adopted adults to understand the circumstances of their adoption and to enhance their sense of identity.

If adopted adults require access to their adoption records they may request this service from the agency involved in their adoption.

In order to access birth records counselling services, an adopted adult needs to make a referral to the Permanence Team directly to request this.

Adoption Intermediary services

An adopted adult and their adult relatives can ask for an intermediary agency to trace and establish whether contact would be welcome with a birth relative. This service is not provided by Leicestershire County Council. Some initial advice may be given but as with other local authorities, the Adoption Agency signposts adoptees who request this service from a third sector agencies.

If the adopted adult does not want to establish contact with a birth relative but simply wants to make it easier for their birth relatives to find him or her, the adopted adult can place their details on the Adoption Contact Register (ACR) held by the Register General.

The adopted adult needs to write to the Registrar General and obtain a form CR part 1 which he or she will need to complete and provide certificates proving his or her relationship to the adopted adult.

General Register Office (ACR)
Adoptions Section
Smedley Hydro

Keeping in Touch

Leicestershire's Adoption Agency is working with business partners to improve on-line information to encourage families to self-help and to attend adoption support groups, and to make use of the Virtual School where advice and support regarding education is required. In addition to this, the Agency has introduced a newsletter to help adopted families feel connected and to make 'reaching out' easier. The newsletter highlights adoption events sponsored by the Adoption Agency, to encourage sharing and support amongst families who have experience and knowledge. Information about the events for foster carers is advertised in *Fostering News*.

The newsletter also provides handy hints, updates and articles about staff and carers. All new foster carers are automatically signed up for *Fostering News*, they don't have to request it. It is also published on the Portal – all new foster carers are invited to register to access the Portal.

Support to birth parents and family in Adoption

Birth Parents are routinely offered support prior to the adoption of their children to help them understand why adoption has been chosen as the appropriate plan for their children and to help them contribute to the care planning. This support is offered through a leaflet provided at the point of Agency Decision Maker (ADM) ratifying a care plan of adoption. Such requests are presented to the Service Manager for Adoption by the child/ren's social worker or the birth parent or family can contact the Adoption Service directly.

Similarly, if a birth parent or birth family requires counselling to help them deal with the loss of their child, the Adoption Team will complete an assessment and present the recommendation to the Service Manager for Adoption.

The LA has a duty to offer to assess the support needs of anyone affected by an Adoption placement, this includes birth parents who can ask to be assessed for support services.

Letterbox contact

The Letterbox is a system that helps birth relatives and adoptive parents to stay in contact

by exchanging written information. The frequency with which information is exchanged via the Letterbox will be discussed and agreed on when the adoption is being planned. This will usually happen once or twice a year.

Information is sent through Leicestershire County Council's Letterbox coordinator, who passes this on to the birth or adoptive parents. This means they can stay in touch via a confidential service. The coordinator checks everything that is sent via the Letterbox to make sure it doesn't contain anything inappropriate (e.g. if the relative accidentally writes their address in the letter). Using the Letterbox is free of charge and completely confidential.

In the past it was believed that adopted children needed a 'clean break', and all ties with their birth family were cut. It is now agreed that many children benefit from a more open attitude towards adoption and the Letterbox service was set up in recognition of this.

Who can use the Letterbox?

The Letterbox service can be used by anyone who has been important in the life of an adopted child, so long as it will be helpful to continue written contact. This can be any relative including birth parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles. If a child is the subject of a Care Order the care plan will usually reflect who will be involved in letterbox contact.

Once the child has been formally matched with an adoptive family, the adoptive and birth families will complete a written agreement with their social workers. This will describe the frequency and type of contact that will take place after the adoption. It will clarify the details of any Letterbox contact including:

- How often it will take place
- Whether the exchange will be two-way with both the adoptive parents and birth relatives sending information, or one-way with only the adoptive parents sending information
- Photographs will not usually be exchanged in order to protect the child

Our letterbox coordinator will receive a copy of this agreement to keep on file.

We recognise that children's needs change over time, and Letterbox contact may not always be appropriate. If birth relatives or adopters wish to stop this contact and withdraw from the

agreement, then a social worker will discuss with them whether this is in the child's best interests. If they decide to withdraw permanently then the other person will be informed.

Where can the birth parents, adoptive parent get support or advice?

There may be times when either the birth or adopted parent feels concerned or distressed and needs advice or assistance with Letterbox contact or any other aspect of adoption.

The parents can contact the Post-Adoption Support Team for assistance and to find out more about what services are offered.

The telephone number is: 0116 3053052

or

E-mail: Adoptionsupport@leics.gov.uk.

Social Media

Social network sites are changing what happens after adoption. Birth parents can contact their birth children, and vice versa, easily. In many instances when the birth child reaches out to their birth family, it is because they need answers. Adoptive parents and carers can help their children use these sites affectively and safely.

