

FOSTER CARERS' CHARTER

**'Children are at the heart
of our work'**



Brent

June 2012

ROLES AND COMMITMENT

Brent local authority's role

The local authority's aim is to recruit and assess carers of the highest calibre who will be able to provide a home environment that promotes the development of children and young people. To achieve this, the local authority will ensure that all foster carers have a variety of practical and financial support available.

Foster carers' role

Foster carers are an integral part of the professional team around the child. Their role is to provide a safe and secure environment for vulnerable children that will help them to maximise their potential and develop into contributing members of society.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Helen Keller

The charter provides clarity as to what to expect from each other in caring for looked after children and young people.

Brent local authority's commitment

Foster carers can expect from Brent local authority

1. Working in partnership
2. Information
3. Support
4. Learning and development
5. Fair treatment
6. Clarity about decisions
7. Communication and consultation

Brent Foster carers commitment

Brent local authority can expect from foster carers

1. Working in partnership
2. Value and respect for the child
3. Information
4. Learning and development
5. Communication and consultation

WHAT FOSTER CARERS CAN EXPECT FROM BRENT LOCAL AUTHORITY

1 Working in partnership

Brent local authority recognises that Foster carers are at the core in ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people in care.

Brent local authority will:

- Value that the skills and contributions of Foster carers are equal to that of other professionals within the multi-disciplinary team around the child or young person
- Include Foster carers in all necessary meetings that affect them and the looked after child, recognising that their input is pivotal to the well being of the child in their care
- Ensure that the Placement Service meets the standards set out in the Fostering Regulations (2011) and guidance
- Ensure that all aspects of our practice is transparent and underpinned by honesty and integrity
- Respect confidentiality (except where it may be necessary to share information to safeguard the young person, in which case we will inform Foster carers of this action)
- Ensure that allowances and fees are paid regularly and within the required timescales
- Ensure that records are being kept about all significant events and communications

2. Information

Brent local authority recognises that information sharing with Foster carers is critical in ensuring that the overall needs of looked after children or young people are met.

The local authority will:

- Provide Foster carers with a Foster carers' handbook upon initial approval which contains all relevant policies and procedures. The local authority will also ensure that these are updated when required and new guidelines are provided
- Ensure Foster carers have information on all financial matters
- Give Foster carers all relevant information available at the time of the referral to enable them to safely care for the child or young person placed in their care
- Ensure that Support Plans are drawn up in consultation with Foster carers and agreed prior to the placement commencing
- Ensure that Placement Planning Meetings take place within timescales

WHAT FOSTER CARERS CAN EXPECT FROM BRENT LOCAL AUTHORITY

3 Support

Brent local authority recognises that fostering can be challenging and that having robust and timely support makes a huge difference:

The local authority will:

- Ensure that fostering allowances are reflective of the needs of individual children and paid within the outlined timescales
- Provide monthly supervisory visits, or more if required, and regular telephone contact
- Ensure that newly approved Foster carers are 'buddied up' with experienced Foster carers
- Provide additional support to children or young people, Foster carers and their families through CAMHS and other agencies.
- Facilitate regular support groups during the day and evening to enable all Foster carers to attend
- Ensure that the Foster carers Focus group runs regularly to meet with senior managers for consultation.
- Ensure all Foster carers are members of an independent organisation which provides support and advocacy (Foster Talk)

4 Learning and Development

The local authority recognises that in order to promote placement stability and help children to make successful transitions, it is essential for foster carers to have access to training and development opportunities that will enhance their skills and knowledge

The local authority will:

- Ensure that all Foster carers have a Development Plan (Training profile) monitoring their development annually
- Provide all the necessary training and other developmental opportunities
- Continually consult with Foster carers on additional specialist training they might require
- Ensure that 'one to one' and group training are available to support foster carers in completing their Children Workforce Development Council (CWDC) work books.
- Ensure opportunities are available for Foster carers to further their career development, i.e. Qualification Credit framework level 3 (QCF)

WHAT FOSTER CARERS CAN EXPECT FROM BRENT LOCAL AUTHORITY

5 Fair treatment

Brent local authority recognises that Foster carers need to be treated fairly at all times

The local authority will

- Provide a framework that is transparent in dealing with complaints and allegations and adhere to the required time scales
- Ensure that Foster carers and their families are treated with dignity and respect whilst subject to an allegation
- Ensure Foster carers are provided with independent support as necessary (Foster Talk)
- Ensure outcomes of investigations are put in writing to Foster carers

6. Clarity about decisions

Brent local authority recognises that to enable children and young people to view fostering as a positive experience and minimise stigmatisation, Foster carers must be empowered to make everyday decisions regarding the children in their care.

