



# Foster Carer's Charter



## Introduction

Here in Waltham Forest, foster carers are the 'Heart of our Place'. Foster carers play a vital role to the function of the council in caring for our 'looked after children' in local families. We are committed to working collaboratively with our foster carers to make their experience and work as positive and rewarding as it can be. We want to use this Foster Carers Charter to outline some of the ways foster carers, social workers and others can work together with looked after children to harness opportunities to provide looked after children and young people stable and loving family homes.

Our foster carers are key partners in the decision-making processes for looked after children. Therefore, our dedicated and committed Fostering Team is on standby to assist and provide foster carers with support they need to undertake this crucial role. The Fostering Team have also implemented the Mockingbird Programme to enable foster carers to adopt a community caring approach in their role, that mirrors and extended family approach to caring for children. We also provide a Virtual Reality training programme designed to help foster carers develop insight and deeper understanding of the impact of trauma in a child's life and equally develop skills and techniques to provide trauma informed care within a loving and supportive family environment.

The aim of the Foster Carers Charter is therefore to build on and develop the working partnership with foster carers, and in regular dialogue achieve the best outcomes for individual children looked after in foster homes on a short term, respite or permanent long-term basis.

The Charter includes a summary of what foster carers can expect from the council, what the council expects from the foster carers and very importantly the young people's views on what makes a good foster carer.

We believe we can work together with this Charter to make a real difference for our children and the foster carers who look after them.

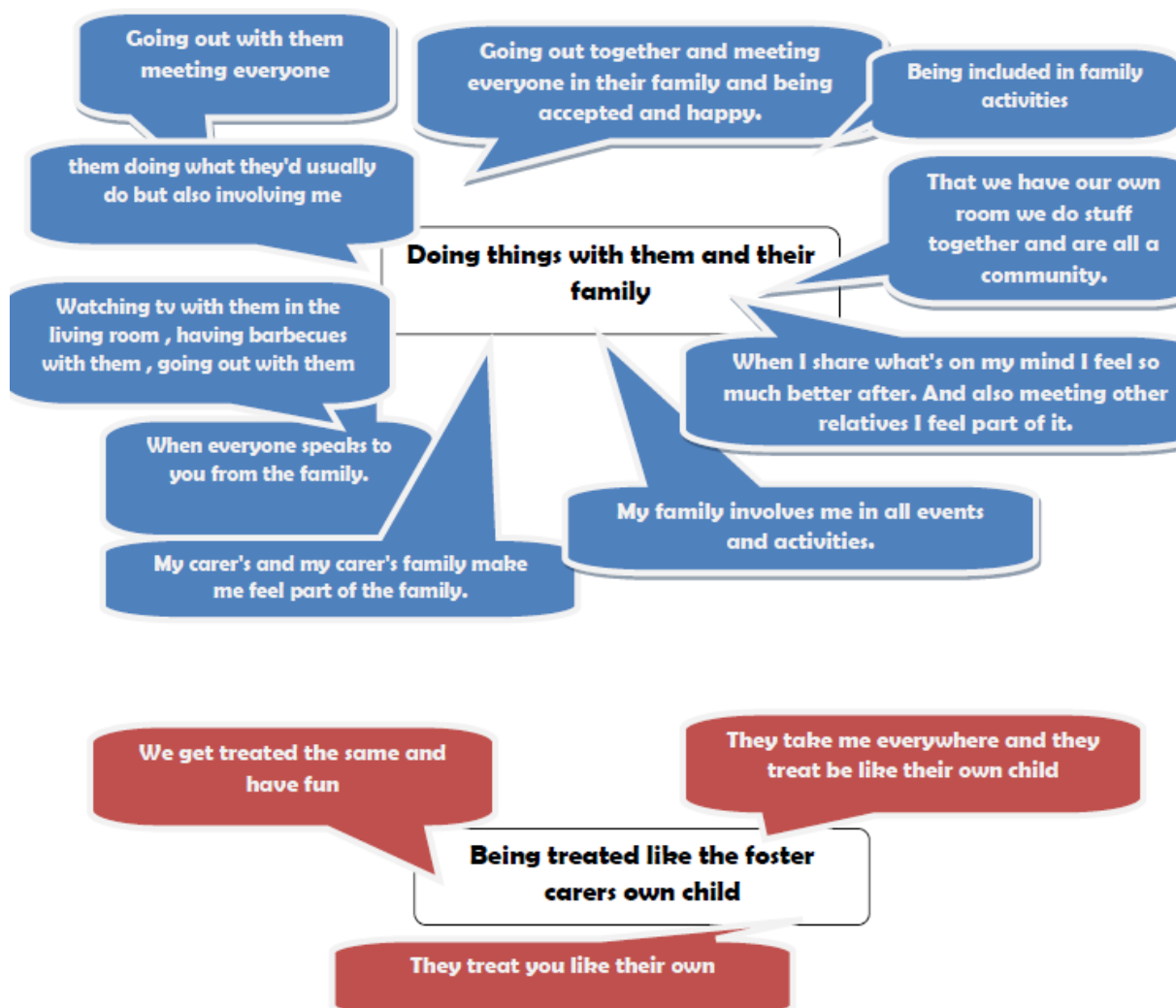
## What makes a good foster carer?

