

Fostering
make a living, make a difference

Foster Carers Charter

**Calderdale Council
acknowledges the
excellent care, support
and commitment shown by
Calderdale foster carers.
We value all foster carers
equally (short term, long
term, respite/support carers,
connected persons carers
and breaks away carers).**

The Charter

This Charter marks the shared commitment to demonstrating and recognising the joint responsibilities to the children and young people in our care, and builds on the success and achievements of fostering in Calderdale.

The Government launched the Foster Carers' Charter in March 2011. It was jointly produced with fostering organisations, charities and children in care in recognising the invaluable work of foster carers and their importance in improving a child's life chances. The charter sets out clear principles: the core belief that children come first, how foster carers should be treated, and the pivotal role played by carers in helping children achieve their full potential.

Calderdale has embraced the principles of the National Charter. In this, our local charter, the Council, its partners and the Calderdale Foster Carers Association have agreed to high expectations of each other. Our aspirations demonstrate Calderdale Council's commitment to their foster carers, to having highly skilled carers looking after all children in our care and to the development and expansion of foster care in Calderdale.

Both Calderdale Council and the Calderdale Foster Carers Association recognise that signing this local charter is the start of a process that will require challenge and culture change to meet the high expectations that are set out.

Therefore, both organisations commit to quickly producing and implementing an action plan which will be developed, monitored and reviewed at regular quarterly meetings.

Our shared core values for all children and young people who are looked after within fostering families.

- Children and young people are at the heart of everything we do
- Children and young people experience good and positive care from 'corporate parents', including foster carers
- Children and young people have access to the best possible services and support
- Children and young people achieve the best outcomes for them in line with their aspirations and abilities

We will commit to demonstrating how we uphold and achieve our values through regular monitoring of the implementation plan.

What Foster Carers can expect from Calderdale Council's Fostering Service and its partners:

1. Working in Partnership

We recognise that foster carers have skills and expertise that can have one of the biggest influences on the future life chances of children in care as well as providing their day-to-day care.

Calderdale Council with the support of its partners will:

- Ensure the recruitment, training and retention of high quality foster carers
- Recognise and value your demonstrable skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals, and to ensure your agreed role is central to the child's care plan and their future life chances
- Recognise that the child is an equal part of the foster carers family
- Treat you without discrimination and respect you as an equal colleague within the children's social care workforce
- Negotiate with you, and ensure your inclusion in, all of the appropriate meetings that affect you and the children you care for and provide appropriate documentation prior to meetings for you and the child
- Ensure that the Calderdale MBC Fostering Service and its partners will meet the standards set out in fostering regulations, guidance and other associated children's social care legislation and guidance
- Protect yours and your family's confidentiality and share with you, in advance, when specific information may need to be shared and with whom on a need to know basis
- Meet with you regularly to share information, as appropriate to the child, and seek your views as an equal partner
- Commit to a child-centred plan to normalise behaviours and promote the development of children including clear objectives for the foster carer to enable the educational, social, emotional, health and physical development of the children in their care
- Ensure defined objectives are monitored through supervision and that the supervision meets the expectations of foster carers and other professionals

2. Information

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

Calderdale Council with the support of its partners will:

- Make sure you have all the information you need in order to safely care for the child
- Demonstrate that you are communicated with in ways that are effective.
- Where you are not directly involved, ensure that you are updated in a timely way following events in the child's life including appointments, contact and meetings
- Ensure that there is a Placement Plan drawn up in discussion with you and agreed with you in advance of placements (except in emergencies where this will be done within 10 working days following placement)
- Provide you with information on all financial matters, in relation to being a foster carer including tax, allowances, additional entitlements and change of circumstances
- Provide you with full details of all relevant policies and procedures
- Make sure you receive regular updates on events and issues relevant to the Fostering Service and wider Children's social care
- Ensure that you receive Care Plan updates and the necessary timescales involved

3. Clarity About Decisions

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

Calderdale Council with the support of its partners will:

- Delegate as much authority to you as possible, relevant to the child's situation and legal requirements. This will enable you to make everyday decisions, meaning that your fostered child is not treated differently to their peers and can feel part of your family
- Agree a comprehensive "who decides what" list using the 'Delegated Authority Decision Support Tool' to ensure that you have a clear agreement, included in the Placement Plan and Placement Information Record, on the decisions you can make for each child in your care

4. Support

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

Calderdale Council with the support of its partners will:

