

## Promoting positive behaviour and relationships

Norfolk Fostering Service has high expectations of all children and young people staff and foster carers to create an environment to promote and support positive behaviour. Norfolk Fostering Service will assist children to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement and constructive responses by their foster carers to inappropriate behaviour.

This policy includes information supporting positive behaviour, de-escalation of conflicts, countering bullying, using restorative approaches. The fostering service shall ensure that children and young people are not physically restrained unless there is no other option and that the restraint is used appropriately and safely.

Many children and young people being looked after by the department will have undergone damaging or traumatic experience prior to being accommodated. Some will have been subject to chaotic life styles, inconsistent parenting and poor supervision, and many will have low levels of self-control. They may have displayed, and may continue to display, challenging behaviour or have difficult emotional issues which are unacceptable to other foster carers, other children in the household, other agencies and the wider community. In some instances they themselves may be overwhelmed by their own lack of self-control.

Some children and young people with additional needs can exhibit extreme changes in behaviour for no obvious reason and the management of this behaviour may be more difficult because of the child's limited ability to communicate.

Helping and supporting such children and young people is an integral part of the caring and therapeutic roles of foster carers.

### 1. Supporting positive behaviour

Norfolk Fostering Service promotes practices that contribute to high quality care, these include respect for the child being looked after; positive reinforcement and reward of good behaviour and the development of self-esteem.

Foster carers will demonstrate explicit, fair, consistent and reasonable rules for conduct and behaviour. Foster carers will have an awareness of relevant histories of the child being looked after and will offer a flexible approach to managing behaviour, taking into account the child's age, competence and ability to recognise and understand danger to themselves, others and property.

Children need to be rewarded for positive behaviour. A major determinate of good behaviour and positive ethos of a home is the quality of the relationships between the foster carer and the child/young person. In the normal circumstances, children should be encouraged to behave well by the frequent expression of approval by foster carers and by the generous use of encouragement.

One of the principal purposes of managing behaviour is to enable the child to develop self control, and establish feelings of worth and self respect.

## 2. Use of consequences (sanction)

Consequences (sanctions) and rewards for behaviour are clear, proportionate, reasonable and fair and are understood by all foster carers and young people. The relationship between young people and foster carers imposing the consequence is also important. Consequences should not be punishments, but strategies designed to help young people learn, develop self-esteem and promote positive behaviours.

Consequences that are negotiated and agreed with the young person are more likely to succeed, therefore using a restorative approach wherever possible young people should be asked what consequences they feel are appropriate to the situation (whether they are the harmed person or the perpetrator).

In all cases, a discussion about the behaviour that led to the consequence should take place and consequences must be fair, proportionate and equitable.

Consequences must be applied in a non-abusive manner. When reprimanded, young people should not be humiliated, oppressed or experience rejection; and foster carers should be calm when applying consequences and even if feeling personal anger, should not shout or look threatening, even through their 'body language'.

## 3. De-escalation methods

Norfolk Fostering Service by supervision will provide advice and support in supervision to all foster carers on de-escalation methods. Where the fostering offer of an individual carer indicates the need for specialist training, this will be provided by Norfolk Steps training. Prevention Strategies, De-escalation Techniques and Handling Aggression is the preferred model for dealing with prevention and management of violence and aggression.

Methods to de-escalate confrontations or potentially violent behaviour are used wherever appropriate to avoid the use of physical restraint.

Foster carers will be supported to manage their responses and feelings arising from difficult situations by their supervising social worker. Foster carers are supported to understand how young people's previous experiences can manifest in challenging behaviour.

## 4. Physical measures of control

The Department realises that issues concerning control, especially the use of restraint, are a subject of great concern to its foster carers. This guidance will not be able to cover every individual situation that may occur.

Foster carers will always need to use their judgement with regards to specific incidents but the following framework is provided both to inform.



Norfolk Fostering Service will provide training on safe holding techniques, (Norfolk Steps) which will be refreshed as required.

Restraint is only used in exceptional circumstances, to prevent injury to any person (including the young person who is being restrained) or to prevent serious damage to the property of any person (including the young person who is being restrained).

Restraint is not used as a punishment, nor to force compliance with instructions where significant harm or serious damage to property are not otherwise likely. Use of restraint is in line with relevant government guidance on restraint and approved approaches to the application of physical intervention and restraint.

The difference between holding and restraint is often a source of vigorous debate and confusion. The Department of Health's guidance states "the main factor separating 'holding' from 'physical restraint' is the manner of intervention and degree of force applied. Physical restraint uses the degree of force necessary to prevent a young person harming himself, others or property. Holding would discourage but in itself would not prevent such action!

Both holding and physical restraint must only be used to prevent a young person from harming themselves, others or causing serious damage to property.

