

# Lancashire's Model of Practice: Family Safeguarding, Strength Based Approach to working alongside Children, Young People and Families

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Children, young people  
and families are safe,  
healthy and achieve  
their full potential

[lancashire.gov.uk](http://lancashire.gov.uk)



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# 1. Introduction

Recent reviews and policy briefings over the last decade have highlighted the need for evolving practice to respond to the increasing number of care proceedings and children entering care. There is a shared understanding that strong, trusting relationships are central to effective social work, and that children thrive best when supported to remain safely within their families

The council and the Department for Education (DfE) through the Strengthening Families Protecting Children Programme have invested in Lancashire and in 2021 we introduced Lancashire Family Safeguarding as a strength-based model of practice.

Lancashire's vision is to embed strength-based practice across the whole of Lancashire, using motivational interviewing techniques when working with children, young people and families but also with staff, colleagues and partners. In Lancashire, from our children and

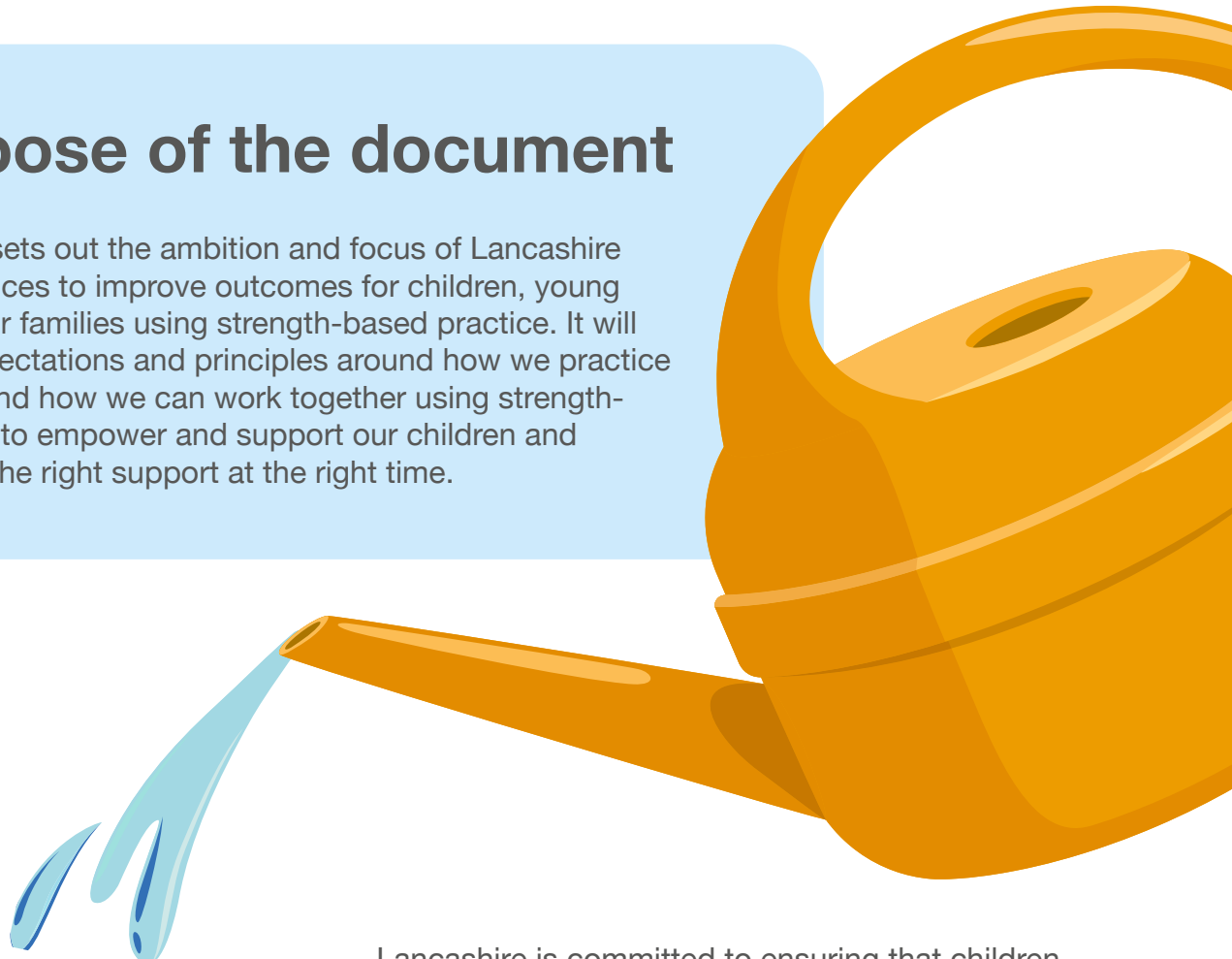
families service and front-door to our leaving care services, we are determined to deliver excellent outcomes for the children, young people, and the families we work alongside.