- Treat you as an equal partner in the team around the child(ren)
- Understand that the child in your care is part of your family
- Actively encourage you to be an 'advocate' for the child
- Work with you to identify, understand and provide the individual support you need through assessment and review
- Provide you with regular 3 monthly supervision as a minimum
- Work with you to identify and provide any additional support that you may need
- Provide you with regular contact by telephone or visits
- Give you a copy of the minutes of supervision that we will both sign and agree
- Give you honest and open recorded feedback
- Listen to your concerns and take appropriate action when needed
- Provide you with out of hours support from suitably qualified workers through the Emergency Duty Team
- Provide you with access, at any time, to relevant support in the event of an allegation being made against you or your family
- Buddy up new foster carers with experienced foster carers
- Provide agreed support to the birth children of foster carers as needed to enrich the fostering experience
- Provide equitable access to respite / support care to which foster carers are entitled in line with agreed policies and procedures
- Negotiate any support you may need to enable you to participate in any relevant meetings in which your attendance is required in line with statutory requirements and as a member of the professional team around the child
- Pay you allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner
- Pay allowances that reflect agreed National Fostering rates
- Ensure that you and your family are members of Calderdale Foster Carers Association, which is paid for by the fostering service.
- Support you in accessing training that meets your needs in fostering a child(ren)



5. Learning and Development

We believe that you as foster carers must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout your fostering career. This will ensure you have the skills and knowledge you need to develop your practice so you can help transform the lives of the children you care for.

Calderdale Council with the support of its partners will:

- Provide you with the support you need to achieve the Training Development Standards
- Make sure you have a Personal Professional Development Plan appropriate to your circumstances outlining your training and development needs
- Provide you and your family with appropriate and relevant training by trainers who understand the fostering task
- Provide you and your family with training in both core and advanced skills (based on the DfE framework) at levels appropriate to your needs, learning style and aptitude
- Support and enable you to build your training and development into recognised qualifications
- Provide training at suitable times to being a carer along with the support you need to attend, including childcare and transport
- Provide you with access to relevant Online Learning
- Provide you with other development opportunities which make the best use of your skills and expertise, such as mentoring or providing training or support

6. Fair Treatment

We want to make sure that you are treated fairly and with respect.

Calderdale Council with the support of its partners will:

- Follow Calderdale Council's equality and diversity policy
- Treat you as a professional and we will be objective in our discussion and practice
- Ensure professional transparency and recording in all of our discussions and communications with you
- Ensure that you are treated with respect and listened to as an equal part of the team around the child
- Provide you with information on Calderdale's framework for dealing with allegations
- Ensure that you know the arrangements for the payment of fees and allowances in the event that you are not able to foster while the subject of an allegation
- Keep you informed and provided with independent support should you be subject to an allegation and adhere to our agreed timescale

7. Communication and Consultation

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

Calderdale Council with the support of its partners will:

- Facilitate regular communication between you, Senior Officers of the council and Elected Members
- Ensure that we consult with you and the children in your care on matters that affect you and give you timely feedback
- Once permission is given by individual foster carers, ensure that the Calderdale Foster Carers' Association is updated to any changes in registration or addresses of Calderdale council's foster carers and the Association is able to communicate with foster carers
- Ensure Senior Managers from Children's Social Care have, as a minimum, two meetings per year with Calderdale Foster Carers' Association enabling it to communicate regularly about the Fostering Service on behalf of Carers

What Calderdale Council Fostering Service can expect from Foster Carers:

1. Working in Partnership

We will demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct.

We as Calderdale Foster Carers will:

Calderdale Council with the support of its partners will:

- Include children as part of our family using the Delegated Authority Support Tool as a basis for decision making
- Use our knowledge, expertise and skills to the best of our ability and agree to meet agreed standards with regard to the educational, social, emotional, health, and physical development of children in our care
- Attend meetings about the children and young people we care for and request appropriate information before meeting if it is not provided. Discuss information with young people before meetings giving them a chance to participate and for us to have input as to whether that is appropriate
- Work, in full partnership, with the team around the child using a person-centred approach , acknowledging our expertise and knowledge of the child

Working in Partnership continued

- Work with birth parents, wider family and people significant in a child's life from a child-centred perspective regarding contact arrangements etc. as per the child's care plan
- Meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance and follow departmental policies and procedures ensuring that we are fully acquainted with them, have a handbook and a copy of Calderdale policies and procedures and refer to them when necessary in supervision and attend any relevant training
- Ensure that all relevant daily, weekly and monthly logs and paperwork are completed, submitted and retained
- Ensure we are fully conversant with the definition of confidentiality in the Fostering service and will promote it with vigilance and consistency within our organization
- Provide positive and effective role models for the child
- Accept that where children and young people still have uncertain futures, that birth parents may still have a right to play a significant role in the lives of their children

2. Respect for the Child

Every child and young person should be respected as an individual. They should be supported in meeting their needs, achieving their aspirations and reaching their potential.

