

Case Study

Karen Bridge – Team Manager (FSS)

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Can you tell us a bit about your initial journey with LBBB? What was your role when you first started as an agency member?

I first joined LBBB in November 2018 as an agency Senior Social Worker in Family Support & Safeguarding. From the beginning, I felt welcomed, encouraged, and supported. Over time, though, I reached a point where I wanted to broaden my experience and explore other locum opportunities in different local authorities.

In 2024, I came across an advert for a permanent Team Manager position within the FSS service at LBBB. My previous experience in LBBB was a positive one so I decided to apply and was delighted to be offered the role.

Coming back truly felt like returning home. It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces from my previous team still here, as well as others who had grown into more senior roles. For example, one former team manager had progressed to Head of Service, and another had stepped into a service manager position. Seeing that progression was genuinely inspiring.

One of the things that makes LBBB feel special is the presence of our director, April. I've never experienced leadership quite like hers anywhere else I've worked. She is always smiling, greets everyone by name, and is consistently visible and approachable. She works alongside us, literally sitting at a desk in the same space, and brings such warmth to the environment. I'll always remember the day she sat with a social worker and offered thoughtful tips and guidance to help them strengthen and improve their report writing. I've never seen that level of involvement in any other organisation.

The support from my current service manager and head of service is equally exceptional. Knowing I can call them at any time for guidance is incredibly reassuring. That level of trust and accessibility really reflects the culture at LBBB.

Another strength here is the genuine commitment to helping people progress. Whether it's supporting our social work students on placement, guiding ASYEs, or

encouraging more experienced staff to take the next step, there is a real drive to lift people up. It's refreshing, motivating, and deeply rooted in the values of the service.

While you were away, what were the things about LBBB that you found yourself missing most? (e.g., the people, the pace, the support).

There is a truly supportive culture here. You never feel like you're on your own because LBBB has a strong sense of shared responsibility. In other local authorities, I often had to build my own networks just to have someone to talk things through with. At LBBB, I know I can reach out to other managers, service managers, or even a Head of Service whenever I need to.

I'm very relationship-focused in the way I work, and the support I receive allows me to offer support to others in return - without feeling overwhelmed or stressed. The environment makes it easy to both seek guidance and give it, which is one of the things that makes working here feel so positive and collaborative.

What does being a 'permanent' member of the team give you that you didn't have before - either personally or professionally?

I feel far more settled now than I did before. As a locum, there was always a sense of uncertainty in the background - a feeling that I could be asked to move on at any time. Becoming permanent has given me a real sense of belonging and stability.

I feel genuinely committed to the team and the service. Knowing that I'm part of something long-term makes me even more motivated to grow, take on new opportunities, and progress when the right moment comes. There's a reassurance in feeling rooted, and that sense of security allows me to give my best every day.

How would you describe the company culture to someone who is thinking of applying?

I would say that while the work is busy, you feel supported at every level. There's a real sense of kindness here, and people work well together - not just within our own service, but across services too. For example, our joint meetings with CYPD help us to stay connected and support our children, young people and families in the most effective way.

The training opportunities are excellent and easy to access, and it's a real strength that so much of this is delivered in-house by our own practice leads. It shows how much value is placed on developing people and sharing expertise.

Even though we are used to working with limited funding, the resilience across the service is remarkable. We pull together, collaborate closely with other teams and

services, and that collective effort means you still feel able to do your job well and make a meaningful difference.

If someone is currently working as an agency member and is on the fence about going permanent, what advice would you give them?

These are conversations I often have with our agency colleagues when they're thinking about making the move to permanent. Of course, there are the practical benefits: paid holiday, the pension scheme, great training and progression opportunities, and the recruitment and retention bonuses.

But just as important is the feeling of being truly settled when you become a permanent member of staff. There's a real sense of belonging here, and the culture is incredibly supportive. That genuine support, combined with the stability and opportunities on offer, is why I encourage agency workers to consider taking that step into a permanent role.

In three words, how does it feel to be back 'home' at LBB?

Settled - Supported - Happy.