

# Durham Foster Carers Charter

## 2015



**Durham County Council Fostering Service**

Tel: 03000 269 400

Visit: [www.durham.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.durham.gov.uk/fostering)



# Durham Foster Carers' Charter

The Fostering Service and Foster Carers have worked in partnership to produce this charter which sets out what we expect from each other.

## **Foster Carers**

look after children and young people in a family environment, providing them with stability, care and an opportunity to grow, develop and reach their potential. They acknowledge the importance of assessment and training and value the support provided by Durham Fostering Service.

## **The Fostering Service**

aim to provide stable and high quality foster care for children who are valued, supported and encouraged to grow as individuals. They recognise that foster carers are at the heart of that service. To achieve this aim Durham Fostering Service recruits, trains and approves foster carers and delivers ongoing support to them.

## **The Principles of The Foster Carer's Charter**

### **We both agree to:**

- Give the children a positive family experience
- Respect the children in our care
- Work in Partnership
- Communicate and consult with each other
- Provide information to each other
- Treat each other fairly
- Be clear in our decision making
- Support foster carers
- Provide opportunities and take responsibility for learning and development and access to support

## Give Children a Positive Family Experience

### We agree that:

- All children have the right to family life.
- Children in foster care deserve to experience as full a family life as possible as part of a loving foster family with carers who can make everyday decisions as they would their own child and without the child feeling that they 'stand out' as a looked after child.

## Respect for the Child

### We agree that:

- Every child and young person should be respected as an individual and must be given every support to develop their own identities and aspirations, fulfil their potential, and take advantage of all opportunities to promote their talents and skills. Above all they should be listened to.

### Foster Carers Will:

- Respect and promote a child's religious, linguistic and cultural heritage.
- Afford the same level of protection and care to a child as they would to their own children and in accordance to the National Minimum Standards.
- Ensure that the child has the right to make decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age and understanding



## Work in Partnership

We recognise that we each have skills and expertise essential for the wellbeing of the child in care. Carers recognise that Children Care Services, as the Corporate Parent has overall responsibility for the child whilst Children's Care Service acknowledge that it is the skill and expertise of the carer that makes the biggest difference to the everyday lives of children in care.

### We both will:

- Value each other's skill and expertise
- Respect confidentiality and keep information securely
- Treat the other party with respect and value each other as colleagues
- Be part of the professional multi-agency team around the child and be included in meetings related to the child
- Meet Fostering Standards, Regulations and Guidance and adhere to Durham County Council Policies and Procedures

## Communicate and Consult

We both agree that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship.

### Foster Carers will:

- Participate in consultation and discussion in order to inform the development of the service.
- Meet with senior and team managers, and others in order to promote dialogue and a good working relationship.
- Run their own Foster Care Association, supported by Durham Fostering Service. (FACT)

### The Fostering Service will:

- Consult with you in a meaningful way on matters that affect you and give you timely feedback from consultations.
- *Senior and team managers will meet with foster carers to promote dialogue and a good working relationship on a quarterly basis.*
- *The Fostering Service will offer support to the Foster Care Association (FACT) to promote its membership.*



## Provide Information to Each Other

We believe that information is vital in order for foster carers to provide care that meets the child's needs.

### Foster Carers Will:

- Inform child care and fostering social worker's as soon as possible about any significant incidents and important events in the child's life.
- Inform their fostering social worker of significant events or changes in the carers' life, home or family and any difficulties you experience.
- Provide information to inform care planning and ensure the child's needs are met

### The Fostering Service will:

- Share all the information they have with carers in order for them to care safely for the child.
- Provide the information in writing prior to placement (except when they are emergency placements and it is not feasible to do so, when we will provide this information as soon as possible).
- *Ensure Children's Care Plans, Placement Plans, delegated authority and risk assessments are updated as necessary*
- Provide carers with full written details of all relevant Children's Care policies and procedures.
- Support carers with matters relating to their finances such as tax, allowances and additional entitlements by signposting to relevant sources of advice.

## Fair Treatment

We recognise that we both have the right to be treated fairly.



### The Fostering Service will:

- Consult with Carers before changing terms and conditions.
- Ensure openness in all their discussions and communications with Carers.
- Ensure that Carers are treated with respect, kept informed and provided with emotional support should they be subject to an allegation.
- Provide a framework for dealing with allegations and be kept up to date regarding progress.
- Ensure that you are informed of the arrangements for the payments of fees and allowances in the event you are not able to foster while the subject of an allegation.

## Clarity about Decision Making

We recognise that in order for children to live a full family life foster carers must be able to make decisions regarding the children they foster.

### Foster Carers will:

- Make everyday decisions consistent with the care plan. This means that children they foster feel part of the family and are not treated differently to their peers and other family members.

### The Fostering Service will:

- Ensure that everyone understands who is responsible for what.

## Support

The Fostering Service recognises that fostering is an isolating and challenging task, and that timely support makes all the difference to the fostering family and the quality life for the child in their care.

### We both will:

- Share the responsibility to ensure the availability of a support network to help provide appropriate care to the child.

### Foster carers will:

- *Take up the opportunity to engage with support services offered.*

### The Fostering Service will:

- Be responsive to requests for additional support
- Provide regular supervision and support as agreed, and *through different forms of communication including email, phone and text* as required.
- Provide carers with access to support which shall include:
  - Fostering support groups
  - Fostering social worker.
  - Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team (E.D.T.)
- Pay agreed fostering allowances and fees promptly and expenses as agreed.
- Pay fees that reflect the training, experience and availability of the carer
  - *Provide independent support and advice through an Advice and Mediation Service*



## Learning and Personal Development

We recognise the need for carers to access learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career. This will ensure carers have the skills and knowledge they need, and allow them to develop their practice in order that they can help transform the lives of the children they foster.

### **Foster Carers Will:**

- Be prepared *and willing* to develop their skills throughout their fostering career
- *Take responsibility to* attend mandatory and core training and other training relevant to the carer/placement needs
- Take up training opportunities offered to them
- Take responsibility to inform the Training Department if they are unable to attend training
- Be encouraged to attend and contribute to support groups

### **The Fostering Service will:**

- Provide carers and their families with appropriate and relevant training by trainers who understand the fostering task.
- Provide carers with other development opportunities which make best use of their skills and expertise including but not limited to support and training
- *Take responsibility to inform carers if training is cancelled at the earliest opportunity*

**In signing this Charter the fostering service, and foster carers agree to reflect the spirit and intentions of the Charter in their actions**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Foster Carer**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Foster Carer**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fostering Social Worker**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fostering Team Manager**