



## **Behaviour Management**

### **Encouraging and Rewarding Children**

Whilst children and young people bring their own values, beliefs and behaviours to their foster homes, Foster Parents play a key role in influencing those in their care. The culture and attitude within the foster home, as created by the Foster Parents, is crucial and should be one of thoughtful, empathetic and therapeutic care.

Foster Parents are expected to understand, manage and respond to children's behaviour, encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions, helping them to learn how to resolve conflict. A culture which is restrictive, unsupportive, discouraging and punitive is likely to result in instability, hostility and potential disruption of the child's home.

All children looked after need to have clear, fair and consistent boundaries to enable those in their care to feel safe, valued and appropriately rewarded. If children and young people are living in a safe, thoughtful and optimistic environment, they thrive and do well. It makes sense therefore that those who adopt this approach will also experience greater stability and less disruptions.

Foster Parents should at all times endeavour to:

- Listen to and empathise with children and young people, providing them with an environment which helps them to share their thoughts and feelings
- Look beyond a child's presenting behaviour, considering the trauma that they have experienced and how this will have impacted on their communication, relationships and ability to self-regulate
- Respect children and young people's thoughts and feelings and take their wishes into consideration
- Look for things that are going well; a willingness to try something new or a step in the right direction needs to be acknowledged and rewarded.

When caring for children, it is important to remember that behaviour is a form of communication and shows how a child or young person may be feeling. Understanding the reasons for this behaviour can help Foster Parents think how best to avoid a similar situation in the future.

### **Rewards**

Rewards should be used in a creative way, specific to a child's individual needs, capabilities and interests. It is important for Foster Parents to 'step into a child's shoes' and think about what will be seen as praise and encouragement by them. Helping a child or young person understand the reason why they are being praised is important, as is helping them to accept praise, something which they may find difficult.

Children and young people can be rewarded with toys, games, activities or money, but all 'tangible' rewards should be accompanied by the use of 'non tangible' encouragement and support. This

means Foster Parents who demonstrate to children and young people that they have done well. 'Non tangible' rewards include verbal praise, smiling, 'high fives', touching e.g. placing a hand gently on a child's head, or giving a hug if the child is happy for you to do so. These actions can be reinforced by talking to other people within earshot about the child or young person's achievements and progress.

Early on when a child first arrives in the foster home, rewards given may be difficult for them to accept and significant rewards and encouragement may be needed. Those we care for have often experienced criticism and rejection, and it may take time for them to accept praise. As time goes on, the expectations of the child or young person are incrementally increased. Having gained greater self-esteem and self-regulation, the likelihood of succeeding increases and, with a gradual increase in confidence and resilience, they are more likely to try new challenges, coping better when they don't always succeed, or things don't work out. For example:

- Those who have few social or life skills, struggle to self-regulate and those whose self-esteem and confidence is low, may require forms of encouragement and reward which are intensive, frequent or even excessive. This can help remind them that they are worthy, doing well and are appreciated.
- A child or young person who has previously been unable to get up for school may be offered a present or activity for getting up on time for a set number of days. Over time, as they achieve what is expected, such rewards should be reduced, or there should be an expectation of achieving more for the same or similar reward.

However, it should also be borne in mind that some cannot tolerate praise as it undermines the low perception they have of themselves. For these children and young people smaller, more specific rewards are needed.

## **Minimum House Rules**

All Foster Parents should have household rules, setting out their expectations of how things are managed in the home. This should be explained to those looked after, along with the reasons for the rules which they should also know apply to everyone. They should not feel they are being treated differently or with less regard than other members of the household. Ideally children and young people should know the expectations of the household before they arrive, but aside from when things are planned, this is rarely possible. Foster Parents need to introduce the child to these rules in a helpful and supportive way and also need to be patient, prepared to repeat the house rules frequently, bearing in mind that many children and young people will have come from chaotic backgrounds where there are few, if any, rules or where rules have been inconsistent.

House rules, some of which relate to providing safer care, may include the following:

- No smoking
- Keeping bedrooms clean and tidy
- Not going into anyone else's bedroom unless you have knocked and/or been invited in
- Being appropriately dressed at all times
- If you go out, return home at the time you and your Foster Parent have agreed; always be where you say you will be; if you want to change your plans when you are out, ask or tell your Foster Parent first
- Be kind to others in your foster family, including pets
- Homework must be done before play
- If you have been excluded from school, schoolwork must be done at home
- When you use the bathroom or toilet always close the door
- Think about other people's feelings.

