

Coventry Foster Carers' Charter

**FOSTER WITH
COVENTRY**



Coventry Foster Carers' Charter



John Gregg
Director of
Children's Services



Cllr Pat Seaman
Cabinet Member,
Children and Young People

Introduction

Coventry is a child-friendly city where relationships with children are valued and supported. Children are at the heart of everything we do. Our aim is to ensure that all Coventry children get the best possible start in life. We are committed to supporting children to live with their family wherever appropriate.

However, if foster care is required, we recognise that stable and nurturing foster homes are at the heart of delivering high quality services and positive outcomes for our children in care. Over recent years the city has invested significantly in its fostering service in order to make this possible.

The vision for the service is to identify and assess carers in order to meet the needs of children in care and support them to do so effectively. We are creating a fostering family that delivers all aspects of fostering. This update to the Coventry Foster Carers' Charter details how we will do this.

Our foster carers play an invaluable role within children's lives and we recognise that the special relationship between a child and their foster carer can transform a child's life. This Charter sets out our shared vision, our commitment and what we can expect from each other when working together to provide outstanding standards of care to all children in care.

We have high aspirations and expectations for our Fostering Service in Coventry so we can provide outstanding fostering homes for our children and young people across the city.

Roles and commitment

The aim of Coventry City Council's Fostering Service is to provide outstanding foster homes when fostering is required.

Coventry's Fostering Service role:

- ▶ Provide services to keep Coventry's children and families safe and secure
- ▶ Ensure that children and families receive the 'right help, at the right time.'
- ▶ Ensure that foster carers are recruited, prepared, assessed and supported to provide the right fostering environment to the children of Coventry
- ▶ Work with our foster carers in a respectful manner ensuring that foster carers' are valued as professionals
- ▶ Provide the best learning and development opportunities to our fostering families
- ▶ Treat our fostering families fairly and with respect
- ▶ Communicate and consult with our fostering families, valuing their input and expertise

Foster Carers' role:

- ▶ Provide safe, stable and secure fostering environments to the children and families in Coventry
- ▶ Enable Coventry's young people to grow up in an outstanding environment where they can reach their full potential
- ▶ Work with professionals in a respectful manner to ensure the needs of the children and young people are met
- ▶ Be positive role models and help our young people reach their full potential
- ▶ Be outstanding advocates and champions for Coventry's children and young people
- ▶ Work in partnership with professionals and key players in the lives of children and young people

What foster carers can expect from Coventry's Fostering Service

Coventry City Council's Fostering Service recognises that there are a number of requirements to make a successful working relationship between our foster carers and the fostering service in order to deliver outstanding fostering environments that will raise the outcomes for children and young people in Coventry.

What can foster carers expect?

Working in partnership

How will we achieve this?

- ▶ Value your skills as a professional carer
- ▶ Respect your confidentiality and own religious values
- ▶ Recognise that you are the people that know the children best and will understand their holistic needs
- ▶ Acknowledge and celebrate that foster carers make big differences to the lives of children and young people
- ▶ Recognise what you as an individual can offer to our children and young people in terms of diversity, uniqueness and difference
- ▶ Ensure your voice is heard, valued and respected as part of any planning process for the children in your care
- ▶ Ensure that the service that we and you provide continues to meet regulatory requirements by adhering to the National Minimum Standards
- ▶ Provide you with the right help, support and advice at the right time
- ▶ Ensure that the needs of your family and birth children are considered and that any fostering arrangement works for you as a whole
- ▶ Offer you an 'out of hours' service to include advice, support and guidance
- ▶ Provide you with independent advice and support should you require it
- ▶ Ensure that any complaints are dealt with in a timely and efficient way
- ▶ Support ongoing involvement with previous foster carers if this is in the best interests of the children
- ▶ Provide you with a range of training, support service and inclusive development days that help you manage and understand the varied needs of children and young people that need to be looked after

To share information with our foster carers

How will we achieve this?

- ▶ Give foster carers all the relevant information that we have in order to support them to care safely and appropriately for a child or children in their home
- ▶ Keep in touch with foster carers via a monthly newsletter to inform them of relevant events, support services, share information of changes within the service
- ▶ Provide foster carers with contact details for any appropriate family, friends or professionals involved with the children in their care, including staff mobile phone numbers
- ▶ Provide a link, advocate or support to foster carers who are attending meetings in relation to the children in their care so their voice can be heard
- ▶ Ensure that foster carers have the necessary legal documentation for children in their care
- ▶ Provide foster carers with the relevant policies, procedures, the National Minimum Standards and Foster Carers' Handbook
- ▶ Consult on a regular basis with foster carers regarding any changes made in policies, procedures or practice issues within the fostering service.
- ▶ To ensure that foster carers are invited and involved in all meetings related to children in their care
- ▶ Consult with foster carers before changing terms and conditions
- ▶ Involve new and established carers in the delivery of the initial training for prospective foster carers and in the interview process for staff members to ensure we continue to meet the needs of the service and our looked after community



To make decisions in a timely manner regarding our children and families

How will we achieve this?