Where there is a risk, the child needs to be helped to understand risk and manage complex situations that may arise from unplanned or unmediated contact. For advice and support families can contact the Post-Adoption Support Team.

The telephone number is: 0116 3053052

or

E-mail: Adoptionsupport@leics.gov.uk.

There is also useful training and online resources through adoption UK and guidance through Coram BAAF specifically in relation to social media in adoption and permanence placements.

Community events hosted by Leicestershire County Council

There are a range of regular support services that adoptive families can access. The Post-Adoption Support Team offer quarterly 'meet ups' for adopters at Christmas, spring, summer holidays and autumn. We also send newsletters out quarterly that includes information on local groups, for example the monthly stay and play hosted by Coram in Shepshed and supported by Leicestershire County Council that is open to all our adoptive families.

Adopters Alice in Wonderland Christmas Party



Adopters are signed up for the newsletter when their adoption orders are granted.

Training

The Adoption and Fostering Service has a dedicated training officer who ensures training is delivered for all our carers which includes Leicestershire's foster carers/connected carers, supported lodgings providers, specialist carers and those carers who have legally secured permanence for the children in their care through Special Guardianship Orders, Residence Orders and Child Arrangements Orders and Adoption.

Our rich training programme offers the following:

- 150 on-learning courses that can be done at home, libraries or on smart phones)
- 2 free online courses for all carers and are based on current trending topics which changes every 12 weeks
- 45 'live' courses in venues booked by the training officer
- 2 information & learning event/fayres
- NHS Diana training for short-break carers
- Family and Friend SGO carers and adoptive parents can access all 'live training' free of charge, subject to availability.
- Training delivered by the Virtual School regarding the barriers to learning and
 - strategies to support children in care/previously looked after.

The Service uses surveys to establish what our carers and parents training support needs are. On this basis, we review our training offer at the end of each financial year.

Our training is publicized through newsletters where you will receive guidance about how to book onto training.

Education and the adopted child

Because of their previous experiences, some adopted children and those with a care history may need additional support at school.

Leicestershire County Council has a specific responsibility to support the educational achievement of those children whose plans are for adoption. This includes ensuring that children are placed with adopters who demonstrate a high commitment to education. Prior to placement the Adoption Support Plan will contain a thorough assessment of the child's vulnerabilities, including current and possible future educational support needs. Once the Adoption Order has been granted, the adoptive parent(s) take on full responsibility for the child or young person.

Following the publication of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 the remit of the Virtual School includes offering advice and guidance about adopted children living in Virtual School's geographic area. The Virtual School can be contacted by the child's school or adoptive parents – telephone number: 0116 3056097.

In the early years, children aged two years old who have been adopted from care are entitled to a [free early education place](#). They can also benefit from the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) when they are aged three and four years old. This is additional funding for providers of early education (such as your child's nursery) to help improve the education they provide for children who need more support. If the adoptive parent would like the nursery or childminder to claim the EYPP, they will need to tell them that your child is adopted. Useful links can be found at [Help Paying for Childcare](#).

When the adopted child reaches school age, they are entitled to priority admission to the school of the adoptive parents' choice.

The child's state funded school can also claim the pupil premium plus, worth an additional £2,300 pa (April 2018), providing the parent lets the school know that your child is adopted before the annual January census. The funding helps schools provide additional support for vulnerable children to improve their education.

Further information can be found at [Pupil Premium Plus](#).

Disruption

Breakdown of placement can happen in the early days of the placement or years after the child has been legally adopted. Disruption may have many causes, but steps can be taken to reduce the risks including:

- Ensure full information about the child is shared with the adopter or carer
- Prepare the child for his or her new home
- Recognise emotional risk and help the carer or parent understand how they can use therapeutic parenting, life story work and Words and Pictures to help the child or young person
- Use other sources of advice and support to help the family understand and meet one another's needs, like support groups, training and access to therapeutic advice
- Recognise the impact of emotional development and the changing need for information and understanding as the child becomes a young adult.
- Collaborative working with the Virtual School to minimize disruption to education and school moves are carefully planned to ensure a positive transition.

At times, the child or young person returns to local authority care or requires a change of foster placement. Where this happens, the Council will work with the parent or carer to enable the child's return to the adoptive parents care. This support may take several forms (e.g. social worker, support worker, CAMHS, therapeutic intervention).

CORAM

Coram is one of the UK's first children's charities. During 2016 the Council met with Coram and agreed to pursue a closer working relationship. This will include improving the adoption offer using Coram provisions such as:

- Parenting Skill Training for children age 3-9 years
- Parenting Skill Training for children approaching adolescents
- Support Group for Teens
- Play Events
- Adoption Support Gateway – clinical assessment and advice provided to the social worker and parent.

