



Mutual Expectations

A Charter for parents and local authority children's services

This Charter¹ aims to promote effective, mutually respectful partnership working between practitioners and families when children are subject to statutory intervention. Such intervention can involve child welfare and family justice, mental health, education and youth justice systems.

This Charter is written for parents,² local authorities and their partner agencies and those working for them.

The Charter has been developed by parents and practitioners, as part of the work of Your Family, Your Voice Alliance: An Alliance of families and professionals working together to transform the system.³ We would like to thank Lankelly Chase for funding this work and all involved for their time, expertise and goodwill in developing this Charter.⁴

The key themes of the Charter

1. Respect and honesty
2. Information sharing
3. Support
4. Participation
5. Communication

¹ The principles of the charter are in accordance with the Code of Ethics of Social Work BASW http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_95243-9.pdf

² The word parents in this charter includes parents, any other people with parental responsibility for the child or who care for him or her. This includes kinship carers.

³ <http://www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/your-family,-your-voice>

⁴ We would particularly like to thank members of FRG's parents' panel and all those practitioners and family members of Your Family, Your Voice for their work in developing this Charter

THEME 1 RESPECT AND HONEST

What we, as parents, can expect from you

To be treated with respect, courtesy and honesty.

To be open to hearing our views.

To be treated fairly.

To have the opportunity to challenge judgements made.

To have our feelings and circumstances understood.

That you will tell us if you are unable to do something that you've said you will do.

To value our time.

To have our culture respected.

Not to be blamed for things that are beyond our control.

What you can expect from us, as parents

That we will work with you to keep our children safe.

To treat you with courtesy, respect and honesty.

To value your time.

To be open to hearing your views.

To tell you if we are unable to do something that we said we would do.

THEME 2 INFORMATION SHARING

What we, as parents, can expect from you

For information to be timely and presented in a way we can understand (in writing or another format).

To give us the information that we need to fully participate in decision making.

To check with us that the information and decisions recorded are accurate and to document our response.

To be given clear reasons for actions and decisions that are taken.

To be informed how any information that we share will be used.

To be informed about how we can access any information you have about us.

To ask for our consent if confidential information about us or our children is to be shared, unless it is to protect a child or adult.

To be notified about planned meetings in good time and be able to fully contribute our views to the meeting.

To explain to us the purpose of any meeting and which agencies will be there.

Whilst we understand that there may be times when you may need us to repeat our story, you recognise that this could be distressing and you keep this to a minimum.

What you can expect from us, as parents

To listen and respond to your views and any concerns you have raised.

To correct inaccuracies in information given.

To provide you with information necessary for you to help us meet our children's needs.

To agree with you how we can best be contacted.

THEME 3 SUPPORT

What we, as parents, can expect from you

To be asked about what support we need, when and for how long.

To offer advice about any available resources that will help to meet our children's needs.

To be able to put forward alternatives, if we feel that the support offered is not suitable.

To be given an explanation when support asked for is not provided.

To be given information about where we can get independent advice.

To be offered the opportunity to take a lead in planning for our child e.g. through a family group conferences or family mediation.

To be offered support to have our voice heard e.g. an advocate and/or an interpreter.

To discuss with us if you intend to change the plan or support arrangements already in place e.g. a change of worker.

To work collaboratively with other professionals and services involved in supporting our children's welfare and improving our situation.

What you can expect from us, as parents

To work with you in our children's interests.

To work with you to identify our children's and family's needs and let you know what is and is not working.

To be open to suggestions for support and promoting our children's welfare.

THEME 4 PARTICIPATION

What we, as parents, can expect from you

To be able to participate in all decisions affecting our children.

To be asked who from our family should be involved in meetings about our children.

To have our knowledge about our family, including our cultural identity, recognised and respected.

To know the key people making decisions about us and our children and that there is a proper handover when workers change.

To discuss our safety and that of our children in order to manage any risks.

To be offered an advocate to help us to have our voice heard, for example, in meetings.

To know ahead of time who will attend meetings and their role.

To have times and venues of meeting that we are invited to, agreed with us beforehand.

To have the opportunity to contribute to the agenda in advance of any meetings about us or our children and receive a copy of it ahead of the meeting.

To be able to say if we disagree with decisions and have the opportunity to offer alternative solutions.

To be able to say if we do not understand and to be offered ways so that we can.

To have the opportunity to give feedback and have our views respected.

To be offered ways to contribute to service developments and policy and practice changes.

What you can expect from us, as parents

To be open to suggestions about who should be involved in meetings.

To say when we don't understand and ask for things to be explained more clearly.

THEME 5 COMMUNICATION

What we, as parents, can expect from you

To know the law that is relevant to our situation and what this means in respect of your powers and duties when you work with us.

For there to be transparency in decision making and accountability when you work with us.

To let us know who makes decisions and their role and the likely timeframe for decisions to be made.

To ensure that everyone who is affected by decisions you make, fully understands the reasons and consequences, including what actions they can take.

To have questions answered clearly.

To be asked for our views routinely.

To be told how we can make a complaint or comment on the service.

What you can expect from us, as parents

To work with you and to engage with services.

To use opportunities to provide constructive feedback.