

Corporate Parenting Board

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 30 January 2020

Report of the Head of Fostering and Adoption, Residential, and YOT

Electoral Division affected: (All Divisions);
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Lancashire County Council's Foster Carers' Charter (Appendix 'A' Refers)

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Executive Summary

Lancashire County Council's Foster Carers' Charter (Appendix 'A') represents the commitment of the Local Authority in its role as a Corporate Parent. The document sets out the roles and responsibilities of Lancashire County Council, the Fostering Service and the foster carers themselves.

Recommendation

Board Members are invited to review Lancashire County Council's Foster Carers' Charter (Appendix 'A'), and ask any questions that arise when the document is discussed at the meeting.

Background and Advice

The Foster Carers' Charter was introduced by the government in 2011 with the following principles;

Children come first:

- Children in foster care deserve to experience as full a family life as possible as part of a loving foster family with carers who can make everyday decisions as they would their own child and without the child feeling that they 'stand out' as a looked after child.
- Children must be given every support to develop their own identities and aspirations, fulfil their potential, and take advantage of all opportunities to promote their talents and skills. Above all, they should be listened to.

Local authorities and fostering services must:

- Recognise in practice the importance of the child's relationship with his or her foster family as one that can make the biggest difference in the child's life and which can endure into adulthood.
- Listen to, involve foster carers and their foster children in decision-making and planning, and provide foster carers and their foster children with full information about each other.
- In making placements be clear about the continuing care or support there will be (including for the child into adulthood), be sensitive to the needs of the foster carer and the child in making and ending placements and have contingency plans should the placement not work.
- Treat foster carers with openness, fairness and respect as a core member of the team around the child and support them in making reasonable and appropriate decisions on behalf of their foster child.
- Ensure that foster carers have the support services and development opportunities they need in order to provide their foster child with the best possible care. That includes liaising with local foster carers groups and seeking to respond to problems and disseminate best practice.
- Make sure foster carers are recompensed on time and are given clear information about any support, allowances, fees, and holidays they will receive including in cases of dispute with the service or during gaps in placements.

Foster carers must:

- Provide positive adult role models, treat the foster child as they would their own child, and be a "pushy parent" in advocating for all aspects of the child's development, including educational attainment and physical and emotional health and wellbeing and co-operate fully as part of a team with other key professionals in the child's life.
- Support their foster child and do all they can to make the placement work. Take part in learning and development, use skills and approaches that make a positive impact and enable the child to reach his or her potential. Support their foster child to help them to counter possible bullying and discrimination as a result of their care status.

Lancashire County Council's first Foster Care Charter was developed in 2011 and has been updated periodically since. Attached is the latest updated version for the Corporate Parenting Boards information and comment.