Connected Permanence Offer:

Special Guardianship and Child Arrangement Order Assessment of need

We recognise that children and young people subject to Special Guardianship and Child Arrangement Orders have had similar experiences to those who have been adopted or those still living in foster care. As such, for these children and young people living within Leicestershire, referrals can be made to Leicestershire County Council's referrals team, called [First Response .Children's Duty for advice or an assessment of need](#). A Customer Service Agent (CSA) will listen to your concerns, ask a few questions and then provide advice. It may be that the CSA feels the need is too complex to be addressed by referring the carer and child to a community resource and will then forward the referral to a manager to consider allocation for assessment by an adoption social worker. This may result in an application being made to the Adoption Support Fund for funding for therapeutic support for the child/young person and/or family.

Allowances for Connected Carers

Where a child is looked after by the local authority, the local authority has a responsibility wherever possible to decide for the child to live with a relative, friend or other person connected who is approved as a foster carer (Section 22 of the Children Act 1989). The child can be placed with the family members prior to such approval, subject to an assessment of the placement, for up to 16 weeks. This temporary approval can only be extended in exceptional circumstances. In this context the carer is referred to as a Connected Person (also Kinship Person) and the process of obtaining approval includes the completion of a viability assessment and obtaining police checks. The assessment is then sent to the nominated senior officer for approval. Where temporary approval is given to such a placement under the procedure, the carers will receive financial support on a regular basis (fostering allowance) and the child will have a placement plan which sets out specific arrangements surrounding the child and carers, including expectations of the carer, the support they can expect to receive to full their responsibilities for the child.

The connected carers process does not apply when family make their own arrangements to care for the child within the family and friends' network. The local authority does not have a duty to assess or support any such informal family and friends' arrangements, unless it appears to the authority that service may be necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of the child. In such cases, the local authority has a responsibility under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to assess the child's needs and provide services to meet the assessed

needs of the child.

A [Family and Friends Guide for Carers](#) is available to help us understand the complexities of these care arrangements.

Those family and friends who are approved as connected foster carers will start to receive fostering allowance payments as soon as the child is placed in their care. These payments are designed to help with the costs of looking after the child on a daily basis. The carer will also receive extra payments on the child's birthday, at Christmas (or other religious festival), and for a holiday once a year. This payment is equivalent to one week of fostering allowance.

Family and Friends foster carer are also entitled to apply for a settling-in grant. This is to help with the initial costs of the child being brought into care, such as clothing and any equipment if it is required. The carer is entitled to claim mileage where appropriate. The supervising social worker will help the carer understand what mileage can be claimed and how. This can include taking them to have contact with their birth parents. There is an expectation that some mileage is already covered in the fostering allowance.

Please note that the carer can't claim child benefit or tax credits for the child if they are still receiving fostering allowance payments.

Specific allowance conditions:

In private proceedings, e.g. where the applicant makes an application for a Child Arrangement Order (of the type akin to that previously known as a Residence Order) or a Special Guardianship Order in respect of a child, where the Local Authority is NOT party to the proceedings- then the applicant can make a request to the Local Authority to be Means Tested for eligibility for a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Allowance. Any such allowance available under these orders is discretionary and is subject to annual review.

In cases of Child Arrangements Orders where the child is in the local authority's care, the allowance is means tested. Further information is provided in the [Child Arrangements Order and SGO Allowance Guidance](#).

In cases of Special Guardianship Orders where the child is in the local authority's care, the allowance is means tested. Further information is provided in the [Child Arrangements Order](#)

[and SGO Allowance Guidance.](#)

Information about fostering rates and claiming benefits whilst fostering can be found in the [Foster Carers Handbook](#).

Life Story Work

Life story work helps children separated from their birth families to make sense of their past experiences. Some children may be too young to remember or understand what happened in their lives. Information about their past and heritage may be missing or forgotten. A life story book is prepared by a social worker or support worker, the foster carer and the permanent carer (adoptive parent or other carer).

The book includes:

- Significant events in the child's life
- Significant information like descriptions of their family, where they were born and care history.



"Life story work is so much more than just completing a book that outlines events in a child's life... life story work should make a child feel supported and nurtured,"

Community Cares 5 June 2017

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Self-help offer for all children and young people living in Leicestershire

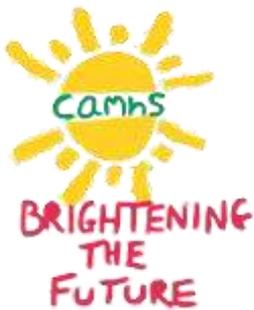
During 2016 the Council worked with partners across Leicestershire to identify services that will help parents and children access support independently. For this reason, [Kooth](#) was launched in Leicestershire. Kooth is an online counselling and emotional well-being support service for children and young people available free. The service offers a team of accredited counsellors, therapists and support workers who provide guided and outcome-focused support for each individual.



