**Torbay Fostering Service: Fostering Family Charter**

**Roles and commitments:** this is what we can expect from each other. This charter represents a commitment and a promise between everyone, to work in partnership in the best interests of the children we care for.

The role of the corporate parent:

Torbay want to be corporate parents who:

* love and care for their children and want to support them to be the very best they can be.
* demonstrate this love and care by taking an active interest in children’s achievements and life events.
* act in the best interests of children and young people at all times and make decisions which help them to achieve the best outcomes they can.
* seek and value the views of children and young people, and act on them.
* oversee and challenge the level of support children receive in terms of their health, wellbeing, education, aspirations, accommodation and preparation for independence.
* Ensure that children and young people are safe and achieve stability in terms of their home environments and experiences, their connections and relationships and their educational or employment.
* ensure children and young people have access to effective and high quality services to meet their needs.
* **whose Officers and Members across the Council think firstly about cared for and care experienced children and young people in respect of every decision they make, in order to improve the Corporate Parenting Offer.**

The role of Torbay’s fostering service:

Torbay Fostering Service want to:

* provide stable and high quality homes for cared for children, in which they feel loved, valued and nurtured.
* continue to recruit, train and approve a diverse range of fostering families who are able to meet the needs of our cared for children.
* Listen to our fostering families, and tailor the service they receive to meet their needs.
* Deliver quality support to our fostering families, to support them in meeting the needs of our cared for children.

The role of the fostering family:

We want our fostering families, with our support, to be able to:

* Build and maintain positive and nurturing relationship with the children they care for.
* Provide a stable and loving home for the children they care for.
* Understand and recognise the experiences of cared for children and how this may impact on their presentation, behaviour and their needs.
* Work with professionals to achieve the very best possible outcomes for the children they care for.
* Support cared for children and young people to have ambition.
* Prepare cared for children and young people to for the realities and challenges of independence.

**What fostering families and the fostering service can expect from the corporate parent:**

The Corporate Parent commits to:

* Providing the most appropriate and beneficial support to our fostering families.
* Listen to our fostering families and act on their feedback.
* Respect foster carers as professionals in their own right, who are often the expert in terms of an understanding of a cared for child’s needs.
* Ensure that foster carers are appropriately and routinely consulted about key changes to policy, procedure or service delivery.
* Invite foster carers to all relevant meetings concerning the child they care for and involve them as much as possible in decision-making.
* Try to make our fostering families feel like the integral part of the service that they are, and as part of the professional team working towards best outcomes for the child.
* Be mindful of the fostering family and their own rights.
* Share all relevant and necessary information with a fostering family caring for a child; this should be in written format where possible prior to a placement being made.
* Ensure that children placed with a fostering family have an up-to-date care plan which is shared with foster carers in a timely manner.
* Work with fostering families to ensure that delegated authority is considered and implemented in a way which promotes a sense of belonging within the fostering family home and does not contribute to a feeling of ‘otherness’ or ‘difference’ for the cared for child.
* Discuss with fostering families the language they would like to be used when talking to them or writing about their work.
* Be clear about the expectations and boundaries of the role, including decisions which fostering families cannot make without the involvement and input of the Corporate Parent.
* Respond in a timely way to any queries or questions fostering families may have.
* Ensure that fostering families feel part of the corporate parenting structure and decision-making process where possible.
* Communicate openly and transparently.

**What fostering families can expect from the fostering service:**

Torbay Fostering Service commit to:

* Respect foster carers as professionals in their own right, who are often the expert in terms of an understanding of a cared for child’s needs.
* Invite foster carers to all relevant meetings concerning the child they care for and involve them as much as possible in decision-making.
* Ensure that the service is statutorily compliant with Fostering Regulations and guidance.
* Treat foster carers as colleagues and as a critical part of the team around the cared for child.
* Be mindful of the fostering family and their own rights.
* Share all relevant and necessary information with a fostering family caring for a child; this should be in written format where possible prior to a placement being made.
* Make sure that fostering families have access to support and guidance at all times.
* Provide foster carers with important information, including matters relating to finance such as tax, allowance and any additional entitlements.
* Provide access to a Fostering Handbook and the Torbay Children’s Services Procedures Manual.
* Support fostering families through the assessment, approval and review process and provide training opportunities which meet the needs of our fostering families.
* Ensure that fostering families have a bespoke annual training plan.
* Listen to fostering families when they request additional support and think creatively about how this support can be provided.
* Ensure that foster carers have regular, high quality supervision.
* Communicate openly and transparently.
* Give honest and open feedback, which supports fostering families to improve their practice.
* Ensure that foster carers allowances, expenses and other financial costs are paid in a timely manner.
* Provide opportunities for fostering families to meet together and share their experiences and good practice.
* Support fostering families in respect of the implications of family time arrangements.
* Explore with fostering families their wishes and feelings in terms of professional development and support them to access what they need to achieve these goals.
* Discuss and consult with fostering families about any proposed changes to the service.
* Ensure that fostering families have the right support when dealing with allegations.
* Meet with and speak to fostering families about their views of the service and consult them in respect of service development planning and action.
* Recognise and thank fostering families for the work that they do on a routine basis.
* Celebrate achievements and progress with fostering families.

**What the corporate parent and fostering service can expect from the fostering families:**

Fostering families commit to:

* Communicate openly and transparently with the Corporate Parent and the Fostering Service.
* Meet the standards as set out in the Fostering Regulations and guidance.
* Adhere to Torbay’s policies and procedures.
* Be proactive in reporting any changes in family circumstances to the service.
* Seek timely advice in relation to any factor which may be influence our ability to fulfil the fostering role.
* Be honest with the service about any challenge or difficulties we may experience.
* Maintain a focus on the child at all times and do all we can to build and maintain a positive and nurturing relationship with the child.
* Report any concerns relating to the child to the appropriate professional.
* Advocate on behalf of the child and promote their wishes and feelings.
* Recognise our importance to the child, and maintain a relationship where possible when a child moves on.
* Appreciate, value and uphold a child’s sense of who they are and respect their identity needs, including their ethnicity, religious beliefs and their linguistic and cultural heritage.
* Promote an equitable expectation in terms of the child’s safety, wellbeing and happiness as we would for our own child.
* Support the child to develop their decision-making capacity in line with their age, understanding and needs.
* Try as best as possible to stand by the child, and demonstrate to the child that they are them for them, no matter what.
* Encourage the child to engage in opportunities for participation and feedback.
* Provide children with the most positive experience of family life and work with all involved professionals and agencies to achieve the best outcomes for the children being cared for.
* Contribute to key meetings about the children we care for.
* Understand the importance of a cared for child’s birth family and their family relationships and work with the service and other professionals to ensure cared for children have positive, consistent, safe and meaningful family time with those important to them.
* Recognise the value of a cared for child’s life story and actively support the development of their understanding of this.
* Be open and willing to engage in training and professional development opportunities through our fostering career.
* Attend relevant training opportunities.
* Engage in and contribute to support groups.

Signed (Corporate Parent): Text, letter

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Becky Thompson, Head of Service, Regulated Services and Corporate Parenting

Signed (Fostering Service):

Signed (Fostering Family):