We believe that kindness matters, and we treat people with fairness, dignity, and respect. Together with our partners, we work with families to recognise and draw on existing resources, motivations, capabilities, and support systems to meet, challenge and overcome adversity. We aim to work with families and partner agencies to co-produce plans that identify sustainable solutions that require the least amount of professional intrusion in family life.

We aim to work alongside families from the earliest opportunity, building on their strengths and resources to overcome challenges and create positive outcomes. Our focus is on supporting families to stay together, ensuring children are safe, nurtured, and empowered to thrive and reach their full potential.

## 2. Purpose of the document

This guidance sets out the ambition and focus of Lancashire Children's Services to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families using strength-based practice. It will set out key expectations and principles around how we practice in Lancashire and how we can work together using strength-based practice to empower and support our children and families to get the right support at the right time.

A large, stylized orange watering can is shown from the side, pouring a stream of blue water from its spout. The water is depicted as several blue droplets falling towards a vibrant red rose. The rose is in full bloom, with many layers of petals, and is attached to a green stem with several green leaves. The background is white, and the overall style is clean and illustrative.

Lancashire is committed to ensuring that children and families receive a seamless service through shared professional values, behaviours and approaches across all services. The best interest of the child is central at all times.

This guidance provides a framework for strength-based relational practice and working together to use resources more effectively to bring about positive changes for children and families and to keep them together when it is safe to do so.

Strength based relational practice focuses on identifying the strengths, or assets, as well as the needs and difficulties of children, young people and families. Strengths-based practice focuses on individuals' and families' strengths (including personal strengths and social and community networks) and not on their deficits. It also encourages families to identify the support they require to address their needs.

Strength-based practice is holistic and multidisciplinary and works with the individual and families to promote their wellbeing. It is outcomes led and not services led.



### 3. Levels of need in Lancashire

Across Lancashire there are identified four broad levels of need:

#### **Level 1 needs – Universal (universal services)**

- Most children, young people and families will experience challenges in their lives that impact on their wellbeing. Most families will be able to weather these challenges (are resilient to them) either without help from services, or with advice, guidance and support from universal services, including empathy and understanding.

#### **Level 2 needs - Universal Plus (Early Help Service)**

- Some children, young people and families will need support from people who know them well and have established relationships with them to meet some challenges where advice and guidance has not been enough to help the family achieve change or where a child or young person needs additional support to help them to thrive.

#### **Level 3 needs – Intensive (Family Help)**

- A small number of children, young people and families will experience significant difficulties and will need coordinated support from experts working with them to find sustainable solutions that reduce the impact of challenge on the wellbeing and development of children and young people.

#### **Level 4 needs – Specialist (statutory children's services)**

- In exceptional cases families need specialist, statutory support that is designed to maintain or repair relationships and keep families together wherever possible. In some very specific circumstances, the needs are so great that children need to be away from their family to ensure that they are protected from harm and in these circumstances the local authority becomes their “corporate parent”.

Please see [Working Well with Children and Families in Lancashire](#) for further guidance on thresholds.



