



TIME OUT
fostering

valuing individual needs

SECTION EIGHT

STANDARDS AND QUALITY PRACTICE FROM THE NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS

2006

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This section is based on the National Minimum Standards in Foster Care. Time Out Fostering aims to exceed these standards. We will support all our carers to achieve these standards in their care and we would ask that you assist us to meet them by talking with your supervising social worker about ways of improving your care standard.

In each of these sections we will firstly summarise some of the standards with bullet points and then outline some ways that foster carers can achieve or exceed them.

Incidents and Events That Must Be Reported.

The National Minimum Standards also states a number of matters concerning the children placed with them that carers must report to their supervising social worker and the child's Local Authority social worker. These are:

- Death of a child placed with foster carers
- Any changes in living circumstances or other significant changes
- Serious illness or infection
- Outbreak of an infectious disease deemed sufficiently serious by a registered medical practitioner
- Suspected or known involvement of a child in prostitution
- Allegation that a child placed in a foster home has committed a serious offence
- Serious incident relating to a child that necessitates calling the police to the foster carers home
- A child absconding from the foster placement
- Any serious complaint about any carer approved by Time Out Fostering
- Incidents where restraint has been used
- Complaints by a child or young person
- Incidents of bullying

Equal Opportunities and Valuing Diversity

- The ethnicity, religion, culture and language of every child must be understood, valued recorded and addressed; this must be followed through the care plan, fostering agreement and reviews.
- Every child and their family in need of foster care will have their needs recognised and addressed as closely as possible. The areas to be addressed are gender, disability, race, religion, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, age, and sexuality.
- The confidence and self esteem of the child or young person in care will be promoted and valued; foster carers and social workers will work positively together to achieve this.
- Children and young people will be encouraged to discuss discrimination and how it affects them, they will also be given support and education to skill them to deal with these issues.
- Where a child or young person has a disability every effort will be made to support them through specific services or adaptations to the house/transport of the placement. The aim of this will be to promote the best possible outcome for the child/young person.
- Equal access will be offered to each placed child/young person, with respect to his or her age, interests and perceived needs. Each child/young person will be encouraged to continue and expand their interests and hobbies appropriate to their age and abilities.
- Each child/young person will be able to take a part in decisions about their future; this will be in relation to the age and understanding of the child/young person.
- Advocacy and support will be offered to children/young people where necessary to facilitate them to be heard and understood.

Foster carers can help to achieve these by;

- Working with social workers to enhance self-esteem and confidence.
- Praising good behaviour and listening carefully to the child or young person.
- Respecting and maintaining the unique cultural background of each child. Sharing in the child or young person's culture.
- Finding out about religions, cultures and disabilities and looking for links in the local community.
- Being positive about identity issues, which differ from your own, and therefore giving positive messages about the child or young person's identity.
- Making sure your house and food are adapted to meet the needs of the placed child or young person.
- Being open to discussion about discrimination and being aware of the racism inherent in our language.

Protecting from Abuse and Neglect

- Time Out Fostering will protect each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.
- Foster carers will attend training in caring for a child or young person who has suffered abuse, this will cover managing behaviour, recognising signs of abuse, safe caring skills and maintaining the child's self esteem.
- Each foster home will be given guidelines on safe caring at the start or prior to the first placement. These guidelines will be explained and time will be given to understand and incorporate these into foster caring practice.
- Foster carers must never use corporal punishment or any other forms of physical and humiliating treatment of children. Time Out Fostering's policy on behaviour management must be adhered to at all times.
- Children and young people in foster or Support Care are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to bullying.
- Each foster or support carer will be provided with full information wherever possible about the foster child and his/her family to enable the carer to protect the foster child, their own children, other children for whom they have responsibility and themselves.
- The foster carer will be given a copy of the procedure to follow if a foster child is missing from the home.

