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**Adoption West**

**Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011**

**Foster Care Agreement**

This agreement reflects the partnership between carer and agency and includes the matters and obligations set out in Regulation 27(5)(b) and Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

All fostering services are regularly inspected by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) to ensure that the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards are being met. Early permanence carers are asked to co-operate as reasonably required with Ofsted and in particular to allow an inspector to interview them and visit their home at any reasonable time.

Adoption West produces a Statement of Purpose about its Early Permanence Service and it is recommended that early permanence carers familiarise themselves with the contents. Carers can access the Statement, and other relevant policies, via the Adoption West website or from their Social Worker.

The agreement is intended to cover any child placed with you as early permanence carers.

**Names of Early Permanence Carer(s):**

**Terms of Approval:**

**Name of Adoption West Social Worker and contact details:**

**Date of Agreement:**

1. **CARING FOR A CHILD**

As carers, you agree:

* to comply with the terms of the Placement Plan of any child placed with you (see clause 5 (i) below)
* to care for any child placed with you as if they were a member of your own family
* to promote their welfare, having regard to the responsible authority’s short and long term plans for the child
* to provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment
* to protect the child from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation
* to encourage, maintain and develop the child’s family contacts and friendships
* to ensure the child’s physical, emotional and developmental health care needs are met
* to ensure that the child’s learning and educational needs are given high priority and the child encouraged to attain their full potential
* to help the child develop the skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.
* to keep the fostering service informed about the child’s progress and to notify Adoption West via your Social Worker or the Adoption West Front Door Duty Worker of any significant events affecting the child.
* comply with the policies and procedures of Adoption West in relation to arrangements for the protection of children, behaviour management and children missing from a foster home.

Adoption West and the carers must be committed to non-discriminatory working practices and to providing a service that values diversity and promotes equality.

1. **TRAINING**

Adoption West is committed to carers receiving ongoing training and will produce a personal development plan with all early permanence carers that will set out how they will be supported to undertake ongoing training and development that is appropriate to their development needs and experience. Training will be provided through local authority fostering services – Adoption West will enable access to these courses.

Early permanence carers will be supported to achieve the Children’s Workforce Development Council’s Training, Support and Development Standards for foster care where ever possible within the timeframe available.

Any additional training needs will be identified and discussed with you by your social worker.

1. **SUPERVISION/SUPPORT**

Supervision and support for you will be provided in a variety of ways, further information can be found within the Early Permanence Carer Handbook - The main areas are as follows:

1. Individual Supervision

This will be provided by your Social Worker who will visit you monthly (minimum frequency), to ensure the provision of high quality care for children placed and to maximise your development as early permanence carers. You will be required to complete either daily or weekly diary recordings for every child placed.

In the absence of your Social Worker, you should contact the Front Door Duty Worker or Hub Team Manager.

1. Individual Support

Your Social Worker will ensure you are provided with the necessary support to enable you to carry out your role as early permanence carers, in line with the identified needs of individual children.

You will also receive visits from the child’s social worker, in accordance with the statutory visiting requirements for looked after children. The social worker will deal with any matters with regard to the child and will read your diary recordings about the child.

1. Out-of-Hours Support

This will be provided by the Emergency Duty Service for the local authority responsible for the child in your care. The phone numbers are as follows:

Bath & North East Somerset **01454 615 165**

Bristol **01454 615 165**

North Somerset **01454 615 165**

South Gloucestershire **01454 615 165**

Gloucestershire **01452 616885**

Wiltshire **0300 456 0100**.

Further out of hours contact details will be provided to you when the child is placed according to the responsible local authority.

1. Financial Support

Financial support is provided according to the fostering allowances rates paid by the local authority responsible for the child placed in your care.

Details of these rates under the various local authority schemes are provided in the Adoption West Welcome Pack for EP Carers.

1. Fostering Network Membership

As an approved carer for Adoption West, your membership of Fostering Network will be paid on an annual basis. Fostering Network provides a range of services, details of which will be included in the membership pack.

1. **REVIEW OF APPROVAL TERMS**

The approval of each early permanence carer must be reviewed at intervals of not more than one year. The procedures for the reviewing process are set out in the Early Permanence Carer Handbook.

The annual review will also consider the contents of this Agreement. The Agreement will be updated following each annual review.

Either you or Adoption West can instigate a review of the terms of your approval at any time and you should initially make this request to your Social Worker.

1. **PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN**
2. Placement Plan

Before a child is placed with you or within five working days of the start of the placement, a Placement Plan must be drawn up, involving carers, parents, child (as appropriate), the local authority responsible for the child and Adoption West. This will include factual information and agreements about areas of delegated responsibility.

All parties are required to sign the Placement Plan.

1. Insurance

Each of the 6 local authorities placing children through Adoption West has an insurance policy that covers foster carers. The details of these are available from your Social Worker.