We as Calderdale Foster Carers will:

- Respect the child's right to be an equal part of our family
- Respect and promote a child's individuality and diversity including religious, linguistic and cultural heritage
- Provide a safe and secure environment for the child as we would our own child
- Ensure the child has the right to make decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age and understanding
- Advocate for children in our care when necessary or request an independent advocate from the approved service commissioned by Calderdale Council



3. Support for the Child

We have the highest expectations and ambitions for all children in our care and will provide them with the support to achieve their aspirations as part of our family.

We as Calderdale Foster Carers will:

- Include the child as an equal part of our family and family life
- Actively support the child to engage and reach their full potential at school
- We agree within the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) to actively engage with the child's school, maintaining ongoing dialogue with teachers and other relevant staff and attend parent evenings.
- Support and encourage the child in their aspirations.
- Show the child that we have high aspirations and achievable expectations and believe they can and will succeed
- Support children as they grow to gain life experiences, resilience and to become independent
- Provide support and advice to the children we care for
- Help children to make and maintain friends and other positive relationship choices
- Show the child how to have a healthy lifestyle with a good diet
- Actively play with and support the physical wellbeing of the child in our care
- Enable young people in our care to develop the skills for independent living such as managing their finances and running a home
- Prepare for, attend and contribute to any paperwork relevant to a child at meetings and other significant events

4. Information

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

We as Calderdale Foster Carers will:

- Inform the Fostering Service about changes in our household as soon as plans are known or no later than 1 working day afterwards
- Inform the Fostering Service about any difficulties that arise for us
- Inform the Fostering Service / Child's Social Worker / Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team immediately about any safeguarding concerns and incidents of bullying
- Inform the Fostering Service / Child's Social Worker / Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team / Police about episodes of missing or unauthorized absence in accordance with Calderdale policies and procedures

5. Learning, Development and Support

We must be enabled to access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career. This will ensure 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 as Calderdale Foster Carers will:

- Complete the Training Development Standards workbook within the required timescales
- Develop our skills throughout our fostering career
- Attend relevant training and develop our own life-long learning
- Use our skills and experience, from both fostering and our other professional backgrounds, as agreed with the fostering service to support, mentor and train foster carers and other professionals
- Attend and contribute to support groups and events

6. Communication and Consultation

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

We as Calderdale Foster Carers and the Calderdale Foster Carers Association will:

- Take an active role in local consultations and discussion and expect to be on all appropriate mailing lists and be informed of all relevant meetings and take up places on strategic planning groups in order to inform the development of the service
- Meet with Elected Members, Senior Managers and other professionals during consultation and support events
- Have regular three monthly meetings with senior staff and other professionals to review the Action Plan and take action where needed
- Evaluate and report to the CFCA committee on issues arising from the Action Plan including progress and areas for further or continuous improvement
- Discuss in committee meetings issues to be presented at support group meetings including evaluating our own practice
- Inform all Calderdale foster carers of matters arising from meetings with senior staff and committee meetings
- Maintain an up to date data base of addresses for foster carers sharing information with fostering service and vice versa

Communication and Consultation continued

- Canvass opinion from a wide a range of foster carers and have a vibrant and effective committee, connected to the members and fully supporting their roles and responsibilities
- Encourage children and young people to have a voice, acting as their advocate and to explore ways of ensuring a person-centred approach is enshrined in all practices in Calderdale
- Encourage children to attend local consultation groups with us, showing them that they should be part of the decision making process and thereby empowering them and helping them to understand their role as a citizen with rights and responsibilities
- Attend and participate in the six-weekly meetings arranged by Foster Care Manager contributing to meetings and requesting speakers and topics for discussion

Calderdale Foster Care Association

The object of Calderdale Foster Care Association is to promote the role of fostering in Calderdale and to provide for the needs of foster carers and the children in their care. Specifically, this will include:

- To provide advice and support to all foster carers in Calderdale.
- To organise social events and activities for the benefit of foster carers and their families.
- To organise social events and activites for the benefit of children in foster care.
- To promote good practice in foster care and support training and development.
- To liaise with Council Officers and other statutory agencies on all issues affecting foster carers and the children in their care to ensure best practice in fostering and to meet the needs of foster carers and fostered children.

For more information please feel free to contact a member of the committee at cfcaenquiries@hotmail.co.uk

Signatures:



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Megan Swift
Lead Member for Children's Services



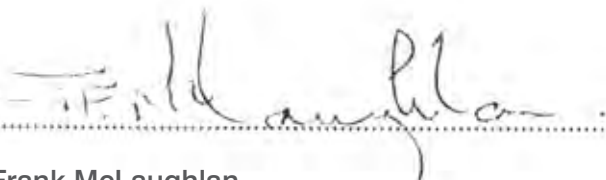
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Stuart Smith
Director for Children & Young People's Services



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Gary Pickles
Fostering Team Manager



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Frank McLaughlan
Chair of Calderdale Foster Carers' Association

Dated 03/05/2013.....

