

Bath and North East Somerset's

Foster Carer's Charter

Our working relationships are based on mutual trust and respect.

This charter explains what we expect from each other.

What to expect from us the agency

The Agency aims to provide stable and first rate foster care for children who are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals. To achieve this aim, we recruit, train and approve foster carers and deliver on-going supervision and support to them.

- ◆ Working in partnership
- ◆ Information Sharing
- ◆ Learning and development
- ◆ Communication and consultation
- ◆ Clarity about decisions
- ◆ Fair treatment
- ◆ Support
- ◆ Respect for the fostering household

What we expect from you, the Foster Carers

Foster carers are at the heart of the foster care service. You are assessed, trained and supported to look after children and young people in a family environment, providing them with stability, care and an opportunity to grow and develop to reach their personal potential and their family.

- ◆ Working in partnership
- ◆ Information sharing
- ◆ Learning and development
- ◆ Communication and consultation
- ◆ Respect for the child

This Charter has been drawn up following consultation with foster carers, social workers, managers and elected members of the Corporate Parenting Group. It will be reviewed on an annual basis.



Bath & North East Somerset Council



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What to expect from us, the agency

Working in partnership

We recognise that foster carers have skills and expertise and make the biggest difference to the everyday lives of children in care

We will:

- ◆ Recognise that you are the people who live with children every day and know them best
- ◆ Value your skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals
- ◆ Include you in all meetings that affect you or the children you care for
- ◆ Ensure that our fostering service will meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance
- ◆ Treat you without discrimination; respect you as a colleague
- ◆ Respect confidentiality
- ◆ Not to take your home for granted
- ◆ To value the contribution your whole family make to fostering

Information sharing

We know that information is vital in order for foster carers to provide care that meets the child's need

We will:

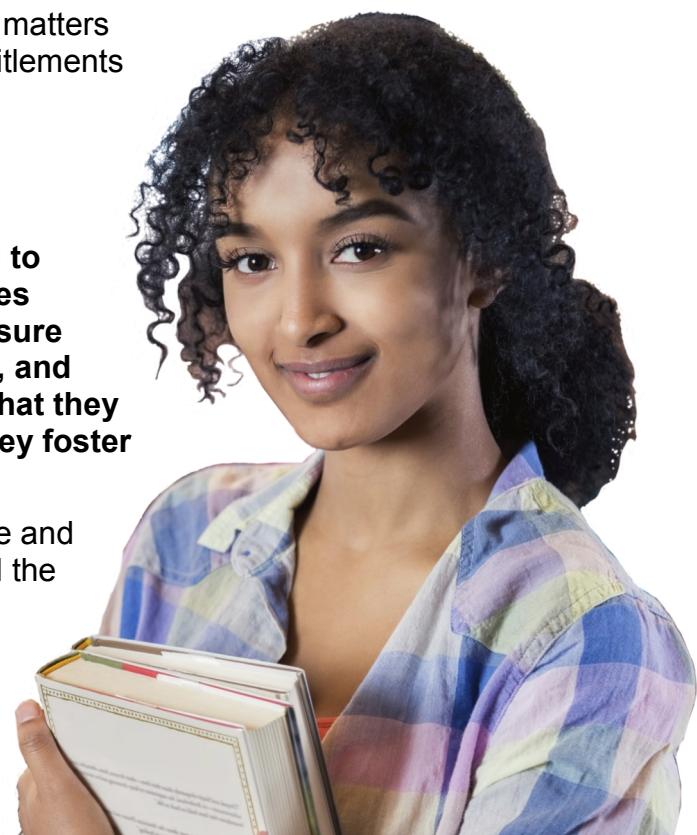
- ◆ Ensure that there is a placement plan drawn up in discussion with you and agreed with you in advance of placements (except in emergencies where this will be done as soon as possible)
- ◆ Give you all the information you need in order to care safely for the child
- ◆ Provide this information in writing prior to placement (except when there are emergency placements and it is not feasible to do so, when we will provide this information as soon as possible)
- ◆ Provide you with information on all financial matters including tax, allowances and additional entitlements
- ◆ provide you with full details of all relevant departmental policies and procedures

Learning and development

We believe that foster carers must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career. This will ensure they 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

We will:

- ◆ Provide you and your family with appropriate and relevant training by trainers who understand the fostering task
- ◆ Provide you with other development opportunities which make the best use of your skills and expertise, by providing training or support



Communication and consultation

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship

We will:

- ◆ Facilitate communication between you, councillors and senior staff of Children's Services
- ◆ Ensure that we consult with you in a meaningful way on matters that affect you
- ◆ Give you timely feedback from consultations.
- ◆ Raise any concerns we have with you in a sensitive and timely way.

