



TIME OUT
fostering

valuing individual needs

SECTION TEN

MANAGING CONTACT, PROMOTING IDENTITY AND CULTURE.

2006

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Managing Contact with Birth Parents

Legislation

The Children Act (1989) (Paragraph 15, Schedule 2) puts a duty on Local Authorities to promote contact between children and their families when they are staying away from the family home and when it is deemed to be in the childrens best interest.

Contact is a legal term covering;

Meetings

Telephone calls

Letters

Emails

Any other forms of communication

Contact is considered very important in maintaining family links and promoting a positive self image for the child. Contact ensures that children staying away from the family home still feel a part of their family culture. Social workers and foster carers need to do everything possible to ensure that regular contact is maintained.

Introduction

The aim of contact is to promote and maintain a positive relationship between the child and members of their family.

Time out Fostering therefore aims to promote, facilitate and enable contact between birth families and their fostered children when it is in the best interest of the children and in accordance with legislation. This will be discussed at the beginning of the placement and be an integral part of the care plan.

The Local Authorities, Time out Fostering, foster carers, families and children at the beginning of a placement will discuss contact. Contact decisions will then be recorded in the placement agreement and the care plan. These will take into account any risks posed to the child or foster carer as a consequence of contact. It may be decided that contact should be supervised because of risks or because records need to be kept of contact for a court report. The supervision may also take place at an external venue. Time Out Fostering can offer support with this. It would be expected that the foster carer would accompany the child to the venue and return them home at the end. If the child is accommodated the parents may see the child more frequently than if they are on a Care Order where some restrictions may be in place, imposed by the court.

Relationship Between Adults During Contact

It is important that contact remains as positive as possible for the children concerned. Therefore the following rules should be adhered to;

- Being on time and at the right venue
- Being free from the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Focussing on the children
- Not using the meeting to discuss disputes between adults
- All adults to give clear agreed information in order not to confuse the child
- Children should not be given information which might not happen e.g. 'you can come home for Xmas' so that they are not disappointed by unrealistic expectations
- If adults are unhappy with any aspect of the care plan they need to discuss it away from the contact.

Supervised Contact

There are different levels of supervised contact. It is when a letter, visit or other form of contact is overseen by an appointed adult - supervisor. This is to maximise the safety of the children. It may be that the appropriate adult needs to listen to all conversation, or that they just watch the contact. This depends on the level of assessed risk to the child or young person. The supervisor will aim to work to the guidelines given by the social worker. They will remind adults of the above points and end the session early if necessary. The supervisor will keep records about the contact and provide Time Out Fostering with these. Time Out Fostering will pass any information on to the child's social worker.

Promoting the Positive Development of A Child's Identity

Policy

Time Out Fostering believes that the child's identity, culture, race, religion, language, sexuality etc must be positively promoted whilst the child is placed with carers through us. The organisation and the carers have a responsibility to promote the positive development of a child's identity.

Introduction

It is a vitally important foundation of foster care that a child or young person's healthy emotional and physical development are encouraged. Children who are in foster care are often discriminated against at school or amongst their peers. This may be compounded in children who are noticeably different from the majority of children in their school or social setting. There are additional needs for children who may be discriminated against on the grounds of race, culture, ethnic origin, religion, language, disability or sexual orientation. Steps should be taken to address this discrimination in order that the child or young person is not permanently damaged by it.

The Local Authority must take into account factors of identity when matching a child to a carer; it is then the responsibility of the organisation and not the child to address these issues.

Procedure

When a child or young person is placed with a Time Out Fostering Carer the following procedure should be followed in order to assess and meet the needs of the child;

Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers should:

- Make records of all aspects of the child's identity and circumstances when they begin their stay
- Make a note of any gaps in formation provided and ensure that any assumptions about the child are checked out
- Make an assessment about any discrimination the child have experienced or faces as a result of their identity
- Identify a suitable person to work with the child with actual or likely discrimination and complete positive identity work such as life story work or therapy
- Allow the child or young person to voice their experiences and have these views listened and respected
- Review this regularly

This can be done by the carer and their supervising social worker. The aim of this is to improve the child's self worth and confidence.