

Foster Carers' Charter:

Working together to improve outcomes for Merton's Looked After Children

www.merton.gov.uk

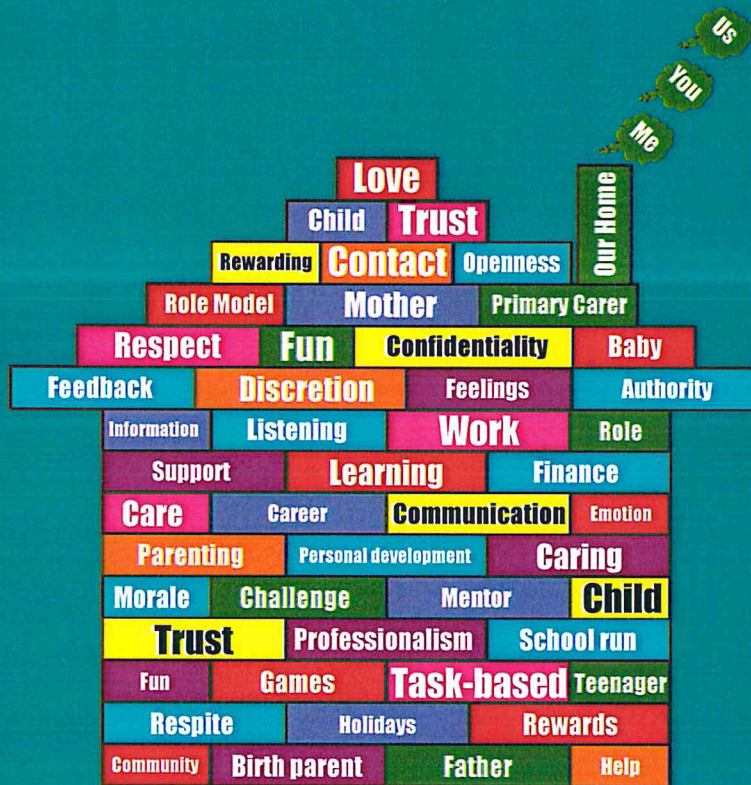
Merton Fostering



Welcome Home



Foster Carers' Charter



www.merton.gov.uk

Merton Fostering



Welcome Home

merton



Introduction

What is the Charter?

The Foster Carers' Charter has been jointly produced by the London Borough of Merton and Merton foster carers. It is a shared agreement, which sets out mutual expectations of each other's roles. The Charter will ensure that Looked After children are cared for in a family environment which is safe, and nurturing, and which provides the opportunity for the child to achieve their full potential.

The Charter recognises the responsibilities of delegated authority which foster carers have under the terms of the 2011 Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. The Charter is a child-focused document, which recognises that children deserve to experience a full family life, with foster carers who can make everyday decisions as they would with their own child, and without the child feeling that they stand out as a Looked After child.

This Charter is an acknowledgment of the vital role that foster carers play in the lives of children in Local Authority care and the importance of maintaining an effective professional partnership. Our working relationship is based on mutual respect and trust. This Charter explains what we can expect from each other.



Cabinet Member for
Children's Services



Chairperson, Merton Foster
Carers' Association



Yvette Stanley
Director of CSF



Roles and Commitment

The Fostering Service's role

The fostering service's aim is to provide excellent foster carers who are valued, supported and encouraged to develop as individuals. This is achieved by recruiting, providing on-going support and training foster carers.

The foster carer's role

Foster carers are at the heart of the fostering service. We are assessed, trained and supported to look after children and young people in a family environment, providing them with stability, care and opportunity to grow and develop to reach their full potential.

Fostering Service's Commitment

What you can expect from us:

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

Foster Carer's Commitment:

What you can expect from us:

1. Working in partnership
2. Respect for the child
3. Information
4. Learning, development and support
5. Communication and consultation.

www.merton.gov.uk

Merton Fostering



Welcome Home



What foster carers can expect from Merton

Working in partnership

We recognise that foster carers have skills and expertise and make the biggest difference to the everyday lives of children in care.

We will:

- Treat foster carers equally, and respect them as members of the professional team
- Respect confidentiality
- Recognise foster carers skills, knowledge and experience
- Include you in all meetings that affect you and the children you care for. If you are unavailable we will ensure that you are updated as soon as possible
- Ensure that our service meets the standards set out in the National Minimum Standards 2011.

www.merton.gov.uk

Merton Fostering



Welcome Home

merton

What foster carers can expect from Merton

Information

We know that information is vital in order for foster carers to provide care that meets a child's need.

We will:

- Provide you with all of the information available in order to care safely for the child
- Provide this information prior to the placement (except when there are emergency placements and it is not feasible to do so. However when we will provide this information as soon as possible.)
- Ensure there is placement plan drawn up in discussion with you and agreed with in advance of placements (except in emergencies where this will be done as soon as possible) This will include details of authority delegated to foster carers
- Provide you with information on all financial matters including tax, allowances and additional entitlement. This to include a detailed pay slip. All payments to be sent out to carers in a timely fashion
- Provide you with full details of all relevant policies and procedures
- Conduct an induction training and provide a welcome pack to all newly approved foster carers.

www.merton.gov.uk

Merton Fostering



Welcome Home



What foster carers can expect from Merton

Clarity about decisions

We recognise that in order for children to live a full life, foster carers must be able to make decisions regarding the children they foster.