*"It means a lot to know Kooth is there even if
others can't be," Jessie, 12 years old*

Therapeutic Consultation sessions

In 2016 the Council introduced consultation sessions, delivered by CAMHS for social worker and carers, to promote understanding of our children's emotional needs and how to meet these needs. These sessions have proven to be very popular with general feedback indicating that the advice received enables the child's network to understand their needs and how best to meet these needs.



This service continues to be offered and social workers can book a consultation session by sending an email request to fpsadmin@leics.gov.uk quoting reference: Booking Consultation Session in the email subject header.

Therapeutic support

Leicestershire County Council recognise that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot be taken when working with children and young people who have had difficult life experiences and have experienced multiple losses. We also recognise that not all children and young people need the specialist services of CAMHS and quite often, need help to make sense of their experiences before permanence (with whom they will be living) has been decided. This support helps the child or young person prepare for their new family and the changes they will need to make.

As such, when it is identified through assessment that a child or young person or their families will require therapeutic services, consideration needs to be given about how best to meet this need i.e.

- Through community services
- Mentors /Pastoral staff /Key adults /ELSA trained Learning Support Assistant/Pastoral team etc.
- Completion of life story work or Words and Pictures by the child's social worker or other worker

- The Adoption Team, therapeutic worker
- CAMHS
- Another provision (There will be times when the need will be best met through a private provider).

To meet an assessed emotional or behavioural need where it is felt that a provider outside the County Council's direct provision is best placed to meet the need, a therapeutic intervention fund has been created. After approval by a designated manager, £450 per child or family member per year for therapeutic intervention will be assigned. In each case, and where the therapist recommends that further work is required, an additional £450 may be allocated for continued intervention (subject to approval by the designated manager).

The child's social worker will work with the carer or parents and where appropriate, the child or young person, or the school to identify the therapist best suited to the need and to ensure that the therapist is appropriately accredited. The social worker, parent or carer and school should always consider the Strengths and Difficulties (SDQ) Score, where this has been completed (children aged 3-16). The SDQ is a short behavioural screening questionnaire. It is used within research, evaluating treatment outcome and as part of clinical assessment to examine a child's emotional well-being.

SGO/CAO child care support worker

This worker will work with the carer and child where Leicestershire County Council has been party to proceedings and the making of the order. This worker makes a placement visit 6 weeks after the making of a final SGO or CAO and will provide a series of contacts or visits to ensure that the carers feel supported in nurturing their relationships with their children, and any early vulnerabilities and difficulties can be quickly identified and support put in place to support the carers. Telephone contact will also be made with carers at 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, 24 months, 30 months and 36 months. The purpose of these calls are to maintain long arm support contact with family, offering advice and support, training and our regular post support meet ups, for example the summer picnic or Christmas party.

In addition to this, these calls offer an opportunity to carers for discussing any presenting needs before crisis point so that interventions can be inputted to maintain stability in placements. The Support Plan will be routinely reviewed throughout this period to ensure that it remains appropriate and relevant to the needs of the child and supports adopters to meet those needs.

Special Guardianship carers and Family Action

Family Action is a charity committed to building stronger families by delivering

innovative and effective services and support that reach out to too many of the UK's most vulnerable people.

The Council is working with Family Action to provide Special Guardianship Support. This provision offers a bespoke website, a dedicated helpline and a wide range of information and resources.

As a Leicestershire Family and Friends Connected Carer, support can be accessed by emailing: sgosupport@leics.gov.uk

Social Media

Social network sites are changing what happens after the making of the Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order. Birth parents can contact their birth children, and vice versa, easily. In many instances when the birth child reaches out to their birth family, it is because they need answers. Carers can help their children use these sites affectively and safely. Where there is a risk, the child needs to be helped to understand risk and manage complex situations that may arise from unplanned or unmediated contact.

There is also useful training and online resources through adoption UK and guidance through Coram BAAF specifically in relation to social media in adoption and permanence placements.

For children in local authority care, the carer can ask the child's social worker or the supervising social worker for advice and together they can work with the child to help him or her understand the risk and manages the risk.

Community events hosted by Leicestershire County Council

Regular events like Coffee Morning Support Groups for carers are held throughout the year and carers can also access all training open to other foster carers.

Information about the events is advertised in the *Special Guardianship Orders News*. To sign up for our newsletter, please contact: sgosupport@leics.gov.uk

Training

The Fostering and Adoption Service has a dedicated training officer who ensures training is delivered for all our carers which includes our Family and Friends Carers who have legally secured permanence for the children in their care through Special Guardianship Orders, Residence Orders and Child Arrangements Orders and Adoption.

