



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Roles and commitment

Brighton and Hove City Council's role

The council aims to provide stable and first rate foster care for children who are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals. To achieve this aim, we recruit, train and approve foster carers and deliver ongoing support to them.

The foster carer's role

Foster carers are at the heart of the foster care service. We are assessed, trained and supported to look after children and young people in a family environment, providing them with stability, care and an opportunity to grow and develop 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 Information
- 3 Clarity about decisions
- 4 Support
- 5 Learning and development
- 6 Fair treatment
- 7 Communication and consultation.

Foster carers' commitment

You can expect from us:

- 1 Working in partnership
- 2 Respect for the child
- 3 Information
- 4 Learning, development and support
- 5 Communication and consultation.

What foster carers can expect from Brighton and Hove City Council:

1. 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 recognising you receive training and knowledge
- recognise that you are the people who live with children every day and know them best
- Aim to include you in all relevant meetings that affect you and the children you care for. To provide you with an explanation and information if you are unable to attend.
- ensure that our fostering service will meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance
- treat you without discrimination and respect you as a colleague
- respect your confidentiality.
- Aim to ensure you receive a consistent approach
- Consult with the foster carers (the BHFCA) about the development of the fostering service
- Ensure you are treated courteously

2. 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 we have in order to care safely for the child. We recognise the importance of this information
- provide this information in writing prior to placement or at the earliest opportunity from the start of a placement.
- ensure that there is a placement plan drawn up in discussion with you within the specified timescales.
- 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.
- To consult with you about change in policies and procedures that affect you.

3. 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:

- ensure that, wherever possible, if appropriate, 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
- provide clarity about any decision you cannot take at the outset so that everyone understands who is responsible for what.
- provide you with explanations of why decisions are made
- if there is a difference of opinion provide opportunity for these to be explained or resolved

4. 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:

- respond positively and in a non judgemental manner to requests for additional support
- provide you with regular supervision and regular phone contact
- give you honest, timely and open feedback. The feedback will be constructive
- provide you with access to 24 hour support from people with fostering expertise
- pay you allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner
- pay fees that reflect the task
- continue to support the Brighton and Hove Foster Care Association who offer support and opportunity to meet and share experiences with other fostering families.
- Provide a range of support services to help you with your fostering task
- Recognise the role of foster carers sons and daughters play an important role in the fostering task.
- Recognise that the ending of placements can be traumatic for foster carers and ensure foster carers are provided with appropriate support following the end of a placement

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 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 trainers who understand the fostering task. Where possible we will provide some flexibility in times of training to enable you to attend.
- provide you with other development opportunities which make the best use of your skills and expertise, such as mentoring or providing training or support.

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 emotional support should you be subject to an allegation
- provide a framework for dealing with allegations and adhere to our 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.
- Provide prompt communication to carers following an investigation resulting from an allegation or complaint

7. Communication and consultation

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

We will:

- facilitate regular communication between you and the Lead Councillor for Children's Services.
- ensure that we consult with you in a meaningful way on matters that affect you
- give you timely feedback from consultations.
- Arrange regular opportunities for foster carers to meet with managers from the Fostering Service and others to raise issues of importance to carers.
- Aim to involve foster carers directly in the development of the Fostering Service.

Draft

What Brighton and Hove City Council can expect from foster carers:

1. 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 and young people with an experience of family life
- work with the 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 a child' or young person's life.
- meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance and follow departmental policies and procedures
- respect confidentiality.

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 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
- ensure the child has the right to make decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age and understanding.
- Help collect and preserve memories of the time the child spends with our family.
- Ensure that if children have to move placements, they are moved in a respectful and considerate manner.

3. Information

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the 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.

4. Learning, development and support

We will access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career. 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 the 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
- play a role in identifying our own training needs

5. Communication and consultation

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship. We believe that it is important for foster carers to play an active role in this

We will:

- aim to respond to local consultations and discussion in order to inform the development of the service
- meet with managers others in order to promote dialogue and a good working relationship.

Feb 2012



