**Equality and Diversity in**

**the Fostering Service**

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# **About This Document**

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| Title | Equality and Diversity |
| Purpose | **Promotion of equal opportunities and promotion of diversity within the fostering service** |
| Updated by | **Julie Macer-Wright in consultation with Antonia Ogandayisi** |
| Approved by | **Fostering Board** |
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# **Version Control**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date Issued | Version | Summary of Changes | Created by |
| March 2016 | **3.0** | **Addition of training expectation that all carers should complete on equality and diversity** | **Rosemarie Cronin** |
| March 2016 | **3.1** | **Updated information to include the Children in Care and Leaving Care Partnership Strategy** | **Rosemarie Cronin** |
| March 2016 | **3.2** | **Included the Essex Care Leavers Charter** | **Rosemarie Cronin** |
| August 2019 | **4.0** | **Updated information from Essex County Council approach to Equality and Diversity** | **Rosemarie Cronin** |
| August 2019 | **4.1** | **Updated training courses for foster carers** | **Rosemarie Cronin** |
| August 2023 | **5.0** | **Added Anti-Racist Strategy and included Supported Lodgings Carers** | **Julie Macer-Wright** |

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# Introduction

* 1. Essex County Council is committed to equality and diversity in both principle and practice. The Fostering Service endorses this commitment in relation to staff, foster carers, supported lodgings carers and the children and young people that are looked after.
  2. Essex County Council celebrate difference and work to ensure no one is disadvantaged when accessing services, employment or public life in Essex. The Equality Act 2010 sets out our duty in this area.
  3. In May 2023, Essex Council Council’s Children and Families function launched it’s first Anti-Racist Practice Strategy. In line with this strategy, the Fostering Service is committed to becoming an anti-racist service and actively pursuing racial inclusion and equity.

# Children and Young People

* 1. In addition to the Essex County Council general policies regarding equality and diversity, the commitment to this is reinforced specifically for the children and young people that we look after.

* 1. The Essex Pledge to children and young people in our care which was written with the help of children and young people also states that “Essex will do its best:
* To do everything we can to make you feel cared about, valued and respected as an individual.
* To make sure you have a social care worker who will spend time with you and get to know you.
* To make sure you have the opportunities to succeed.
* To help you keep in touch with your family, brothers and sisters and friends when you come into care.
* To fully involve you in decision making so your views are listened to and to explain when we decide that you may not like or agree with.
* We will ensure that the Children in Care Council arrangements and the Pledge are promoted with all children and young people and ensure they are supported to attend participation events.
* We will ensure that all those working with children and young people in care work to and know if we have kept to our promises in the Pledge. If this is not the case partners are proactive in challenging practice.
* We will make opportunities to consult with children and young people in care to seek their views on the improvement of services to meet their needs and improve outcomes.
  1. Essex County Council have also signed up to the [Care Leavers Charter](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/264694/Care_leavers__charter.pdf)) a national set of promises made by councils across the country. In it we promise:
* To respect and honour your identity, beliefs, values, relationships and help you to become a valued member of your community.
* To believe in you, recognise your strengths and will support you in your aspirations, even when you have lost faith in yourself.
* To listen to you, respect your point of view and if we disagree, we will explain why.
* To inform you, provide you with information, including information on your legal entitlements; and the information we keep about you will be accurate and we will let you know how you can see it.
* To support you and provide advice, practical, emotional and financial help, help you learn from your mistakes and will not judge you.
* To find you a home and do everything we can to ensure you are happy and feel safe, and secure, when you move to independent living.
* To be a lifelong champion, help you break down barriers and help work with the services you need, including housing, benefits, colleges and universities and employment providers and health services. We will not forget about you and will remain your supporters in whatever way we can, even when our formal relationship with you has ended.

# Foster and Supported Lodgings Carers

* 1. The Fostering service is committed to working within the Essex County Council’s policy and commitment to equality and diversity and would encourage staff, foster carers, supported lodgings carers to adopt anti-racist practice and to challenge any form discrimination.
  2. Foster and Supported Lodgings Carers must sign the relevant Agreement which confirms their commitment to working within an anti-discriminatory framework when they are approved as carers.
  3. Foster carers are expected to evidence equality, inclusion and anti-discriminatory practice as part of the Training, Support and Development (TSD) induction standards.
  4. In addition, primary foster carers are expected to complete training on Equality and Diversity as a priority. Supported Lodgings Carers are recommended to also complete this.

1. **Essex County Council Anti-Racist Practice Strategy,**

**To align with our anti-racist strategy Essex Fostering service will ensure that :**

* 1. We will acknowledge and address Racism. Black, Asian, Dual-Heritage and ethnically diverse children, families, foster carers will be equally valued; treated without partiality and have the right conditions to thrive, reach and achieve their full potential.

4.2 Our leadership teams will acknowledge history and the generational trauma experienced by Black, Asian, Dual-Heritage and ethnically diverse people; take ownership and accountability to ensure that all staff are culturally competent and confident to openly discuss Race, Racism and to fully support Black, Asian, Dual-Heritage and ethnically diverse people, children, families and staff.

We will foster structural and systemic resolutions to racial inequalities by amending or creating key policies and procedures.

We will set and endorse excellent practice standards, facilitating a learning culture to develop and strengthen social work practice in the lives of Black, Asian, Dual-Heritage and ethnically diverse people, children and families. We will create a framework for excellent practice by critically appraising theory and ensuring that our practice tools are inclusive and that every child’s race, culture and ethnicity is explored and is central to planning and support.

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