Our rich training programme offers the following:

- 150 on-learning courses that can be done at home, libraries or on smart phones)
- 2 free online courses for all carers and are based on current trending topics which changes every 12 weeks
- 45 'live' courses in venues booked by the training officer
- 2 information & learning event/fayres
- NHS Diana training for short-break carers
- Family and Friend SGO carers and adoptive parents can access all 'live training' free of charge, subject to availability.
- Training delivered by the Virtual School regarding the barriers to learning and strategies to support children in care/previously looked after.

We use surveys to establish what our carers and parents training support needs are. On this basis, we review our training offer at the end of each financial year. Our training is publicized through newsletters where the carer will receive guidance about how to book onto training.

Disruption of placement

Breakdown of placement can happen in the early days of the placement or years after the child has achieved permanency with a family member. Disruption may have many causes, but steps can be taken to reduce the risks including:

- Ensure full information about the child is shared with the carer
- Prepare the child for his or her new home
- Recognise emotional risk and help the carer or parent understand how they can use therapeutic parenting, life story work and Words and Pictures to help the child or young person
- Use other sources of advice and support to help the family understand and meet one another's needs, like support groups, training and access to therapeutic advice
- Recognise the impact of emotional development and the changing need for information and understanding as the child becomes a young adult
- Collaborative working with the Virtual School to minimize disruption to education and school moves are carefully planned to ensure a positive transition.

At times, the child or young person returns to local authority care or requires a change of placement. Where this happens, the Council will work with the parent or carer to enable the child's return to their care as soon as possible. This support may take a number of forms (e.g. social worker, support worker, CAMHS, therapeutic intervention) and may include the

support of the Dedicated Placement Support Team.

Support Workers in this team bring range of skills, knowledge and experiences and work intensively with the child and parent or carers to enable the child or young person's return home. Referrals to this team can be made by the child's social worker but allocation of the resource is made based on a criteria basis and is authorised by the Head of Service.

[The Placement Planning and Disruption Meetings procedure](#) is available for further operational guidance to staff.

Fostering Permanence Offer:

Looked after Child Assessment of Need

Children who remain in the care of the local authority will have an allocated social worker and designated [Independent Review Officer \(IRO\)](#). The social worker is responsible for providing an up to date assessment of need as per regulations and the IRO is responsible for ensuring the Care Plan reflects this need. The Care Plan may include a range of actions to address the child or young person's need, including those included in this document. A [Children's Rights Officer](#) is available to help the child or young person understand their Care Plan, to help them understand their rights and make their views known.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 requires a Pathway Plan for all eligible, relevant and former relevant young people. The Act defines an *eligible* young person as one who is aged 16 or 17, who has been looked after by the local authority for a total of 13 weeks since the age of 14 and remains looked after. A *relevant* young person is defined in the Act as a young person who was previously an *eligible* young person but who is no longer looked after and is under the age of 18.

The Pathway Plan fulfils the requirements both for assessing the young person's needs and planning services for the young person.

Life Story Work

Life story work helps children separated from their birth families to make sense of their past experiences. Some children may be too young to remember or understand what happened in their lives. Information about their past and heritage may be missing or forgotten. A life story book is prepared by a social worker or support worker, the foster carer and the permanent carer (adoptive parent or other carer).

The book includes:

- Significant events in the child's life
- Significant information like descriptions of their family, where they were born and care history.

"Life story work is so much more than just completing a book that outlines events in a child's life... life story work should make a child feel supported and nurtured."

Community Cares 5 June 2017



The Life Story work may also take the form of or include a scrapbook, photo album, interactive DC, collection of personal items and [Signs of Safety](#) work like Words and Pictures.

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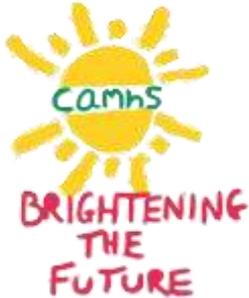


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There is useful training and online resources through Adoption UK and guidance through Coram BAAF specifically in relation to social media in adoption and permanence placements.

For children in local authority care, the foster carer can ask the child's social worker or the supervising social worker for advice and together they can work with the child to help him or her understand the risk and manages the risk.

Community events hosted by Leicestershire County Council

Regular events like support and information sharing groups for foster families are held throughout the year. Other events include family fun days, craft days, summer play scheme and celebration events.

Information about the events is advertised in *Fostering News*. All new foster carers are automatically signed up for *Fostering News*, they don't have to request it. It is also published on the Portal – all new foster carers are invited to register to access the Portal.

This a small sample of the events offered:



Training

The Fostering and Adoption Service has a dedicated training officer who ensures training is delivered for all our carers. Our rich training programme offers the following:

- 150 on-learning courses that can be done at home, libraries or on smart phones)
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- Training delivered by the Virtual School regarding the barriers to learning and strategies to support children in care/previously looked after.

We use surveys to establish what our carers' training support needs are. On this basis, we review our training offer at the end of each financial year.

