

THE FOSTER CARERS' CHARTER

Foreword

I am delighted to have been invited to write the foreword to the re-launched Ealing Foster Carers' Charter. Over the years, I have worked with many foster carers, all of whom have made such an enormous difference to the lives of Ealing's children and young people.

It is essential that we fully appreciate the commitment and important contribution made by our foster carers, who provide excellent care and support for Ealing's looked after children and young people. High quality foster care helps provide safety, stability and security for children and enables children and young people who have had a difficult start in life to have a second chance to grow up in a family environment. Our shared aim is to make sure that all of our looked after children receive the best possible care so that they are well supported to make the most of the opportunities available to them, now and in the future.

The Ealing Foster Carers' Charter is part of a commitment to work together in partnership between the local authority and foster carers. Foster carers will be included in the arrangements for looked after children and fully engaged, supported and consulted at every stage of the child's journey. The Charter will be used as a basis to unite Ealing staff and foster carers to work together in the teams around the child, ensuring that the best interests of children and young people are at the top of everyone's agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Judith Finlay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'F'.

The Child's Local Authority - Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Children, Adults and Public Health

Children come first

- Children in foster care deserve to be part of a caring, nurturing, safe family home that will guide, protect and share family experiences.
- Our carers will be able to make everyday decisions as they would for their own child and without the child feeling they 'stand out' as a looked after child.
- Children can expect to be placed with a family who will meet their needs and nurture and support their culture and identity.
- Children must be given every opportunity and support, to develop their own identities and aspirations to fulfil their potential. Above all, they should be listened to.

Ealing Children's Services

- Values the importance of the child's relationship with their foster family as one that can make the biggest difference in the child's life and which can endure into adulthood.
- Listens to and involves foster carers and their foster children in decision making and planning, and provide foster carers and their foster children with timely and relevant information about each other.
- In making placements, be clear about the continuing care and support that there will be for the child, including their transition into adulthood. Be sensitive to the needs of the foster carer and the child when making and ending placements and put into place a contingency plan, should the placement not work. The views of the young person and carer should be considered, as these are individual to each person.
- Treats foster carers with openness, fairness and respect as a core member of the team around the child, and supports them in making reasonable and appropriate decisions on behalf of their foster child.
- Ensures that foster carers have the support services, development and training plan that they need, in order to provide their foster child with the best possible care. Foster carers' training needs will be reviewed annually in consultation with their supervising social worker.
- Ensure foster carers are recompensed on time and given clear information about any support, allowances, fees and holidays that they will receive, including in cases of dispute with the service or during gaps in placements.
- We believe that an honest two-way dialogue is the key to a good relationship. To achieve this, we will arrange for two joint visits per year between the child's social worker and the supervising social worker.
- Supervising social workers and the foster carer will ensure that young people are notified of their allowances.
- Young people will be provided with details of independent advocacy providers in the event that they would like independent advice or additional support.

Foster Carers must

- Be positive role models and provide opportunities and life experiences for the foster child and treat the foster child as they would their own children.
- Be a strong advocate in encouraging all aspects of the child's development and co-operate fully as part of a team with other key professionals in the child's life.

- Actively promote the educational attainment, the physical health emotional health and well-being of the child.
- Support their foster child and do all they can to sustain the placement. Take part in learning and development, use existing and skills acquired through training, to make a positive impact and enable the child to reach his or her potential.
- Provide and cultivate an environment of dignity, respect and consideration. Support their foster child to help them to counter any bullying and discrimination, particularly as a result of their care status.
- Support and promote appropriate links with the child's family and their history. Maintain records of their life with the foster family and ensure that Ealing's Confidentiality Policy is adhered to.
- Foster carers must take the opportunity to feed back on their experiences through a two way dialogue with their supervising social worker

In signing this charter the Fostering Service, the child's Local Authority and the Foster Carer agree to reflect the spirit and intentions of the charter in their actions.



The Child's Local Authority - Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Children, Adults and Public Health



Fostering and Adoption – Carolyn Fair, Interim Director, Children and Families

Foster Carer/s
