



The Foster Carer's Charter January 2019



INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE CHARTER?

This Foster Carer's Charter has been jointly produced by the OwnLife fostering team and foster carers.

It is a shared agreement which sets out the mutual expectations of our roles and responsibilities.

This charter will ensure that children who are placed with OwnLife are cared for in a safe and nurturing family environment, where children can be given every opportunity to achieve their own individual potential.

This charter is a child focussed document which recognises that all children deserve to experience a full family life with foster carers who can make everyday decisions and without the children feeling they are different. As such, the charter recognises the responsibilities of delegated authority which foster carers have under the terms of the 2011 Fostering Services National Minimum Standards.

This charter is an acknowledgement of the crucial role carers play in the lives of children who are looked after, and of the importance of their professional partnership.

The working relationship between the team and the foster carers is built on mutual respect and trust, and this charter describes what we can expect from each other.

CHILDREN COME FIRST

Children in foster care deserve to experience as full a family life as possible as part of a loving 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.

Children 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, MANAGERS AND SUPERVISING SOCIAL WORKERS MUST:

- Recognise in practice the importance of the child's relationship with his or her foster family as one that can make the biggest difference in the child's life and which can endure into adulthood.
- Listen to and involve foster carers and their foster children in decision-making and planning, and provide foster carers and their foster children with full information about each other.
- In making placements be clear about the continuing care or support there will be (including for the child into adulthood), be sensitive to the needs of the foster carer and the child in making and ending placements and have contingency plans should the placement not work.
- Treat foster carers with openness, fairness and respect as a core member of the team around the child and support them making reasonable and appropriate decisions on behalf of their foster child.
- Ensure that foster carers have the support services and development opportunities they need in order to provide their foster child with the best possible care. That includes linking with local foster carers groups and seeking to respond to problems and disseminate best practice.
- Make sure foster carers are recompensed on time and are given clear information about any support, allowances, fees and holidays they will receive.

OWNLIFE FOSTER CARERS MUST:

- Provide positive adult role models, treat the foster child as they would their own child, and advocate for all aspects of the child's health and wellbeing and co-operate fully as part of a team with other key professionals in the child's life.
- Support their foster child and do all they can to make the placement work. Take part in learning and development. Use skills and approaches that make a positive impact and enable the child to reach his or her potential. Support their foster child to help them to counter possible bullying and discrimination as a result of their status.

ROLES AND COMMITMENT

OwnLife Fostering Team Role

Our role is to provide excellent foster carers and excellent family placements.

Our role is to recruit, train, manage and support foster carers who can deliver excellent outcomes for children who are placed with them.

Our Commitment

- What you can expect from us:
- Working in partnership
- Clarity about decisions
- Information
- Support
- Learning opportunities
- Fair treatment
- Effective communication
- Consultation

Foster Carer's Role

Our role is to deliver excellent family placements.

Our role is to provide a family environment in which children experience stability, care, warmth, nurturing, and the opportunity to grow and develop, and reach their potential and achieve excellent outcomes.

Our Commitment

- Respect for the child/young person
- Information
- Learning and development
- Communication and consultation

WHAT FOSTER CARER CAN EXPECT FROM OWNLIFE FOSTERING

Working in Partnership:

We recognise that foster carers have the skills and expertise to make a big difference to the everyday lives of children and young people in care.

We will:

- Value and recognise your skills, knowledge and expertise in providing quality care to children and young people placed with OwnLife Fostering.
- Recognise that you are the people who live with children and young people every day and know them well.
- Aim to include you in all relevant meetings that affect you and the children and young people you care for and to provide you with an explanation and information if you are unable to attend.
- Ensure that our fostering service meets the standards set out in Fostering Regulations and Guidance.
- Treat you fairly and without discrimination and respect you as a colleague.
- Respect your confidentiality.
- Consult with the foster carers about the development of the fostering service.
- Ensure you are treated courteously.

Clarity about Decisions

We recognise that in order for children and young people to live a positive family life, foster carers need to be able to make decisions regarding the children and young people they foster.

We will:

- Ensure that, whenever possible and if appropriate, you are able to make everyday decisions that mean that your fostered child or young person 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.
- Provide you with explanations of why decisions are made.
- If there is a difference of opinion provide opportunity for discussion and resolution.

