

**FOSTER FOR
COVENTRY**

Foster Carer's Charter for Coventry



Coventry City Council

www.coventry.gov.uk/fostering



Foster Carers' Charter for Coventry



John Gregg



Pat Seaman

Introduction

Coventry's Children's Service is on a journey to improving the lives and outcomes for the young people in our City.

The foster carers' charter will support our commitment to all children in Coventry and ensure that they receive the 'right help, at the right time in the right way.' This is a key part of our work in delivering the overall vision for the city: **"We want Coventry children and young people to have supportive families; live safe from harm; achieve their potential; be healthy; and have positive and fulfilling lives"**.

When foster care is required, we recognise that stable and nurturing foster placements are at the heart of delivering high quality services and positive outcomes for our looked after children.

John Gregg, the Director of Children's Services, describes our foster families as 'the life blood of the looked after children's system.' 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.

The vision for Coventry City Council's fostering service is that we are able to create a fostering service that becomes a fostering family; delivering all aspects of fostering so as many of Coventry's looked after children can be cared for by Coventry's fostering families as possible.

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 of looked after children.

John Gregg praises fostering families and recognises that our foster carers' in Coventry are 'extraordinary people doing extraordinary work.'

Coventry City Council are committed to ensuring that children receive the right help and secure the right placement at the right time.



Roles and commitment

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

Roles

Coventry's Fostering Service Role	Foster Carers Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 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

Commitment

Coventry's Fostering Service Role	Foster Carers Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Work in partnership with our foster carers' ▶ Share information with our foster carers' ▶ Make decisions in a timely manner regarding our children and families ▶ Offer high levels of support to our fostering families ▶ 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide a safe, nurturing fostering environment ▶ Respect and value Coventry's children and young people in their household ▶ 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 recognise 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 and expertise as equal professionals
- ▶ Respect your confidentiality
- ▶ Recognise that you are the people who children live with and that you understand their needs
- ▶ Recognise that foster carers make a big difference in children and young people's lives
- ▶ Recognise the knowledge, skills and expertise that you have as carers'
- ▶ Ensure that your views and expertise are considered when making plans for the children in your care
- ▶ Ensure that the service that we provide meets the regulatory requirements as a minimum
- ▶ Provide you with the 'right help and at the right time'
- ▶ Ensure that the needs of your family are considered and acted upon including that of your birth children
- ▶ Provide you with independent advice and support should you require this
- ▶ Ensure that any complaints are taken seriously and dealt with efficiently

To share information with our foster carers

How will we achieve this?

- ▶ Give foster carers all the information that we have in order to care safely for the child
- ▶ Provide foster carers with contact details for all of those involved with the children in your care
- ▶ Ensure that foster carers have the necessary legal documentation for children in your care
- ▶ Provide foster carers with the relevant policies, procedures and the foster carers handbook
- ▶ Consult with foster carers regarding any changes in relation to policies and procedures and any changes made
- ▶ Keep in touch with foster carers via a Newsletter to inform you of relevant changes
- ▶ Provide foster carers with access to independent advice and support
- ▶ To ensure that foster carers are invited to and are involved in all meetings related to the children in their care
- ▶ Consult with foster carers before changing terms and conditions



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
- ▶ Ensure that any decisions regarding the Care Plan for the children are communicated with foster carers

Offer high support to our fostering families

How will we achieve this?

- ▶ Value all of the members of our fostering families
- ▶ Provide a named supervising social worker who will visit foster carers frequently and provide outstanding supervision and support to all foster carers and their families. Supervising social workers will be an advocate for fostering families
- ▶ Respond in a timely manner for additional request for support. We are committed to offering our children and families 'the right help at the right time'
- ▶ Hold support groups across the service, foster carers and invite their families.
- ▶ 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 when needed
- ▶ Provide additional support when placements are under strain.
- ▶ Provide foster carers with access to a fostering worker at all times even when the 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 TSD 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 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 discussions and listen to views and expertise when making Care Plans for children and young people
- ▶ Ensure that complaints are handled sensitively and in a timely manner
- ▶ Facilitate regular communication between foster carers, councillors and senior managers
- ▶ Consult foster carers regarding matters that affect them and children and young people in Coventry

The fostering service would like to thank our foster carers and CFCA 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 17/05/2018

What can Coventry Fostering service expect from our Foster Carers?

