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|  | **Foster Carer Agreement** |  |

**Introduction**

This agreement is between

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| **Foster Carers:** |  |
| **Address:** |  |
|   | **Postcode:** |   |

and Nottinghamshire County Council.

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| **Current terms of approval:** |  |

The purpose of this agreement is to provide information about the terms and conditions of the partnership including expectations between Nottinghamshire County Council (the “Authority”) and approved Local Authority foster carers. It is supported by the specific Placement Plan and Care Plan for each child placed.

For the purpose of this agreement the term foster carer relates to all foster carers approved by Nottinghamshire County Council. It is also acknowledged that many of the children in receipt of services from the Short Breaks Fostering Team may not be Looked After Children.

1. **Support and Training**
	1. The Authority will provide specific support to the foster carers from each child’s own social worker, who will visit, supervise, and review the placement in accordance with the Placement Plan. The names and contact points of the staff and the frequency of their visits are detailed in the Placement Plan.

Foster carers will be provided with a supervising social worker from their fostering team who will be in regular contact as required and will visit monthly to offer supervision, advice, support and development opportunities, or at a visiting frequency as agreed by the fostering team manager that is proportionate to the care provided.

* 1. A dedicated Out of Hours telephone support line is available to all foster carers (Tel: 0800 0858995). Monday to Friday 6 p.m. – 10 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays, and Bank Holidays 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. The Emergency Duty Team is also available out of office hours or when the Out of Hours support line is closed (Tel: 0300 4564546).
	2. Prior to approval, all foster carers will be assessed, have an induction, and attend the pre-approval training program.

The Fostering Service will provide foster carers with post-approval training opportunities identified to meet the DfE Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care (2011).The associated workbooks will be completed by foster carers within the first 12 months (18 months for family and friends carers) or a timescale agreed by the fostering team manager.

All foster carers will have a Personal Development Plan (PDP) in which their learning and development needs are identified, this will include both core and specialist opportunities. The PDP will be reviewed at the foster carer’s annual review.

A comprehensive programme of information is available each year to all carers through the Fostering website and ‘My Learning’ online training portal.

All foster carers are expected to evidence a minimum of 20 hours training, learning and development, within a review period.

* 1. All approved foster carers will be given access to the Fostering website where the Foster Carer Handbook and useful links to policy and practice guidance are located. Foster carers will be provided with membership to The Fostering Network.
	2. Following approval all foster carers must register as self-employed. Information regarding ‘Qualifying Care Relief’ for foster care and ‘Staying Put’ arrangements can be found in the Foster Carer Handbook.
	3. All foster carers are encouraged and invited to join their local Foster Carer Association/Support Groups. The Authority supports carers in holding quarterly county-wide liaison meetings, referred to as the Fostering Liaison and Advisory Group (FLAG).
1. **Review of Approval**
	1. The annual review of foster carers will be undertaken by a fostering independent reviewing officer (FIRO). Additional reviews may be held following concerns or a change in circumstances. The arrangements for reviewing the approval of foster carers are set out in the Foster Carer Handbook. As part of this process, all relevant checks deemed appropriate will be completed, including social media checks, which may also be initiated outside of the review period should concerns emerge.
2. **Placement Policy and Procedures**
	1. Each placement made with foster carers will be covered by a Placement Plan. This will be agreed within 72 hours of a child being placed, at the placement planning meeting. A copy of the Placement Plan will be provided by the child’s social worker.
	2. The Authority’s arrangements for covering the insurance and legal liability issues in placements are as set out in the Foster Carer Handbook.
	3. A link to Nottinghamshire County Council’s policies and procedures as well as Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Childrens Board (NSCB) policies and procedures can be accessed through the Fostering website.
3. **Written Notices By Foster Carers**
	1. Foster carers will give written notice to the Authority and provide the details to their supervising social worker as soon as possible about any of the following events:
* Change of address
* Changes in membership of the household (people leaving or joining)
* Any further application to foster, adopt, or child-mind from a member of the household
* Any contact received or initiated with a fostered child who has left the fostering household
* Any other changes in personal circumstances and any other event which may affect the foster carer’s capacity to care for a child or which affects the suitability of the household:

