

Behaviour Management Policy

1. Introduction

This policy sets out Achieving for Children's expectations of you, as foster carers, with regard to managing challenging behaviour of children in your care. Our expectations are based on the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011 and national guidelines that we have in our TriX Procedures Online manual.

We have also included some advice that we worked with children and foster carers on which we hope will be useful in managing challenging behaviour of a child in your care.

1. Behaviour management in the National Minimum Standards
2. Behaviour management and safe caring
3. Restrictive Physical Intervention
4. Some advice

2. Values, principles and standards of care

All of our work as part of the Independent Fostering Agency is underpinned by our values, principles and standards of care. They are listed here and you need to take these into consideration when approaching behaviour management are:

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of your care.
- Children need to have an enjoyable childhood and benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills; leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up in a loving environment that can meet their development needs.
- Every child needs to have her/his wishes and feelings listened to and taken account of.
- Each child needs to be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background in order to develop their identity, self-confidence and self-worth.
- Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own children and to have the opportunity for as full an experience of family life and childhood as possible without unnecessary restrictions.
- It is essential that you receive relevant support services and development opportunities in order to provide the best care for children.

2. Behaviour management in the National Minimum Standards for Fostering

2.1. About the National Minimum Standards

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (NMS) are issued by the Secretary of State under section 23 of the Care Standards Act 2000. They are taken into account by

the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) when they inspect our services.

The NMS are a guide to the basic expectations that parents, children and young people can expect fostering services to do as a minimum. All the standards in the NMS relate to the service we offer. It is our responsibility to support you as children's foster carers to meet the standards.

2.2. National Minimum Standard 3: Promoting positive behaviour and relationships

Standard 3 of the NMS, summarised in Figure 1 below, sets out expectations relating to promoting positive behaviour and relationships for children in foster care. The standard aims to support children to enjoy sound relationships with their foster family, interact positively with others and behave appropriately.

Figure 1: NMS Standard 3

National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services: Standard 3

- 3.1. Foster carers have high expectations of all of the foster children in their household.
- 3.2. Foster carers provide an environment and culture that promotes, models and supports positive behaviour.
- 3.3. Children are able to develop and practice skills to build and maintain positive relationships, be assertive and to resolve conflicts positively.
- 3.4. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour in a way that is appropriate to their age and abilities.
- 3.5. Foster carers respect the child's privacy and confidentiality, in a manner that is consistent with good parenting.
- 3.6. Foster carers have positive strategies for effectively supporting children where they encounter discrimination or bullying wherever this occurs.
- 3.7. Foster carers receive support on how to manage their responses and feelings arising from caring for children, particularly where children display very challenging behaviour, and understand how children's previous experiences can manifest in challenging behaviour.
- 3.8. All foster carers receive training in positive care and control of children, including training in de-escalating problems and disputes. The fostering service has a clear written policy on managing behaviour, which includes supporting positive behaviour, de-escalation of conflicts and discipline. The fostering service's policy is made clear to the responsible authority/placing authority, child and parent/s or carers before the placement begins or, in an emergency placement, at the time of the placement.
- 3.9. Each foster carer is aware of all the necessary information available to the fostering service about a child's circumstances, including any significant recent events, to help the foster carer understand and predict the child's needs and behaviours and support the child within their household. The fostering service follows up with the responsible authority where all such necessary information has not been provided by the authority.
- 3.10. The fostering services' approach to care minimises the need for police involvement to deal with challenging behaviour and avoids criminalising children unnecessarily.

3. Behaviour management and safe caring

3.1. Encouraging and rewarding children

Whilst children bring their own values and behaviours to placements, you play a key role in influencing children.

The culture of the home, generated by you, is crucial. You need to understand, manage and deal with young people's behaviour including encouraging children to take responsibility for their behaviour and help them to learn how to resolve conflict.

A restrictive, unsupportive, discouraging and punishing culture is likely to result in instability, hostility and possibly disruption to the placement. Providing clear, fair boundaries, where children feel safe, encouraged and appropriately rewarded, will give them a greater chance of thriving and doing well. This approach will be written down and reflected in the Safe Caring Agreement for each child based on your family Safe Caring Policy. We believe that this approach will help to reduce the risk of instability or disruption of the placements that you provide.

