



*Quality. Integrity. Respect.*

## **Foster Carer's Charter 2017**

As a Fostering Service, AFA's role is to provide a consistently high standard of foster care for looked after children and young people; to enable them to feel valued and supported to develop as individuals. To achieve this, we aim to recruit, approve and train a community of Foster Carers who we will supervise and support to build their skills, knowledge and practice.

The children and young people we look after are at the centre of our fostering service, but AFA could not achieve the aims and objectives of the agency without our valued group of Foster Carers. The Foster Carer's role is to provide a stable and nurturing family environment, providing children and young people with the opportunity to explore and reach their full potential.



## **What Foster Carers can expect from AFA:**

### **1. Working in partnership**

We recognise that Foster Carers have the skills and expertise to make a difference to the lives of children and young people.

#### **We will:**

- Value your skills and knowledge and work with you as fellow professionals
- Acknowledge that, through caring for the children every day, you have an understanding and insight into their needs, strengths and vulnerabilities
- Support you to attend and contribute to all meetings that affect you and the children you are caring for
- Ensure that AFA conforms with the standards and legislation as set out in fostering regulations and guidance
- Respect your confidentiality
- Work with you in a transparent, fair and respectful way
- Give you information on the AFA complaints procedure and support you to resolve any complaints you may have about the service you receive

### **2. Sharing information**

Carers need full and up to date information to provide the care that the child or young person needs.

#### **We will:**

- Make sure you have the information you need to safely care for the child placed with you
- Provide information as soon as possible, ensuring that it is discussed with you verbally if it is not immediately available in writing
- Ensure there is a placement plan, which is drawn up with you and agreed
- Circulate information on financial matters relating to the children and young people you care for
- Provide information on all matters relating to Foster Carer's finance, such as tax, allowances and any additional entitlements
- Keep you up to date with AFA policies and procedures and ensure all carers have a current edition of the Foster Carer's Handbook

### **3. Clear decision making**

AFA fully support and agree with Foster Carers making everyday decisions for the children and young people they care for.

#### **We will:**

- Ensure, wherever possible, that carers are supported to make decisions so that young people are not treated differently to their peers and feel part of the carer's family
- Be clear as to the decisions you cannot make and ensure that you know who is responsible for making these decisions
- Regularly review the placement plan to ensure that it reflects the current needs of the child and any changes necessary in respect of delegated authority

- Be proactive in identifying and accessing any written information you need from the authority placing the child in your care, for example, the current Care Plan

#### **4. Support**

AFA acknowledges that fostering can be a challenging task, which can have a significant impact on carers and their families.

##### **We will:**

- Respond quickly to requests for additional support, advice and guidance
- Provide regular monthly structured supervision by a qualified member of AFA staff
- Keep in touch by phone, text and email to let you know of any changes, developments or training that is relevant to the child or young person you are looking after
- Carry out an annual review of your approval as a Foster Carer, to highlight your progress and development and identify any areas where we need to provide additional support or training
- Provide a 24 hour, 7 days a week out of hours' service run by qualified staff
- Provide opportunities for you to meet formally and informally with other Foster Carers for support and to share experiences
- Ensure that you are a member of an independent agency who can offer support, for example, Fostering Network

#### **5. Learning and development**

We want to make sure that Foster Carers have access to quality training and learning to ensure they provide the best possible care for the children who live with them.

##### **We will:**

- Provide you and your family with relevant training, on a variety of days and times that enable carers and their family to attend
- Ensure that our trainers are experienced and professional and have the appropriate skills and knowledge to run the courses you need as carers
- Help you broaden your experience through development opportunities such as mentoring or co-presenting pre-and post-approval training to applicants and Foster Carers
- Use a variety of training methods, which include adaptations for those who have specific needs
- Arrange access to online training for those carers who have difficulty attending courses

#### **6. Fair Treatment**

Regardless of the circumstances we will treat carers fairly and sensitively.

##### **We will:**

- Consult with you if there are any changes within AFA that are likely to affect you or your family
- Be open in all our discussions and communications

- Treat you with respect, keep you informed and provide you with practical and emotional support should you be subject to an allegation
- Give you information on the timescale and process to be followed if an allegation is made against you
- Ensure the timescale stated is adhered to, and if there are any delays to inform you at the earliest opportunity
- Make sure you know the arrangements for paying fees and allowances if you are not able to foster whilst an allegation is investigated

## **7. Communication and consultation**

AFA believe that the key to a good relationship is to be open and honest.