Foster carers can help to achieve these by;

- Reading the related policies and procedures such as; Absence from Home, Behaviour Management, and Child Protection. You should have a copy of these in this handbook. Please ask for replacements when necessary.
- Using positive reinforcement and negotiation as the normal methods of behaviour management. Other methods should be used with caution and take into account the child or young person's previous experience. All types of behaviour management must be recorded.

No form of corporal punishment should ever be used.

Carers must abide by Time Out Fostering's Behaviour Management Policy.

Adults must be aware of appropriate relationships within the house and the wider community.

Carers must only use physical restraint when the child or young person is likely to hurt themselves or others or do serious damage to property. Any incidents of this kind must be recorded, and their Supervising Social Worker (or director in their absence) must be advised as soon as possible.

Records of any incidents of bullying must be recorded and discussed with the supervising social worker.

The safe caring guidelines will vary at each placement and these will be decided at the start of the placement. All household members should understand and adhere to the guidelines.

All carers must report any suspected abuse immediately to their supervising social worker and follow the guidelines in the Child Protection Procedure.

Children and young people should be enabled to understand and abide by house rules designed for their safety.

Promoting Contact

- The fostering service makes sure that each family or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in his/her care plan and/or foster placement agreement.
- Time Out Fostering will ensure that foster carers understand the importance of contact with friends and family and are trained and supported to provide contact.
- Time Out Fostering will make sure that unless a special court order exists contact will not take place until the child's social worker has carried out a risk assessment and made arrangements for any supervision that is needed.
- Time Out Fostering will support any pre- arranged financial costs relating to contact.
- Contact will take place in line with the children's care plan and fostering agreements.
- The views and wishes of children and young people should be heard and given weight in decisions about contact.
- All carers must record the outcomes of contact meetings and their perceived impact on the child, this information should then be fed back to the child's social worker.
- Carers will consult with their supervising social worker before making any arrangements for contact with a child's friends or family, including overnight stays.

Foster carers can help to achieve these by;

- Listening and consulting the child or young person about contact arrangements.
- Relaying this information to the supervising social worker.
- Keeping up –to –date records of contact meetings
- Listening to the child following meetings and noticing the child's behaviour and recording what they observe.
- Asking their supervising social worker for any kind of assistance with contact issues.

Consulting with Children and Their Parents

- Time Out Fostering ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues which are likely to affect their daily life and future.
- Time Out Fostering will train and support foster carers in understanding the significance of consulting children and young people.
- Time Out fostering will assist and train carers in listening and responding appropriately to the views and wishes of children placed with them.
- Time Out Fostering will ensure that children are regularly listened to and that their views are not taken for granted.
- Children with communication difficulties will be provided with means to make their wishes and feelings known with regard to their care and treatment.
- Time Out Fostering will aim to identify a translator or interpreter where appropriate
- Time Out Fostering will make sure that all children placed with their agency understand how to raise any concerns or complaints and ensure they are protected against reprisals and are responded to quickly.

Foster carers can help to achieve these by;

- Attending training on communicating with children and young people.
- Asking the children and young people placed with them regularly for their views and opinions and taking them into account when making decisions that effect their care and future.
- Ensuring that the child's preferred method of communication is accepted and used by the carers.
- Ensuring children placed are aware of the Time Out Fostering complaints procedure and know how to use it.
- Making time and listening to children placed, on a daily basis.

Promoting health and development

- Time Out Fostering will ensure that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets his/her needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about his/her health.
- Time Out Fostering will ensure that it has up to date information about health provision in the locality of the placements and take this into account when matching children to a foster carer.
- Time Out Fostering will ensure that children will continue to receive any treatment they need; this may include providing support aids or equipment.
- Before the placement, carers should be given all the information possible regarding the health and development needs of the child to be placed. Occasionally this information will be given as soon as possible after the placement has started.
- Time Out Fostering will seek to obtain information about a child's health and development needs from the Local Authority as soon as possible when a placement has been matched to a carer.
- Depending on their age and understanding the placed child will have access to their health records.
- A child's health records will be updated during the placement and will move with them.
- Time Out Fostering will give each carer training on health & hygiene issues and First Aid, with emphasis on health promotion and communicable diseases.
- Time Out Fostering will promote good links with the local health services and will help the carer to secure services for the child when necessary.