Our training is publicized through newsletters where you will receive guidance about how to book onto training.

Education and Children in Care

Leicestershire County Council has a specific responsibility to support the educational achievement of Children in Care. Leicestershire's Virtual School promotes positive outcomes for all Children and Young People (CYP) in care to Leicestershire wherever they are living or educated and supports schools and colleges to narrow the achievement gap. The Virtual

School promotes higher aspirations and a greater accountability from all those involved in the education and care of Leicestershire's looked after children.

The Virtual School ensures that each child in care to Leicestershire has an up to date Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is reviewed three times a year. The Virtual School also has the responsibility of managing the Pupil Premium Plus for LAC. The Virtual school:

- Advises on the use of Pupil Premium Plus to ensure promotion of educational engagement, including provision of services to meet emotional and behavioural needs
- Delivers bespoke training, information, advice and guidance for professionals to help them understand the range of barriers to learning experienced by children in care and why they might underachieve.
- Robustly monitors attendance, exclusion and attainment and progress data in order to ensure that everything is in place to support the specific needs of the children.
- Delivers a range of initiatives which support young people to engage in education, raise aspirations and enable children in care to experience successful transitions.



Year 8/9 Art and Design University Day – Our students had lots to say on the day including: “it has made us want to come to uni” and “I definitely want to come back for the residential in June!” Education Blog 15 Jan 2018

Leicestershire Virtual School monitors and tracks the progress of post-16 young people in care and care leavers, supporting their transition into education, employment and training (EET) and signposting provision and resources to those who are not in education, employment and training (NEET). Schools have a statutory responsibility to provide careers information, advice and guidance for pre-16 young people which will be complemented by support from the Virtual School to ensure young people have access to the most appropriate provision relative to their needs and aspirations.

Specialist Foster Carers

All our foster carers are special and work with children and young people who have a range of complex emotional, health and educational needs. Some children have greater needs and find it difficult to settle into more traditional family based foster placements. For these children, Leicestershire works with foster carers who have lifestyles, skills and knowledge that can best meet these children and young people’s needs. We call these carers Specialist Foster Carers and are recruited through a specialist recruitment scheme.

Types of specialist carers:

One2One carers – These carers support some of our more challenging young people as part of their step down from residential care, return to their families or a family based placement. Each placement has a clear trajectory for the young person to be reunified with their parents, return to family placement or into independence.

Pathway Carers - We are looking to recruit specialist transition carers who will work with our young people who have more complex needs; these maybe young people who are in their final school year or who are 16-17 years of age. We are hoping that this scheme will enable young people to have a level of independence but also the security of knowing that they have support and guidance that will make their transition into adulthood smooth. These young people may require an extra level of supervision and support that is not offered with our current Supported Lodgings Providers.

Short Breaks – For carers wishing to provide respite care to children with disabilities. We successfully recruited new carers to the scheme providing invaluable to parents by the provision of short breaks. These carers go to great lengths to build lasting relationships with birth parents / long term carers, so both the child and the family benefit from the scheme.

Parent and Child Placements – There still continues to be a drive for these placements, requiring skilled carers who enable parents to stay alongside their child who is placed whilst an assessment is undertaken.

Disruption of placement

Breakdown of placement can happen in the early days of the placement or years after the child's permanency has been agreed with a particular foster carer or family member. Disruption may have many causes, but steps can be taken to reduce the risks including:

- Ensure full information about the child is shared with the adopter or carer
- Prepare the child for his or her new home
- Recognise emotional risk and help the carer or parent understand how they can use therapeutic parenting, life story work and Words and Pictures to help the child or young person
- Use other sources of advice and support to help the family understand and meet one another's needs, like support groups, training and access to therapeutic advice
- Recognise the impact of emotional development and the changing need for information and understanding as the child becomes a young adult.
- Collaborative working with the Virtual School to minimize disruption to education and school moves are carefully planned to ensure a positive transition.

At times, the child or young person returns to local authority care or requires a change of foster placement. Where this happens, the Council will work with the parent or carer to enable the child's return. This support may take several forms (e.g. social worker, support worker, CAMHS, therapeutic intervention) and may include the support of the Dedicated Placement Support Team (DPST).

The Support Workers in the DPST bring range of skills, knowledge and experiences to the team and work intensively with the child and parent or carers to enable the child or young person's return home. Referrals to this team can be made by the child's social worker but allocation of the resource is made based on a criteria basis and is authorised by the Head of Service.

[The Placement Planning and Disruption Meetings procedure](#) is available for further operational guidance to staff.

Other offers of support and useful information:

The role of the therapeutic worker, children using abusive behaviour

Children and young people who abuse others should be held responsible for their abusive behaviour, while being identified and responded to in a way that meets their needs as well as protecting others. We believe that children and young people need the opportunity to be able to make sense of their life experiences, are helped to manage their emotional needs and are supported by their families and people who know them best. Leicestershire County Council has a specialist therapist who will work with children and young people aged 4-17 years who live in Leicestershire who, following the completion of an assessment is deemed to be Children in Need (Children Act 1989, Section 17) and who require longer term therapeutic intervention.

