



# Brent

## **FOSTER CARERS and KINSHIP CARERS'**

## **CHARTER**

**2022**

**Final Draft**

**'Children are at the heart  
of our work'**

# INTRODUCTION

The term 'Carer' refers to both foster carers and kinship carers in this Charter. The term 'Kinship Carer' only refers to connected person's carers who are known as 'family and friends foster carers. It does not include special guardians or any other arrangement.

The Charter has been developed in consultation with Brent foster carers.

The purpose of the Charter is:

- to encourage open and honest partnership working between foster carers, kinship carers, social workers and the fostering service
- to ensure foster carers and kinship carers are supported by Brent Council to be the "best they can be"
- to help and support foster carers and kinship carers to work together with staff to build professional/respectful relationships with each other and with children and young people
- to show commitment and investment in the professional development of foster carers and kinship carers, to aspire and reach their full potential
- to ensure foster carers and kinship carers are given opportunities to meet, form support groups and have a strong voice in influencing the development of children's services and best practice

# ROLES AND COMMITMENT

## Brent's role

Brent's aim is to recruit and assess prospective carers who are willing and able to provide a home that enables children and young people to grow and reach their full potential. Brent will ensure that all carers receive training, guidance and financial support.

## Carers' role

Carers are key members of the professional team around the child. Their role is to provide a safe and secure environment for vulnerable children and work with staff to help them to settle, develop and enjoy their time with their foster family.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Helen Keller

The charter provides clarity in relation to expectations from Brent and carers in respect of looked after children and young people.

## What Carers can expect from Brent

1. Working in partnership
2. Information
3. Support
4. Learning and development
5. Fair treatment
6. Clarity about decisions
7. Communication and consultation

## What Brent can expect from carers

1. Working in partnership
2. Value and respect for children and young people
3. Information
4. Commitment to learning and development
5. Communication and consultation

## WHAT CARERS CAN EXPECT FROM BRENT

### 1. Working in partnership

Brent recognises that Carers are vital in ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people in care.

Brent will:

- Value the skills and contributions of carers
- Include carers in all necessary meetings that affect them and the child, recognising that their contribution is important to the well-being of the child in their care
- Ensure that the Placement Service, Fostering & Kinship Team meets the standards set out in Regulations, Standards and Guidance
- Ensure that all aspects of our practice is open and transparent
- Respect confidentiality (except where it may be necessary to share information to safeguard the child/young person, in which case we will inform carers of this action)
- Ensure that allowances and fees are paid regularly and within the required timescales
- Ensure that records are being kept about all significant events and communications

## 2. Information

Brent recognises that information sharing with carers is critical in ensuring that the overall needs of looked after children or young people are met.

Brent will:

- Provide carers with a carers' handbook upon initial approval which contains all relevant policies and procedures. The local authority will also ensure that these are updated when required and new guidelines are provided
- Ensure carers have information on all financial matters
- Give carers all relevant information available to enable them to safely care for the child or young person placed in their care
- Ensure that Support Plans are drawn up in consultation with carers and agreed prior to the placement commencing
- Ensure that Placement Planning Meetings take place within timescales

## 3. Support

Brent recognises that fostering can be challenging and that having robust and timely support makes a huge difference.

The Brent will:

- ensure that fostering allowances are reflective of the needs of individual children and paid within the outlined timescales
- provide monthly supervisory visits, or more if required, and regular telephone contact with carers
- ensure that newly approved foster carers and kinship carers are 'buddied up' with experienced foster carers
- provide additional support to children or young people, carers and their families through CAMHS and other agencies
- facilitate regular support groups during the day and evening to enable carers to attend
- ensure that the carers' support groups run regularly to meet with senior managers for consultation.
- ensure all foster carers are members of an independent organisation which provides support and advocacy (Fostering Network)

#### 4. Learning and Development

Brent recognises that in order to enable children to experience stability in their life, and help them succeed, it is essential for carers to have access to training and development opportunities that will strengthen their skills and knowledge.

Brent will:

- Ensure that all carers have a Learning & Development Plan and we will review your progress annually
- Provide all necessary training and other development opportunities
- Continually consult with carers on additional specialist training they might require
- Ensure that 'one to one' and group training are available to support carers
- Ensure opportunities are available specifically for foster carers to gain support in completing their TSDS (Training Support & Development Standards) and further their career development, i.e. Qualification Credit Framework Level 3 (QCF)

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## 5. Fair treatment

Brent recognises that carers need to be treated fairly at all times.