- ▶ Involve you in decisions about children and young people coming to live with you and ensure that foster carers are empowered to use delegated authority where appropriate to do so, to make day to day decisions regarding children in their care
- ▶ You will be invited to key meetings where you will be asked to contribute your views to any decisions which impact on the children or young person in your care, for example in looked after children reviews and PEP meetings

Offer high support to our fostering families

How will we achieve this?

- ▶ Value all members of our fostering families
- ▶ Provide a named supervising social worker who will visit foster carers frequently and provide outstanding support and supervision to all foster carers and their families. Supervising social workers will be an advocate for foster families
- ▶ Respond in a timely manner for additional request for support
- ▶ We will provide foster carers with the opportunity to attend support groups
- ▶ Have access to the duty social worker, if the supervising social worker is unavailable, or out of hours support
- ▶ Provide foster carers with information about social work cover for longer periods of absence within 3 weeks
- ▶ Organise social activities across the city
- ▶ Provide open and honest feedback
- ▶ Ensure fees and allowances are fair, consistent and communicated clearly. Ensure these are paid in a timely way
- ▶ Provide equipment and support when needed
- ▶ Provide additional support when placements are under strain
- ▶ Provide foster carers with access to a fostering worker at all times even when offices are closed through the 'on call' service.





Provide the best learning and developmental opportunities

How will we achieve this?

- ▶ Run Skills to Foster training frequently throughout the year
- ▶ Provide the right support to complete the Training Support and Development Induction Standards as foster carers
- ▶ Ensure fostering households have individual training plans specific to their training and development needs
- ▶ Provide a flexible and diverse training programme which will enable foster carers to be outstanding foster carers
- ▶ Provide opportunities to develop your skills and expertise within the fostering service
- ▶ Run a progression scheme to enable carers to enhance their income according to their expertise and skills

We will treat our fostering families fairly and with respect

How will we achieve this?

- ▶ Ensure open and transparent ways of working
- ▶ Include foster carers in professional decisions and listen to views and expertise when making Care Plans for children and young people
- ▶ Ensure that decisions are handled sensitively and made in a timely manner
- ▶ Facilitate regular communication between foster carers, councillors and senior managers
- ▶ Consult foster carers regarding matters that affect them and their children and young people

What can Coventry's Fostering Service expect from our foster carers?

Learning development and support

How will we achieve this?

- ▶ We will be prepared to develop and update our skills throughout our fostering career
- ▶ Attend mandatory and relevant training
- ▶ Complete the Training Support and Development Induction Standards Standards
- ▶ Take up opportunities offered to us
- ▶ Attend and contribute to support groups
- ▶ Communicate with professionals involved

Communications

How will we achieve this?

- ▶ Respond to local consultations and discussions in order to develop the service
- ▶ Talk openly and honestly with your supervising social worker and ask for advice and support when needed.
- ▶ Meet with councillors, managers and others in order to promote dialogue and good working relationships
- ▶ Communicate the needs of children and young people in our care to professionals
- ▶ Be outstanding advocates and champions for the children and young people of Coventry
- ▶ Be willing to keep in touch with children who have moved on from our care

To share information with the fostering service

How will we achieve this?

- ▶ Inform our supervising social worker and professionals about significant changes in our household
- ▶ Inform our supervising social worker and professionals about any difficulties that arise for us



Foster Care Support Strategy

1. Working with one another

This strategy is underpinned by an active commitment to all those involved with fostered children working together. It is crucial that the child's current or planned foster carer is a part of this team and their engagement is fully supported in order to achieve the best outcomes for the child.

1.1 The relationship between carers and child is paramount

The quality of the relationship between the foster carer and child is the most critical factor to promoting the child's outcomes. Therefore, the primary focus of the team working with the child in care, will be on providing support for this relationship. This will include support to maintain connection with previous foster carers where this is in the child's best interests.

1.2. The priority is to listen and respond to children

As the reported experiences of children are key to any understanding of fostering, it is essential that the team listen to their views and hear what works best for them. It is also important that the team works together to provide a consistent, clear and honest message about the limitations of what cannot be changed.

1.3. Understanding theory and developing skills is key

High quality training and consultation with specialists provides foster carers with detailed understanding of dealing with challenging behaviours. Foster carers need confidence to understand a child's development and the impact of trauma, separation and loss on children.

1.4. Delivery of permanence and placement stability is our goal

As set out in Coventry's Permanence Strategy, all children need to have stable and permanent arrangements in their everyday lives to enable them to grow and develop into healthy adults. Where placement stability is at risk, support will be provided that is easy for the foster carers to access.

2. How the Service works

Foster carers have a named supervising social worker who can be easily contacted at times of crisis as well as access to "Fostering On Call" outside office hours. The named supervising social worker

will provide additional assistance to enable foster carers to access help from health or education where needed. Where a decision or task has been agreed, foster carers will know the timescales for this. If tasks are not completed in a timely way, foster carers will be assisted to escalate this.

