



TIME OUT
fostering

valuing individual needs

SECTION NINE

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

2007

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Introduction

Time Out Fostering recognises that children and young people who are in foster or support care will have strong emotions about the difficulties and changes in their lives that have brought them to that point. Their behaviour may reflect these feelings in various ways. This behaviour will inevitably present challenges to foster and support carers.

This policy outlines the minimum standards of care which foster and support carers must adhere to when responding to the difficult or unacceptable behaviour of a child or young person placed with them through Time Out Fostering.

Policy

1. All carers and staff will be expected to attend training about how to address the behaviour of children and young people placed in their care. This will include the theory and skills involved in de-escalating conflict and safe handling.
2. When carers are experiencing challenging behaviour which they feel unable to manage, they should contact their Time Out Fostering Supervising Social Worker for support.
3. **Foster carers and Support Carers and Time Out Fostering staff are not permitted at any time to use corporal punishment or/and other forms of humiliating punishment on a child or young person.**

Corporal punishment is;

- a. Physical punishment such as;
 - smacking
 - slapping
 - pinching
 - hitting (with objects as well as with the body),
 - shaking
- b. Other forms of humiliating treatment or punishment, including;
 - depriving a child of food/ sleep/ drink
 - ridiculing
 - intimate physical examination
 - locking in a room
 - withholding medical treatment
 - preventing contact with family
 - verbal abuse
 - threats of violence
 - threats of any of the above

Restraint

1. On rare occasions it may be necessary to restrain a child. This should **only** be used when it is necessary to prevent likely injury to the child or other persons or serious damage to property.
2. Time Out Fostering will be using Unisafe methodology and practice with staff and carers.
3. All restraint techniques used by carers must only be those approved for use by Time Out Fostering.
4. A written account of any incidents must be recorded as soon as it is possible. This report should be in accordance with the following guidelines. The report should cover
 - what events led up to the restraint
 - the date and circumstances of the problem
 - who said/did what and when
 - what restraint techniques were used
 - what happened afterwards

The report should separate what actually happened from what the carer thought or felt happened; it should state if there is uncertainty.

5. At the earliest opportunity Time Out Fostering must be informed of the incident.
6. The Supervising Social Worker will visit to discuss the incident and read the report.
7. The Supervising Social Worker will decide if further action is necessary.

Further Guidelines

When children and young people are first placed in a foster or support care placement they will need to know the general rules by which the family live. The child or young person may be used to different values so what appears normal to them may be difficult for carers. Carers will need to help them understand these rules. Children/ young people may have difficulty with new rules; they should be presented as positive rather than punitive values.

It is important to be consistent with an approach so that the child is clear about what is likely to happen. It is also important to bear in mind how other children in the house are treated and to be fair.

The following ideas need to be used bearing in mind the age, understanding and experience of the child/young person e.g. A child with a history of sexual abuse

could possibly be very frightened by being put to bed early. Common sense and consultation should prevail when applying management behaviour.

Positive Reinforcement

Time Out Fostering expects carers to notice and acknowledge positive behaviour and reward the behaviour, preferably by acknowledging the child/young person at the time.

Ignoring

Ignoring behaviour is a better option than criticism; however this is not always possible. The idea is based upon the belief that children often behave in difficult ways to get attention, if they get no attention they will eventually stop the behaviour and try a new method of attention seeking!

Rewards and sanctions

Carers should try to understand the child/ young person's previous experiences and any rewards or sanctions should be carried out with an understanding of this.

Rewards are things like outings, activities, money, extended bedtimes etc. Sanctions may be things like not attending a family outing; withdrawal of contact with family cannot be used.

Incentives

Behaviour management is likely to be effective if young people feel they gain something for their effort. So if a child can improve their behaviour a sanction time could be reduced. There are a few exceptions to this;

- Where there is a court ban prohibiting a particular action
- Smoking ban
- The permanent removal of an item

Use of family meetings

The whole family sitting down together and discussing a problem or making a decision can be useful in getting children's views and involving them in the smooth running of the home.

As many family members as possible should be present. Notes can be taken and everyone can have a copy. This is a particularly useful method of managing behaviour in teenagers.

Giving Space

A child can be given space if a situation is escalating. This has to be done bearing in mind the age and circumstances of the child.

Telling Off

A carer who tells off a child must not include terms of abuse or language that humiliates, oppresses or demeans. It is useful to refer specifically to the behaviour and not the child. It is advisable not to tell a child off in public but to take them aside.

