



**Children come first**

- Children in foster care deserve to 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 must 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.

**Brighton and Hove must**

- 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.
- Listen to, 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 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.
- 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.
- Ensure that 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 liaising with local foster carers groups and seeking to respond to problems and disseminate best practice.
- Make sure foster carers are recompensed on time and are given clear information about any support, allowances, fees, and holidays they will receive.

**Foster carers must**

- Provide positive adult role models, treat the foster child as they would their own child, and be a 'pushy parent' in advocating for 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.

- 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.

### Roles and commitment

#### Brighton and Hove City Council's role

The council aims to provide stable and first rate foster care for children and young people 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 and supervision to them.

#### The foster carer's role

Foster carers are at the heart of the foster care service. We are assessed, trained, supported and supervised to look after children and young people in a family environment, providing them with stability, care, encouragement and an opportunity to grow and develop and to reach their aspirations and potential as individuals.

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 Openness and honesty about information sharing
- 3 Clarity about how and why decisions are made
- 4 Support and supervision
- 5 Learning and development
- 6 Fair treatment
- 7 Good levels of communication and consultation

#### Foster carers' commitment You can expect from us:

- 1 Working in partnership
- 2 Respect for the children and young people in our care
- 3 Openness and honesty about information sharing
- 4 A commitment to learning, development and support
- 5 Good levels of communication and consultation

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

#### 1. Working in partnership

We recognise that foster carers have the skills and expertise to make a big difference to the everyday lives of children and young people in care.

We will:

- § Value and recognise your skills, knowledge and expertise equally with other professionals committed to the quality of care to children and young people.
- § Recognise that you are the people who live with children and young people every day and know them well.
- § Aim to include you in all relevant meetings that affect you and the children and young people you care for and 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 fairly and without discrimination and respect you as a colleague.
- § Respect your confidentiality.
- § 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 the care that meets the child and young person's needs.

We will:

- § Give you all relevant information in order for you to care safely for the child and young person and we recognise the importance of this information.
- § Provide this information in writing prior to placement or at the earliest opportunity after 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 and young people to live a positive family life foster carers need to be able to make decisions regarding the children and young people they foster.

We will:

- § Ensure that, wherever possible and if appropriate, you are able to make everyday decisions that mean that your fostered child or young person 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 discussion and resolution.

### 4. Support

We recognise that fostering is rewarding but can also be isolating and challenging and appropriate and timely support can make all the difference to the child or young person in your care and your own family.

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, constructive and open feedback.
- § Provide you with access to 24 hour support from people with fostering expertise.
- § Pay you allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner.
- § Continue to support the Brighton and Hove Foster Care Association who offer support and opportunities to meet and share experiences with other fostering families.
- § Provide a range of support services to help you with your fostering.
- § Recognise that foster carers sons and daughters play an essential role.
- § Recognise that positive endings of placements are important for children, young people and foster carers and their families ensuring that support is in place to achieve this.

### 5. Learning and development

We believe that foster carers must be enabled to access and participate in 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 improve and enrich the lives of the children and young people they foster.

We will:

- § Provide you and your family with appropriate and relevant training. Where possible we will provide some flexibility in times of training to enable you to attend.
- § Give you opportunities to utilise your skills and expertise by delivering mentoring or providing support to other foster carers.

### 6. Fair treatment

We recognise that foster carers have a right to be treated fairly and with respect.

We will:

- § Consult with you before changing terms and conditions.
- § Ensure openness in all of our discussions and communications with you.
- § Provide a framework which details timescales and support networks should you be subject to an allegation.
- § Be transparent in our investigations procedures.
- § 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 aim to:

- § Facilitate communication between you and key members of the elected council with responsibility for children's services.
- § Ensure that we consult and listen to you on matters that affect you, your family and the children and young people you foster.
- § 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.

### 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 and knowledge to the best of our ability.
- § Provide children and young people with a positive experience of family life.
- § Recognise the importance of child or young person's birth family and work in a positive way with the birth parents, wider family and other people significant to them.
- § Promote anti-discriminatory practice in our fostering of children and young people in our care.
- § Meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance and follow departmental policies and procedures including complying with the terms of the Foster carers' agreement
- § Respect confidentiality.

#### 2. Respect for the child and young person

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

We will:

- § Respect and promote a child's identity.
- § Afford the same level of protection and care to a child and young person as we would our own in accordance with the national minimum standards.
- § Ensure the child or young person has the right to contribute to making decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age, maturity and understanding.
- § Help collect and preserve memories of the time the child or young person 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 proposed changes in our household.
- § Inform our supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise for us.
- § Keep the child or young person's Social Worker regularly up to date of their progress.

#### 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 improve the lives of the children and young people we foster.

We will:

- § Be committed to develop our skills throughout our fostering career.
- § Attend mandatory and relevant training.
- § Take up opportunities offered to us.
- § Be committed to participate in training and other opportunities to develop our skills and knowledge.

#### 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.

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