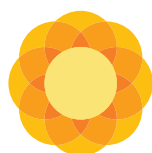


Fostering Service

Foster Carer's Charter 2020-21



BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST

Contents

Introduction (p3)

'Team around the child' wheel (p4)

Sections

1. Roles and commitment (p5)

2. What foster carers and the Trust Fostering Service can expect from the corporate parent (p6)

3. What foster carers can expect from the Trust Fostering Agency (p7-8)

4. What the Trust Fostering Agency can expect from foster carers (p9-10)

Introduction

This team around the child foster care charter has been written to place the child in the centre of everything we do and improve their outcomes.

This charter recognises the importance of working together to provide each child with the opportunity to be nurtured, accepted, thrive, grow and achieve their potential.

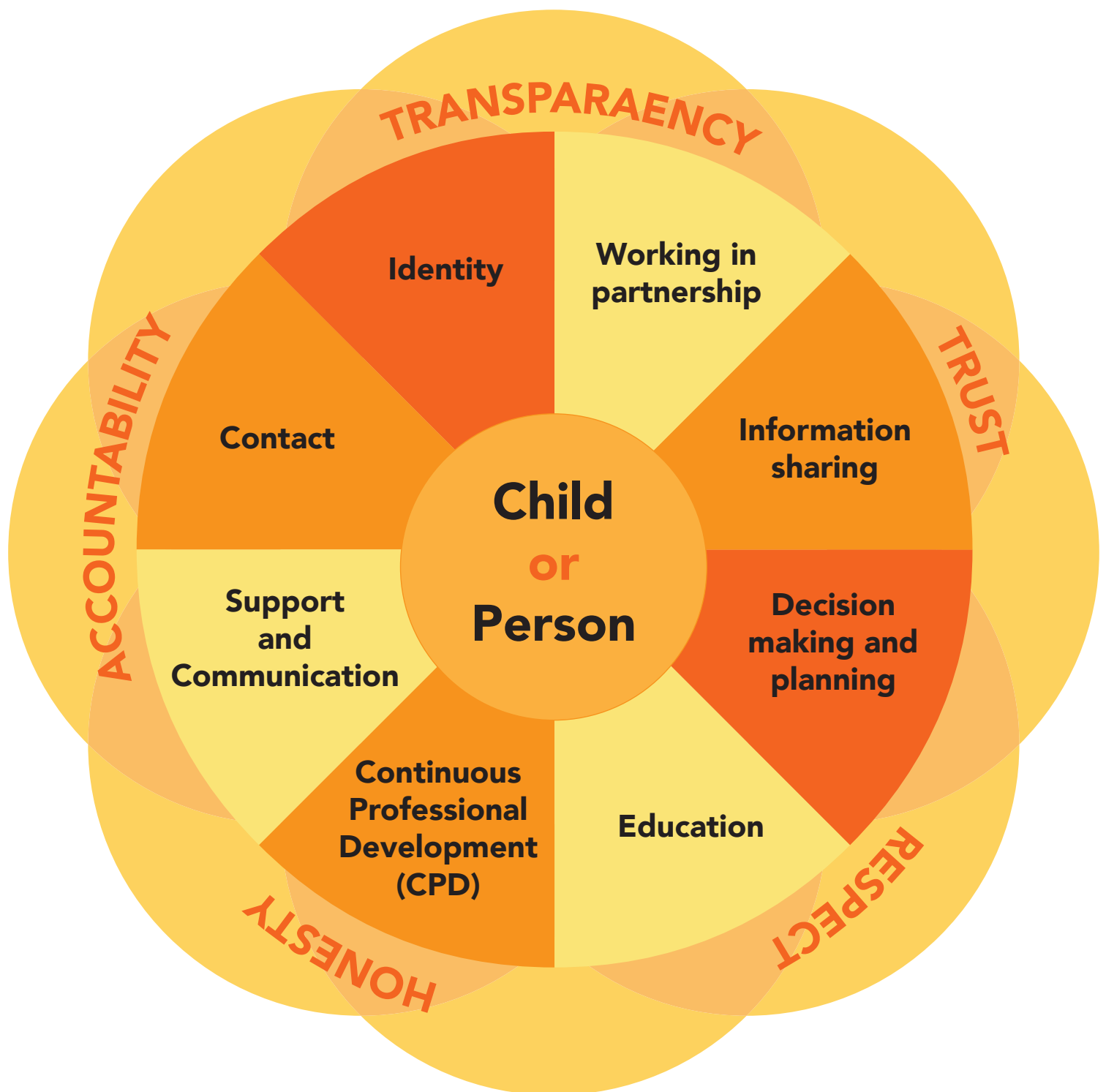
This happens when we work together as a professional team.