### **We will:**

- Encourage regular communication between you, AFA managers and staff and the Directors, in both formal and informal settings
- Consult with you in a meaningful way on matters that affect you
- Recognise that you develop valuable skills and knowledge through fostering, and provide a platform for you to share your experiences with other Foster Carers
- Give you feedback and 'flag up' any new developments or learning that arises from consultation with you

## **What AFA can expect from Foster Carers:**

### **1. Working in partnership**

We will provide a consistently high standard of care to the children and young people placed with us.

#### **We will:**

- Make use of our experience and skills to care for children to the best of our ability
- Provide children with a valuable experience of family life
- Attend all meetings relating to the children and young people who live with us
- Work with the agencies involved with a child, such as school, health and therapeutic environments
- Be open to working with birth families, wider family and those who are significant to the child or young person
- Meet the standards set out in the fostering regulations and guidance and follow AFA policies and procedures
- Respect confidentiality

### **2. Respect the child**

Every young person should be respected as an individual and cared for in a way that meets their individual needs.

#### **We will:**

- Treat each child fairly and with respect
- Respect and promote the child's religious, linguistic and cultural heritage

- Protect and care for each child as we would our own
- Support the child or young person to make decisions about their lives, appropriate to their age and understanding
- Never respond to a child or young person, regardless of their behaviour, with physical or emotionally degrading punishment
- Always look beyond a child's behaviour to try and understand the impact of past experiences on them

### **3. Information**

We believe that to work in partnership we must maintain open and honest dialogue.

#### **We will:**

- Inform our Placement Manager of any changes in the fostering household
- Contact our Placement Manager if we are facing any difficulties, either with the child in placement or in our own lives and family
- Keep clear and accurate records, giving details of the child or young person's day to day activities and progress
- Be in touch with all those in the 'team around the child' if we have any concerns or if they are ill, unable to attend school or if there are any notifiable incidents

### **4. Learning, development and support**

As carers, we want to be helped to attend and access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career. We want to develop our practice so that we can best meet the needs of the children we care for.

#### **We will:**

- Be prepared to develop our skills and build on our knowledge and practice
- Attend all core training within the required timescale
- Take up development opportunities such as mentoring and co-presenting training for applicants and Foster Carers
- Let AFA know if we are unable to attend training and the reason why
- Attend social events and activity days for Foster Carers, their own children and the young people they care for

### **5. Communication and consultation**

We want to be kept informed and for our opinions to be valued.

#### **We will:**

- Actively respond to consultations and discussions designed to enhance our practice
- Attend support groups and use these opportunities to share our experiences of fostering
- Feedback any concerns, comments and compliments to AFA
- Co-operate with external agencies undertaking specific pieces of work or carrying out an inspection of the agency, for example, Ofsted
- Establish good working relationships with other professionals and agencies with whom we come into contact whilst fostering

## **The Foster Carer's Pledge**

Having reflected on the Charter, AFA Foster Carers have drawn up the following pledge to summarise what they want to achieve for the children in their care:

**C**hildren are at the centre of our world. We will always place the child at the centre of the fostering process and aim to act in their best interests at all times.

**H**olistic approach. We aim to take a holistic approach to caring for our children which includes taking account of their religious, linguistic and cultural needs. We support their heritage, health, interests and education.

**I**ntegrity. We will always keep our focus on the child, doing everything we can to overcome challenges that could throw us off course.

**L**istening. We aim to listen with all of our senses. We understand that children cannot always articulate how they are feeling, so we need to help them get across their feelings and opinions. We aim to support our children to feel they can contribute to the discussions and decision making that affects their lives.

**D**evelopment and Training. We are committed to our own personal development as Foster Carers through training and reflection during our supervision. We are open to challenge to ensure that we improve our skills and practice as Foster Carers.

**R**espect. We respect everyone who we come into contact with as Foster Carers, including children, birth families and professionals. We keep an open mind and welcome advice and support which enhances the care that we give to our children. We respect ourselves and our own health and well-being and are aware of when we need to ask for support in order to help us to care for our children.

**E**ducation. We will encourage and support our children to reach their full potential. We will help them to develop independence skills to make life easier for them as they grow older.

**N**urture. We will provide nurturing, consistent and child-centred care of the highest quality that we can.