

Foster carers' charter

A charter is an agreement between a placing authority in their role as corporate parent, a fostering service and foster carers that sets out each party's roles and responsibilities. They can help foster carers to get the recognition they deserve and need, to provide children with the best possible care.

Roles and commitment

Rotherham Fostering's role

Rotherham Fostering aims to provide stable and first-rate foster care for children who are valued, supported, and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals.

To achieve this aim we recruit, train, and approve foster carers. We deliver ongoing support to them, to give them the skills and confidence they need to develop meaningful relationships with the children and young people they care for, ensuring they provide stable and loving homes while they are part of the foster family.

Rotherham Values

The Fostering Service is designed to operate within the corporate vision and values of the Council, in particular the Rotherham Values which demonstrate how all staff behave with each other, our partners, elected members and customers:

- **Honest:** Open and truthful in everything we say and do
- **Accountable:** We own our decisions; we do what we say, and we acknowledge and learn from our mistakes
- **Respectful:** We show regard and sensitivity for the feelings, rights, and views of others
- **Ambitious:** We are dedicated, committed and positive, embracing change with energy and creativity
- **Proud:** We take pride in our borough and in the job that we do



The Rotherham Family Approach

The Rotherham Family Approach underpins the work of all of children's services including the Rotherham Fostering Service and describes our focus on the question 'Would this be good enough for my children and family?' Our Rotherham Family Approach is informed by respectful, collaborative relationships and a stance of critical enquiry and "locating grand aspirations in everyday practice where the experience of the child is at the centre."

- *A relentless focus on children:* Children are always at the heart of quality practice that helps to build safety, wellbeing, and success.
- *Working 'with' families* to help them solve problems, maximising their existing strengths, resources, and networks.
- Enabling '*space for positive change*' within families through empowerment and real opportunity to help that change occur.
- *Building meaningful relationships:* Improved communication that includes high challenge and high support in collaboration with families that enables change for children.
- *The lived experience of the child is evident in all that we do.* Children and young people are actively involved in work that affects them and are always consulted on their wishes, feelings, and decisions about their lives.
- *Effecting long term, sustainable change.* Families are supported so that they can be clear about what the problems are, what needs to change and how it needs to change. They can then feel empowered to take action to make things better for their child(ren).
- *Risk, worries, danger, safety, success, and wellbeing goals are clearly evidenced* and articulated to families. We work with families to support their understanding of why there are worries concerning their children and what the 'bottom line' is.
- *Language that cares:* Rotherham has taken part in national consultation with children and young people to establish preferred language when describing children within the statutory care system. Practitioners are being encouraged to consider this work when working with, writing and/or talking about children and young people in order to ensure that their voice is heard.

What Rotherham Looked After Children's Council would like foster carers to know

- **Confidentiality** Our histories, our stories with our families and being fostered by other foster carers are our personal history, this information is confidential and belongs to us and should not be shared about with anyone else. We ask that you show respect for us and our information, history and family situation and don't share this with other foster carers or your family and friends. We want to come to you with a fresh start, a new positive beginning and don't want you or your family and friends to judge us before getting to know us as this is a barrier to us feeling cared for by you.



- **Family Equality** We want our foster carers to treat us equally to their own biological children wherever legally possible. We would like to go on the family holiday all together and not be put in respite while you all go without us. This makes us feel we are not really equal or cared for as much as your own.
- **Confusing Expectations** We don't always understand the rules of your house as each home has different rules for meal times, whether to take your shoes off inside, whether we can help ourselves to biscuits, if its okay to play on our computers/phones at night etc etc We would really appreciate it if you would kindly help us understand your home rules and which are important to you. Also, please ask us what we like to eat and what we don't like and explain what you expect from us for example instead of just saying tidy your bedroom, what exactly do you mean? What is tidy enough for you?

Thank you for listening to our voices 😊 Rotherham Looked After Children's Council.



The foster carer's role

Foster carers are at the heart of Rotherham Fostering. They are assessed, trained, and supported to look after children and young people by developing meaningful relationships in a family environment, providing them with stability, care, love, and an opportunity to gain experience and develop and to reach their potential.

Our relationships with other members of the team around the child are based on mutual trust and respect. This charter explains what we expect from each other.

