

## Portsmouth City Council Foster Carers' Charter



make a  
difference to  
their life....  
....and yours

# Introduction

**Portsmouth City Council Children's Services have worked in partnership with foster carers and consulted with children in care to produce this Charter. It is a shared agreement which sets out what we can expect from each other and demonstrates our joint responsibilities to the children and young people in our care.**

The Charter is child-focused recognising that children and young people deserve to experience a full family life, with foster carers who can make everyday decisions as they would their own child, and without the child feeling that they stand out as a looked after child.

The Charter is an acknowledgement of the importance of maintaining an effective working relationship between Children's Services and foster carers based on mutual respect and trust.

The National Minimum Fostering Standards for Fostering Services, Regulations and Statutory Guidance sit alongside the Charter. The Charter should be read alongside the Foster Care Agreement that is a legal requirement which covers responsibilities, requirements and expectations between the fostering service and the foster carer.

This is a 'living' document and should adapt to and reflect best practice.

Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care

**Councillor Ryan Brent**

Director of Children's Services

**Alison Jeffery**

Foster Carer representative

**Dianne Gash**

Foster Carer representative

**Sally Parrack**

# Foster Carers



Foster carers are at the heart of the fostering service. They 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 reach their potential.

**What Portsmouth foster carers say:**



“Children should always come first. They should be welcomed into your family and reassured that you are not trying to replace their own family. They should be listened to, encouraged, believed in and their achievements celebrated.”

“Foster carers should inspire ambitions, promote strengths and encourage the child in their care to follow interests and take an active part in the community in which they live. They must do the very best they can for the child while they are in their care.”





# Portsmouth Children's Services

**A good quality foster carer helps achieve stability for the child who is valued, supported and encouraged to grow as an individual.**

Portsmouth City Council is the Corporate Parent of the child in care but recognises the positive and central role that foster carers play in the life of the child placed with them.

In order to ensure the best possible outcomes for that child, Portsmouth City Council are committed to working in partnership with and listening to their carers who they view as an essential part of the team supporting the child.

Portsmouth Children's services aims to provide first rate foster care for children through the recruitment, training and delivery of ongoing support to our foster carers.

Image Credits: (Top right) ©John Birdsall. Posed by models (Left carer) Dianne (Right carer) Sally (all others) stock images posed by models.

“

**We should listen to foster carers, acknowledge what they see, hear and feel about the child and their views kept central to planning a future for the child.**

”

# What Foster Carers can expect from Portsmouth City Council

## Respect and working in partnership

- Recognise that you are the people who live with children every day, know them best and make the biggest difference to their everyday lives
- Recognise the importance of the relationship between you and your family and the children in your care
- Value your skills, knowledge and expertise equally to those of other professionals
- Acknowledge and respect that the foster placement is your family home and as such impacts on every aspect of your family life
- When making a foster placement ensure the wishes and feelings of the child or young person are listened to and taken into account
- Ensure that you are included in all meetings that affect you and the children you care for
- Ensure you are asked your views and opinions and that these are listened to
- Treat you without discrimination and respect you as a colleague
- Respect you and your family's confidentiality
- Ensure that our fostering service meets the standards set out in the fostering services National Minimum Standards, fostering regulations and good practice guidance

## Information

- Provide you with full details of all relevant departmental policies and procedures
- Provide you with information on all financial matters including tax, allowances, additional entitlements and PCC fee scheme
- Provide all new foster carers with an induction including details of the structure of the department
- Give you all the available information you need to care safely for the child
- Provide written information prior to a placement unless it is made in an emergency and it is not feasible to do so, when we will provide this information as soon as possible
- Ensure there is a placement plan provided on the day of placement drawn up in discussion with you and agreed with you in advance of the placement (except in emergencies where this will be done as soon as possible)
- Ensure that all information is regularly updated so that you are best placed to care for the child placed with you
- Give children and young people information about their foster carer, foster family and foster home before placement and as soon as possible if placed in an emergency
- Provide you with information about permanency options and options for young people in your care when they become 18



## Clarity about decisions

- Ensure that wherever possible you are able to make everyday decisions that mean your foster child is not treated differently to their peers and can feel part of your family
- Provide you with full details of what decisions you can make, recorded in the placement plan so you and the child in your care are clear about who is responsible for what
- Ensure foster children and young people understand who can make what decisions and the reason for this