Some examples of what you can do in line with this approach would be:

1. Listen to and empathise with your foster child, respect their thoughts and feelings and take their wishes into consideration
2. Look for things that are going well, or any step in the right direction, and appropriately reward it
3. Use rewards in a creative and diverse way, specific to children's needs, capabilities and interests. This may mean that children are rewarded with toys, games, activities or monetary rewards. We suggest that all 'tangible' rewards need to be accompanied by use of 'non tangible' encouragement and support, include praising, smiling, touching and hugging children, demonstrating to children that they have done well.
4. Children usually benefit from rewards which may appear to outweigh that which is expected. This is normal; over time rewards can be more relevant as children's self esteem and skills improve. For example:
 - Children who have few social or life skills and whose self esteem and confidence is low may require forms of encouragement and reward which are intensive, frequent or even what you might ordinarily consider excessive in order to help/remind them that they are doing well and appreciated;
 - A child who has previously been unable to get up for school may be offered a small present or activity for getting up on time for a few days;
 - Some children cannot tolerate praise as it undermines the low perception they have of themselves. For these children, you might try smaller more specific praise or find other ways for them to feel good about what they are achieving.

Over time, as children achieve what is needed, the rewards that you give them can be reduced, or you can increase what is expected for them to achieve the same award.

3.2. Minimum house rules

You will be supported to write a Safe Caring policy for their own household - this is usually done when you are doing the assessment before you are approved as a foster carer and then reviewed on a regular basis. This needs to be adapted for each child in placement to include any specific needs and rules. The child needs to contribute to their own Safe Caring Agreement so that they can understand and agree with the reasons for the rules and understand how the rules relate to others in the home. It is important that they do not feel that they are being treated differently to other members of the household. Ideally these expectations will be shared with children before they are placed.

An example of some of the rules:

1. Saying please and thank you
2. Keep own bedroom clean and tidy
3. Be dressed appropriately at all times
4. If you have gone out, return home at the time your carer and you have agreed
5. Always be where you say you will be or let your carer know if something changes
6. If you want to change your plans when you are out ask permission from your carer first
7. If you are feeling angry or have problems talk with your carer who can help you think of ways not to hurt yourself or others.
9. Homework is important - your carer will help you
10. If you have been excluded from school, school work will be done at home
11. When you use the bathroom or toilet always close the door

3.3. Sanctions or consequences

3.3.1. Guidance on the use of sanctions and consequences

Sanctions and consequences can be very effective but, before imposing them, it is important to think carefully about the potential impact. Many children who are in care have low self-esteem and have often experienced, inconsistent and unacceptable parenting.

Before providing sanctions, you need to do all you can to support and encourage children to do well and to demonstrate that there can be positive consequences. If children do not behave in the way that has been discussed and agreed with them, further strategies that continue to encourage and reward are the best way of managing the situation.

Rather than noticing and sanctioning misbehaviour it is always better to notice and reward good behaviour - or any step in the right direction. For example, it may be more effective to allow a child to have use of a video or TV at bedtime for getting up on time; rather than

taking the TV away for getting up late. Same deal, different meaning! The former is discouraging and causes resentment; the latter is encouraging, can improve self-esteem and relationships between children and carers.

If children continue to behave in unacceptable ways, remind them about what is expected and give further encouragement to get it right. If this is not effective then think about how consequences can be put in place so that the child understands what happens if they are not willing to learn and adapt their behaviours.

If you do need to use sanctions, they need to be reasonable and the minimum necessary to achieve the objective. Try to be certain that the sanction you are thinking of has a good chance of having the outcome that you want it to and of increasing the possibility that acceptable behaviour will follow.