Information:

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

We will:

- Give you all relevant information in order for you to care safely for the child and young person and we recognise the importance of this information.
- Provide this information in writing prior to placement or at the earliest opportunity after the start of a placement.
- Ensure that there is a placement plan drawn up in discussion with you within specified timescales.
- Provide you with information on all financial matters including tax allowances and additional entitlements.
- Provide you with full details of all relevant policies and procedures.
- To consult with you about change in policies and procedures which affect you.

Support:

We recognise that fostering is rewarding but can also be isolating and challenging and appropriate and timely support can make all the difference to the child or young person in your care and your own family.

We will:

- Respond positively and in a non-judgemental manner to requests for additional support.
- Provide you with regular supervision and regular phone contact.
- Give you honest, timely, constructive and open feedback.
- Provide you with access to 24-hour support from people with fostering expertise.
- Pay you allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner.
- Provide the necessary equipment
- Provide a range of support services to help you with your fostering.
- Recognise that foster carers sons and daughters play an essential role.
- Recognise that positive endings of placements are important for children, young people and foster carers and their families ensuring that support is in place to achieve this.

Learning and Development:

We believe that foster carers must be enabled to access and participate in 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 so that they can help improve and enrich the lives of the children and young people they foster.

We will:

- Provide you and your family with appropriate and relevant training. Where possible we will provide some flexibility in times of training to enable you to attend.
- Give you opportunities to utilise your skills and expertise by delivering mentoring or providing support to other foster carers.

Fair Treatment:

We recognise that foster carers have a right to be treated fairly and with respect.

We will:

- Consult with foster carers before changing terms and conditions.
- Ensure openness in all our discussions and communications with foster carers.
- Provide a framework which details timescales and support networks should you be subject to an allegation.
- Be transparent in our procedures for conducting investigations.
- 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.
- Provide prompt communication to foster carers following an investigation resulting from an allegation or complaint.

Communication and Consultation:

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

We will aim to:

- Ensure that we consult with and listen to foster carers on matters that affect them, their family and the children and young people they foster.
- Arrange regular opportunities for foster carers to meet with managers from the fostering Service and others to raise issues of importance to foster carers.
- Aim to involve foster carers directly in the development of the fostering service.

Working in Partnership:

We will:

- Demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills and knowledge to the best of our ability.
- Provide children and young people with a positive experience of family life.
- Recognise the importance of birth families to a child or young person in care and work in a positive way with the birth parents, wider family and other people significant to children in care.
- Promote anti-discriminatory practice, in particular in the direct care of children and young people looked after.
- Meet the standards set out in the Fostering Regulations and Guidance and follow OwnLife policies and procedures including complying with the terms of the foster carer agreement.
- Respect confidentiality.

WHAT OWNLIFE FOSTERING CAN EXPECT FROM ITS FOSTER CARERS?

Respect for the Child and Young Person.

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

We will:

- Respect and promote a child's identity.
- Afford the same level of protection and care to a child and young person as we would our own in accordance with the National Minimum Standards.
- Ensure the child or young person has the right to contribute to making decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age, maturity and understanding.
- Help collect and preserve memories of the time the child or young person spends with our family.
- Ensure that if children have to move placements they are moved in a respectful and considerate manner.

Information:

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

We will:

- Inform our supervising social worker about proposed changes in our household.
- Inform our supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise for us.
- Keep the child or young person's social worker regularly up to date of their progress.

Learning and Development

We will 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 improve the lives of the children and young people we foster.

We will:

- Aim to respond to local consultations and discussions in order to inform the development of the service.
- Meet with managers in order to promote dialogue and good working relationships.

Communication and Consultation.

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

We will:

- Respond to local consultations and discussions to inform the development of the service
- Meet with the Director, Manager and social work staff to promote dialogue and a good working relationship.

IN SIGNING THIS CHARTER, OWNLIFE FOSTERING AND THE FOSTER CARER AGREE TO REFLECT THE SPIRIT AND INTENTIONS OF THE CHARTER IN THEIR ACTIONS.

OwnLife Fostering

Contact details for the person implementing the aims of the charter

Foster Carer/s