Rotherham Fostering's commitment

You can expect from us:

- Working in equal partnership.
- To be seen as a valued member of the team around the child.
- Information.
- Clarity about decisions.
- Support to increase foster carer confidence and resilience.
- Ongoing learning and development.

- Fair treatment.
- Communication and consultation.

Foster carers' commitment

We can expect from you:

- Working in equal partnership.
- Respect for the child and the members of the team around the child.
- Information.
- Learning, development, and support.
- Communication and consultation.

What foster carers can expect from Rotherham Fostering?



Working in partnership

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

We will:

- value your skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals.
- recognise that you are the people who live with children every day and know them best.
- include you in all meetings that affect you and the children you care for
- ensure that our fostering service will meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance.
- treat you without discrimination and respect you as a colleague.
- respect confidentiality

Information

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

We will:

- give you all the information you need in order to care safely for the child.
- provide this information in writing prior to placement, or as soon as possible in the case of emergency placements.

- ensure that there is a placement plan drawn up in discussion with you and agreed with you in advance of placements, or as soon as possible in the case of emergency placements.
- provide you with information on all financial matters including tax, allowances, and additional entitlements.
- provide you with full details of all relevant departmental policies and procedures.

Clarity about decisions

We recognise that in order for children to live a full family life foster carer must be able to make decisions regarding the children they foster.

We will:

- ensure that, wherever possible, you are able to make everyday decisions that mean that your fostered child is not treated differently to their peers and can feel part of your family.
- provide clarity about any decision you cannot take at the outset so that everyone understands who is responsible for what.



Support

We recognise that fostering can be an isolating and challenging task, and that appropriate and timely support can make all the difference to the fostering family and to the child in your care.

We will:

- respond positively to requests for additional support.
- provide you with monthly supervision and weekly phone contact.
- give you honest and open feedback.
- provide you with access to out-of-hours support from people with fostering expertise.
- pay you allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner.
- pay fees that reflect the needs of the child.

- ensure that there is a local group, recognised by the fostering service, where you and your family can find support and share experiences with other fostering families.

Learning and development

We believe that foster carers must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career. This will ensure 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 they foster.

We will:

- provide you with appropriate and relevant training by trainers who understand the fostering task.
- enable you to develop meaningful relationships with the children in your care and the fellow members of the team around the child.
- provide you with other development opportunities which make the best use of your skills and expertise, such as mentoring or providing training or support.

Fair treatment

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

We will:

- consult with you before changing terms and conditions.
- ensure openness in all of our discussions and communications with you.
- ensure that you are treated with respect, kept informed and provided with emotional support should you be subject to an allegation.
- provide a framework for dealing with allegations and adhere to our agreed timescales.
- ensure that you know the arrangements for the payment of fees and allowances in the event that you are not able to foster while the subject of an allegation.

Communication and consultation



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

We will:

- facilitate regular communication between you and the wider organisation.
- ensure that we consult with you in a meaningful way on matters that affect you.
- give you timely feedback from consultations.

What Rotherham Fostering can expect from foster carers?

Working in partnership

We will demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct. We will:

- 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 and young people we care for
- work with the agencies involved with the child such as school, health, and religious establishments.
- show a willingness to work with birth parents, wider family, and people significant in a child's life.
- meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance and follow departmental policies and procedures.
- respect confidentiality

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 will:

- develop a meaningful relationship with the child: understand their needs, support their growth, and become an advocate and champion for them.
- respect and promote a child's religious, linguistic, and cultural heritage.

- afford the same level of protection and care to a child as we would our own child in accordance with the national minimum standards.
- ensure the child has the right to make decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age and understanding.

Information

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. We will:

- inform our supervising social worker about changes in our household.
- inform our supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise for us.

Learning, development, and support

We must be enabled to access a minimum of six learning and development opportunities per year. This will ensure we have the skills and knowledge we need and allow us to develop our practice in order that we can help transform the lives of the children we foster. We will:

- be willing and able to develop our skills throughout our fostering career.
- attend relevant training.
- take up opportunities offered to us.
- let you know if we are unable to attend.
- attend and contribute to a minimum of six support groups per year.

Communication and consultation

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

- respond to local consultations and discussions in order to inform the development of the service.
- meet with councillors, service managers and others in order to promote dialogue and a good working relationship.
- support the children in our care to do the same.

