Lancashire Portage Protocol
1. Background

Lancashire Portage service provides educational home-visiting for pre-school children who have significant special educational needs and disabilities. The Portage Home Visitor works in partnership with parents and carers in their own home. The aim of the service is to empower parents and carers in developing their child's play and learning and promote positive outcomes. Lancashire Portage service is registered with the National Portage Association (NPA) and adheres to the NPA Code of Practice and Ethical Guidelines (2006). The service continues to maintain a 5 star award from the NPA.

The Lancashire Portage protocol was developed and agreed through discussion with all Portage Home Visitors, the Lancashire Portage Forum and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Senior Management team. Parents/Carers, health colleagues, early years providers and schools were involved.

All Lancashire County Council policies and procedures and those of Lancashire Special Educational Needs and Disability Service are adhered to. These include Safeguarding and Child Protection; Lone Working; Complaints/Grievance Policies: Equalities, Continuing Professional Development, Data Protection; Health, Safety and Welfare; Management of Sickness Absence and Sick Pay. They are all available through the Portage Service or are on the Lancashire County Council Intranet.

2. Service Ethos

Lancashire Portage Service follows the guidance available from the NPA Code of Practice and Ethical Guidelines (2006). As such the Service is committed to being:

- Family Centred
- Accessible
- Well co-ordinated
- Competent
- Accountable
- Working in partnership with other agencies

3. Aims and objectives of the Service

- Portage is delivered as part of the County Council's Local Offer for children from birth to the time the child is eligible for their free Early Years Entitlement for 3 year olds who live in Lancashire and meet the referral criteria.

The Service aims to:

- support and empower parents/carers in promoting their child's learning and development through structured teaching
• work cohesively with other professionals through, whenever possible, the CAF/TAF process

• support the successful transition from home to an early years provider

• provide educational advice to the local authority as part of the Educational, Health and Care pathway

4. Referrals

The Service operates an open referral system, in line with NPA recommendations, so that parents are able to self-refer. This can be done by using the parent/carer self-referral form available from one of the area offices (details available on www.lancashire.gov.uk/SEND website).

Children can also be referred to the Portage team through discussion and agreement with parents/carers through a CAF by any involved professional.

Referrals will be accepted using the following criteria:

• The child lives in Lancashire

• From birth to the time the child is eligible for their free Early Years Entitlement for 3 year olds

• The child has significant difficult in two or more areas of development (this would usually be of around half-life age) or an identified condition, such as Downs Syndrome

• If the child is not accessing any other educational specialist services

5. Priority and waiting lists

In order to meet the local authority's statutory regulations for Safeguarding and SEND reforms, all referrals and waiting lists will be prioritised as follows:

• If the Child is Looked After (CLA), has a Child Protection Plan or is a Child in Need

• On a 'first come, first serve' basis

• Provision the child is already receiving

• Length of time on the waiting list

• The child's age
6. **Service Discharge**

Continuation of Portage visits will be reviewed alongside the review of targets and will take into account:

- Family requests for a temporary or permanent cessation of visits
- Progress made by the child so that criteria may no longer be met
- If the child is accessing any other educational specialist services – e.g. special school
- If it is the term after the child's third birthday
- If there is a succession of 3 or more unexplained failed visits
- Parent/carer not wanting to be present during the home visit
- Where the Local Authority Lone Working Risk Assessment identifies risk for staff safety in the child's home, although whenever possible alternative venues such as Children's Centres will be sought.

7. **Service Level Agreement**

This will be discussed with the parent/carer during the Initial Visit and, if the involvement of the service is agreed, it will be signed by the parent/carer.

8. **Sharing of information with other professionals**

With the permission of the parent/carer we will:

- Make contact with other professionals so that relevant information can help us to plan and work with the child together
- Inform the local Children's Centre that the family are receiving Portage services
- Share any relevant information with other professionals working with the child, such as the Nursery or School Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), Inclusion Teachers, Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist, Paediatrician, Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapists

In order to minimise disruption to the family, the Portage Home visitors will try to arrange joint visits with other professionals wherever this is appropriate.
9. Portage Visits

Once a child has been accepted into the service a play plan will be written based on what the child can already do and focus on positive outcomes. This plan will be agreed between the parents/carers and the Portage Home Visitor and will last for an agreed period of time. It may include ideas to help develop all aspects of the child’s play and learning or even advice around establishing a good sleep routine.

