



## Foster Carer Charter

Tree House Care acknowledges the excellent care, support and commitment shown by Tree House Care Foster Carers. This charter demonstrates and recognises the joint responsibilities to the children and young people in our care, and builds on the success and achievements of fostering at Tree House Care.

The Government launched the Foster Carer Charter in March 2011. It was jointly produced with fostering organisations, charities and children in care. Recognising the invaluable work of foster carers, it sets out clear principles. These are based on: the core belief that children come first, how foster carers should be treated, and the pivotal role played by carers in helping children achieve to their full potential.

Tree House Care has embraced the principles of the Charter and through consultation and involvement of children, young people and foster carers we have developed our own '***Tree House Care Foster Carer Charter***'.

This Charter builds on the existing solid foundations and ongoing commitment by Tree House Care to its Foster Carers. This is through:

- day-to-day support, events and activities for foster families
- listening to both carers and children
- placing a high value on the contribution of carers in all areas
- having high aspirations for all children in our care
- further development and expansion of foster care at Tree House Care.

# What Foster Carers can expect from Tree House Care

## 1 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 as Tree House Care will endeavour to:

- Recognise and value your skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals
- Treat you without discrimination and respect you as a colleague
- Include you in all meetings that affect you and the children you care for, unless this is not appropriate
- Ensure that the Tree House Care will meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance
- Respect you and your family's confidentiality
- Meet with you regularly to share information and seek your views
- Ensure transparency between all involved in the team around the child
- When situations do not go to plan, we will support you (as appropriate), and provide you with advice and guidance, including a peer mentor if required

## 2 Information

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

We as Tree House Care will endeavour to:

- Make sure you have all the information you need in order to safely care for the child
- Make sure that you are communicated with efficiently
- Ensure that you are updated 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 as soon as possible)
- Provide you with information on all financial matters including tax, allowances and additional entitlements
- Provide you with full details of all relevant policies and procedures
- Make sure you receive regular updates on events and issues relevant to the Tree House Care including the weekly Newsletter

### 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.

We as Tree House Care will endeavour to:

- Ensure that, wherever possible, you are able to make everyday decisions, meaning that your fostered child is not treated differently to their peers and can feel part of your family
- Ensure that you have a clear agreement, included in the Placement Plan, on the decisions you can make for each child in your care
- Provide clarity about any decision you cannot make at the outset so that everyone understands who is responsible for what

### 4 Support

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

We as Tree House Care will endeavour to:

- Provide and ensure you have access to the support you need
- Provide you with regular supervision and telephone contact
- Give you honest and open feedback
- Listen to your concerns and take action when needed
- Provide you with out of hours support from suitably qualified workers
- Where appropriate facilitate a consultation with Chrysalis, a therapeutic service working in partnership with Tree House Care
- Pay you allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner
- Provide contact details for other carers where this has been agreed
- Support carers in making applications for additional allowances they may be entitled to
- Provide an annual calendar of events including children's parties, health information days, creative workshops and exhibitions

## **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.

We as Tree House Care will endeavour to:

- Provide you with the support you need to achieve the Seven Training, Support and Development Standards
- Make sure you have a Personal Professional Development Plan outlining your training and development needs
- Provide you and your family with appropriate and relevant training by trainers who understand the fostering task
- Provide training at times to meet your needs with the support you need to attend
- Signpost you to online training (if appropriate)
- Provide you with other development opportunities which make the best use of your skills and expertise, such as mentoring or providing training or support
- Acknowledge carers' requests for additional training and help them access any external training as appropriate

## **6 Fair treatment**

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

We as Tree House Care will endeavour to:

- Ensure openness in all of our discussions and communications with you
- Ensure that you are treated with respect and listened to
- Provide you with information on Tree House Care'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.

We as Tree House Care will:

- Facilitate regular communication between you and Senior Management, including the Board of Directors
- Ensure that we consult with you in a meaningful way on matters that affect you and give you timely feedback
- Ensure you are invited to Tree House Care's Information Meetings
- Ensure that Tree House Care Foster Carer Support Groups are held regularly with staff members present to provide a two way discussion process
- Use circulars to provide update information on Tree House Care policies and procedures

# What Tree House Care can expect from Its Foster Carers

## 1 Working in partnership

We will demonstrate a high level of care and conduct.

