

Foster Carers' Charter



North
Tyneside
Council

Introduction

The following Charter has been developed in consultation with our foster carers via North Tyneside Fostering Network, elected members and taking into account the views and wishes of children in care.

This Charter has developed from the original Foster Carers Charter agreed in May 2011.

This Charter is an integral document for North Tyneside Council's fostering service, and wider children's services colleagues, and sets out what our foster carers can expect from the agency and what we expect from our foster carers.

This document should be read alongside the Foster Carers Agreement, which all foster carers are required to sign annually, or when there is a change in their approval.

Roles and commitment

The fostering service's role

The fostering service will recruit, train, assess, and support sufficient numbers of skilled people to provide stable, supportive care arrangements for all children in care who require care outside of their family network. Following approval, foster carers will be supervised by a fostering supervising social worker to ensure the child is given every opportunity and encouragement to meet their potential and be part of the fostering family.

The foster carers' role

Foster carers and our families are central to the fostering service. As foster carers we are assessed, trained, and supervised to enable us to offer the best family life for the children in our care. We will provide them with a high standard of physical and emotional care, recognising that a child in care may require additional support given their early life experiences. In our care each child will have the opportunity to grow and develop in every area of their lives and to reach their potential.

Our working relationships are based on mutual trust and respect. This Charter explains what we expect from each other.

Fostering Service's commitment

You can expect from us:

1. Working in partnership
2. Timely sharing of information
3. Clarity about decisions
4. Supervision
5. Ongoing opportunities for learning and development
6. Fair and consistent treatment
7. Open communication and consultation

Foster carers' commitment

You can expect from us:

1. Respect and commitment to the child
2. Working in partnership
3. Timely sharing of information
4. Learning, development, and support
5. Open communication and consultation

What foster carers can expect from the fostering service, children's services and partner agencies

1. Working in partnership

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

We will:

- Value the skills of our foster carer and their expertise, equally to those of other professionals.
- Recognise that foster carers are the people who live with the children every day, and therefore know them best.
- Give adequate notice of meetings and be conscious of foster carers' other commitments, such as childcare with regards to the timing of meetings, so you can attend as many scheduled meetings as possible.
- Ensure that our fostering service will meet the standards set out in the Fostering Regulations (England) (2011), The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 and the National Minimum Standards (2011).
- Treat all foster carers without discrimination and respect you as a colleague.
- Respect confidentiality.

2. Information

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

We will:

- Give foster carers all the information needed, in order to decide if they can provide care for a child.
- Provide written information at the placement planning meeting, which is held within 48 hours of the care arrangement starting.
- Provide foster carers with any outstanding written information as soon as possible.
- Provide one comprehensive document that details all fees, allowance, and additional payments that foster carers can request.
- Signpost foster carers, as appropriate, to more specialist financial support, i.e., in relation to your self-employed status.

- Signpost foster carers to all policies and procedures of the fostering service, and where relevant children's services, which are all available online. Paper copies are available from your supervising social worker.

3. Clarity about decisions

We recognise that in order for children to live as part of your family, foster carers must be able to make decisions regarding the children they care for.

We will:

- Provide written consent, wherever possible, to enable you to make everyday decisions that mean that the child you care for is not treated differently to their peers and feels part of your family.
- Provide clarity about any decision you cannot take at the outset, so that everyone understands who will be responsible for that particular area of the child's care plan.
- Work in partnership with yourselves and the child's social worker to develop clarity in decision making and not be punitive when genuine errors or mistakes occur.

4. Supervision

We recognise that fostering can sometimes be an isolating and challenging task, and appropriate and timely supervision makes all the difference to the fostering family, and to the children that you care for.

We will:

- Respond positively and promptly to requests for support.
- Provide you with supervision at the level agreed between you and your supervising social worker, as recorded in the supervision agreement.
- Give you honest and open feedback, in a constructive manner to support you in your fostering role.
- Provide you with 24-hour, 7 days a week support. During out of hours this is by telephone and accessed via the emergency duty team (EDT).
- Pay you allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner via the weekly schedule. Where requested, and in exceptional circumstances, advances of the children's allowance can be paid.
- Pay child-based allowances in line with the national minimum allowances.
- Pay the skills to foster fees corresponding with role and expectations.
- Support the vital work of North Tyneside's Fostering Committee as an

independent body representing all North Tyneside Council's foster carers.

- Provide a range of support groups to meet the expressed needs of the whole fostering family, including children who foster.
- Work with colleagues, partner agencies and other providers to offer a range of therapeutic services.

5. Learning and development

We believe that foster carers must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities, throughout their fostering career. This will ensure that they have the most up to date skills and knowledge needed, to enable them to offer the best care possible to children and young people.