We recognise that we all have different roles and responsibilities which we have outlined in this charter.

By working together with honesty, accountability, respect, transparency and trust - as outlined in the **'Team around the child' wheel (see page 4)** we will champion our children and help them to have aspirations and fulfil their potential.

Different role same aim.

'Team around the child' wheel



Section 1

Roles and commitment

The foster carer's charter places the child at the centre of everything that we do. It is a commitment on behalf of Birmingham Children's Trust in its role as the corporate parent, the fostering service and the foster carers to work in partnership in the best interests of the children for whom they care.

It is a promise, owned by everybody involved, to strive for best practice at all times, ensuring that the children remain at the centre of all that we do and are supported to experience positive outcomes.

The corporate parent's role

The role of the corporate parent when placing and supporting children in a foster home is to:

- act in their best interests, and promote their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings and take them into account.
- help them to gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the placing authority and its relevant partners.
- promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes for them.
- ensure that they are safe, and that there is stability in their home lives, friends and birth family relationships and education or work.
- prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

Trust Fostering Service role

The fostering service aims to provide stable, nurturing foster care of the highest standard for children who are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals.

To achieve this aim the service recruits, approves and provides continuous professional development for foster carers and delivers ongoing support to them, in order to give them the skills and confidence they need to develop meaningful relationships with the children and young people they care for.

In this way the service provides stable and loving homes while the children are part of the foster family.

The foster carer's role

Foster carers look after children by developing meaningful relationships in a safe and nurturing family environment.

The stability, care and love provided by foster carers helps the child to achieve recovery and healing from past trauma and promotes resilience in order for the child to realise their full potential.

A foster carer's relationships with other members of the team around the child should be based on mutual trust and respect.

This charter explains what all parties can expect from one another.

Section 2

What foster carers and the Trust Fostering Service can expect from the corporate parent

Working in partnership

We understand that we must provide foster carers with the best possible opportunity to give the children in our care a loving, stable home, and to enable those children to enjoy a positive, nurturing experience of family life - one that does not set them apart from their peers.

We must:

- treat foster carers as experts on the child and include them in all meetings where planning and decision-making affect them or the children they care for.
- treat foster carers without discrimination and respect them as professional colleagues.
- value foster carer's skills and expertise equally to those of others in the team around the child.
- respect confidentiality.

Information

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

We must:

- within statutory timeframes, share with the fostering service and/or foster carer, all the relevant information needed in order to care safely for the child.
- provide this information in writing prior to the placement, or as soon as possible in the case of emergency placements.
- secure clear and timely plans for the child's care, to support the child in fulfilling their potential.

Clarify about decisions

We recognise that in order for children to live full family lives, foster carers must be able to make decisions regarding the children they look after.

We must:

- ensure that foster carers are able to make everyday decisions that mean that their fostered child is not treated differently from their peers and can feel part of their family.
- provide clarity about any decisions foster carers cannot take at the outset so that everyone is clear about their respective responsibilities.
- deal swiftly with any requests for decisions on matters that are outside of the foster carer's delegated authority.

Communication and consultation

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

We must:

- facilitate communication between foster carers, and listen to advice from professionals, experts and decision-makers.
- provide foster carers with the opportunity to influence relevant policies and procedures.

Section 3

What foster carers can expect from the Trust Fostering Service

Working in partnership

We recognise that foster carers have skills and expertise and can make the biggest difference to the everyday lives of children in care.

We work in partnership with Birmingham Foster Care Association (BFCA), to develop the Fostering Service.

The Fostering Development Forum meets regularly to consider and consult on issues of development or concerns (raised by foster carers) and seek to find a mutual resolution.

We must:

- value foster carer's skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals.
- recognise that foster carers are the people who live with children/young people every day and usually know them best.
- include foster carers in all meetings that affect them and the children/young people they care for.
- ensure that our fostering service will comply with fostering regulations and guidance.
- treat foster carers without discrimination and respect them as professional colleagues.
- respect confidentiality.

Information

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

We must:

- share all information we have about the child in order to care safely for them.