### *Principles underpinning the use of holding and physical restraint*

Wherever practicable, before holding or restraining a young person, foster carers should:

- warn the young people of their intentions;
- ensure other adults are present;
- remove other non-involved young people from the scene;
- have consideration to any known factors that may affect their own or the young person's safety or well being e.g. a young person with a physical disability where restraint would cause harm; and
- ensure their own safety and that of other young people and others.

Despite any episode of holding or restraining foster carers should:

- use only the minimum amount of force required so allowing maximum freedom of movement of the young person consistent with the circumstances;
- avoid vulnerable areas such as head, throat, chest, sexual areas, abdomen or fingers;
- be aware of any sexual expectation or arousal of feelings in the young person, and if there are, consider alternatives;



- foster carers should try to use clothing rather than limbs to effect restraint. If limbs have to be grasped they should be held near a major joint to minimise risk;
- any episode should be for as short a period as possible;
- foster carers should gradually relax the restraint as soon as it is considered safe to allow the young person to regain self control;
- encourage de-escalation through continued communication e.g. telling the young person what to expect and what is expected of him/her.

#### Actions to be taken after the incident:

- as soon as practically possible, the child's social worker and the fostering carer's supervising worker should be informed of the incident;
- if out of hours the foster carer should consider phoning the Fostering Service out of hours support line;
- the foster carer must accurately record the events leading to the restraint, the restraint itself and subsequent action;
- the supervising social worker should arrange an urgent meeting with the foster carer after being informed of any restraint;
- the supervising social worker should inform their manager who will keep a log of all restraints.

#### *Prohibited measures of control*

- use of corporal punishment such as slapping, punching, kicking, rough handling and throwing of missiles. (The boundary between 'horse-play' and rough handling is often blurred, therefore it should be avoided);
- deprivation of food, drink or sleep. The only exception to this is the use of 'snacks' or 'treats' which are not considered to be part of a healthy programme thus ensuring that appropriate nutritional levels are maintained, as a primary responsibility;
- restriction or refusal of visits, or communication unless the visitor is one who the young person needs to be protected from;
- requirement to wear distinctive or inappropriate clothes;
- withholding or use of medication;
- withholding medical or dental treatment;
- locking of a young person or young people in a room or certain sections of the building even when accompanied by a responsible adult or adults;

- imposing of fines other than those imposed by a Court Order;
- intimate physical searches.

Foster carers need to be aware that the use of one or more of the measures on the previous page will result in the allegations and concerns procedure being instigated.

## 5. Countering bullying

Foster carers and young people understand bullying is unacceptable. Foster carers need to understand that their role is to help prevent and counter bullying by any adult or young person living or visiting their home.

Foster carers need to act proactively and intervene positively, engaging with those who bully as well as those who are bullied within their home.

### *Definitions*

#### Intimidation

Intimidating behaviour is the menacing action that causes fear, upset or worry in the hearts and minds of others. Intimidation involves the misuse of strength or power to control or subjugate others.

#### Bullying

The term 'bully' conjures up a child being physically threatened by a larger, stronger child for their own personal gain. This is an overt action, however bullying is also a covert action, involving persistent unwelcome behaviour, constant criticism, taunting, teasing, nit picking, aggression, threats, deception and lies.

#### Racial Harassment

Racial violence, harassment and abuse are closely related to, and sometimes indistinguishable from bullying. Racial harassment can range from ill-considered remarks, which are not intended to be hurtful to deliberate physical attacks causing serious injury. Racist bullying can be identified by the motivation of the bully, the language used, and/or by the fact that the victims are singled out because of the colour of the skin, the way they talk, their ethnic grouping or by their religious or cultural practices. Intentional racial harassment is a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment or fines.

#### Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature from one person to another. It takes many forms, from relatively mild sexual banter to actual physical violence. People may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes sexual harassment but everyone must recognise that what is acceptable to one person may not be acceptable to another.



Norfolk Children's Services accept that despite its best efforts there will be situations in which children and young people will be bullied by others. In these situations, whether the incident is witnessed or reported, prompt protective action will be taken to keep the victim safe and the behaviour of the bully will be challenged and addressed. Where the problems of bullying are persistent, either for the victim or the perpetrator, these will be addressed through the childcare planning process.

All injuries to children and young people of a non-accidental nature, and all incidents or disclosures or allegations of sexual abuse must be reported to the Manager immediately.

The Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) will be consulted when a young person makes an allegation against a professional who works with young people, and fully investigated.

## 6. Providing a suitable physical environment

The child's privacy will be respected and the rules about what is permitted in the child's bedrooms will be made clear to them on arrival to the foster carer's home. If the foster carer needs to search a child's bedroom, they should clearly record the reason why and inform the child's social worker and their supervising social worker of this need, in advance where possible.