Working in partnership

How will we achieve this?

- ▶ Demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct
- ▶ Provide positive adult role models and treat a foster child as they would their own child as a "pushy parent" in advocating for all aspects of the child's development, including educational attainment and physical and emotional health and well-being
- ▶ Co-operate as fully as part of a team with other key professionals in the child's life
- ▶ Develop a meaningful relationship with the child, understand their needs, support their growth and become an advocate and champion for them
- ▶ Support foster children in our care to help them overcome discrimination
- ▶ Demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability
- ▶ Provide children and young people with an experience of family life
- ▶ Attend meetings about the children and young people we care for
- ▶ Work with the agencies involved with the child such as school, health and religious establishments
- ▶ Show a willingness to work with birth parents, wider family and people significant in a child's life
- ▶ Meet the standards set out in Fostering Regulations and guidance and follow departmental policies and procedures
- ▶ Respect confidentiality
- ▶ Respect the children and young people that we care for, valuing diversity and culture and ensure that their holistic needs are met

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

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 TSD standards
- ▶ Take up opportunities offered to us
- ▶ Attend and contribute to support groups
- ▶ Communicate with professionals involved

Communication

How will we achieve this?

- ▶ Respond to local consultations and discussions in order to inform the development of the service
- ▶ Meet with councillors, service managers and others in order to promote dialogue and a good working relationship
- ▶ 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



Foster Care Support Strategy

1. The Team around the Child

This strategy is underpinned by an active commitment to the Team Around the Child. 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 Children is paramount

The quality of the relationship between 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 looked after child, will be on providing support for this relationship.

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 around the child listen to their views and hear what works best for the child. It is also important that the team work together to provide a consistent and clear and honest message about the limitations of what can and what can't be changed.

1.3. Understanding Theory and Developing Skills is the 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 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, the Team Around the Child will provide support 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 time 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 KEEP. The Fostering Service has a monthly meeting with a representative of the Coventry Foster Carers' Association and the Organisational Development Team, to plan and review the training for foster carers. The foster carers' training brochure is published online each April and updated regularly as changes are made. Foster carers can request a hard copy of this if they wish.

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 their FCA representative 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 with this where appropriate.

Preparation training is made available to all prospective carers.

Every foster carer, including Connected Person's 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 foster care placements should be inherently therapeutic. It is crucial that foster carers are supported to care for children you 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.

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 that it 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

In 2018, The Fostering Service will work with foster carers to enable them to deliver workshops to children's social workers about working effectively with foster carers. The escalation policy details how foster carers can raise difficulties 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.

Children's social workers will alert both children and foster carers when they are on leave.

Managers of children's social workers will ensure foster carers are advised should a children's social worker be on sick leave for more than 3 days and make alternative arrangements to cover any concerns.

3.6 Changes of social workers

In 2017, Children's Services were restructured to provide improved consistency for looked after children. Where there is a change of social worker, a joint visit will take place with the incoming and outgoing social worker alongside the supervising social worker to establish good working relationships and prevent any drift and delay.

3.7 Placement endings

Where there is an unplanned ending, a disruption meeting should take place to ensure that learning from the placement is identified and applied. This learning will consider the needs of the child, the developments of the foster carer and the development of the service.

For all placement endings, Foster carers, their birth children and other key members of the household alongside looked after children, will be provided with opportunities both in writing and verbally to provide feedback on ending of the placement. This will be used in the foster carers annual review.

3.8 Supervision of Foster Carers

Every foster carer will have a named supervising social worker. The frequency of supervision visits will be agreed with them. As a standard, foster carers will have supervision visits at least once a month, however where a long term match has been agreed, the frequency of these visits will be discussed and reviewed. Supervision will be reflective and enable foster carers to share their thoughts and views and receive support. In addition to supervision visits, there will be at least one unannounced visit during the year.