## **Consequences**

Before giving consequences, Foster Parents should do all that they can to support and encourage children and young people to do well. If they do not behave as expected, strategies should be found which will encourage them and which are sympathetic to their past experiences. Behaviour as a form of communication shows how a child or young person may be feeling. Understanding the reasons for this behavior can help Foster Parents think how best to avoid a similar situation in the future.

Giving consequences to actions can be very effective but, before imposing them, think carefully. Often those who are 'looked after' have come to view themselves, and are often viewed, as failures. They will have experienced very little other than negativity and unfair and inconsistent consequences.

As far as is possible Foster Parents should try and ignore negative behaviour. This can be challenging, but rather than noticing and responding to misbehaviour, it is always better to watch out for, and reward, good behaviour, or any step in the right direction. For example, it may be more effective to allow a child to have the use of a DVD or TV at bedtime for getting up on time, rather than taking the TV away for getting up late. In this example, the former is discouraging and could cause resentment, but the latter as an encouraging approach could improve self-esteem and the child's relationship with the Foster Parents. Building a sense of trust is vital, so by allowing the child or young person to know their Foster Parents are there to listen, encourage and negotiate is essential when looking for a way forward. There is a need to be creative and think outside the box.

If unacceptable behaviour continues, children and young people should be reminded of what is expected, being given further encouragement to get it right. If misbehaviour persists or is serious, effective use of reprimands can act as a disincentive or firm reminder. If this does not work, consequences may be effective but must be reasonable and the minimum necessary to achieve the objective. Foster Parents need to be optimistic, believing that the consequence will have the desired outcome and eventually bring about acceptable behaviour. If consequences are imposed, Foster Parents should follow the following principles:

- Consequences must be the exception, not the rule. They should be a last resort
- Consequences must not be imposed as an act of revenge or retaliation
- Think before imposing a consequence; don't apply a consequence in the heat of the moment
- Consequences may only be imposed for persistent or serious misbehaviour; where reminders and reprimands have failed or are likely to fail
- Consequences should only be used if there is a reasonable chance they will have the desired effect, preventing further unacceptable behaviour
- Before applying any consequences, make sure the child is aware that their behaviour is unacceptable and, if possible, warn them that consequences will be applied if the unacceptable behaviour continues
- It is the certainty not the severity of the consequences that is important
- Consequences should only last as long as they need to, allowing the child the opportunity to make a fresh start as quickly as possible.

### **Consequences that should not be used**

- Any form of corporal punishment; i.e. any intentional application of force as punishment, including slapping, punching, rough handling and throwing missiles
- Any consequences relating to the consumption or deprivation of food or drink
- Any restrictions on a child's time with their parents, relatives or friends; visits to the child by their parents, relatives or friends; a child's communication with any of the persons listed; or their access to any telephone helpline providing counselling or

advice for children. This does not prevent contact or communication being restricted in exceptional circumstances, where it is necessary to do so to protect the child or others; although this consequence should not be imposed without discussion with the child's Social Worker and AFA staff

A child or young person should not be prevented from contacting:

- Any Social Worker assigned to them by their Responsible Local Authority
- Any Officer of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service appointed to them
- Any person appointed in respect of any requirement of the procedure specified in the Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations 1991
- Any independent visitor; or
- Any person authorised by the Regulatory Authority

Foster Parents must not:

- Make a child wear distinctive or inappropriate clothes
- Use or withhold medication or medical or dental treatment
- Intentionally deprive the child or young person of sleep
- Restrict or prevent a child from using the toilet
- Allocate a task that is beyond the physical ability or capacity of the child
- Seek to modify a child's behaviour through bribery or the use of threats
- Impose a consequence which may humiliate a child or cause them to be ridiculed
- Impose any fine or financial penalty, other than a requirement for the payment of a reasonable sum by way of reparation
- Undertake any intimate physical examination of a child
- Withhold aids/equipment needed by a disabled child
- Impose any consequence which involves a child acting against another child or the consequence of a group of children for the behaviour of an individual child
- Swear at the child or use foul, demeaning or humiliating language towards them

### **Approved Consequences**

The following consequences may, in the right circumstances, be imposed:

- Confiscation or withdrawal of a telephone or mobile phone in order to protect a child or another person from harm, injury or to protect property from being damaged
- Restriction on sending or receiving letters or other correspondence (including the use of electronic or internet correspondence) in order to protect a child or another person from harm, injury or to protect property from being damaged
- Reparation, involving the child doing something to put right the wrong they have done, e.g. repairing damage or returning stolen property
- Restitution, involving the child paying for all or part of damage caused, or the replacement of misappropriated monies or goods. No more than two thirds of a child's pocket money may be taken in these circumstances if the payment is small and withdrawn in a single weekly amount. Larger amounts may be paid in restitution but must be of a fixed amount with a clear start and end period. If the damage is serious or the size of payment particularly large, then this should be discussed with the child's Social Worker
- Preventing a child from participating in leisure activities
- Involving a child in undertaking additional chores
- Imposing early bedtimes, by a limited amount of time or as agreed with the child's Social Worker/AFA staff member
- Removal of equipment, for example the use of a TV or video/DVD player/device
- Loss of privileges, for example the withdrawal of the privilege to stay up late