3. Training and Development

3.1 Ongoing training and development is crucial to developing and supporting foster carers. Coventry's Fostering Service offers a range of training options including face to face, online training, long or short workshops, the Foster Carers' Conference and support groups as well as more intensive courses such as The Foundations for Attachment. The Fostering Service consults regularly with foster carers about future training and development. A foster carers' training catalogue is published online each April and updated regularly as changes are made.

Evaluation of foster carers' training is regularly undertaken at the end of each course. Foster carers are invited to contribute their feedback on training provision through the CFCA or their Supervising Social Worker. In addition to foster carers' training, foster carers are also able to access training alongside fostering and children's social workers on a regular basis. All foster carers are supported to complete their Training, Support and Development (TSD) standards.

Foster carers will be advised within 5 working days should there be any changes to scheduled training that they have registered for.

Foster carers are supported to access childcare to attend training, where needed. Reasonable transport costs are reimbursed to access training. Where foster carers live at a distance from Coventry, we will discuss with them how to access local training and support access to this where appropriate.

Preparation training is made available to all prospective carers. There is specific preparation training available to Connected Persons foster carers and another available to those progressing into Special Guardianship.

Every foster carer, including Connected Persons foster carers, has individual training needs which will be discussed with them. Supervision discussions will cover how these are best met.



3.2 Therapeutic Support

The service is clear that all fostering homes should be inherently therapeutic. It is crucial that foster carers are supported to care for children who have experienced trauma. It is also crucial that therapeutic intervention includes them, as well as the child and enables them to have a better understanding of the child's inner world. Therapeutic support will be accessible where needed.

The service works with the Integrated LAC CAMHS service to ensure that foster carers are able to access therapeutic support in relation to children and young people in their care.

The service has a background of understanding of 4 therapeutic models – Theraplay®, DDP, Social Pedagogy and Secure Base. The service uses these models to inform our practice.

Foster Carers also have access to therapeutic support via the Edge of Care service where there are difficulties in the household.

3.3 Delegation of Authority

The Delegation of Authority policy outlines how Delegated Authority to foster carers works in Coventry. The delegation of authority is based on the Fostering Network Support Tool which provides a detailed record of arrangements to foster carers.

Delegated Authority is discussed at the placement planning meeting and at every LAC Review.

3.4 Support from Health and Education is key for foster carers to meet the needs of the child or young person

This support is provided through The Virtual School and a Designated Nurse.

The use of the Pupil Premium is discussed at the child's Personal Education Planning meeting. Foster carers will be provided with information regarding the use of the Premium by the school and be supported to challenge its use. If they are not satisfied the foster carer can request the Virtual School to get involved and they will support the child's educational outcomes. Foster Carers have been invited to participate in The Virtual School's governing body.

3.5 Children's social workers are crucial to the child's plan

The Fostering Service is committed to ensuring that all practitioners in Children's Services are supported to work effectively with foster carers. This support is provided in a number of ways including workshops led by foster carers and one minute guides for practitioners.

Members of the service and foster carers are consistently involved in the induction of new staff members. Foster Carers are regularly part of the recruitment of new fostering service staff members. The escalation policy details how foster carers can raise difficulties in accessing support from children's social workers and timescales for this.

Children's social workers visit children in placement and discuss their progress with foster carers within statutory timescales.

The Fostering Service would like to thank our foster carers and the FCA in Coventry for the outstanding work you do with children and young people.

“Extraordinary people, doing extraordinary work”
with thanks,
John Gregg – Director of Children's Services

Foster Carers' Charter Signatories

Foster Carers' Charter Signatories

John Gregg
John Gregg
D.C.S.

ANTONIA BOTHAM
ANTONIA BOTHAM - SENIOR PRACTITIONER

Charlotte Thomas
Charlotte Thomas - Advanced Practitioner

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Joanne Scriven
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Operational support officer.

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Connected Persons Team

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M. Wilkin - Foster Care

Viva Perumal
Viva Perumal
Supervising Social Worker

K. Ratour
K. Ratour
LAC social worker.

Howtownhill
Howtownhill
SSW Fostering Service.

SUE SEDGEBEAR
SUE SEDGEBEAR
Foster Carer

BAIAN SEDGEBEAR
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FOSTER CARER

Foster Carers' Charter Signatories

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Natasha Broadhead (SSW)

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Lisa-Marie Plassel - LAC social worker

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Julia Swallow
Therapeutic Practitioner - Edge of Care Service

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TEAM MANAGER.

Early Mentoring - Student Social Worker COT

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Angela Whitlock
Strategic Lead - looked after children.
(Corporate parenting)

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TEAM MANAGER,
LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN
CHANTELLE DAVIES.

[Signature] Foster Carer

Ray Radnell - Social Worker

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DR ANITA MORGAN
DESIGNATED DOCTOR
FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN.

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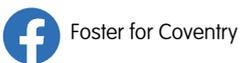
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Foster for Coventry



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