

Barnet Foster Carer Charter

Ensuring children and young people in our care flourish and thrive is at the heart of our resilience-based practice approach in Barnet. To achieve this, we know that it is fundamental that children and young people in our care are provided with Foster Carers who know what is expected of them, are committed to providing consistently excellent care for our children and know what they can expect from Barnet's Fostering Support Service and Barnet Council to support them in their role. To achieve this aim, we must ensure that we all share our vision and commitment.

Our Foster Carers charter is an agreement between Barnet, in our role as corporate parents and our Foster Carers. It represents the commitment and partnership between Barnet and our Foster Carers as corporate parents.

Purpose

The purpose of Barnet's Foster Carer Charter is:

- To ensure that everyone involved within the child or young person's life is focused on the child and are striving for their best long-term interests
- To represent our commitment as corporate parents
- To reinforce communication and partnership working between everyone involved in the child and young person's life
- To ensure that our foster carers are supported to provide the best care for our children and young people
- Our Charter is owned by us all, as our promise to always strive for excellence and best practice

Our Core Values

- 1. Children and young people are at the heart of what we do**
- 2. Working in partnership**
- 3. Communication and Consultation**
- 4. Support those that care for our children and young people**
- 5. Effective decision making**
- 6. Learning and development**

1. Children and Young people are at the heart of what we do

In Barnet we will:

- Ensure that the child and young person remains at the heart of everything we do.
- Remain committed to improve every child and young person's experience.
- Remain highly aspirational for each child and young person.
- Ensure we are flexible and adaptable in our ways of working, recognising that each child and young person is unique.
- Ensure we endeavour to meet the needs and expectations of each individual child and young person.
- Ensure that we respect and embrace every child's lived experience, norms, values, culture, and identity.
- Support the child or young person in our care to have a voice and ensuring this is always considered whilst acknowledging that this voice may not be saying the same as us.

As Foster carers we will:

- Acknowledge and accept that the needs of the child/ren we care for will always be paramount and will sit at the heart of what we as a family do together.
- Provide a stable, safe and nurturing home environment that supports children and young people to heal from past trauma and develop resilience in order to meet their potential and be confident in their aspirations.
- Develop meaningful relationships to understand their needs
- Advocate and champion for the children and young people in a professional way
- Provide care and opportunities that embrace, recognise, and promote their identify and culture
- Support the child and young person to make age-appropriate decisions about their life
- Always have the child's needs central to everything we do
- Support the child and young person to have their say in the development of their plan and how services are delivered

2. Working in partnership

In Barnet we recognise and appreciate that foster carers are part of the child's team, and they have the skills and knowledge to make the difference in the child or young person's life.

In Barnet we will:

- Value and respect foster carers knowledge, views and opinions and work with you as a professional member of the team.
- Respect and treat foster carers as experts about the child as often you will know the child the best, through caring for them every day.
- Ensure that you can attend or contribute to all decision-making meetings about the child or young person and any meetings in relation to you as a foster carer.
- Work with you in an honest open and transparent way.
- Provide you with a supervising social worker that will get to know you and understand you and your family's individual strengths, knowledge and skills.
- Ensure that we work in accordance with fostering standards and regulations.
- Respect confidentiality.

As Foster carers we will:

- Attend relevant meetings about the child or young person that we care for, and work in partnership as part of the child's team.
- Work collaboratively and proactively with the agencies involved with the child or young person such as education, health, birth parents, wider family and significant people in the child and young person's life including any religious services.
- Seek support and guidance from our supervising social worker and the fostering service.
- Make use of the support services offered through peer support, support groups and coffee mornings.
- Meet the standards set out within the Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards.
- Communicate and work in partnership with all professionals involved within the child and young person's life.

3. Communication and Consultation

We recognise that foster carers need comprehensive and up-to-date information in order to provide the best possible care.