## **Recording of Consequences**

If a child receives a consequence it must be recorded in the Foster Parent's log and discussed with their Fostering Social Worker either before or at the next supervision. If a child has received a consequence, it is important that they are then allowed to move on and not be constantly reminded of any misbehaviour; it is important that Foster Parents 'let it lie' and don't keep reminding people, family members or others of what has taken place.

## **Searching**

Foster Parents are not permitted to conduct body searches, pat down searches, searches of clothing being worn by the child or searches of their bedrooms. Should Foster Parents suspect that a child is carrying or has concealed an item which may place the child or another person at risk, they should try to obtain the item by co-operation and negotiation, notify AFA and, in an emergency, the Police. If safety or safeguarding concerns are significant, this should be discussed with their Fostering Social Worker and agreement made with them and the Child's Social Worker as to any action that may need to be taken.

## **Serious Incidents and use of Physical Intervention, including Violence towards a Foster Parent**

In the event of any serious incident (e.g. accident, violence or assault, damage to property), Foster Parents should take what action they deem necessary to protect children and themselves from immediate harm or injury. They should notify AFA immediately afterwards and this is particularly important in situations where the child or young person is acting aggressively or violently towards a Foster Parent. It can be helpful in such circumstances, if there are other children in the home, to have everyone leave the room in order to give a child who is very distressed and/or angry space to calm down. It may be that sitting just outside the room and letting the child know you are there if they want to talk provides reassurance.

However, if a child attacks another child or a Foster Parent, and various strategies haven't worked, then consideration has to be given to contacting the Police. The child must know that physical assaults are unacceptable, but equally, Foster Parents must be aware that many children looked after may well have personally experienced violence or witnessed domestic violence. While this doesn't make the behaviour acceptable, that they may have normalised such behaviour because of their past experiences is something to actively consider when trying to deal with aggression.

When the situation has calmed, Foster Parents should support the child to talk about the episode, asking what they could have done to help the child regain control. Many children will say they 'don't know', and although this can be a frustrating response, it is usually a truthful one. There are many ways that memories of abuse can be triggered. It could be a smell, a noise, an adult standing over them, or someone shouting and threatening them; all things that spark a major emotional and physical response. In these cases, Foster Parents can help children and young people recognise their feelings of losing control, providing a safe place within their sight where they can sit until they feel ready to talk. Sometimes physical activity, such as running around the garden or ripping paper can help a child to express their anger in an acceptable way.

Even if there is a risk of serious injury/harm or damage to property, Foster Parents should not use any form of physical intervention except as a last resort to prevent themselves or others from being injured or to prevent serious damage to property. If any form of physical intervention is used, it must be the least intrusive necessary to protect the child, Foster Parent(s) or others and last for the shortest possible period of time. At no time should Foster Parents act unless they are confident of managing the situation safely, without escalation or risking further injury.

If the Foster Parent ever intervenes in this way, they must immediately inform their Fostering Social Worker/on call Social Worker or Manager and they will need to provide a written incident report of what happened which will then be recorded as a monitorable event.

AFA will endeavour to manage the challenges that arise from caring for children and young people without recourse to the Police, who should only be involved in serious circumstances such as:

- An emergency necessitating their immediate involvement to protect the child or others
- Following a discussion with the Fostering Social Worker/On Call Manager.

If any serious incident occurs or the Police are called, the Registered Manager/On Call Manager must be notified without delay. They will notify the relevant Social Worker(s) and arrange for a full report to be made of the incident and any actions taken. The Registered Manager will monitor all such events and may need to make a notification to the Regulatory Authority.

### **Connected Policies or Guidance**

<b>Name of Policy / Guidance</b>	<b>Relevant for</b>
Expectations of Foster Parent's Behaviour	Foster Parents, Fostering Social Workers and Senior staff
Foster Parent's Handbook	Foster Parents and Fostering Social Workers
Safeguarding Policy	All staff and Foster Parents
Management of Allegations Against Staff and Foster Parents	Foster Parents and Fostering Social Workers
Notification of Significant Events	Fostering Social Workers and Senior

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