



## The Foster Carers' Charter

The working relationships between Child and Adult Services and our foster carers are based on mutual trust and respect.

We worked together to write this charter. It explains what we can expect from each other.

## The local authority's role

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

### What foster carers can expect from us

#### 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

## Compliments and complaints

### If you have a complaint about our service

If you wish to complain about, comment on or compliment any part of our service you may contact our complaints officer by:



Telephone: 01429 284020



Email: [socialcare@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:socialcare@hartlepool.gov.uk)



Filling in the form on our website: [hartlepool.gov.uk/socialcarecomplaints](http://hartlepool.gov.uk/socialcarecomplaints)

## With thanks to...

George Davey, Craig Lamplough, Elaine McIntosh and Lindsey Newbury.

#### 4. Learning development and support

We must be able to access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career. This will ensure we have the skills and knowledge we need and allows us to develop our practice so 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 all relevant training and complete all training logs
- take up all training opportunities offered to us and inform you if we are unable to attend
- contribute to support group meetings

#### 5. Communication and consultation

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

##### **We will:**

- inform the development of the fostering service by taking part in discussions and meetings
- meet with all involved in the service in order to promote dialogue and sustain good working relationships
- provide honest and open feedback

- recognise that you are the people who live with the children every day and know them best
- include you in all meetings that affect you and the children in your care and/or inform you of the outcomes
- ensure that our fostering service will meet the standards set out in the fostering regulations and guidance
- treat you without discrimination and respect you as a colleague
- respect your confidentiality

#### 2. Information

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

##### **We will:**

- make every effort to provide you with all of the information you need in order to care safely for the child at the point of placement. Failing this, we will provide the information as soon as we can
- provide you with information about the financial payment you will receive in respect of caring for the child
- provide you with full details of the departmental policies

and procedures

- provide you with full details of the department's policies and procedures

### 3. Clarity about decisions

We recognise that, in order 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, you are able to make everyday decisions that mean your fostered child is not treated differently to their peers and can feel part of your family
- provide clarity about any decision you can not make at the outset so that everyone understands who is responsible for what

### 4. Support

We recognise that fostering is a challenging and sometimes isolating task and, as such, appropriate and timely support makes all the difference to the fostering family and to the child in your care.

### 2. Respect for the child

Every child and young person should be respected as an individual. They should be supported in meeting their needs, achieving their aspirations and meeting their potentials.

#### **We will:**

- offer our fostered child the same level of protection and care as we would our own child, in accordance with the national minimum standards
- ensure that our fostered child has the rights to make decisions regarding their life, as appropriate

### 3. Information

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

#### **We will:**

- inform our supervising social worker about any changes in our family
- inform our supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise
- complete all paperwork required, including care recording sheets, reports for meetings, etc

# The foster carers' 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. We provide them with stability, care and an opportunity to grow and develop and to reach their potential.

## Foster carers' commitment

### 1. Working in partnership

We will demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct.

#### We will:

- provide children with an experience of family life
- show a willingness to work with birth parents, wider family and people significant in the child's life
- respect confidentiality
- attend meetings about our fostered children
- meet the standards set out in the fostering regulations and guidance and follow the department's policies and procedures
- demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability
- work with other agencies involved with our fostered child, such as health and education

#### We will:

- respond to requests for additional support, where possible
- provide you with regular supervision and phone contact
- give you honest, constructive and open feedback from all parties involved with you and your fostered child
- provide you with 24-hour support. Out of hours support is provided by the Emergency Duty Team (EDT)
- provide regular organised support group meetings

### 5. Learning and development

We believe that we must enable foster carers 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 so that they can help transform the lives of the children they foster.

#### We will:

- provide you with appropriate and relevant training from recognised trainers
- provide you with the development opportunities which make the best use of your skills and expertise, such as

monitoring 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 making changes to the terms and conditions outlined in your foster care agreement
- ensure openness in all of our discussions and communications with you

## 7. Allegations and complaints

Should you be subject to any complaint or investigation,

### we will:

- ensure that you are supported, that your personal feelings are respected and your confidentiality is protected
- recognise that things will be difficult for everyone involved. We will ensure that any investigations are dealt with sensitively

## 8. 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 Head of Business Unit, if requested
- provide information on making contact with the Director of Child and Adult Services, if requested
- ensure we consult with you in a meaningful way about matters which affect you