We will:

- Provide you and your family with ongoing training which is facilitated by experienced members of the fostering service and partners.
- Ensure all foster carers undertake the training, support and development standards within the prescribed timescale.
- Continually review the content of training offered and where appropriate, work with external facilitators to offer more specialist training.
- Offer all foster carers the opportunity to work alongside peer mentors and fostering buddies to offer support and advice, while also utilizing the experience of our existing foster carer workforce.

6. 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 independent support (should you request this). This is not just offered for allegations and complaints but is accessible at any time.
- Provide a framework for dealing with allegations and standards of care, and endeavor at all times to adhere to the timescales for these.
- Continue to pay the fostering fee whilst allegations or complaints are investigated.

7. Communication and consultation

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

We will:

- Facilitate regular communication between you, councillors, and the senior managers of children's services.
- Offer regular opportunities for consultation to ascertain the views of our foster carers on a variety of issues and developments, but no less than annually. This includes the views of foster carers being shared formally through the fostering committee in their regular meetings with fostering managers.
- Facilitate celebration events for our foster carers to formally acknowledge and celebrate their achievements as foster carers.

What the fostering service can expect from foster carers

1. Working in partnership

Foster carers will demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct.

- Supervising social workers will work alongside our foster carers to promote their expertise and use their skills to the best of their ability in the care of children and young people.
- Foster carers will provide children they are caring for with a positive experience of family life.
- Foster carers will be supported in being responsive in their role as advocates for the children in our care, working alongside other professionals to ensure the child's needs are successfully met.
- Foster carers will attend meetings and share balanced information about the children and young people they care for.
- Work in cooperation with all involved professionals and retain the focus on the child in their work with all involved agencies, such as school, health and religious establishments.
- As members of the child's care team, foster carers must be aspirational for the children and young people in our care and seek out the support they need to achieve their full potential.
- Foster carers will demonstrate their willingness to work with birth families, and people who are significant in a child's life.
- Where siblings are not living together, foster carers must promote

positive and consistent family time between them, always ensuring the child's best interests at the centre of this.

- Meet the standards set out in the fostering regulations and statutory guidance and follow the fostering service's policies and procedures.
- Respect the confidentiality of all children in care, their families, and other foster carers.

2. Respect for the child

Every child and young person should be respected as an individual, with their own views and interests and be supported to achieve their goals and potential.

Foster carers will:

- Respect and promote a child's religious, linguistic, and cultural heritage.
- Respect and promote a child's opinions, views, and interests.
- Afford the same level of protection and care to a child, as we would our own child, in accordance with the national minimum standards.
- Ensure the child has the right to make decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age and understanding.
- Support the child in developing a positive relationship with their social worker and encourage the child to share their views with them.
- Support the child to be healthy, and to enjoy physical good health, through exercise and physical activities.
- Provide an emotionally responsive and nurturing home environment, to help the child feel safe and secure.

3. Information

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

Foster carers will:

- Maintain an accurate record of the child's time and experiences in their care and support the child's social worker in completing their life story work.
- Inform the fostering service about changes in our household.
- Inform the fostering service about any issues/difficulties that arise for us as a family.
- Notify the fostering service in writing of all relevant matters as detailed in our Foster Carer Agreement.

4. Learning, development and support

Foster carers must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career. This will ensure they have the up-to-date skills and knowledge needed to meet the needs of children and young people.

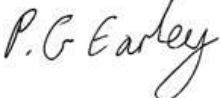
Foster carers will:

- Develop their skills, knowledge, and expertise throughout their fostering career, and subsequently share this with their peers via the mentoring and buddy schemes.
- Fully participate in the annual review meeting, including the completion of their personal development plan, making every effort to achieve the goals identified within this.
- Attend relevant training which has been identified by them as beneficial to their role, alongside training identified by their supervising social worker.
- Where training is booked, foster carers must contact the agency in a timely manner if they are no longer able to attend.
- Attend and contribute to support groups as identified by their supervising social worker.

In signing this Charter North Tyneside Council's fostering service and foster carers agree to reflect the spirit and intention of the charter and its actions.

The child's Local Authority (contact details for person responsible for implementing the aims of the Charter) North Tyneside Council, Quadrant, The Silverlink North, Cobalt Business Park, NE27 0BY

Cllr Peter Earley – Cabinet Member for Supporting and Protecting Children

Signature 

Date 18/05/2023

Julie Firth – Director of Children's Services

Signature 

Date 18/05/2023

Mary Connor – Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Children's Services

Signature 

Date 18/005/2023

The fostering service (if different from above)


(contact details for person responsible for implementing the aims of the charter)

Jackie Ingram – Senior Manager for Children in Care

Signature 

Date 18/05/2023

Helen Bewick – Team Manager, Fostering Service

Signature 

Date 18/05/2023

North Tyneside Fostering Network Representative Sandra Watson

Signature 

Date 18/05/2023