We as Tree House Care Foster Carers will:

- Demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability
- Provide children with an experience of family life
- Attend meetings about the children and young people we care for
- Work with other professionals involved with the child to support their educational, physical and emotional health
- Meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance and follow Tree House policies and procedures
- Respect confidentiality

## 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 Tree House Care Foster Carers will:

- Respect and promote a child's religious, linguistic, and cultural heritage
- Provide the same level of protection and care to a child as we would our own children
- Include the child, where appropriate, in making decisions regarding their own lives
- Be aware of the high level of protection and care children placed with us need, and keep them as safe as we are able, taking advice from Tree House Care as required

### 3 Support for the Child

We should have high expectations and ambitions for the children in our care and provide them with the support to meet their aspirations.

We as Tree House Care Foster Carers will:

- Support the child/young person to achieve and maintain good health
- Support and encourage the child/young person to do well in their education placement
- Support the child/young person in their aspirations
- Encourage and enable children and young people to form positive relationships with their peers
- Show the child/young person we have high expectations and believe they can succeed
- Support children and young people as they grow to gain life experiences and become independent by passing on our own life skills i.e. communication, decision making, cooking, money management etc.
- Provide support and advice to, and advocate for, the children and young people in our care
- Provide opportunities for a range of out of school activities for all children in our care
- Support the child/young person to help them counter possible bullying

### 4 Information

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

We as Tree House Care Foster Carers will:

- Inform Tree House Care about any changes within our household
- Inform Tree House Care about any difficulties that arise for us
- Inform Tree House Care immediately about any serious issues or accidents that happen to, or affect any child or young person in our care
- Keep up-to-date diaries about the children you have in placement
- Complete all paperwork in a timely and detailed manner

## **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 Tree House Care Foster Carers will:

- Be prepared to develop our skills throughout our fostering career and use these skills in caring for children and young people to make a positive impact thus enabling the child/young person to reach their potential
- Attend core and any other training courses as required
- Take up opportunities offered to us
- Let Tree House Care know if you are unable to attend meetings and training
- Attend and contribute to support groups

## **6 Communication and Consultation**

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

We as Tree House Care Foster Carers will:

- Be prepared to attend and contribute to the meetings, such as the consultation group and support groups to discuss issues in relation to Tree House Care in order to promote dialogue and good working relationships
- Respond to consultation discussions/questionnaires by the agreed date in order to maintain and develop the service Tree House Care delivers

## **• 7 Support for Other Carers and Potential Carers**

- Provide advice and support to other carers in times of crisis
- Be prepared to act as mentors for new carers
- Provide Tree House Care with details about additional information and concessions (such as Max Activity Cards) carers are entitled to so that this information can be shared with all carers

# What Children/Young People in Foster Care can expect from Tree House Care and Tree House Care Foster Carers

The following is from consultation undertaken with children in care placed with Tree House Care Foster Carers

We as children in foster care placed with Tree House Care Foster Carers expect:

- To feel valued, respected, and encouraged (for example, at school) so that we can achieve our ambitions
- To be listened to, and someone to advocate on our behalf, respects our views, and take account of our wishes and feelings, especially when decisions are being made
- Caring, loving, warm adult to take care of the child in their care
- To support us when we are having difficulties and when we're not
- Honesty
- To celebrate our achievements and praise us
- To promote our identity, our culture, gender, religion, and background
- To attend meetings with us, like our reviews, and medical assessments
- For social workers to be on time to meetings, and let us know if you need to cancel
- The foster carers to help us attend contact with our birth families and significant others (where appropriate)
- We want a foster carer who is happy, enjoys spending time with us.
- For social workers to want to spend time with us, and greet us with a smile
- To be interested in and give us the opportunity to do different activities, including age appropriate games and clubs, and provide us equipment and toys to play with, then praise us when we have done well
- To keep us safe in the home and outside, including online
- To look nice, provide nice clothes, and age appropriate toys for all children
- To give us healthy and tasty food
- An 'ordinary' family life, and not to feel 'different'