## Support

- Provide you with regular face to face supervision and phone contact as required
- Give you opportunities to meet other foster carers
- Ensure there is a local support group where you can share experiences and find support from other foster carers
- Respond positively and in a timely way to requests for additional support
- Provide specialist support from partners such as the Virtual Head Teacher, looked after children's nurse and CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service)
- Ensure that you are provided with support, including independent support, if subject to an allegation
- Give you timely, honest and open feedback which allows you to reflect on your practice
- Provide opportunities for children who foster to be supported
- Provide you with an out of hours telephone support service from people with fostering experience and 24 hour support via the Emergency Duty Service
- Support the physical and emotional wellbeing of our carers
- Pay you allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner
- Provide you with equipment agreed to be necessary for the children you foster



## Learning and development

- Provide you with appropriate and relevant training throughout your fostering career to enhance your skills and knowledge for the benefit of the child in your care
- Provide you with support to achieve your Training Support and Development Standards within the required time-frame
- Provide opportunities in supervision to reflect on your practice so that you are able to apply learning to the care you give
- Provide you with other development opportunities which make the best use of your skills and experience, such as mentoring or providing training or support to others

## Communication and fair treatment

- Be open, honest and transparent with you in all our discussions and communications
- Ensure that you are treated with respect and kept informed should you be subject to an allegation
- Provide a framework for dealing with allegations and adhere to our agreed time-scales
- Ensure you know the arrangements for the payment of allowances and fees in the event that you are not able to foster while the subject of an allegation
- Respond to communication from you in a timely and respectful manner
- Ensure that there is in place a mechanism for resolving disagreements
- Promote an active Liaison Group between carers and senior managers within Children's Services to facilitate regular communication and consultation
- Facilitate regular opportunities for foster carers to meet with counsellors and senior managers and contribute to strategic planning for looked after children through representation on the Corporate Parenting Board and sub groups such as Health and Education
- Consult with you on matters that affect you and before changing your terms and conditions
- Give you timely feedback from consultations





# What Portsmouth City Council can expect from their foster carers

## Respect for the child

- Treat the child or young person in our care as part of our family, including them in our daily routines and activities and holidays
- Provide a safe, caring, supportive family home as we would to our own child
- Respect the child's right to be treated equally, promoting the child's sexual identity, religious, spiritual, linguistic and cultural heritage
- Listen to the child in our care and take their views and opinions into account, ensuring children have the right to make decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age and understanding
- Have high expectations for the children in our care, high ambitions for them and provide support to achieve their aspirations
- Ensure the child in our care attends school and is supported to do well by attending parents' evenings, PEP meetings and general school activities as a good parent would
- Strive to encourage and support the social, educational, physical and emotional development of the child in our care in order for them to achieve their potential
- Respect and promote the child's relationship with their birth family and people who are important to them
- Advocate on behalf of the child or young person in our care to help them achieve the best possible outcomes
- Support the child as they grow to gain life experience and become independent by modelling, passing on and teaching life skills



## Working in partnership

- Demonstrate expertise and make use of skills to the best of our ability
- Provide children with a positive experience of family life
- Work with the agencies involved with the child such as school, health and religious establishments
- Attend and contribute to meetings about the children and young people we care for
- Respect and value the skills and knowledge of other professionals involved with the child or young person in our care
- Contribute to and work with the plans made by the team around the child
- Encourage children to keep in touch with family and friends by showing a willingness to work with birth parents, wider family and people significant in a child's life
- Respect the child and their family's confidentiality
- Meet the standards set out in the fostering services National Minimum Standards, Regulations and Guidance and follow departmental policies and procedures

## Information

- We will inform our supervising social worker about changes to our household and about any difficulties that arise for us
- We will keep accurate records about the child in our care and inform the child's social worker as soon as possible about any significant incidents and important events in the child's life





### Learning and development

- We will complete the Training Support and Development Standards within the required time-scales
- We will actively participate in regular supervision
- We will take personal responsibility for developing our skills throughout our fostering career
- We will attend relevant training and take up training opportunities offered to us and those identified in our supervision and annual review
- We will attend and contribute to foster carer support groups and foster carer events
- We will be open to using support when offered to help make placements work well

### Communication and consultation

- We will consult and communicate with children in our care when making decisions in line with delegated authority
- As foster carers we believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship
- We will respond to consultations and discussions in order to inform the development of the service
- We will take up opportunities to meet with councillors, senior managers and others in order to promote dialogue and a good working relationship including representing foster carers on the Liaison Group
- We will encourage our own children and foster children to give feedback

## Portsmouth Looked After Children ‘in our words’

- **Respect us**
- **Support us emotionally and as individual people**
- **Support contact with friends and family**
- **Support us in our health and education and be a strong advocate for us**
- **Be open and honest and let us into your lives**
- **Support us through the good times and the bad**
- **Help us understand who we are and where we come from**

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