The local authority will

- Ensure that delegated authority tools such as placement agreement meetings, reviews, etc. are used to provide clarity on the remits of decisions Foster carers can and cannot make in relation to the child or young person in their care
- Ensure that Foster carers are empowered and feel confident to make basic decisions on the day to day matters relating to the child or young person in their care
- Regularly consult children and young people about their wishes and feelings and empower them to contribute to the decisions made about their lives

WHAT FOSTER CARERS CAN EXPECT FROM BRENT LOCAL AUTHORITY

7. Communication and Consultation

Brent local authority is a firm believer in open and transparent dialogue in developing positive working relationships.

The local authority will:

- Facilitate regular communication with Foster carers and other professionals
- Strive to provide honest and constructive feedback to Foster carers which will benefit both Foster carers and children in placement.
- Ensure that Foster carers are consulted on all matters affecting them
- Ensure that Foster carers are provided with feedback in a timely manner

WHAT BRENT LOCAL AUTHORITY CAN EXPECT FROM FOSTER CARERS

1 Working in partnership

Foster carers recognise that high quality care can only be provided if all professionals work together.

Foster carers will:

- Meet the standards set out in the Fostering Regulations (2011) and National Minimum Standards and follow the local authority's policies and procedures (See Foster Carers' Handbook)
- Provide looked after children with an experience of family life
- Use their expertise, skills and knowledge positively to improve the outcomes for looked after children
- Show willingness to work positively with birth families and significant people in the child's life to help them maintain their sense of identity
- Work positively within a multidisciplinary network of professionals involved with the child or young person, i.e. school, health, religious establishments and others

2 Value and Respect for the child or young person in their care

Foster carers recognise that every child and young person should be respected and valued as an individual and be supported to meet their aspirations and full potential.

Foster carers will:

- Ensure their practice is reflective of the individuality of each child in their care
- Support the child or young person to be involved in making decisions regarding their lives appropriate to their age and understanding
- Respect and promote the child or young person's identity, culture, religion, language and other cultural observations and practices.
- Afford the same level of consideration, care and protection as they would for their own child in accordance with the requirements set out in the National Minimum Standards
- Advocate on behalf of the child or young person in their care by obtaining additional support and services as required

WHAT BRENT LOCAL AUTHORITY CAN EXPECT FROM FOSTER CARERS

3 Information

Foster carers recognise that open dialogue is key to positive working relationships and in safeguarding children

Foster carers will

- Maintain information about the child and/or their family in a confidential manner
- Keep supervising social workers informed of any changes within their household
- Inform the Placement Service of any difficulties that they, the looked after child or any other household members are experiencing that could have an impact on the placement
- Make use of their logbooks and evidence that they are recording significant events in relation to the child or young person in placement
- Respond to correspondence and requests for information in a timely manner

4 Learning, Development and Support

Foster carers recognise the importance of having access to learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career. This will have a significant impact in ensuring that they will positively meet the needs of the individual children placed in their care.

Foster carers will:

- Take responsibility for the development of their knowledge and skills throughout their fostering career
- Attend all mandatory training courses and also specialist training that would benefit the placement
- Be proactive in informing the local authority of their training needs
- Attend monthly Support group meetings (alternated morning and evening sessions)
- Give sufficient notice to the local authority if they are unable to attend training or support group sessions

5 Communication and Consultation

Foster carers recognise the importance of effective communication in ensuring the needs of children are met

Foster carers will:

- Conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times
- Make sure their views are communicated in a constructive manner which is beneficial to all
- Keep the local authority abreast of all matters relating to the child or young person in writing
- Participate in consultation and discussions on an individual or group level (support groups/focus groups) which will contribute to the development of the service as a whole