Smoking Ban

Foster carers should not encourage children or young people to smoke in any way. All foster carers should have clear house rules about smoking which all children staying should be aware of from the start of the placement. It may be difficult to prevent smoking completely.

Confiscation

This is the permanent removal of dangerous, illegal or unacceptable items for example, pornographic material, alcohol, solvents, weapons or drugs.

These items must be handed to the young person's social worker or Time Out Fostering or to those who have parental responsibility or to the young person when leaving, if appropriate.

The young person should be informed about when the items will be returned and by whom.

The item can be returned either after a specified period of time or the behaviour has ceased or ownership has been verified.

The foster carer should always inform the child or young person's social worker and keep a record of the events.

Supervision or Suspension of Pocket Money

Where there is a likelihood that pocket money is to be spent on things which have an increased risk to the child e.g. drug, solvents, cigarettes, absconding etc. then the foster carer may want to accompany the young person when they are spending their money.

Foster carers should record and inform social workers when they feel pocket money needs restricting or children need accompanying. This should also be recorded.

Temporary withdrawal of pocket money is allowed but it must be returned at an agreed time. The young person could earn their money back. This must be

recorded. If this is a regular event then it should be agreed with the social worker and planned. This is to protect all parties.

Withholding all pocket money is only allowed when it will be restored within 24 hours.

When a child has severe learning difficulties then the foster carer will not need to inform the social worker as pocket money spending will have been addressed at the start of the placement.

Extra Household Chores

When a child or young person begins staying at the foster house they need to be made aware of any expectations of household chores.

Extra household chores can be used as a sanction; this is particularly useful if a child/ young person has been avoiding his tasks. Toilet or bathroom cleaning can only be used if the child or young person has made the mess in the first place.

Children or young people should be supervised and only gentle household chemicals should be used.

When the sanction is recorded, the time and quality of work should be recorded.

Early Bed Time

This can be used as a sanction particularly when a child or young person;

- Refuses to comply with repeated requests to stop reckless behaviour. This could include school behaviour
- Has difficulty in getting up in the morning
- Is disruptive after bedtime
- Was late home the night before

The following points should be applied to the sanction;

- Never more than one hour earlier than usual bedtime
- If it is to be used for more than two nights consecutively the child's social worker should be informed
- Consideration should be given before using this sanction on children who may have been sexually abused, as they may be frightened of bedtime.
- Children with learning difficulties may not understand this concept of sanction. It may therefore be inappropriate and this should therefore be discussed with the social worker

Withholding Lie-in

This would apply at weekends and school holidays. It is most appropriate when the child or young person;

- Does not settle at their usual bedtimes
- Returns or is returned after absconding after the usual bedtime
- Comes back later than agreed after usual bedtime

If this is an ongoing situation it should be discussed with the child / young person's social worker and be a part of their plan and recorded.

Grounding

This means keeping a child/young person at home or accompanying them when they go out.

The child/young person must not be made to feel locked in or physically restrained. If grounding is a regular behaviour management technique then the child/young person's social worker should be consulted. Records should be kept.

Grounding would be particularly appropriate when;

A child/young person was not coming back to the foster home when allowed out unaccompanied or a child/young person was at risk when out of the house

Individual points system

This is a way of helping a child or young person learn to control or change behaviour. It needs to be planned on an individual basis and work as follows;

- The system is reward based and not related to punishment
- Appropriate behaviour earns credits, which can then be exchanged for a reward
- These system require a visual way of recording such as a star chart

The system must

- Be agreed upon by everyone, social worker , foster carer and child
- Followed over an agreed period
- Reviewed and changed if necessary
- recorded

The system must be;

- Agreed on by everyone involved, social workers, parents, child/young person
- Have a predetermined timescale
- Reviewed
- Diligently recorded

Plan for Behaviour Management

It is good practice to discuss and the beginning of a placement which rewards and sanctions might be appropriate. Techniques may be used for a specific child and why these may differ from other children/young people living in the house. They will need to be reviewed on a regular basis.

Drugs

If foster carers suspect or find the child/young person to be in possession of drugs they must contact their supervising social worker as soon as possible for support.

Record all aspects of events thoroughly.

Finally...

Time Out Fostering believes that any behaviour management used should be non-physical, appropriate, fair and effective. Always ask the Time Out Fostering social worker for support and advice with any concerns about behaviour management.