## What makes a foster placement good?

## From the voice of our 'looked After Children 2019- 2020

20. What kinds of things make you feel part of a foster carer's family?

The answers to these free form questions broadly fell into the following themes:



18. What makes a foster placement good?



## What you, as a foster carer, can expect from Children's Services

- To be treated fairly and openly in all our discussions and communications with you.
- To be listened to and involved alongside your foster children in planning and decision-making about their lives.
- Recognise in practice the importance of the child's relationship with his or her foster family as one that can make the biggest difference in the child's life and support you to support them to stay connected when living together arrangements end.
- Supported to continue providing a home for your foster children beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- Should you be subject of complaint/allegation we will ensure you have support and access to [Fostering Network](#) if required.

- To be provided with all the information, including risk assessments you need prior to the child/young person coming to live with you so that you can safely care for the child. When a child comes to live with you in emergency, we will endeavour to give you all relevant information about the child on the next working day or within 72 hours if placement takes place during the weekend by EDT.
- To complete a Placement Planning Meeting before a child comes to live with you if placement is planned and within 5 working days of the child/young person coming to live with you on a short notice.
- To be informed of outcomes of court proceedings and how this might impact on the care plan and future living arrangement for the child/young person.
- To be treated with respect, fully supported, valued as a key person in the child's life and kept informed of key changes to undertake the carer's role
- To be paid on time and given clear information about any support, allowances, fees, Council Tax exemptions and holidays you will receive.
- To be provided with out of hours telephone support from the Fostering Team and ensure that you have access to our carers support groups where you can learn and share experiences with other foster carers.
- To be provided an updated annual fostering fee and allowance document with clear breakdown of how allowances could be utilised.
- That the foster carers professional fee and the child related allowances are paid promptly in line with the Fostering Fee/ allowances policy.
- That the allowances policy outlines the monies for children to be provided with e.g. pocket money, savings and how overpayment will be recouped.
- To have delegated responsibility and clarity from the start of the placement to enable you treat your foster child the same as their peers, as part of your family and ensure that wherever possible you are able to make every day decisions in consultation with them as part of the agreed plan and without unnecessary restrictions.
- To consult and work collaboratively with Waltham Forest Foster Carer's Association (WFFCA) to improve and strengthen practice.

## What we expect from you, as foster carers

- To promote your foster child's developmental needs which will include them benefiting from good parenting, supporting their education, health, social and emotional needs.
- To contribute to the educational attainment of every child that you look after by attending relevant training for yourself, supporting the child in their learning in various ways, attending school events such as parents' evenings and working closely with the child's school provisions and the Virtual School.
- To follow departmental policies and procedures especially in relation to behaviour management and discipline (not using corporal punishment) confidentiality and safeguarding.
- To immediately inform your supervising social worker about any proposed or actual changes in your household and about any difficulties you may be facing.
- To provide children with experience of family life and afford them the same level of parenting protection and care as you would your own child.
- To be 'pushy parents' in advocating for children in all areas of their life and to ensure that they have a better chance in life just like their peers who are not looked after.
- To respect and promote a child's sexuality, gender identification, religious, linguistic and cultural heritage in all aspects of their life.
- To respect children's birth families regardless of their circumstances.
- To promote family time with birth families and friends and supervising and transporting children in line with the care plans.
- To promote their social and leisure needs by giving access to a wide range of opportunities to develop their interests, hobbies, talents and skills.
- To attend and contribute to all children's reviews, school meetings and health appointments.
- To tell us as soon you receive an overpayment so that appropriate measures can be taken for you to return the overpayment amount to the council.

- For foster carers in the Waltham Forest Mockingbird programme we expect you to build up a good working relationship with the Hub carer and other foster carers in your constellation to help children develop a sense of belonging and learn how to build positive relationship with others.
- Join and take an active part in WFFCA meetings and activities.

## Become a foster carer

Refer a friend to become a foster carer for Waltham Forest and receive £250.

Waltham Forest found that referrals were much more likely to progress to foster carers than advertising for foster carers. As such, we hope to be working collaboratively with you to implement some of our creative ideas for recruiting new foster carers.

At Waltham Forest, we acknowledge the importance of recruiting foster carers and will pay £250 to you when you refer a friend who has been successful approved and taken their first placement. It is all about spreading the word and encouraging people to sign up to what is the most rewarding journey you will have; not mentioning how vital your contribution will be to the child/young person's journey through care.

Here at Waltham Forest, we take our Referral Scheme very seriously because we really appreciate and believe in the work our foster carers do. Now is the opportunity to earn up to £250 by introducing a friend to become foster carer.

It does not matter if you are a foster carer, adopter or an employee; you can share your passion about becoming a foster carer and refer a friend

Please use every opportunity to talk to your friends and family about becoming a foster carer if you think they are suitable. Please make sure that those you tell about becoming a foster carer are over 21 years, live in the UK permanently have a spare room and are likely to have a satisfactory police, health and reference checks.

Please ask them to call us or email us to progress their application on:

- Tel: 020 8496 3437
- Email: [fostering@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@walthamforest.gov.uk)
- WWW: [www.fosteringwalthamforest.co.uk](http://www.fosteringwalthamforest.co.uk)

And complete the registration form. They will need to give us your name when we complete a home visit if they meet the criteria to become a foster carer.

1. Your friend will then need to undertake the Skills to Foster course and undertake relevant health and police (DBS) checks and Reference checks.
2. Your friend does not need to live in the borough. They can be married, single, divorced and from any religious or cultural background. All they need is resilience, determination, patience, love, care and a spare room/s in their home.

Please take a few minutes to watch this [video](#).

Contact us today and have that conversation with a social worker. Find out if you may be able to be there for a child/young person. You may be next the foster carer in our future video clips!

**Thank you so much for helping to make a difference in a child's life.**