- provide this information in writing prior to placement, or as soon as possible in the case of emergency placements
- provide foster carers with information on financial matters including tax and insurance, allowances and additional entitlements
- provide foster carers with full details of all relevant policies and procedures

Support

We recognise that fostering can be an isolating and challenging task, and that appropriate and timely support makes all the difference to the fostering family and to the children in their care.

We must:

- ensure there is a robust post-approval induction process.
- respond positively to appropriate requests, including respite support and out of hours support.
- provide foster carers with regular supervision and phone contact.
- give foster carers honest and open feedback.
- provide foster carers with access to 24-hour support from people with fostering expertise.
- pay foster carers correct allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner.
- ensure that there is a local group, recognised by the fostering service, where foster carers and their family can find support and share experiences with other fostering families.
- recognise and champion the contribution foster carers and their families make to fostering.
- support foster carers to develop their skills, knowledge and expertise in arenas other than tutor/foster carer-led training courses.
- work with BFCA, which provides local independent support services to foster carers.

Section 3

What foster carers can expect from the Trust Fostering Service (ctd.)

Learning and development

We believe foster carers must have relevant learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career.

This will ensure they develop and enhance 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 must :

- ensure all foster carers have an individual annual training plan.
- provide foster carers and their family with appropriate, accessible and relevant training by trainers who understand fostering.
- support foster carers to develop meaningful relationships with the children/young people in their care and the other members of the team around the child.
- continue to provide all foster carers with other development opportunities which make the best use of their skills and expertise, such as mentoring or providing training and support.

Fair treatment

We recognise that foster carers have a right to be treated fairly no matter the circumstances.

We must:

- consult with foster carers before changing terms and conditions.
- ensure honesty and openness in all of our discussions and communications with foster carers.

- provide a framework for dealing with allegations, including access to independent support, and adhere to agreed timescales.
- ensure that foster carers know the arrangements for the payment of fees and allowances if they are not able to foster while the subject of an allegation.
- ensure that foster carers are treated with respect, kept informed and provided with emotional support should they be subject to an allegation.

Communication and consultation

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

We must:

- ensure that we consult with foster carers in a meaningful way on matters that affect them.
- give foster carers timely feedback from consultations.
- provide clear information on how foster carers can give us feedback and report concerns.

Section 4

What the Trust Fostering Service can expect from foster carers

Working in partnership

We must demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct.

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

And we will aim to build a meaningful and collaborative relationship with our supervising social worker, the child's social worker and other relevant professionals.

We must:

- demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability.
- provide children/young people with a positive experience of family life.
- attend meetings about the children and young people we care for.
- work with the individuals and agencies involved with the child such as the child's social worker, fostering service, school, health and religious organisations.
- work with birth parents, wider family and other significant people in a child's life.
- meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance, and follow policies and procedures.
- inform our supervising social worker about factors that impact on our fostering, including changes in our household.
- inform the supervising social worker and child's social worker of any concerns we have related to the child/young person.
- respect confidentiality.
- maintain an open dialogue with the fostering service.
- keep accurate records and write up to date reports in order to clearly reflect the progress, achievement and outcomes of the children/young people in our care.

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 must:

- develop a meaningful relationship with the child/young person - understand their needs, support their growth, become an advocate and champion for them, and endeavour to remain in touch with them when they move on.
- care for the child in a manner that recognises and respects their identity - including their ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural heritage and gender identity.
- afford the same level of protection and care to a child as we would our own child.
- support the child to make decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age, understanding and ability - ensuring their voice is heard.
- support the child to develop age appropriate independent skills and learn how to take age appropriate risks safely.
- support the child/young person to inform the development of the services which affect their care, as appropriate to their age, understanding and ability.

Section 4

What the Trust Fostering Service can expect from foster carers (ctd.)

Learning, development and support

We must access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career to meet the needs of the children we are caring for.

This will ensure we have the necessary skills and knowledge to allow us to develop our practice so we can transform the lives of the children we care for.

We must:

- be willing and able to develop our knowledge, skills and expertise throughout our fostering career to maintain our approval / Fitness to Foster.
- maintain a continuous professional development portfolio by accessing a wide range of learning with evidence on the impact this has had on the child/young person in our care.
- be willing to attend and contribute to support groups, BFCA buddy groups and contribute to service development activities whenever possible.

**Together we will make a real
difference to each and every child
and young person living within a
fostering family.**