This therapist will accept referrals following a multi-agency meeting where the child or young person's needs are considered, in line with safeguarding procedures. [The Children using Abusive Behaviour](#) procedure is available for further operational guidance to staff.

Children who are not deemed to be 'Children in Need' but require emotional support or behaviour/boundary guidance, can access services through universal and targeted provision e.g. through school nurses, mentors, school counsellors or where appropriate, short interventions through social workers, and Early Help intervention services.

Family Action Post Sexual Abuse Service:

Leicestershire County Council works with Family Action to provide a post sexual abuse services to children, young people who have experienced sexual abuse and their carers. It recognizes that sexual abuse can have a very damaging and long-lasting impact on a child's or young person's emotional and mental health, particularly if no help is available, and that problems caused by the abuse are often linked to the atmosphere of secrecy within which it is perpetrated.

The service therefore aims, where possible, to use group work interventions in order to link children up with each other and to demonstrate to them that they are not alone, abnormal or unworthy of friendship and positive social interactions. However, the service also recognizes that some children find it hard to cope in a group or, at the point of referral, are not yet ready

to work on their abuse in the presence of others. Equally, some may have very particular issues or needs which could not easily be dealt with in a group work setting. In such cases individual work may be the preferred type of intervention.

The service also recognizes the vital role played by parents and carers in supporting the child's recovery from sexual abuse. Groups for carers are therefore run on a regular basis and are used to enable parents and carers to learn from and help each other, to develop their understanding of how abusers work, to consider how best to make sense of their child's behaviour and how best to support them and to learn not to blame themselves for what happened and to attend to their own needs appropriately.

Children, young people and their families can self-refer to the service or they can be referred by another agency. Referrals can be made over the telephone, in person or on completion of our referral form:

Address: Family Action, 9 Newarke Street, Leicester, LE1 5SN

Telephone: 0116 2574979

Youth Offending Service

The Youth Offending Service (YOS) works with young people age 8 to 17 years at risk of offending and reoffending, by working with young people and families. YOS work with young people who become involved in Anti-Social Behavior (ASB), minor offending or Court orders.

The ethos of the YOS is to engage young people as soon as possible once incidents of ASB or offending begin taking place. The YOS is keen always to work closely with parents or carers when undertaking its work. All young people receive a detailed assessment to uncover what the issues associated with their offending, and also to uncover the strengths they have which can be used to help them to desist from offending. We also assess what are the risks of a young person offending, causing harm to others and of their safety and wellbeing. The parents and carers involvement in the assessment process is always valued.

The YOS recognizes that young people's offending can be linked to their past experiences. Workers seek to enable young people to mature, learn and make choices which avoid future offending. The service has access to specialist help from CAMHS, substance misuse services, education and housing, all of which are critical areas which frequently

require additional support.

The Youth Offending Service can be contacted via email at youthoffendingservice@leics.gov.uk or by telephone on 0116 3050030.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS):

CAMHS sees young people from across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The service also links with other children's services to offer a multi-agency Approach. The team is made up of doctors, nurses and therapists who specialize in child mental health. The support CAMHS provide varies according to need, from a one-off appointment to a programme of on-going care which lasts until the child or young person feels better and is felt to be safe. About the services-

CAMHS Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment team provides rapid assessment and treatment at home for children and young people in mental health crisis and support for their families, providing no physical medical intervention is required. Primary Mental Health Team works between primary care - for example GPs and public health (school) nurses - and specialist CAMHS outpatient teams. The team treats young people who have difficulties with their mental health or emotional wellbeing, and who may be at risk of developing a mental health disorder. The Young Peoples Team works particularly with vulnerable young people in care, adopted children and those who are involved with the Youth Offending Service. CAMHS Learning Disability Team provides services for children with a moderate to profound learning disability and or associated behavioural problems. CAMHS Eating Disorders Team offers specialist outpatient assessment and treatment to young people and their parents affected by eating disorders.

Further information can be found at NHS [Leicestershire Partnership, CAMHS](#)

The role of the children's social worker

When a child is still in the local authority's care, he or she will have a social worker. The role of the children's social worker is to fulfil the council's obligations as a corporate parent. The role is to work alongside other professionals, to ensure that a child or young person receives appropriate care, education and health services. The children's social worker will have an agreed visiting pattern that is prescribed by regulation and is required to see the children or young person alone, undertake direct work, establish their views etc. The social worker will also seek the views of other professionals and the foster carer to determine the child's needs and required actions or support needed to meet these needs.

