



# Foster Carer Charter

**The Government launched the Foster Carers' Charter in March 2011. It was jointly produced with fostering organisations, charities and children and young people. Recognising the invaluable work of foster carers, it sets out clear principles, based on the core belief that children come first, it details how foster carers should be treated, describes the roles of carers and the pivotal role played by carers in helping children achieve to their full potential.**

Foster Care Associates (FCA) recognises the excellent care, support and commitment shown by foster carers and the invaluable role they play in the lives of looked

after children and young people. This charter aims to reinforce that recognition, demonstrate the joint responsibilities to the children and young people in our care and build on the successes and achievements.

FCA demonstrates commitment to a child centred and inclusive partnership based approach which embraces children/young people, their families, foster carers, local authority/health and social care trusts and other agency colleagues. FCA staff also pledge that they will work in partnership with children and young people in foster carer families the families of

the children placed with foster carers, their local/health and social care and other agency colleagues doing everything possible to guarantee a stable placement, free from disruption and where the placed young person's needs are understood and met.

We will do all that is possible to recruit foster carers from a wide range of backgrounds so that we can offer appropriate placements for children/young people. Therefore, in consultation with staff, foster carers and our children we have set out our commitment to each other and the children in our care.

## FCA Staff will

- Treat foster carers with openness, fairness and respect as a core member of the team around the child and support them in making reasonable and appropriate decisions on behalf of their foster child.
- Make sure foster carers are recompensed on time and are given clear information about any support, allowances, fees and holidays they will receive including in cases of dispute with the service or during gaps in placements.
- 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 liaising with local foster carers groups, and seeking to respond to problems and disseminate best practice.
- Recognise in practice the importance of the child's relationship with his or her foster family as one that can make the difference in the child's life which can endure into adulthood.
- Listen to, involve foster carers, foster children and birth children in decision-making and planning and provide them with full information about each other. In making placements be clear about the continuing care or support, (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.

## FCA Foster Carers will

- Promote contact with birth family where possible and support Life Story Work.
- Involve young people in decision making on how they feel support should be provided.
- Support their foster child to help them to counter possible bullying and discrimination as a result of their status.
- Provide positive adult role models, treat the foster child as they would their own child, and be an 'ambitious parent' in advocating for all aspects of the child's development, including educational attainment and physical and emotional health and wellbeing. 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.

- Provide you with other developmental opportunities which make the best use of your skills and expertise, such as buddy scheme, ambassadors, carer reps or providing training or support.

### 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:

- Provide clarity about any decision you cannot take at the outset so that everyone understands who is responsible for what.

- 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.

### 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:

- Value your skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals.
- Recognise that you are the people who live with the children every day and know them best.

- Ensure that our fostering service will meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance.
- Include you in all relevant meetings that affect you and the children in your care.
- Treat you without discrimination and respect you as a colleague.
- Respect confidentiality.

# What FCA can expect from their foster carers



### Working in Partnership

We will demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct.

#### We will:

- Demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability.
- Provide children with an experience of family life.
- Attend meetings about the children and young people we care for.

- Work with agencies involved with the child such as school, health and religious establishments.
- Show a willingness to work with birth parents, wider family and people significant in the child's life.
- Meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance and follow departmental policies and procedures.
- Respect confidentiality.

### 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.

#### We 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.

# What Foster Carers can expect from FCA

## Information

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

### We will:

- Give you all the information you need in order to care safely for the child.
- Provide this information in writing prior to placement, (except emergency placements and it is not feasible to do so, we will provide this information as soon as possible).
- 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).
- 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.

## 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 decisions 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.

## Support

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

### We will:

- Assess fully and respond quickly to all reasonable requests for additional support.
- Provide you with monthly supervision and regular phone contact between supervisions.
- Provide you with access to 24 hour support from people with fostering experience.

- Give you honest and open feedback.
- Pay you allowances, expense and fees in a timely manner.
- Ensure that there is a local support group where you and your family can find support and share experiences with other fostering families.
- FCA staff will support you to have easy access to Senior Management where appropriate.

## Learning and Development

We believe that foster carers must have access to 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 a trainer who understands the fostering task, along with e-learning opportunities that can be accessed at any time.



- Ensure the child has the right to make decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age and understanding.

### **Information**

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

#### **We will:**

- Inform our supervising social worker about changes in our household.
- Inform our supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise for us.

### **Communication and Consultation**

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

#### **We will:**

- Foster Carers will be an advocate and where necessary a voice for the child/young person and represent their views giving them a voice in contributing to their best interest and future lives.

- Respond to local and/or national consultations and discussion in order to inform the development of the service.
- Meet with members of the regional and national teams in order to promote dialogue and a good working relationship.
- Foster Carers will communicate in a timely manner compliments, complaints or concerns to appropriate levels in the Senior Management team.

### **Learning and Development**

We must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering carer. 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 children we foster.

#### **We will:**

- Be prepared to develop our skills throughout our fostering career.
- Attend relevant training.
- Take up opportunities offered to us.
- Let you know if we are unable to attend training.
- Attend and contribute to support groups.

**Alongside FCA the following organisations have worked to develop the Charter and have pledged to support the Foster Carers' Charter and help make it a reality in all areas.**

- Fostering Network
- Fostering People
- FCA Carer Representatives
- FCA Carers
- FCA Young people
- FCA Staff