

Norfolk
Fostering
Service



Foster Carers' Charter



Norfolk County Council



Introduction

This team around the child foster care charter has been written to place the child in the centre of everything we do and improve their outcomes. This charter recognises the importance of working together to provide each child with the opportunity to be loved, accepted, thrive, grow and achieve.

This happens when we work together as a professional team. However we also recognise that we all have different roles and responsibilities. In this charter we have clearly outlined the different roles of each professional.

By working together with honesty, accountability, respect, transparency and trust; as outlined within the team around the child wheel, we will champion our children and help them reach their full potential.

Different roles, same aim.

13th May 2019





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Roles & Commitment

The foster carers' charter places the child at the centre of everything that we do. It is a commitment on behalf of Norfolk County Council in its role as the corporate parent, the fostering service and the foster carer to work in partnership in the best interests of the children for whom they care. It is a promise, owned by everybody involved, to strive for best practice at all times.

The corporate parent's role

The role of the corporate parent when placing and supporting children in a foster home is to:

- act in their best interests, and promote their physical and mental health and wellbeing
- encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings and take them into account
- help them to gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the placing authority and its relevant partners
- promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes for them
- ensure that they are safe, and that there is stability in their home lives, friends and birth family relationships and education or work
- prepare them for adulthood and independent living, using the Passport to Independence.

Norfolk Fostering Service's role

The fostering service aims to provide stable, nurturing foster care of the highest standard for children who are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and

develop as individuals. To achieve this aim the service recruits, approves and provides continuous professional development for foster carers and delivers ongoing support to them, in order to give them the skills and confidence they need to develop meaningful relationships with the children and young people they care for. In this way the service provides stable and loving homes while the children are part of the foster family.

The foster carer's role

Foster carers look after children by developing meaningful relationships in a safe and nurturing family environment. The stability, care and love provided by foster carers helps the child to achieve recovery and healing from past trauma and promotes resilience in order for the child to realise their full potential.

A foster carer's relationships with other members of the team around the child should be based on mutual trust and respect.

This charter explains what all parties can expect from one another.

What foster carers and Norfolk Fostering Service can expect from the corporate parent

1. Working in partnership

We understand that we must provide foster carers with the best possible opportunity to give the children in our care a loving, stable home, and to enable those children to enjoy a positive, nurturing experience of family life – one that does not set them apart from their peers.

We must:

- treat foster carers as experts on the child and include them in all meetings where planning and decision making affect them or the children they care for
- treat foster carers without discrimination and respect them as professional colleagues
- value foster carers' skills and expertise equally to those of others in the team around the child
- respect confidentiality.

2. Information

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

We must:

- within statutory time frames, share with the fostering service and/or foster carer, all the relevant information needed in order to care safely for the child.
- provide this information in writing prior to the placement, or as soon as possible in the case of emergency placements
- secure clear and timely plans for the child's care, to support the child in fulfilling their potential.

3. Clarify 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 look after.

We must:

- ensure that foster carers are able to make everyday decisions that mean that their fostered child is not treated differently from their peers and can feel part of their family
- provide clarity about any decision foster carers cannot take at the outset so that everyone is clear about their respective responsibilities
- deal swiftly with any requests for decision making on matters that are outside of the foster carer's delegated authority.



4. Communication & consultation

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

We must:

- facilitate communication between foster carers, and listen to advice from professionals, experts and decision makers
- provide foster carers with the opportunity to influence relevant policies and procedures.

What foster carers can expect from the Norfolk Fostering Service

1. Working in partnership

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

We must:

- value foster carers' skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals
- recognise that foster carers are the people who live with children every day and usually know them best
- include foster carers in all meetings that affect them and the children they care for
- ensure that our fostering service will comply with fostering regulations and guidance
- treat foster carers without discrimination and respect them as professional colleagues
- respect confidentiality.

2. Information

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

We must:

- share all information we have about the child in order to care safely for them
- provide this information in writing prior to placement, or as soon as possible in the case of emergency placements
- provide foster carers with information on all financial matters including tax and insurance, allowances and additional entitlements
- provide foster carers with full details of all relevant policies and procedures.



3. Support

We recognise that fostering can be an isolating and challenging task, and that appropriate and timely support makes all the difference to the fostering family and to the children in their care.

We must:

- ensure there is a robust post-approval induction process
- respond positively to appropriate requests, including respite/short break support and out of hours support
- provide foster carers with regular supervision and phone contact

- give foster carers honest and open feedback
- provide foster carers with access to 24-hour support from people with fostering expertise
- pay foster carers' correct allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner
- ensure that there is a local group, recognised by the fostering service, where foster carers and their family can find support and share experiences with other fostering families
- support foster carers when facilitating contact with birth families
- recognise and champion the contribution foster carers and their families make to fostering
- support foster carers to develop their skills and expertise in arenas other than tutor led courses

4. Learning & development

We believe foster carers must have relevant learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career. This will ensure they develop and enhance 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 must:

- ensure all foster carers have an individual annual training plan
- provide foster carers and their family with appropriate, accessible and relevant training by trainers who understand fostering
- support foster carers to develop meaningful relationships with the children in their care and the other members of the team around the child
- continue to provide all foster carers with other development opportunities which make the best use of their skills and expertise, such as mentoring or providing training or support.

5. Fair treatment

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

We must:

- consult with foster carers before changing terms and conditions
- ensure honesty and openness in all of our discussions and communications with foster carers
- provide a framework for dealing with allegations, including access to independent support, and adhere to agreed timescales
- ensure that foster carers are treated with respect, kept informed and provided with emotional support should they be subject to an allegation
- ensure that foster carers know the arrangements for the payment of fees and allowances in the event that they are not able to foster while the subject of an allegation.



6. Communication & consultation

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

We must:

- ensure that we consult with foster carers in a meaningful way on matters that affect them
- give foster carers timely feedback from consultations
- provide clear information on how foster carers can give us feedback and report concerns.

What Norfolk Fostering Service can expect from foster carers

1. Working in partnership

We must demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct. We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship, and we will aim to build a meaningful and collaborative relationship with our supervising social worker, the child's social worker and other relevant professionals.

We must:

- demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability
- provide children with a positive experience of family life
- attend meetings about the children and young people we care for
- work with the individuals and agencies involved with the child such as the child's social worker, fostering service, school, and health and religious bodies
- work with birth parents, wider family and any other significant people in a child's life
- meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance, and follow policies and procedures
- inform our supervising social worker about factors that impact on our fostering, including changes in our household
- inform our supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise for us
- inform the child's social worker about any concerns we have related to the child
- respect confidentiality
- maintain an open dialogue with the fostering service
- keep accurate records and write up to date reports in order to clearly reflect the progress of the children in our care.

2. 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 must:

- develop a meaningful relationship with the child - understand their needs, support their growth, become an advocate and champion for them, and endeavour to remain in touch with them when they move on
- care for the child in a manner that recognises and respects their identity - including their ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural heritage and gender identity
- afford the same level of protection and care to a child as we would our own child
- support the child to make decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age, understanding and ability
- support the child to develop age appropriate independent skills
- support the child to inform the development of the services which affect their care, as appropriate to their age, understanding and ability



3. Learning, development & support

We must access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career to meet the needs of the children we are caring for. This will ensure we have the necessary skills and knowledge to allow us to develop our practice so we can transform the lives of the children we care for.

We must:

- be willing and able to develop our skills throughout our fostering career
- Maintain a continuous professional development portfolio by accessing a wide range of learning.
- be willing to attend and contribute to support groups.



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