The role of the supervising social worker

All foster carers are supported by a fostering or supervising social worker. The fostering

service supports their foster carers to ensure they provide foster children with care that meets those children's needs, takes the children's wishes and feelings into account, and supports the children's safety, health, enjoyment, education and preparation for the future. They will visit the foster carer at least once a month, but can visit more often if it is needed (based on the carers experience and the child's needs). The carer can phone the social worker any time you need help or advice. Three times a year the supervising social worker must make an unannounced visit too. These provisions are regulated, and further information can be found in the [National Minimum Standards \(21\)](#).

The role of the permanence social worker:

The role of the Permanence Team is to undertake all family finding for children who need permanence via the adoption route. They also support adopters through the placing and supporting children through to Adoption Order. This work also includes family finding for long term fostered children although it is acknowledged that the child's social worker is best placed to inform the child's profile.

Referrals are made by the locality teams who request a Pack A from the Permanence Team if the child's plan is adoption or a pack F if the child's plan is long term fostering and the placement either has not been identified or is identified but the child has been placed there for less than two years. The child's social worker will provide the necessary information in the 'Packs' that will be used during the permanence process.

In addition to day to day operations, the team is very committed to ongoing developmental projects such as:

- Life Appreciation Days
- Permanence planning of children in long term foster care
- Further embedding of the Signs of Safety methodology in their practice.
- Increased involvement in the completion of *sibling together or apart* assessments
- The use of *Theraplay* and *Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy* principles to ensure that the Permanence Team can appropriately support adopters to understand the needs of our children and parent them therapeutically.
- The introduction of an Adoption Support Worker who will offer regular contact with adopters post the final order for three years, to ensure the adoption support plan remains appropriate and to help adopters implement their training and link with support networks.

The Local Offer:

Leicestershire's Local Offer provides children and young people with special education needs or disabilities (SEND) and their family's information about help and services in Leicestershire. Information can be found on-line, which enables you to search for services and provision. The Local Offer can be found [here](#).

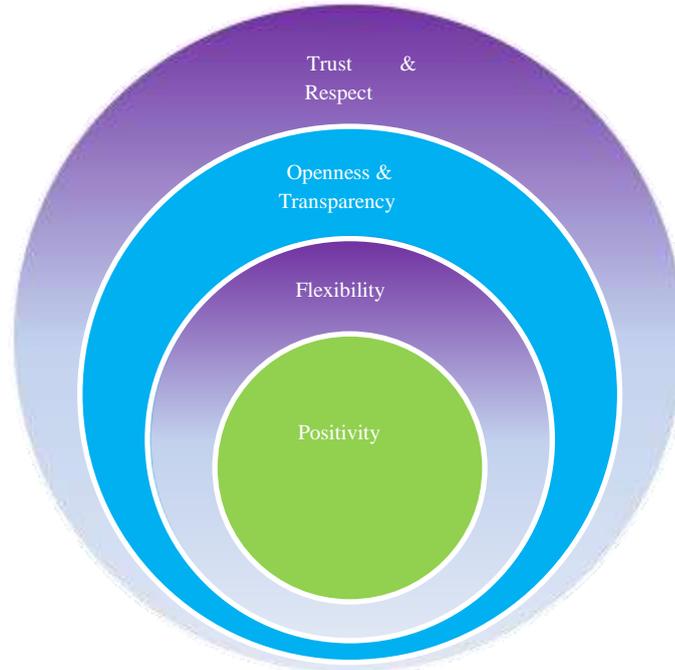
Making a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's provision of, or failure to provide, a service for which it has responsibility.

Many people feel daunted at the prospect of making a complaint. They may be unsure how to go about it, or how best to put their case. The Council has a positive approach to complaints and will encourage people to seek the support of friends or other advocates such as Citizens Advice Bureau. The council will assist people in finding such support.

The Council encourages any customer who has a concern to first speak to a member of staff in the relevant service area who should try to resolve it. However if a service user remains unhappy and wants to make a complaint, we need to make it easy for them to do so. The customer (parent or carer) can be provided with a complaints leaflet (available from Business Services) and/or can be directed to the Council's [online complaint form](#).

This guidance embraces and promotes the core values of Leicestershire County Council:



Positivity

We find the best way to get things done. We challenge ourselves to deliver high quality services and inspire others to deliver results.

Flexibility

We are adaptable to support the needs of the business – working collaboratively and supporting colleagues.

Openness & Transparency

We are honest with the people we work with and serve. We share information and communicate clearly.

Trust & Respect

We enable our staff to take ownership and be accountable for their own performance, actions and decisions. We value diversity and listen to the view of others.

PERMANENCE PASSPORT: THE FOSTERING, ADOPTION AND CONNECTED CARE SUPPORT OFFER GUIDANCE TO STAFF

Published February 2018
Date of review June 2019

http://llrchildcare.proceduresonline.com/leicestershire/local_resources.html