The Lancashire Portage model of visits reflects that outlined by the NPA and is characterised by:

- Regular home visits, which are usually on a weekly or fortnightly basis, by a trained Portage Home Visitor. The Portage Home Visitor will normally visit on the same day at a set time during the period equivalent to school terms.

- Working in a co-productive way with parents/carers so that they take the lead in the role that is established.

- To support parents/carers to identify outcomes they would like for their child, and plan goals for learning, which may include the completion of an All About Me.

- Empowering parents/carers to support their child’s development by setting small achievable targets and to demonstrate the child's progress through regular programmes of activities.

- Parents/carers being encouraged to find time each day to practice the activity and observe how the child gets on. Other members of the family are encouraged to join in too. The activities can often be included in the child's normal daily routine or play.

- Keeping a shared record of the child's progress

- Reviewing and discussing the child's progress with the parent/carer during each visit. We will also carry out a more detailed review the child's progress at the end of each block of visits. These reviews aim to celebrate success and outline the focus for the next block of visits.

10. Gifts

The Code of Conduct for Employees of Lancashire County Council is followed. Portage Home Visitors would not be expected to be given any gifts, but in the event of this happening will declare this, in line with the policy.
11. 2 Year Old Funding (Free Early Education for 2 year olds)

The Lancashire Schools Forum have agreed that 2 Year Old Funding (2YOF) can be given for young children who meet the Portage criteria. When children access the 2YOF under the Portage criteria home visits will continue in the home. However, to support transition and ongoing cohesive intervention there will be a visit from an inclusion teacher into the early years setting, usually on a termly basis. At the point of transition, the Portage home visitor will go into the early years setting rather than visiting at home for one or two visits.

12. Induction and Training

Newly appointed Portage Home Visitors will work through a programme of Core Competencies which extends their skills under a range of headings and ensure that they have met the standards expected of visitors by the NPA. This will include completion of the Portage Basic workshop. Training required by the NPA will be carried out as part of Lancashire County Council's Induction programme and the Learner Support bespoke Induction.

Following a successful 6 month induction period, the Portage Home Visitor will then have regular appraisal meetings, in line with Lancashire County Council Continued Professional Development policy and procedures. Individual training needs will be identified in this way alongside the ongoing business development needs of the service. Training will be provided primarily through 5 days annual INSET days.

Supervision, in relation to the Portage Home Visitor's casework, will take place through regular team meetings.

13. Confidentiality

All Portage Home Visitors should be familiar with the NPA guidelines and Lancashire County Council guidance on confidentiality and adhere to the general rule that no information is to be disclosed to another person or agency without parental consent, except in the case of issues of Child Protection.

Information about individual children will be kept under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

There are digital cameras available for the Portage Home Visitor to record and celebrate a child’s progress. Use of photography is discussed with parents at the initial visit and is agreed to within the Service Level Agreement parents sign with their Portage Home Visitor.

14. The Portage Forum

This management group meets on a termly basis and has a responsibility to oversee, review and ensure that Portage is delivered in line with NPA requirements and the SEN Code of Practice. Members of the Forum consist of the Service
Manager, Area Managers, Portage teachers and a Portage Home visitor representative.

15. Service Evaluation

Following initial involvement with a family and in line with NPA requirements, all Portage Home Visitors will have a supportive joint visit with their Portage teacher at or around 10 weeks. Following the visit the Portage teacher will provide written feedback to the Portage Home Visitor. This monitoring promotes a quality of provision. During the visit parents/carers will also be asked specific questions on their views of Portage, which will be recorded by the Portage teacher. This information is then collated on an annual basis and shared with the Parent/Carer forum and the SEND Senior Management team.

Parent’s views are sought and recorded as part of the Portage visit.

When visits have ceased parents are sent an evaluation questionnaire. These are collated on an annual basis and shared with the SEND Senior Management team.

16. Review of the Portage protocol

The Lancashire Portage protocol will be reviewed formally on an annual basis by the Portage Forum.

June 2017.