For example:

* Ill-health
* Criminal investigation/conviction
* Significant practical problems in the living arrangements
* New relationship
* Pregnancy
* Relationship breakdown
* Bereavement
* Significant financial pressures/debt
* Any household member begins or resumes smoking
* Any known safeguarding concerns.
	1. Foster carers will give 28 days written notice of their intention to cease a foster placement, this can be by email or text.
	2. Foster carers will give 28 days written notice of their intention to resign as foster carers, this can be by email or text. There is no provision to extend this period or withdraw notice once received.
1. **Notice of Changes by the Authority**
	1. The Authority will give foster carers information of any change of social worker, team manager, or supervising social worker, and of any change of office base, telephone number, or other practical changes within the organisation.
2. **Physical or Corporal Punishment**
	1. Foster carers will not use or allow others to use any form of physical or corporal punishment.
	2. Each fostering household has an individual Safer Care Agreement, and each child should have a risk assessment. The Safer Care Agreement and the child’s risk assessment will be updated when a child is placed, following specific incidents and for the foster carer’s annual review.
	3. The Authority recommends all foster carers attend Coping with Risky behaviour (CRB) training.
3. **Confidential Information**
	1. Foster carers will ensure any information given to them in connection with a placement, (whether it is about the child, their family, or the plan), is kept confidential and in a secure place.

Foster carers will ensure that confidential information is not disclosed to anyone without the Authority’s consent and is returned to the child’s social worker or supervising social worker at the end of the placement.

* 1. Foster carers are provided with an individual recording folder for each child placed. The Recording Policy can be accessed through the Fostering website and Foster Carer Handbook. Foster carers will keep photographs, memorabilia and keepsakes of important events and milestones for the purpose of life story work.
1. **Care for the Child**
	1. Foster carers will provide a child with a safe home environment that meets the health and safety requirements for a fostering household.
	2. The Foster Carers will meet a child’s health needs as directed by health professionals.
	3. The Authority has a zero-tolerance policy towards smoking or vaping inside a fostering home. Foster carers will inform their supervising social worker should any household member, including looked after children begin or resume smoking or vaping.
	4. Foster carers will ensure that if there is alcohol use by members of the fostering household, positive role modelling is reinforced. Alcohol may have been a significant factor in children’s pre-care experiences.
	5. Foster carers will:
* Comply with the terms of the Placement and Care Plan for each child placed.
* Care for the child as if he/she were a member of their family and as agreed with the Authority in respect of responsibilities delegated to the carer.
* Promote the child’s welfare, in partnership with birth parents, those with parental responsibility and the Authority.

* 1. Foster carers will allow the child’s social worker access to the child. It will also be important for the child to be seen alone by the social worker, possibly outside the home. The social worker needs to ensure that the child is safe, therefore will observe the care of the child, and expect to make announced and unannounced visits to view the quality and standard of care provided.
	2. The child’s independent reviewing officer (IRO) may also visit the child in placement.

As part of OFSTED’s inspection of services, inspectors may wish to visit foster homes.

The supervising social worker will visit monthly (unless agreed otherwise by the fostering team manager) and make at least one unannounced visit within a review period.

* 1. Foster carers will be expected to encourage and facilitate contact (which may include transporting the child) with the child’s birth parents and significant others in accordance with the Care Plan.
	2. Foster Carer’s vehicles and car insurance details will be checked. It is mandatory for all foster carers to have business use car insurance.
1. **Education**
	1. Foster carers will work with the child’s social worker and other involved professionals to encourage the child to achieve their full educational potential by:
* Keeping in regular contact with the child’s school
* Supporting the child’s learning at school and at home
* Ensuring regular attendance and facilitating homework
* Being aware of tests, exams, and assessments
* Attending parents’ evenings
* Attending other school events and activities
* Contributing to the child’s Personal Education Plan (PEP) and transitional arrangements
* Alerting the social worker to educational issues and problems at an early stage
1. **Health Care**
	1. Foster carers have delegated responsibility from a birth parent, person with parental responsibility or the Authority, for arranging certain health treatments for the child. This is set out in the Delegated Authority Form and the Placement Plan.
	2. Foster carers will notify the Authority immediately of any serious health emergency affecting the child. They will routinely record and report to the child’s social worker all health care needs, treatments and arrangements. It is also important that the child’s health history is accurately recorded for the child’s future wellbeing, and for their own understanding of their health history.
	3. The child’s social worker is responsible for co-ordinating information and arrangements for health assessments of the child and will discuss health care needs and treatments with foster carers.
2. **Emergencies/Unexpected Events**
	1. Serious occurrences may happen to the child for example, incidents at school or in the home, risk taking behaviours, an event which causes the child or members of the carer’s family serious upset, or a child may be missing from the placement. Foster carers should tell the social worker, supervising social worker or the Out of Hours or Emergency Duty Team, immediately or as soon as possible.