***N.B. It is your responsibility to inform your insurance company of your fostering activities i.e. Building, Contents and Car. You will be required to provide evidence on an annual basis of your Building, Contents and Car insurance.***

1. The Complaints Procedure

As carers you may make use of the Adoption West Complaints procedure or the local authority Complaints Procedure.

You may also make a Complaint on behalf of a foster child, if you are dissatisfied with the way the local authority has discharged its function in relation to the child.

The Complaints procedures you need to use are those of the local authority in whose area you live. Details of how to make a complaint are set out in the Early Permanence Carer Handbook.

1. Written Notification of Significant Changes

You must immediately notify the Department in writing of the following:

1. change of address (this should be notified in advance)
2. change of household composition (e.g. anyone moving in or out, death of a household member). Depending on the change, DBS checks may be required and a review of your approval may be undertaken.
3. any other significant change in your circumstances. The Early Permanence Carer Handbook contains details of potential events that are regarded as significant changes and which require written notice.
4. any other application you make that involves the care of children, including childminding, adoption or private fostering.

This written notice should be sent to your Social Worker.

You must inform your Social Worker verbally or in writing of any significant change in your circumstances or those of members of your household which may impact on your fostering such as ill health or outbreak of an infectious disease, relationship difficulties, significant changes to your accommodation, contact with the police.

Adoption West undertakes to inform you of any organisational changes which may affect you as carers, or the placement.

***N.B. Failure to notify Adoption West of a significant change will be viewed very seriously.***

1. Corporal Punishment

You must not use any form of corporal punishment on any child placed with you.

The term corporal punishment means any intentional application of force as punishment including slapping, pinching, squeezing, shaking, throwing missiles and rough handling. It would also include punching or pushing in the heat of the moment in response to violence from young people. It does not prevent a person taking necessary physical action to avert immediate danger of injury to the child or another person or serious damage to property. However you must not use any excessive or unreasonable measure of control, restraint or discipline on any child placed with you.

Further information about behaviour management can be found in the Early Permanence Carer Handbook and in the Behaviour Management Policy on the Adoption West website.

***N.B. In the event that Adoption West is informed of or becomes aware of a breach of the Regulations, this breach will be regarded as serious and immediate action will be taken.***

1. Confidentiality

As carers you agree to ensure that any information relating to a child placed with you; to the child’s family; or to any other person, which has been given to you in confidence in connection with a placement, is kept confidential and is not disclosed without the consent of Adoption West.

At the end of a placement all paperwork relating to a child placed with you must be returned to Adoption West.

***N.B. Any breach of confidentiality will be regarded as serious and will result in an immediate review.***

Confidentiality is a two-way process and Adoption West undertakes to keep confidential and secure the records we hold on you. Under the Data Protection Act 2018 you have the right to request access to your records, at any time. If you wish to do this you should discuss it with your Social Worker.

Further information on confidentiality can be found in the Early Permanence Carer Handbook.

1. Serious Occurrences

As carers you agree to immediately notify the responsible authority (i.e. the local authority that holds responsibility for the child) and Adoption West of any serious illness or accident involving the child, of any serious occurrence affecting the child (including allegation that the foster child has committed a serious offence, a serious incident relating to the foster child necessitating calling the police, suspected involvement of a foster child in prostitution, a child missing from the foster placement), or the death of the child (see Early Permanence Carer Handbook).

1. Removal of Child

As carers you have a duty to comply with the Adoption West Policies and Procedures in relation to the arrangements for the protection of children. Where the continuation of the placement would be detrimental to the child’s welfare, you must allow the child to be removed from your home by the responsible authority or by the area authority where you live.

1. Acting as a Signatory

As carers you must **not** become signatories to a foster child’s bank account, savings account or any other financial account.

1. **ENDING THIS AGREEMENT**

This Agreement can come to an end either because you are matched with a child for adoption (according to your adoption registration) or because Adoption West decides that you or your home are no longer suitable to provide foster care.

Prior to ending registration, a discussion should take place between the carers and the Social Worker and as much written notice as possible should be given, by either party, of the intention to end your approval as an early permanence carer.

If you decide you no longer wish to continue as an early permanence carer a report will be taken to the Adoption and Permanence Panel to cease your registration.

1. **OTHER MATTERS**

Any other matters to be included in this Agreement should be recorded here. (These could include, for example, any health care needs of the carers and family; aftercare support for carers; any other matter which any party feels has not been covered):

**I have read and understood my responsibilities as an approved early permanence carer for Adoption West.**

**Signed………………………………………… Foster Carer Date: …................**

**Signed………………………………………… Foster Carer Date: …………….**

**Signed………………………………………… Date: …………….**

**Hub/Deputy Team Manager**

**(on behalf of Adoption West)**