## 4. Lancashire Children, Young People and Families Partnership Vision

**Outcome one:** Vulnerable children and young people are safe from harm and build resilience.

**Outcome two:** Children and Young People achieve their full potential in education, learning and future employment.

**Outcome three:** Children and young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and know how to help others

**Outcome four:** Children, young people and families have a voice in shaping the support they receive.

**Outcome five:** Children and young people live in Lancashire where they can enjoy a good quality of life, be happy and want to stay.

For further information on our vision please visit: Vision ([lancscc.net](http://lancscc.net))

## 5. Our Support

In Lancashire we are committed to working together with children and families to find out what support they want so that they can build on their own strengths as well as the strength of their family, friends and local community.

We aim to enable families of Lancashire to achieve their goals, reach their full potential and reduce reliance upon traditional services. We want to work with families so that they feel empowered to make and maintain change.

In line with the National Framework (2023) we also aim to ensure that wherever possible children can remain within their family where it is safe to do so.





# Lancashire's Vision: Children, young people and their families are safe, healthy and achieve their full potential.

## Lancashire's Model of Practice: Family Safeguarding – Strengths-Based Relational Approach to working alongside Children and Families.

In Lancashire, from our front-door to our leaving care services, we are determined to deliver excellent outcomes for the children, young people, and the families we work alongside. We believe that kindness is integral, and we treat people with fairness, dignity, and respect. Together with our partners, we work with families to recognise and draw on existing resources, motivations, capabilities, and support systems to meet challenge and overcome adversity. We aim to work with families and partner agencies to co-produce plans that identify sustainable solutions that require the least amount of professional intrusion in family life.

**“When a flower doesn’t bloom, we fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower”**

**Alexander Den Heijer.**



### Our behaviours seek to nourish:

Actively listening, supporting, role modelling, honestly and transparent. Resourceful, adaptable and flexible. Be reflective, using initiative and demonstrating positivity. Demonstrating empathy, compassion, kindness, and unconditional positive regard. Rising to the challenge, communicating clearly, and timely. Being genuinely responsive and welcoming feedback. Taking accountability, being emotionally intelligent, seeking to empower and increasing resilience. Sensitive and able to contain and co-regulate. Nurturing, demonstrating warmth and professional love and always being aspirational for the families we work alongside.

### Our Core Values Keep Us Grounded:

Autonomous, Responsible, Creative, Innovative, Maintaining a Just Culture, Owning our practice, Assuming Positive Intent. Advocating for Social justice. Having a Learning and Growth Mind-set, Maintaining Professional Boundaries. Believing in Changes and Valuing Strengths. Demonstrating Cultural Humility and Responsive, Ethical Practice. Cohesion and Belonging, Driving Shared Identity,

Across Lancashire all agencies work together to offer families the right support at the right time, helping them to stay together safely.

# Practice

**In Lancashire we use strength-based Relational practice and motivational interviewing to empower families to make and maintain positive change.**

We will work alongside children and their families when they experience challenges to support them to build strong foundations and develop resilience so that children thrive.

Our Practice is guided by our co produced practice standards and practice principals, the things which we agree matter the most.

The support we offer to children, young people and families is solution-focused, trauma informed and evidence-based interventions and our families should experience this consistency of approach, regardless of where they are in our service.

We want to offer support at the earliest opportunity to prevent problems from escalating.

- We want children, young people and their families to receive the right support at the right time.
- We want children to remain within their families when it is safe to do so
- We have a whole family approach when working with families.
- We work with children, young people and families and do not do to them.
- We believe that children, young people and their families are experts in their own lives and that working alongside them and co-producing solutions is important.

- We provide timely support and recognise when children and families require additional support from statutory services.
- We use motivational interviewing skills to empower and enable our children, young people and families to be fully engaged and be in control of the support they receive.
- Children, young people and families are supported and encouraged to participate and be involved in changes to services, have their voices heard and their wishes and feelings understood.

In Lancashire our practice is open and transparent, rights-based and person-centred and has a clear ethical and values-based foundation.

