

Lambeth's Foster Care Charter

2022 – 2023



“When you come into a home, it is a family that make a home”

“Our foster carers help us feel comfortable, safe, supported and listened to”

Introduction

Lambeth's Foster Care Charter is an agreement between Lambeth Local Authority in their role as a corporate parents to children looked after, foster carers and the fostering service. The charter sets out each party's roles and responsibilities.

As corporate parents and in partnership with foster carers we are passionate about providing outstanding services, Lambeth has the highest ambition for our children and young people who are looked after. We want Lambeth and all partners to be ambitious every day for every child, putting children, young people and their carers at the heart of everything we do.



What to expect from corporate parents

What is a corporate parent?

A corporate parent is the name given to an organisation or individual within that organisation who has special responsibilities for children who are looked after and care leavers. Lambeth has a partnership response to corporate parenting. We are all responsible for providing excellent standards of care to our children and young people. As corporate parents we should continuously be asking ourselves:

“Is this what a good parent would do?”

“Would this be good enough for my child?”

Working in partnership, we understand that we, as corporate parents 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.

Our Commitments

As corporate parents, we understand that information is vital in order for foster carers to provide care that meets the child’s needs and recognise that in order for children to live a full family life, foster carers must be able to make decisions that mean their fostered child is not treated differently from their peers and can feel part of the family. We believe that open and honest dialogue is key to a good relationship with our foster carers and will support them in their caring roles.

The role of the corporate parent when placing and supporting children in their foster home is to always act in their best interests and promote their physical, mental health and well-being. We will listen to children and young people, encouraging them to express their views and wishes and take these into account. We will ensure that our children and young people are safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work. We will work with young people to support them in preparing for adulthood and independent living.

Lambeth's Corporate Parenting Principles

In order to thrive, children and young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Lambeth's Corporate Guardians Model

Corporate Guardians are an extension to our corporate parenting model in practice in our residential and fostering placements. As Corporate Guardians we have outlined what this model means through a variety of concepts and approaches that we wish to see in all placements regardless of the provider. We will be using this approach to manage any placement we make and to review how we are improving outcomes for children and young people.



What foster carers can expect from the corporate parent.

As corporate parents we will:

Partnership Working

Support carers to give the best possible opportunities to children



- Treat foster carers as experts on the child
- Include foster carers in all relevant meetings
- Treat foster carers without discrimination and respect them as colleagues
- Value foster carers expertise and skills equally to those of other professionals
- Respect confidentiality

Information

Information is vital to ensure care given meets the child's needs



- Share with the foster carer all relevant information to care safely for the child and support them in fulfilling their potential
- Provide information in writing prior to the placement
- Secure clear and timely plans for the child's care

Clarity About Decisions

Foster carers must be able to make decisions to provide the care the child needs



- Ensure foster carers are able to make day to day decisions to ensure they are not treated differently than their peers
- Be clear about what decisions foster carers cannot take so everyone is clear about their responsibilities
- Deal swiftly with any requests for decision making on matters outside the foster carers authority

Communication and Consultation

Open and honest dialogue



- Facilitate communication between the foster carers and decision makers
- Provide foster carers with the opportunity to influence relevant policies and procedures
- Consult on any changes which may affect foster carers and gain feedback

What to expect from the Fostering Service

The Fostering Service's Role

Lambeth's Fostering Service identifies and supports first rate foster care for children who are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals, whilst providing safe and safe family homes for our children looked after and care leavers to grow up and thrive in. To achieve this the service recruits, trains and approves foster carers and delivers ongoing support and training 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 Fostering Service recognises that foster carers have skills and expertise and can make the biggest difference to the everyday lives of children and young people who are looked after.