We will:

- Ensure that where ever possible, you are able to make everyday decisions that mean that your foster child is not treated differently to their peers and can feel like part of your family
- Provide clarity about decisions you can take by delegating authority to you at the outset of the placement so that everyone understands who is responsible for what.

www.merton.gov.uk

Merton Fostering



Welcome Home



What foster carers can expect from Merton

Support

We recognise that fostering is an isolating and challenging task and appropriate and timely support makes all the difference to the fostering family and to the child in your care.

We will:

- Acknowledge and respond in a timely fashion to request for additional support
- Provide you with monthly supervision and weekly contact if needed
- Give you honest and open feedback on your work with children
- Provide the necessary equipment for the child in your care.
- Pay allowances and expenses in a timely manner
- Support the Merton Foster Carers' Association
- Speak to your children to ensure that their views about fostering is heard.
- Provide you with an out of hours telephone support service
- Promote the attendance of foster carers at the Merton Foster Carers' Association meetings and support groups
- Provide a mentor or "buddy" to all newly approved foster carers

What foster carers can expect from Merton

Learning and development

We believe that foster carers must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career. This will ensure that they have the skills and knowledge they need, and allow them to develop their practice in order that they can improve the lives of the children they care for.

We will:

- Provide you and your family with appropriate and relevant training by trainers who understand the fostering task
- Provide you with other developmental opportunities which make the best use of your skills and expertise, such as mentoring or training to other foster carers

www.merton.gov.uk

Merton Fostering



Welcome Home



What foster carers can expect from Merton

Fair treatment

We recognise that foster carers have a right to be treated fairly, no matter what the circumstances.

We will:

- Consult with you before changing the terms and conditions of your approval
- Ensure openness in all our discussions and communications with you
- Ensure that you are treated with respect, kept informed and provided with emotional support should you be subject to an allegation. This support will be provided by an independent agency
- Provide a framework for dealing with allegations and adhere to agreed time scales
- Ensure you know the arrangements for the payments of allowances in the event that you are not able to foster during investigations.

www.merton.gov.uk

Merton Fostering



Welcome Home

merton



What foster carers can expect from Merton

Communication and consultation

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship.

We will:

- Facilitate regular communication with you, Councillors and the Director of Children Schools and Families
- Ensure that we consult with you in a meaningful way on matters that affect you
- Give you consistent and timely feedback from consultations and all meetings concerning your role as a foster carer, including monthly visits and annual reviews

www.merton.gov.uk

Merton Fostering



Welcome Home

merton



What Merton expects from its foster carers

Working in partnership

We will demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct.

We will:

- Demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability
- Provide children with a positive experience of family life
- Attend meetings about the children and the young people we care for
- Work constructively with all agencies involved with the child
- Have a positive attitude towards working with birth parents, wider family and people significant in the child's life
- Meet the standards set out in the National Minimum Standards 2011 and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and follow departmental procedures
- Respect confidentiality

www.merton.gov.uk

Merton Fostering



Welcome Home



What Merton expects from its foster carers

Respect for the child

Every child and young person should be respected and be supported in meeting their needs and achieving their aspirations and potential.

We will:

- Respect and promote a child's religious, linguistic and cultural heritage.
- Afford the same level of protection and care to a child as we would our own child.
- Ensure the child's expressed wishes and feelings are taken into account, in relation to decisions made regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their understanding
- Act as advocates on behalf of our foster children, to ensure that they have full access to appropriate services and support that meet their needs
- Actively encourage and support the social, educational and emotional development of the child in your care.
- Provide a safe, caring and nurturing family environment
- Give support to develop children's own identity and aspirations, fulfil their potential, and take advantage of opportunities to promote their talents and skills

www.merton.gov.uk

Merton Fostering



Welcome Home



What Merton expects from its foster carers

Information

We believe that open and honest dialogue is key to a good relationship.

We will:

- Inform our supervising social worker about changes in our household
- Inform our supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise for us.

Learning, development and support

We must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career. This will ensure that we have the skills and knowledge we need, and allow us to develop our practice in order that we can help transform the lives of the children we foster.

We will:

- Be prepared to develop our skills to progress through the levels as set out in the Fostering Payment Scheme
- Attend relevant training
- Take up opportunities offered to us
- Let you know if we are unable to attend any training events
- Attend and contribute to support group meetings

www.merton.gov.uk

Merton Fostering



Welcome Home



What Merton expects from its foster carers

Communication and consultation

We believe that an open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship.

We will:

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

Merton Foster Carers' Association

- We expect all foster carers to attend at least 2 forum meetings per year of the Merton Foster Carers' Association
- We expect all foster carers to attend at least 4 support group meetings per year
- We expect foster carers to take children in their care to all activities organised for them.
- We expect foster carers to include their own children in activities organised by the Association so they can meet with other children whose parents foster.

www.merton.gov.uk

Merton Fostering



Welcome Home