Foster carers can help to achieve these by;

- Registering a child with a doctor and dentist.
- Accompanying the child to any health appointments, including dentist and opticians.
- Helping the child to access the health services they need.
- Giving guidance and attention to health issues in the everyday care of the child, including personal hygiene.
- Acting as an advocate on the child's behalf.
- Taking into account the special dietary needs of the child, e.g., religious, allergies or vegetarianism.
- Guiding and educating about healthy eating appropriate to the child's needs and wishes.
- Encouraging children to be positively responsible for their own health and hygiene in an understandable and achievable way and listening to their views on health matters.
- Encouraging children not to take drugs, smoke or abuse alcohol.
- Act as an advocate.
- Seek appropriate medical help when a child is ill or injured.

Promoting Educational Achievement

- Time Out Fostering gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain his/her full potential.
- Time Out Fostering requires foster carers to contribute to the assessment of the child's educational needs and progress for the planning and review process. The fostering service helps the foster carer to contribute to the delivery of any Personal Education Plan.
- The foster carer's role in school contact e.g. Parents evenings, open days, discussions with teachers, in conjunction with the birth family where appropriate and in line with the care plan, is clearly laid out in the placement agreement.
- Time Out Fostering will make sure that foster carers provide an environment in which education and learning are valued; the foster carer will establish an expectation that the child attends school, and supports the child's participation fully through making sure the child has the correct uniform, does their homework, and has financial and practical support to attend school trips and other activities.
- Time Out Fostering has information to demonstrate the attendance rates of children in their fostering services and to show the numbers excluded from school.
- If a child cannot or does not attend school Time Out Fostering will make clear its expectations to carers, these will include structured occupation during school hours.
- The foster placement agreement establishes where financial responsibilities lie for school costs.

Foster carers can help to achieve these by;

- Ensuring that the child's religious and other cultural needs have been recognised and addressed by the school.
- Providing a quiet space and time to undertake homework, and monitoring this.
- Assisting young people who have left school with finding out about training and employment.
- Providing an environment where education is valued.
- Keeping up contact with the school.

Preparing Young People for Adulthood

- Time Out Fostering will ensure its service enables young people to develop the necessary skills for independent living and adult life.
- Time Out Fostering will provide clear written guidance on preparing children for adult life.
- Time Out Fostering will provide training and guidance to foster carers to enable them to provide children with developmentally age appropriate opportunities for learning independence skills.
- Time Out Fostering will make sure that young people are consulted about their future and have an active part in making and implementing their Pathway Plan.

Foster carers can help to achieve these by;

- Planning and contributing to the implementation of the Pathway Plan.
- Contributing to the assessment of disabled children and helping them with any transition to adult services.
- Providing opportunities for young people to learn skills such as; cooking, managing finance and domestic responsibilities.
- Providing some appropriate opportunities for the child to be supported by the carers after they have moved into independent accommodation.

Maintaining Confidentiality and Keeping Records

- Time Out Fostering will ensure that carers are trained and provided with all the necessary equipment to record significant events for the child and to encourage the child to make such recordings, including photograph albums.
- Time Out Fostering will ensure that their carers store information in a secure manner and understand what information they are expected to keep and what information needs to be passed on to the Time Out Fostering.

Foster carers can help to achieve these by;

- Not sharing confidential information about children or young people placed with anyone other than their supervising social worker or the child's social worker unless it has been agreed with the child's social worker.
- Storing written information securely and only sharing it with the child or their social worker unless agreed by the social worker.
- Maintaining records securely
- Keeping the records requested by Time Out Fostering.
- At the end of the placement returning all records and written information to the child's social worker.
- Encouraging children to reflect on their life events and history, in accordance with their age and developmental understanding.
- Encouraging children to keep their own records including photograph album, etc.