The Foster Carers' Charter



Foster Sandwell

fostersandwell.co.uk

Introduction

The Foster Carers' Charter was produced by the Fostering Network with support from a range of organisations including the Department for Education, ADCS and FosterTalk.

The Charter represents a commitment on behalf of the placing authority in its role as the corporate parent, the Sandwell Children's Trust Fostering and the foster carer to work in partnership in the best interests of the children for whom they care.

Sandwell Children's Trust

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What Foster Carers Can Expect from the Sandwell Children's Trust Fostering

Working in partnership

We recognise that foster carers have skills and expertise that makes 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 you and the children you care for
- Ensure that the Sandwell Children's Trust Fostering will comply with fostering regulations and guidance
- Treat foster carers without discrimination and respect you as colleagues
- Respect confidentiality

Information

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

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, allowances and additional entitlements
- Provide foster carers with full details of all relevant policies and procedures

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 child in your care.

We must:

- Ensure there is a robust post-approval induction process
- Respond positively to requests for additional support, 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' allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner
- Ensure that there is a local group, recognised by the Sandwell Children's Trust Fostering, 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

Learning and development

We believe that foster carers must have 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 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

Fair treatment

We recognise that foster carers have a right to be treated fairly, no matter what 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
- Ensure that you are treated with respect, kept informed and provided with emotional and practical support should you be subject to an allegation
- Provide a framework for dealing with allegations, including access to independent support, and adhere to agreed timescales
- 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

Communication and 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 you
- Give foster carers timely feedback from consultations
- Provide clear information on how foster carers can give us feedback and report concerns

What the Sandwell Children's Trust Fostering Can Expect from Foster Carers

Working in partnership

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

Foster carers must:

- Demonstrate expertise and make use of skills to the best of carers' ability
- Provide children with a positive experience of family life
- Attend meetings about the children and young people that carers care for
- Work with the individuals and agencies involved with the child such as the child's social worker, Sandwell Children's Trust Fostering, school and health and religious bodies
- Work with birth parents, wider family and other significant people in a child's life;
- Meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance and follow policies and procedures
- Inform the carers' supervising social worker about factors that impact on fostering including changes in household
- Inform the carers' supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise for the foster carers
- Inform the child's social worker about any concerns we have related to the child
- Respect confidentiality
- Maintain an open dialogue with the Sandwell Children's Trust Fostering

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.

Foster carers 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 and cultural heritage
- Afford the same level of protection and care to a child as foster carers would their own child
- Support the child to make decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age, understanding and ability
- Support the child to inform the development of the services which affect their care, as appropriate to their age, understanding and ability

Learning, development and support

Foster carers must access learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career in accordance with the needs of the children they are caring for. 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.

Foster carers must:

- Be willing and able to develop their skills throughout their fostering career
- Attend relevant training
- Be willing to attend and contribute to support groups