- o Kindness and respect are at the heart of everything we do.
- o Our relationship with children, young people and families
  - o Within our teams
  - o When working with colleagues
  - o In our relationships with our senior management team
  - o Within the community of Lancashire





### **Within Lancashire, our Practice Priorities are**

- Good quality assessment and analysis
- SMART planning
- Purposeful and intentional direct work
- The right support at the right time.

These priorities are informed by keeping the child and family at the heart of everything we do, empowerment, co production and recording well. Our co produced Practice Standards are informed by our co produced Practice Priorities.

### **We are committed to**

- manageable workloads so that social workers can spend time delivering intentional and purposeful interventions.
- are committed to creating good files for our children to access in their future. We will write to the child and use language that is family friendly, jargon free and shows that the child's journey is heard. using language that is more family friendly and to ensure that the child's voice and journey are heard.

In Lancashire, we are committed to fostering a strong learning culture where continuous professional development is at the heart of social work practice. Our approach ensures

that every practitioner has access to high-quality support and opportunities to grow. Through our dedicated Practice Development Managers, we provide tailored guidance and coaching to embed best practice and reflective learning. For those at the start of their careers or new to Lancashire, our Social Work Academy offers a structured and supportive environment, helping practitioners build confidence and competence as they transition into practice.

We also invest in leadership development to strengthen our workforce for the future.

Our Leadership Academy equips current and aspiring managers with the skills and knowledge to lead effectively and inspire teams. Alongside this, we nurture collaboration and shared learning through Communities of Practice and regular learning circles, creating spaces for social workers to exchange ideas and celebrate innovation. Continuous improvement is embedded in our culture, with audit findings informing practice development and shaping the way we deliver services. Together, these initiatives ensure that Lancashire social workers are empowered to learn, lead, and deliver the best outcomes for children and families



## 7. Our Innovation

We have adopted the **Family Safeguarding** whole family approach to supporting children and families this is a way of keeping families together where it is safe to do so. This is achieved through a more collaborative way of working where we as professionals, motivate parents and carers to identify the changes needed within their own families. We also provide wrap around support for parents who need support to change some of their own behaviours which may be a cause for safeguarding concern. This helps to achieve better outcomes for children and young people.

We work with parents to build on strengths and identify positive changes. It's not about imposing change on them. That includes:

- **Motivational interviewing** – A strengths-based conversational approach that encourages families to choose change.
- **Multi-disciplinary planning** - A team of specialists working together to address parental domestic abuse, mental health and substance misuse
- **The family safeguarding workbook and family programme** – An assessment of need leading to a programme of tailored support. The workbook is a working tool for the time a family are being supported by a family safeguarding social worker
- **Group case supervision** monthly supervision for each case with input from every professional working with the family

### **Becoming Trauma Informed Lancashire -**

Trauma is recognised as a profound global public health crisis. The pervasive and harmful impact of traumatic experiences on individuals, families, and communities and the inadvertent but widespread re-traumatisation of children and adults within the system has made it essential to rethink 'how we do business'. There has been a tendency to focus on presenting symptoms such as violence or substance 'abuse' and there is a need to tackle the impact of trauma and focus on how systems can prevent trauma and support recovery from traumatic events by working together, across systems and with communities. Senior Leaders across Lancashire have committed to the development of **Trauma Informed Lancashire** and the collective practice

of understanding human experiences of the children, families and communities of Lancashire, responding to such experiences and addressing the causes rather than just the presenting behaviours.

### **National Framework and Families First**

The National Framework was launched in 2023. The Children's Social Care National Framework is statutory guidance that sets a clear vision for local authority children's social care. It defines its purpose, core principles, and expected outcomes, focusing on keeping families together wherever safe and possible, supporting family networks, ensuring children's safety, and providing stable, loving homes for those in care.

The framework emphasises relational practice, listening to children's voices, and working in partnership with families and agencies. It identifies three key enablers—effective multi-agency collaboration, strong leadership, and a skilled workforce—to deliver these outcomes and drive continuous improvement across the system.

Our innovation and way of working through Family Safeguarding supports the outcomes of the National Framework.

Our innovation will continue as we continue to take steps towards strengthening family supports and family safeguarding further through Families First.