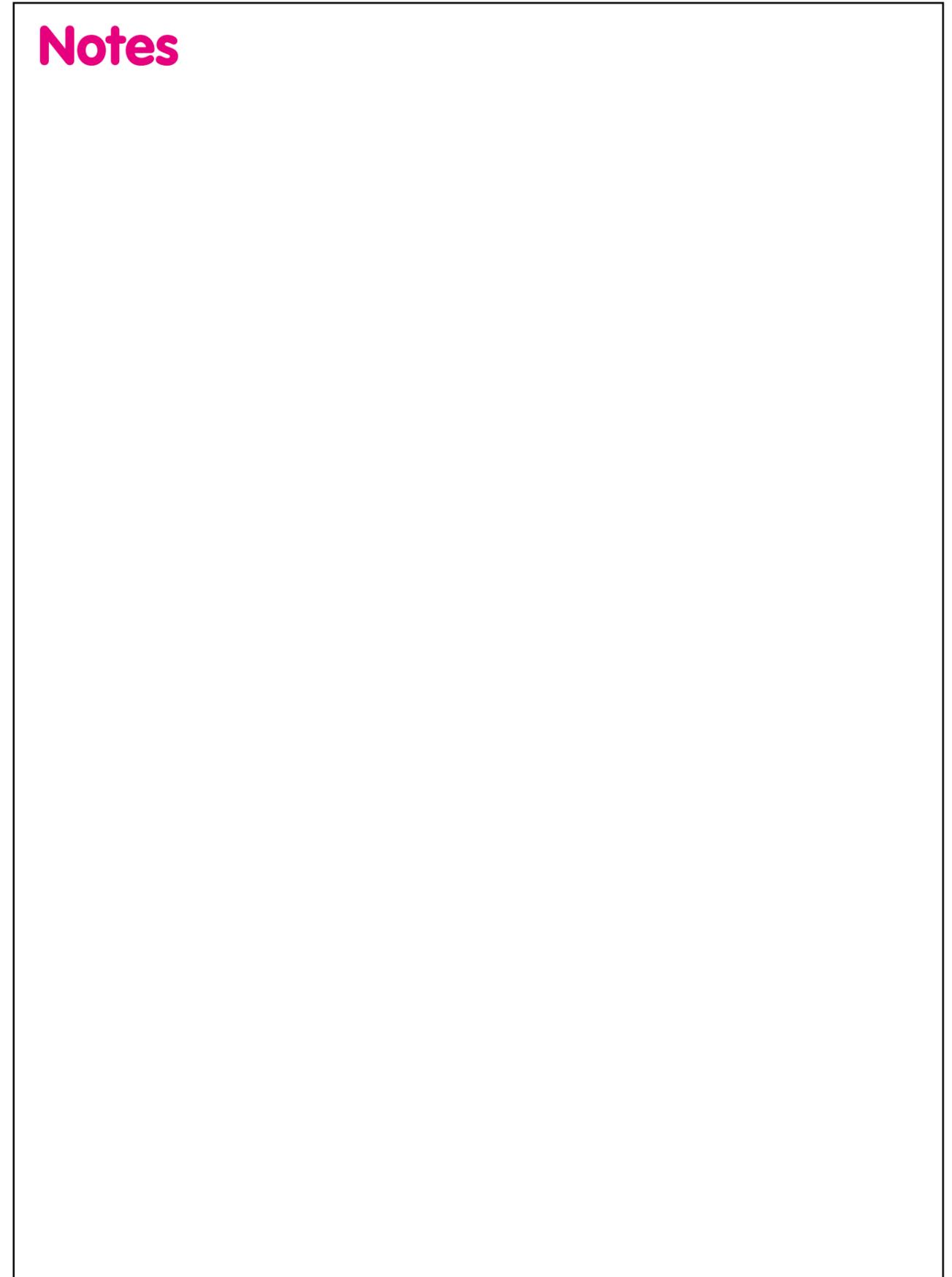
The quality of supervision provided by the supervising social worker will be assessed by a practice observation of each team member once per year by their team manager.

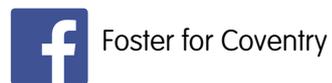
In the absence of their named supervising social worker, the foster carer will have access to support from a duty worker from the Support Team.

Notes



Notes





Tel: 024 7683 2828 | www.coventry.gov.uk/fostering