Foster carers will keep a record of all injuries or accidents as they occur in line with the Recording Policy.

* 1. The child’s social worker will respond to a request for an urgent visit in a crisis immediately or as soon as possible. In the absence of the social worker, the team manager will make contact with the carer to arrange for help and support to be provided.
	2. The supervising social worker is available to support the carer and to ensure, where necessary that any information about the child is given to the social worker for the child.
	3. The child’s social worker will inform the foster carer about any significant event that happens within the child’s birth family.
1. **Removal of a Child from a Foster Placement**
	1. Foster carers will allow the responsible Authority or an Area Authority to remove a child from their care in the circumstances described in Regulation 14 (Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010). The responsible Authority may only terminate a child’s placement following a review of a child’s Care Plan unless.
* There is an immediate risk of significant harm to a child or
* There is an immediate need to protect the child or others from serious injury.

(The ‘responsible authority’ is the Local Authority or voluntary agency who placed the child with the foster carer; the “area authority” is a Local Authority who did not place the child, but in whose area the foster carer lives).

1. **Financial Support**
	1. The Authority undertakes to provide foster carers with financial support. The document ‘Financial Information and Advice for Foster Carers’, is updated annually and can be found in the Foster Carer Handbook.
	2. Foster carers will use the child’s allowances appropriately to meet the child’s needs and share with the social worker and supervising social worker the arrangements for pocket money, clothing, transport, and other expenditure.

Foster carers will seek authorisation for additional financial costs such as holiday allowances as outlined in the ‘Financial Information and Advice for Foster Carers’.

* 1. It is expected that as a child grows and develops, foster carers will encourage the child to take increased responsibility, budgeting for clothes, personal needs, and social activities. It is also expected that foster carers will help to develop the young person’s interests and everyday living skills as they move towards adulthood.
1. **Valuing Diversity and Promoting Equality**
	1. Foster carers are expected to work with the Authority in identifying and meeting a child’s needs. The Authority is committed to providing services to all children and carers which address and meet individual needs. Whilst all children have certain needs in common, some will have additional individual needs resulting from their racial or ethnic origin, language, religion, culture, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.
2. **Complaints**
	1. The Authority’s arrangements for receiving and reviewing complaints and representations from foster carers are as set out in the Foster Carer Handbook.

1. **Signatures**
	1. This agreement must be signed by foster carers, the supervising social worker and fostering team manager following approval and the foster carer review.

**Signatures:**

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| **Foster carer:** |  |
| **Foster carer:** |  |
| **Supervising Social Worker:** |  |
| **Fostering Team Manager:** |  |
| **Date:**  |  |

**General Information**

**Nottinghamshire County Council**

Fostering Website: [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/fanotts](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/fanotts)

Fostering out of Hours telephone number: **0800 0858995**

Emergency Duty Team: **0300 4564546**

**The Fostering Network - Caron Heath**

Telephone: **01332 959980**

Mobile: **07918708945**
Email: caron.heath@fostering.net

Caron’s core days are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

**Other contacts:**

Member’s information line: **020 7401 9582**

24-hour legal helpline: **01384 885734**

Stress counselling helpline: **0345 074 2799**

**Complaints**

<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/media/1530433/making-a-complaint.pdf>