

LB Redbridge

FOSTER CARER CHARTER

Our commitment to each other: valuing,
respecting, supporting and training foster
carers

Redbridge Council's Foster Carer Charter



A foreword from Councillor Alan Weinberg

We recognise the enormous contribution you make as a foster carer. We want you to know this and be sure about what you can expect from us.

As a result we've been working with foster carers in Redbridge to put this document together, the first Redbridge Foster Carer Charter, which details our commitment to you, and what we expect in return.

We pledge to make fostering as straightforward and rewarding as possible. We pledge to ensure that you are valued and supported. We pledge to be open and honest, and treat you with the respect you deserve and need. This Charter is your assurance of all this and more.

Thank you to all of you for your contribution to Redbridge. My special thanks go to those foster carers who have contributed to this document.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Alan Weinberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Councillor Alan Weinberg
Cabinet Member for Children's Services
London Borough of Redbridge

Children Come First

The child's relationship with their foster family can make the biggest difference in the child's life.

Foster carers, Redbridge Council and other professionals will work together to ensure that the child comes first by:

- ensuring services are available to children and families to enable the child to reach their potential, regardless of their economic or social background, home circumstances, ethnicity, gender, ability or health;
- ensuring that children and young people in foster care shall experience as full a life as possible. They will feel part of the foster family and do not stand out because they are looked after children;
- ensuring that children and young people are 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;
- ensuring that the child is listened to and their views are acted on.

Our commitment to you to make this happen

We will:

- listen to what you say, respect your views, take them into account and make sure you're part of making decisions;
- support you to contribute your views, and make sure that you are empowered to take part in all placement and care planning decisions;

- respect you as a colleague and respect your confidentiality;
- value your skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals;
- ensure that our service to you meets all the necessary regulations and addresses your needs personally and professionally.

Commitment 1

We will make certain that you and the child in your care are **empowered to play an active part** in all placement and care planning decisions.

So we will:

- ensure that you and the child have comprehensive and essential information about each other, and are supported to get to know each other before a placement takes place where possible;
- make sure you have all the information you need to provide safe care, and have access to good quality, reliable and current information on
- all financial matters;
- provide all foster carers with an up to date fostering handbook and ensure you have access to relevant policies and procedures.

Commitment 2

We will ensure that information records are clear, comprehensive and of a high quality, and that you and the foster child are fully aware of the details of the child's care plan.

So we will:

- ensure a placement plan is drawn up and agreed with you and the child when they are placed with you, except in very exceptional circumstances.
- Written copies of the plan will be provided before the placement wherever possible and will be regularly updated, and will include contingency planning arrangements;
- support you to attend all relevant child protection conferences, statutory reviews, permanency planning meetings and any other relevant meetings.

Commitment 3

We will make sure that you are respected by all professionals involved as a core member of the team.

So we will:

- make sure that you're fully informed about plans for your foster children, are invited to meetings and that your contribution is truly valued;
- ensure other professionals understand your role as an active, competent and essential member of the team around your child.

Commitment 4

We will make sure that you're supported to make reasonable and appropriate decisions on behalf of your foster child.

So we will:

- make sure plans for your child are clear from the beginning so everyone understands who's responsible for what;
- support you to make day to day decisions for your foster child so that they're not treated differently to their peers and can feel a part of your family.

Commitment 5

We will provide you and your family with high quality support, learning and development opportunities to make sure that the outcomes for your foster child are the best they can be.

So we will:

- value and support your own sons and daughters with support groups and advice;
- give you access to an experienced supervising social worker and access to alternative support if that worker is unavailable and provide out of hours support from a qualified social worker via the Emergency Duty Team.
- give you access to high quality supervision, visit you monthly and talk to you weekly, as a minimum. We will review your needs regularly and act on your requests quickly;
- formally review your support needs, progress and achievements every year, provide honest feedback, and provide up to date Personal Development Plans. We will also provide a comprehensive catalogue of training events, activities and support groups;
- invite you to forums to tell you about best practice;
- support the consultation role of the Foster Carers' Association and help you to contribute to the development of services for children in care;
- Support you to attend the mandatory training courses as outlined in the training programme for Foster Carers: including completing the foster carers induction standards training.

- Enabling you to achieve the training support and development standards for approved foster carers.

Commitment 6

We recognise that you have the right to be treated fairly no matter what the circumstances.

So we will:

- give you clear information within the Foster Carers Handbook about dealing with allegations, complaints and concerns. This will include information about what happens with allowances and fees if you're not able to foster;
- give you independent advocacy to make sure you have access to external support;
- be clear about timescales and about all discussions and consult with you before any changes to your terms and conditions of your fostering approval is made.

Commitment 7

We recognise that open and honest, two way dialogue with you is the basis of our working relationship.

So we will

- consult with you in a meaningful way on matters that affect you;
- give you timely feedback from our consultations;
- facilitate regular meetings between your representatives, councillors and senior officers within Redbridge Council.
- ensure that you have direct access the Managing Director Children's Trust where you believe that a concern is not being adequately dealt with.

Your commitment

In return we ask that you work with us for the benefit of the child.

You will:

- work with us as part of the team around the child;
- seek to solve problems quickly by using all your available formal and information support networks;
- advocate the child's best interest at all times and ensure good quality information is shared with us, and that confidentiality is maintained and you challenge any disadvantage experienced by the child;
- ensure that the child feels part of your family, including them as appropriate in family decision making and supporting them to be a part of family activities.

You will:

respect your foster children in respect of their education, diversity and wellbeing, leaving care opportunities and family relationships, and work in partnership with all members of the team around the child.

So we ask you to:

- always prioritise the needs of your children and actively seek support to do so;
- inform the supervising social worker and child's social worker of achievements and success, and about any difficulties and concerns;
- adhere to all conditions within the Foster Carer agreement,
- meet the standards set out in 'Fostering Regulations and Guidance,' 'National Minimum Standards for Foster Care', and comply with policy and procedures and guidance.
- To agree to Redbridge policy and procedures on investigating complaints and allegations involving foster carers.

You will:

access learning and developmental opportunities throughout your fostering career and make sure that you have the skills and knowledge required to develop practice in order to transform the lives of the children you foster.

So we ask you to:

- maintain an effective and relevant Personal Development Plan and continually reflect on your learning needs;
- undertake a range of training and learning opportunities for at least 21 hours each year and attend support groups where these are relevant to your needs;

- attend the Foster Carers' Association events, and the Fostering Service celebration events where possible.

You will:

maintain open and honest dialogue with us, Redbridge Council.

So we ask you to:

- take part in consultations and discussions to inform the development of the fostering service;
- consider representing others by meeting with councillors to give an account of the challenges and achievements of being a Redbridge Foster Carer;
- promote the fostering service and the recruitment of foster carers where appropriate.

Thanks for being a Redbridge Council Foster Carer.

If you have any questions please ring us on 0208 708 7528