



**Market Position
Statement
December 2024:
Children's Homes**



Where we are now

Higher numbers of children living in children's homes, despite a fall in the number of children in our care overall.

- **Less Lancashire children in care:** 316 less Lancashire children in care at end of November 2024 compared to in 2021 (1686 Lancashire children in care as of 30/11/24).
- **Sharp increase in the number of Lancashire children living in children's homes** (from 180 in 2021 to 261 in November 2024).
- **71 more Lancashire children living in an agency children's home** in November 2024 compared to 2021.

There are more than enough children's homes in Lancashire to meet local demand, but we can still struggle to find suitable homes.

- **Lancashire has the largest number of children's homes within its local authority area than any other local authority in England.** 8% of all children's homes in England are in our boundaries, with most operated by agency providers.
- **There are more than enough children's homes in Lancashire to care for Lancashire children, yet we still cannot place all our children locally.** According to Ofsted's register of children's homes (November 2024) there were a total of 302 Ofsted registered children's homes run by private providers in Lancashire, able to care for up to 893 children. As of 30 November 2024, only 143 Lancashire children were living in an agency Ofsted registered children's home in Lancashire. 66 other Lancashire children were living in an agency Ofsted registered children's home outside of the county, with most living there due to a lack of offers from Lancashire homes, (as they are full of children from other Local Authority areas), not because it was part of their care plan to live at a distance from their community.
- **Only 36% of agency Ofsted registered children's homes in Lancashire have Lancashire children living there (November 2024).** Lancashire children were living in only 108 of the 302 agency Ofsted registered children's homes in Lancashire County Council's boundaries.
- **Only 15% of beds in agency children's homes in Lancashire are being used by children from Lancashire (November 2024).**
- **More and more agency children's homes continue to be opened in Lancashire,** despite already high numbers. 56 more Ofsted registered homes have opened in Lancashire in 2024, with a similar number opening in 2023. Only 29% of the new children's homes that opened in 2023/24 were caring for Lancashire children as of 31 March 2024. More homes in our area further exacerbates the already challenging staff recruitment and retention issues being faced by children's home providers in Lancashire and risks impacting on quality across both new and existing homes.

Very high numbers of children in care living in Lancashire from other local authority areas significantly impacts on local services.

SCHOOLS

- As many children in care have special education needs or have a history of disrupted education, high numbers of children in care from out of area is placing a high demand on alternative educational provision (i.e. Pupil Referral Units or PRUs). Secondary PRUs and special schools in Lancashire are already over capacity and this additional demand is impacting on the local authority's ability to fulfil statutory duties for excluded pupils (which is the main purpose of a PRU).



- The high number of out of area children in care that are moving into children's homes is putting a strain on admissions in both secondary and primary schools. This is impacting on our ability to find school places for Lancashire's own children in care, as schools are routinely reporting that they cannot meet any further demand due to the high numbers of children in care they already have on roll.

HEALTH

- There are over 1000 children from other Local Authorities living in Lancashire for whom health have a responsibility to complete statutory health assessments and act as lead health professionals.
- These children tend to have a higher complexity of health needs and require various health services. This puts a high demand on already stretched services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Accident and Emergency Services.
- Increasingly out of area children move to Lancashire without any or very little prior planning, which can mean that children are moving into Lancashire without a robust plan for how their health needs will be met.
- An average of 4 young people per day (who have been admitted due to emotional and wellbeing needs) are unable to move out of hospitals in our area because there is not a suitable home for them to move to.

POLICE

- Evidence shows that 1 in 10 children in care will be reported missing. Children in care will be reported missing on an average of 5 occasions as opposed to 2 occasions for children not looked after by the local authority.
- The large number of homes in Lancashire is making meaningful, regular engagement between Missing Person Prevention Officers and children's homes difficult to achieve.
- In addition to police responding to children being missing, police also respond to crime related incidents linked to children living in children's homes.

It can be challenging to find suitable, local homes for some of our children.

- **More than half of Lancashire's requests for children's homes are for smaller homes** (caring for 3 children or less).
- **25% of Lancashire's searches for a children's home are 'hard-to-find'**, with most being for smaller homes able to meet the needs of children with a higher complexity of need/ behaviours.
- **More children with a plan for fostering are living in children's homes**, due to fostering sufficiency challenges. These children are more likely to be prioritised by providers due to their lesser complex needs/ behaviours, further exacerbating the challenge of finding homes for our children with a higher complexity of need/ behaviours.

We do not need any more solo children's homes in Lancashire.

- Solo children's homes will only be used by Lancashire in very specific circumstances and would not usually be a child's long-term plan. Solo homes will only be considered for a very small cohort of our children, whose needs have been assessed as very high risk at that time, with the impact being such that other children could not safely live alongside them, or because this would further increase the risk to the child.
- Children who need a solo home tend to be in a period of crisis, with frequent incidents of concern and daily worries for the child's safety and well-being. However, children do not tend to remain with such level of need in the longer term, and with the right care and intervention, we expect to see levels of risk reduce and for children to make progress. Solo homes are considered periods



of intervention whilst children receive the necessary support to reduce risk and to move on to their longer-term home.

- To reduce the need for a child to experience an additional move, our preference would be to place a child who requires to live on their own into a home that could in the future support another child to move in (i.e. the first child into a 2-bed children's home).
- As of November 2024, there were 33 solo children's homes in Lancashire. Most of these homes were not caring for Lancashire children.

There are particularly high numbers of Ofsted registered children's home in Fylde and Wyre districts.

- As of November 2024, Fylde had 47 Ofsted registered children's homes in its area (compared to 24 the previous year) and Wyre had 43 children's homes (compared to 22 the previous year).

Where we want to be

- **More agency children's homes in Lancashire caring for Lancashire children.**
- **A higher proportion of children living in children's homes that are delivered by the Local Authority** (increase from 20% to 25% initially; then 33%; and an aspiration of 50% longer term).
- **More smaller homes that will prioritise Lancashire children and that are able to effectively care for the following needs/ behaviours:**
 - Complex mental health needs
 - Criminal behaviours, including high risk of exploitation, damage to property, possession of knives/ weapons, and arson
 - Aggression/ violence
 - Harmful sexualised behaviours
 - Autism
 - Children with physical and/ or learning disabilities

What we don't need

- **Any more agency children's homes opened by providers who do not prioritise providing a home for a Lancashire child:** Further children's homes opening that take children from outside of Lancashire will put further pressure on health services, schools and police. They will also further exacerbate the current staff recruitment and retention challenges.
- **Any more children's home for one child only.**
- **Any further residential family assessment units:** We have enough locally to meet demand and do not struggle to secure this type of provision.
- **Larger children's homes or those aimed exclusively at younger children (i.e. under 11),** as we do not tend to struggle to secure these types of homes.

Who we need

Good quality and good value providers who are willing to work collaboratively with Lancashire County Council to deliver local homes for Lancashire's children in care.

Please contact artenquiries@lancashire.gov.uk for any further discussions

