

Our shared commitment

- The Fostering Service recognises the central importance of the child's relationship with their foster carer and acknowledges foster carers as core members of the team working with the child.
- The Fostering Service, therefore, agrees to take part in a genuine partnership with the foster carers. This will include that the Fostering Service provides carers with full information about a child before they are placed and that they are well prepared and clear about the responsibilities they are being asked to undertake – in every case.
- The Fostering Service will 'delegate responsibility' (The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011) to foster carers to enable them to treat their foster child as a good parent would treat their own children, and provide them with opportunities for as full an experience of family life and childhood as possible, without unnecessary restrictions. Delegated authority will be covered in the Placement Plan, which is part of the Care Plan. The distribution and balance of responsibilities between parents, social workers and foster carers must be considered during the initial placement planning process and every looked after child review.
- Placement Plans will be reviewed regularly and will address a wider range of consents, decisions and tasks using the delegated authority support tool.
- Before delegating particular tasks, decisions or consents to a foster carer, supervising social worker should be satisfied that foster carers are sufficiently trained and confident to take on these responsibilities. It is also essential that the things which they are authorised to do are discussed with them outside planning meetings and reviews to ensure that they make sense 'in practice'. However, no matter how competent and supported the carer is, the possibility that something may go wrong cannot be entirely eliminated.
- Foster carers will take responsibility for ensuring that they are happy with arrangements that the fostering agency has in place to deal with any potential issues or liabilities.

In signing this charter, Hillingdon's Fostering Service, the fostering agency (if applicable) and the foster carer(s) agree to reflect the spirit and intentions of the charter in their actions.

Hillingdon's Fostering Service

Independent fostering agency:

Foster carer/s

Hillingdon's Fostering Service

Fostering Service
Social Care Health and Housing
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The Foster Carers' Charter



HILLINGDON
LONDON



Foreword

The role of a foster carer is an invaluable one and I believe it should be recognised, valued and supported. Foster carers are key to the work we do in Hillingdon in supporting local looked after children and this Charter is, therefore, an important step in making the job as uncomplicated and worthwhile as possible. The Foster Carers' Charter sets guidelines on how social workers and foster carers should work together in the future, with the overall aim of making sure that all children looked after have greater stability, less upheaval and a better chance of a stable family life.

In order to meet the needs of local children and do the best for them, our foster carers have to be central to all decision-making involving their care and should be clear what is expected of them in undertaking their role. Children are better served in relation to education, health and contact issues when placed locally and this is where we want them to be. We, therefore, aspire to provide safe and secure local foster homes for children and young people looked after by the London Borough of Hillingdon, by recruiting and retaining foster carers from a wide range of ethnic, cultural, religious and economic backgrounds. We provide all foster carers with professional support and comprehensive training to enable them to carry out their role effectively and provide quality care to the children and young people they care for.

We want to work with foster carers to bring about a greater sense of shared understanding and a stronger sense of common purpose as well as to provide the opportunity for people to question and challenge when the essence of the Charter is not being met. This means open communication, sharing where things are working well and not so well, and the contribution of ideas on how to improve the life chances of the children and young people we care for. I hope that we can all work together to support and implement the Hillingdon Foster Carers' Charter.

**Cllr David Simmonds, Deputy Leader of the Council
and Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services**

The Fostering Service wants to increase the in-house foster care provision to meet the needs of an increasingly, challenging and broad looked-after population in Hillingdon, and to ensure that existing foster carers are supported, feel appreciated, and are retained.

Children come first

- Children in foster care will experience as full a family life as possible as part of a loving foster family with 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.
- Children will be given every support to develop their own identities and aspirations, fulfil their potential, and take advantage of all opportunities to promote their talents and skills. Above all, they should be listened to.

Our promise

- We will recognise, in practice, the importance of the child's relationship with his or her foster family as one that can make the biggest difference in the child's life and which can endure into adulthood.
- We will listen to and involve foster carers and their foster children in decision-making and planning, and provide foster carers and their foster children with full information about each other.
- In making placements, our social workers and supervising social workers will be clear about the continuing care or support there will be (including for the child into adulthood), be sensitive to the needs of the foster carer and the child in making and ending placements, and have contingency plans should the placement not work.
- We will treat foster carers with openness, fairness and respect as a core member of the team around the child, and support them in making reasonable and appropriate decisions on behalf of their foster child.
- We will ensure that our foster carers have the support services and development opportunities they need in order to provide their foster child with the best possible care. That includes receiving support from our clinical psychologist, appropriate training and liaising with local foster carers groups, and seeking to respond to problems and disseminate best practice.

- We will make sure foster carers are recompensed on time and are given clear information about any support, allowances, fees, and holidays they will receive, including in cases of dispute with the service or during gaps in placements.

What we ask of our foster carers

- To provide positive adult role models, treat the foster child as they would their own, and be a 'pushy parent' in advocating all aspects of the child's development, including educational attainment and physical and emotional health and wellbeing, and co-operate fully as part of a team with other key professionals in the child's life.
- To support their foster child and do all they can to make the placement work. Take part in learning and development, use skills and approaches that make a positive impact and enable the child to reach his or her potential. Support their foster child to help them to counter possible bullying and discrimination as a result of their care status.
- To promote the child growing up in a loving environment that can meet their developmental needs. This will include the child having an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills, leading to a successful adult life.
- To agree that every child should have his or her wishes and feelings listened to and taken into account.
- To agree that each child should be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background, in order to develop their identity, self confidence and self-worth.
- In signing this charter, the fostering service, child's local authority and foster carer(s) agree to reflect the spirit and intentions of the charter in their actions.