In Barnet we will:

- Ensure that you are provided with all the information required in a timely manner in order to care for the child and young person.
- Provide you with information about the child or young person in writing prior to the commencement of any placement, with the exception of emergency placements.
- Insure the child or young person has a placement plan which is drawn up in partnership with you and the child.
- Ensure that we communicate with you respectfully, honestly, and openly at all times.
- Ensure you have access to the foster carers handbook and any council and national policies and procedures.
- Provide you with regular updates via email, newsletters and at monthly support groups.
- Provide you with the opportunity to have your say about the service and be part of service development.

As Foster carers we will:

- Communicate regularly with our supervising social workers regarding any difficulties or challenges that arise in regard to meeting the child or young person's needs.
- Inform our supervising social worker regarding any changes within our household including financial matters.
- Ensure we read all communications within a timely period and attend and engage in support services that are available to us.
- Communicate effectively, regularly and respectfully with our supervising social workers.
- Engage in conversations and consultations that will help the fostering department to develop the service. Providing honest and open feedback.

4. Support those who care for our children

We appreciate that fostering can be a challenging role and that support is vital for foster carers, their families and the children and young people that they work with.

In Barnet we will:

- Listen to you to ensure we understand your support needs.
- Work with you to assess requests for support in a timely manner
- Provide you with 24/7 support, which includes providing you with an out of hours social worker support phone line for advice and guidance until 10pm and then an emergency duty service thereafter.
- Provide all newly approved carers with a 2-year bespoke support package.
- Work with you to complete your annual foster care review and to use this to showcase your progress and identify with you any future development and support needs.
- Ensure holistic feedback is provided for your annual foster care review.
- Provide regular supervision as per our supervision policy, but also at a frequency based upon your needs.
- Ensure our buddy system is available to you so you have the support of other carers.
- Ensure that nominated care assessments of friends and family members who can offer support to you are completed.
- Ensure you are aware of our support groups, coffee mornings and BAFCA
- Ensure that your allowances expenses and fees are paid in an accurate and timely manner.

As Foster carers we will:

- Attend and contribute to local support groups.
- Talk openly and honestly about support requirements at different stages throughout our fostering journey
- Make use of support services that are available to me including support through my nominated carers and the buddy system.

5. Effective decisions making

We understand that as foster carers you are the people who live with the child and young person every day and know them well and as such you can be best placed to be involved in the decision-making for the child/young person.

In Barnet we will:

- Support you in making everyday decisions for the child and young person and ensure that you are fully informed about which decisions you as a foster carer can make.
- Be clear to you who is responsible for each element of decision-making, and at which point throughout the child or young person's journey.
- Ensure you are involved in decision-making meetings to provide your views about the best interest of the child or young person.
- Ensure that you are provided with clarity and understanding about any decisions made in respect of the child/young person.
- Review the child or young person's placement plan to ensure all plans reflect and understand the child or young person's current needs.

As foster carers we will:

- Ensure we attend or contribute to decision making meetings.
- Support or respectfully disagree with Barnet's decisions in respect of the care of the child and young person. Knowing the appropriate routes to take if we are not happy or do not agree with a decision.
- Ensure we are clear and respectfully articulate what our views are and what the child and young person's views are, even if they differ from ours.

6. Learning and development

In Barnet we are committed to supporting our carers with continuous professional development in order to provide high-quality support to our children and young people.

In Barnet we will:

- Ensure we have a robust and creative training offer for all foster carers.
- Ensure that training is offered in ways that support carers accessibility to attend the training.
- Provide development opportunities to foster carers to ensure the most appropriate use of your skills and knowledge.

As Foster carers we will:

- Ensure that we are committed to continually developing our skills and knowledge throughout our fostering journey.
- Attend mandatory and non-mandatory training and ensure that our requirements for attendance at training is met annually.
- Be open to considering opportunities for continual professional development.
- Ensure that we communicate what our training needs are in order for appropriate training to be provided or signposted.

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