The following principles can help if you do need to use sanctions:

1. Sanctions must be the exception, not the rule - a last resort
2. Sanctions must not be imposed as acts of revenge or retaliation
3. Pause to think before imposing the sanctions, it is best to avoid applying sanctions in the heat of the moment
4. Use sanctions carefully - make sure you've given the child a chance by using reminders and reprimands first and only imposing sanctions for persistent or serious misbehaviour where more reminders and reprimands are not likely to get the outcome you want
5. Sanctions must only be used if you believe that there is a reasonable chance they will have the outcome you want, for example that they will make the point and reduce or prevent further unacceptable behaviour
6. Before applying any sanction, make sure the child is aware that his or her behaviour is unacceptable and, if possible, warn him or her that sanctions will be applied if the unacceptable behaviour continues
7. The certainty, not the severity, of sanctions is the most important aspect of deploying sanctions
8. Only have the sanction in place for as long as it needs to be, and give the child the opportunity to make a fresh start as quickly as possible.

3.3.2. Non Approved Sanctions

The following sanctions are 'Non Approved', which means they must never be used with children:

1. Any form of corporal punishment; i.e. any intentional application of force as punishment, including slapping, punching, rough handling and throwing objects
2. Any sanction relating to the deprivation of food or drink in terms of major meals. (Deprivation of snacks is at the discretion of the carer).

3. Any restriction on a child's contact with his or her parents, relatives or friends; visits to the child by his or her parents, relatives or friends; a child's communications with any of the persons listed below*; or his or her access to any telephone helpline providing counselling or advice for children. (NB 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.)
4. Any requirement that a child wear distinctive or inappropriate clothes
5. The use or withholding of medication or medical or dental treatment
6. The intentional deprivation of sleep
7. The modification of a child's behaviour through bribery or the use of threats
8. Any sanction used intentionally or unintentionally which may humiliate a child or could cause them to be ridiculed
9. Any intimate physical examination of a child
10. The withholding of aids/equipment needed by a disabled child
11. Any measure which involves a child in the imposition of any measure against any other child; or the sanction of a group of children for the behaviour of an individual child
12. Swearing at or the use of foul, demeaning or humiliating language or measures.

3.3.3. Approved Sanctions

The following sanctions are 'Approved Sanctions' - which means that you can use them with a child in your care, if it is proportionate to do so and you have agreed this with your supervising social worker and usually, the child's allocated social worker:

1. 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
2. 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
3. Reparation, involving the child doing something to put right the wrong they have done; e.g.: repairing damage or returning stolen property
4. Restitution, involving the child paying for all or part of damage caused or the replacement of misappropriated monies or goods. Please note that 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.
5. Curtailment of leisure activities, involving a child being prevented from participating in some activities
6. Additional chores, involving a child undertaking additional chores over and above those they would normally be expected to do.
7. Early bedtimes, by up to half an hour or as agreed with the child's social worker

8. Removal of equipment, for example the use of a TV or video/DVD player
9. Loss of privileges, for example the withdrawal of the privilege of staying up late
10. Suspension of pocket money for short periods.

3.3.4. Recording of Sanctions

If a child receives a sanction, please record it in your Foster Carer's Daily Log.

3.4. Searching

You are not permitted to conduct body searches, searches of clothing worn by children or of their bedrooms.

If you are worried that a child in your care is carrying or has concealed an item which may place him or her, or another person, at risk try to obtain the item by cooperation or negotiation. If you can't, and please notify the child's social worker, and your supervising social worker or in an emergency, notify the police.

3.5. Serious incidents and use of physical intervention

In the event of any serious incident, this could be an accident, violence or assault, or damage to property, only take actions that you deem necessary to protect the child in your care, yourself and your family from immediate harm or injury. Please notify your supervising social worker and their manager immediately.

If there is a risk of serious injury or harm, please do not use any form of physical intervention except as a last resort to prevent yourself or others from being injured, or to prevent serious damage to property. If any form of physical intervention is used, use the least intrusive intervention possible to protect the child, yourself, or others.

At no time should you act unless you are confident of managing the situation safely, without escalation or further injury.

NMS Standard 3 asks that our "approach to care minimises the need for police involvement to deal with challenging behaviour and avoids criminalising children unnecessarily". Where at all possible, you need to deal with situations without involving of the police. There are two clear circumstances when you will need to involve the police:

- An emergency necessitating their immediate involvement to protect the child or others
- Following discussion with the child's social worker and/or relevant senior manager.