Brent will:

- Provide an open transparent process for dealing with complaints from carers and allegations within the required time scales
- Ensure that carers and their families are treated with dignity and respect whilst subject to an allegation
- Ensure carers are provided with independent support as necessary
- Ensure outcomes of investigations are put in writing to carers

## 6. Clarity about decisions

Brent local authority recognises that to enable children and young people to view Fostering and Kinship arrangements as a positive experience, carers must be empowered to make everyday decisions regarding the children in their care.

Brent will:

- Ensure they are supported to make decisions and encouraged to participate as equal partners at placement planning meetings and reviews. Help provide clarity on decisions carers can and cannot make in relation to the child or young person in their care
- Ensure that carers are supported and feel confident to make basic decisions on the day to day matters relating to the child or young person in their care
- Regularly consult children and young people about their wishes and feelings and help them to contribute to the decisions made about their lives

## 7. Communication and Consultation

Brent is a firm believer in openness, transparency and building a positive working relationships.

Brent will:

- Encourage and ensure regular communication with carers and other professionals
- Strive to provide honest and constructive feedback to carers which will benefit both carers and children in placement
- Ensure that carers are consulted on all matters affecting them
- Ensure that carers are provided with feedback in a timely manner

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# WHAT BRENT LOCAL AUTHORITY CAN EXPECT FROM CARERS

## 1. Working in partnership

Carers recognise that high quality care can only be provided if all professionals work together.

Carers will:

- Where applicable, meet the standards and guidance set out in the Fostering Regulations (2011) and National Minimum Standards and follow the local authority's policies and procedures (See Carers' Handbook)
- Provide looked after children with an experience of family life
- Use their expertise, skills and knowledge positively to improve the lives and experiences of children in their care
- Show willingness to work positively with birth families and significant people in the child's life to help them maintain their sense of identity
- Work positively within a network of professionals involved with the child or young person, i.e. school, health, religious establishments and others

## 2. Value and Respect for the child or young person in their care

Carers recognise that every child and young person should be respected and valued as an individual and be supported to meet their aspirations and full potential.

Carers will:

- Ensure their practice supports the individual needs of each child in their care
- Support the child or young person to be involved in making decisions regarding their lives appropriate to their age and understanding
- Respect and promote the child or young person's identity, culture, religion, language and other cultural observations and practices
- Afford the same level of consideration, care and protection as they would for their own child
- Advocate on behalf of the child or young person in their care by obtaining additional support and services as required

### 3. Information

Carers recognise that openness and sharing of information is key to positive working relationships in safeguarding children.

Carers will:

- Maintain information about the child and/or their family in a confidential manner
- Keep supervising social workers informed of any changes within their household
- Inform the Local Authority of any difficulties that they, the child or any other household members are experiencing that could have an impact on the placement
- Make use of their logbooks and evidence that they are recording significant events in relation to the child or young person in placement
- Respond to correspondence and requests for information in a timely manner

### 4. Learning, Development and Support

Carers recognise the importance of having access to learning and development opportunities. This will have a significant impact in ensuring that they will positively meet the needs of the individual children placed in their care.

Carers will:

- Take responsibility for the development of their knowledge and skills
- Attend all mandatory training courses and also specialist training that would benefit the placement
- Be proactive in informing the local authority of their training needs
- Attend monthly support group meetings where applicable
- Give sufficient notice to the local authority if they are unable to attend training or support group sessions

## 5. Communication and Consultation

Carers recognise the importance of effective communication in ensuring the needs of children are met.

Carers will:

- Conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times
- Make sure their views are communicated in a constructive manner which is beneficial to all
- Keep the local authority informed of all matters relating to the child or young person in writing
- Participate in consultation and discussions on an individual or group level (support groups/focus groups) which will contribute to the development of the service as a whole

In signing this Charter, Brent Council, Foster Carers and Kinship Carers agree to reflect the spirit and intentions of the Charter in their actions:

- **Brent Local authority**

(Contact details for the person responsible for implementing the aims of the Charter)

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