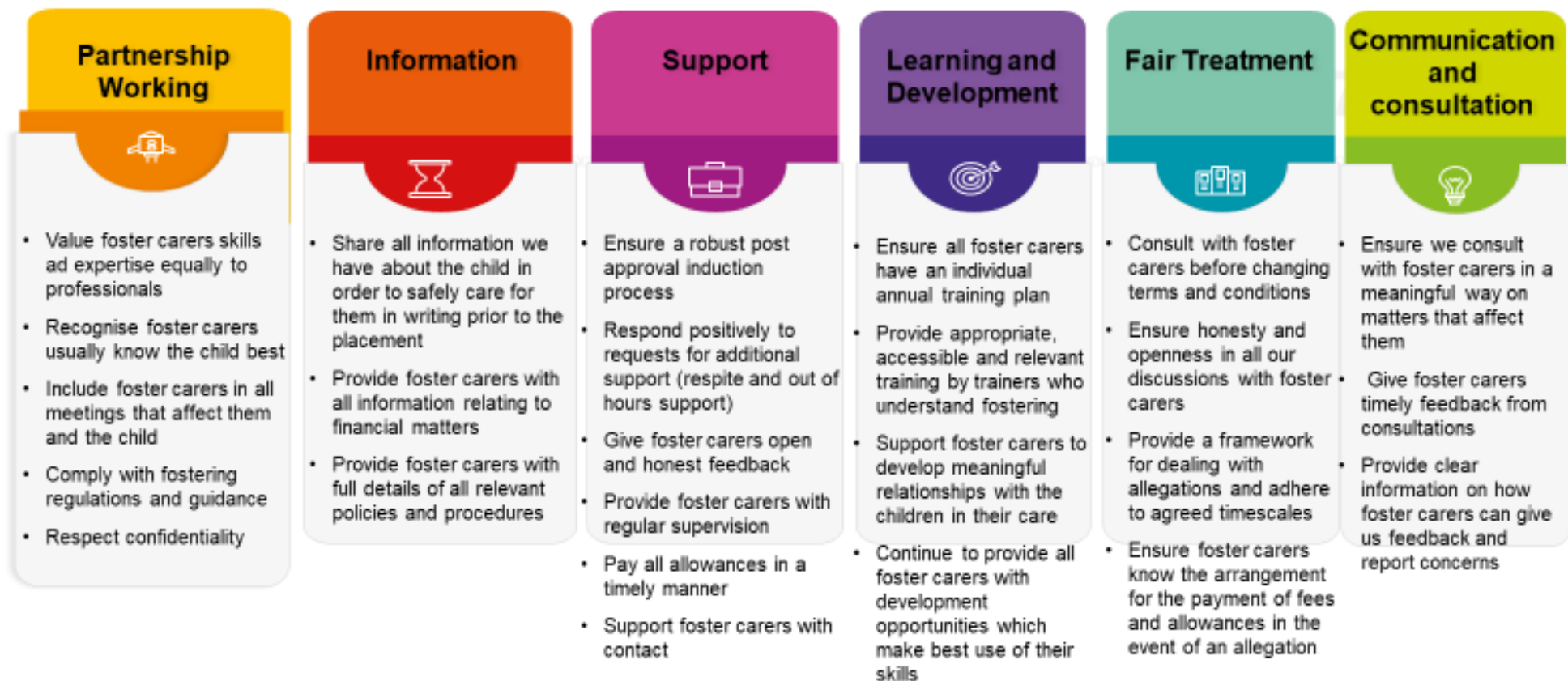
We recognise that fostering can be an isolating and challenging task, and that appropriate and timely support makes all the difference to the fostering family and to the children and young people in their care.

We must provide foster carers with learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career. This will ensure that they have 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 and young people they foster.

We recognise that foster carers have the right to be treated fairly, no matter what their circumstances and we believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to building and maintaining good relationships.

What foster carers can expect from the fostering service.

We will:



What the Fostering Service can expect from Foster Carers

The Foster Carers Role

As foster carers we support children and young people in a safe family environment, providing them with the care and stability, and the opportunity achieve their dreams.

As foster carers, we must demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct. We are caring for some of Lambeth's most vulnerable children and young people. We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good working relationship and we will aim to build meaningful and collaborative working with our supervising social worker and the child's social worker.

We will have respect for the child or young person in our care as an individual and we will support them in meeting their needs and achieving their aspirations and potential.

We are eager to access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career to help us support and meet the needs of the children and young people we are caring for.

What fostering services can expect from foster carers

We will:

Work in Partnership



- Demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability
- Provide children with a positive experience of family life
- Attend meetings about the children we care for
- Work with individuals and agencies involved with the child
- Work with birth parents, wider family and any other significant people in the child's life
- Meet standards set out in the fostering regulations and follow policies and procedures
- Inform our supervision social worker of any difficulties
- Maintain an open dialogues with the fostering service.

Respect the Child



- Develop a meaningful relationship with the child, understand their needs and advocate and champion for them
- Care for a child in a manner that recognises and respects their identity, including ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural heritage
- Maintain a memory box which will support life story work
- Afford the same level of protection and care as we would our own child
- Support the child to make decisions about their own lives as appropriate to their age and understanding
- Support the child to inform the development of the services which affect their care

Learn, Develop and Support



- Be willing and able to develop our skills and knowledge we need to allow us to develop our practice in order that we transform the lives of the children we foster
- Attend relevant training
- Be willing to attend and contribute to support groups

Conclusion

Good quality foster placements help children achieve stability, a vital element in helping children to have a decent second chance at safe and fulfilling childhood. Therefore, foster carers are at the heart of arrangements for children looked after and must be fully engaged, supported, and consulted at every stage. This charter aims to unite us all towards developing a shared ambition and determination to achieve the best outcomes for our children and young people looked after. This charter recognises the relationship of mutual respect held between the London Borough of Lambeth and its cohort of professional Foster Carers. In Lambeth, we are proud to have a fostering community that is made up of truly passionate caring people and we are grateful for the contributions they make to our children and young people looked after.