If any serious incident occurs or the police are called, please notify the child's social worker as soon as possible. You will be asked to provide a report about the incident and actions taken. We may also need to notify Ofsted.

4. Physical intervention

The principle is that you do not use physical restraint as a foster carer; it will be very rare for you to need to.

If the need ever does arise then there are strict criteria:

1. Restraint may only be used where there is likely significant injury or serious damage to property;
2. Before any other form of physical intervention is used, all of the following principles must be applied:
 1. For the intervention to be justified you must believe that injury or damage is likely in the predictable future
 2. The intervention must be immediately necessary
 3. The actions or interventions taken must be a last resort
 4. Any intervention used must be the minimum necessary to achieve the objective.

4.4. Locking or bolting of doors

In general, locking doors is acceptable if this is part of the normal routine of your home, for example you can lock office or storage areas to which children are not normally expected to gain access, or doors to hazardous materials.

You can also use mechanisms or modifications to your home which are necessary for security, for example on external exits or windows, so long as this does not restrict children's movements or ability to leave the house if it is safe for them to do so.

If you do want to think about additional mechanisms or modifications in your home, they must be agreed by the manager of the fostering service and set out in the Safe Care Agreement.

4.5. Timeout

Time out involves you restricting the child's involvement in activities for a short period of time so that they can calm down and think about how they are reacting and behaving.

Like any other sanction, this needs to be agreed and understood by the child, if they are older enough and able to make sense of what is being suggested, the child's social worker and your supervising social worker and written in the Safe Caring agreement.

5. Some further advice

We've worked with foster carers and children to put together some do's and don'ts that we hope are useful in managing sometimes challenging behaviour:

5.1. Do's

- Treat children as you would expect to be treated yourself
- Encourage good behaviour rather than disciplining bad behaviour
- Give simple encouragements for good behaviour – for younger children, this could be a gold star or a treat.
- Praise the child when they are not perfect but are obviously trying hard. A foster carer said: 'If the child that you are looking after is on time or ready early for school then praise them. When this happened to one of our foster children who was usually running late in the mornings I gave him extra pocket money for that day.'
- Another said 'When you are modelling good behaviour for a child to copy, make a game of it. Although the child needs to take the message seriously, humour will help everybody involved.'
- Try to be realistic - set goals that the child can reasonably achieve.
- Be clear and consistent about what is acceptable - children will understand your approach much more easily if it is always the same. Make sure that everyone in the family knows what the approach is.
- Talk to the child. If you demand something of a child then the barriers will go up.
- Remove children from dangerous situations. For younger children – if they are having a tantrum or doing something that is a danger to themselves or others, pick them up and remove them from the situation, with a firm 'no'. For older children – try to distract them. When they co-operate, reward them with praise and encouragement.
- If a child is about to harm themselves or others, you may need to stop them. Use as little restraint as possible – enough to calm the situation, no more.

5.2. Don'ts

Don't be afraid to admit you are wrong, or that you are angry. Don't be afraid to compromise and negotiate. But don't simply give in: once you have made the results of a certain behaviour clear, 'surrendering' will give the child the wrong message.

- Don't get into a negative spiral with the child. Re-think your approach if it's not working.'
- Don't prolong arguments with children. Arguing with children can become a habit. Try not to prolong arguments or to make them more important than they really are. State your case and then leave it – move away or change the subject. Choose a calmer time to tell the children what the results will be if they behave in a certain way.

- Don't forget your own family's needs. Find ways of communicating in your family so that everyone can be heard and feels able to express their needs.
- Don't threaten punishments.
- If it's a serious problem, like stealing or violence, don't ignore it. Talk to your Supervising Social Worker about the situation, and don't be afraid to involve the police or other professionals if it becomes necessary.
- Don't forget you're not on your own. You don't have to deal with everything on your own. Talk about any problems with your Supervising Social Worker or the child's Social Worker.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help: every child is different and just because you have coped before, doesn't mean that you can't ask for help when you need it.

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