Clarity about decisions

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

We will:

- ◆ Ensure that, wherever possible, you are able to make everyday decisions that mean that your fostered child is not treated differently to their peers and can feel part of your family
- ◆ Provide clarity about any decision you cannot take at the outset so that everyone understands who is responsible for what
- ◆ This is called delegating authority and this along with the placement plan makes it clear who is responsible for what decisions so that you are able to protect the child's individuality.

Fair treatment

We recognise that foster carers have a right to be treated fairly, no matter what the circumstances

We will:

- ◆ Consult with you before changing terms and conditions
- ◆ Ensure openness in all of our discussions and communications with you
- ◆ Ensure that you are treated with respect, kept informed and provided with emotional support should you be subject to an allegation
- ◆ Provide a framework for dealing with allegations and adhere to our agreed timescales
- ◆ Ensure that you know the arrangements for the payment of fees and allowances in the event that you are not able to foster while the subject of an allegation
- ◆ Respect all members of your household

Support

We recognise that fostering can be an isolating and challenging task. Appropriate and timely support makes all the difference to the fostering family and to the child in your care

We will:

- ◆ Respond positively but realistically to requests for additional support
- ◆ Provide you with 6 weekly supervision and phone/email contact in between
- ◆ Give you honest and open feedback
- ◆ Provide you with access to 24-hour support through our Out of Hours telephone service and the Emergency Duty Team
- ◆ Pay allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner
- ◆ Ensure that there are opportunities for meeting with other carers, where you and your family can find support and share experiences with other fostering families.
- ◆ Offer the opportunity for your own children to meet others who live in a fostering household
- ◆ Provision of R2K activities through holiday periods for the children you look after

What we expect from you, the foster carer

Working in partnership

We will demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct

We expect you to:

- ◆ Provide children with a positive experience of family life
- ◆ Demonstrate your expertise and make use of your skills to the best of our ability
- ◆ Attend meetings about the children and young people we care for
- ◆ Work with the agencies involved with the child such as school/college, health and faith establishments
- ◆ Show a willingness to work with birth parents, wider family and people significant in a child's life
- ◆ Meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance and follow departmental policies and procedures
- ◆ Respect confidentiality

Information sharing

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship

We expect you to:

- ◆ Inform your supervising social worker about changes in our household
- ◆ Inform your supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise for us
- ◆ Ensure that diary sheets are completed and other paperwork needed for meetings is prepared in good time
- ◆ Respect confidentiality
- ◆ Inform us of any significant changes in the child's health

Learning and development

We must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career. This will ensure we have the skills and knowledge we need, and allow us to develop our practice in order that we can help transform the lives of the children we foster

You will:

- ◆ Be prepared to develop your skills throughout our fostering career
- ◆ Be prepared to attend relevant training, this can be online learning
- ◆ Take up opportunities offered to you
- ◆ Attend and contribute to support groups.
- ◆ Be prepared to share learning, experiences and knowledge with other carers.

Communication and consultation

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship

You will:

- ◆ Respond to local consultations and discussion in order to inform the development of the service
- ◆ Be prepared to meet with councillors, senior managers and others in order to promote dialogue and a good working relationship
- ◆ Raise any concerns we have with the person concerned or the fostering manager to effect an early resolution if possible

Respect for the child

Every child and young person should be respected as an individual and be supported in meeting their needs and achieving their aspirations and potential

You will:

- ◆ Respect and promote a child's religious, linguistic and cultural heritage
- ◆ Afford the same level of protection and care to a child as we would our own child, in accordance with the national minimum standards