

## Behaviour Response Policy

The purpose of the policy is to enable staff and foster carers to effectively support children and young people to respond to their behaviour, in a child-centred way, understanding and reducing potential risk for children, young people, foster carers and anyone else caring for them, and which enables the organisation to deliver services safely and legally. Soundly Fostering suggests first relating to a child, to help them regulate, before then reasoning with them, whilst also being mindful of what a behaviour might be communicating. Trauma-informed practice, alongside the proactive promotion of positive behaviour, is central and integral to the ethos of Soundly Fostering and to good practice when responding to behaviour.

The policy places the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention as a last resort, to be used only when all other techniques have been considered and attempted. It should only be used to prevent a child or young person harming themselves or others, or to prevent serious property damage and when the risk resulting from not using it is higher than from its use.

At Soundly Fostering, we believe that positive behaviour is supported by:

- Respecting and valuing the individuality of children and young people.
- Encouraging children and young people to respect themselves, each other, their surroundings and property.
- Providing positive role models.
- Rewarding positive behaviour through the use of praise and positive reinforcement.
- Providing children and young people with appropriate support to help them establish strategies to deal with their emotional responses.
- Ensuring that expectations and rules are developmentally appropriate, clear and consistently applied. Positive behaviour management is good practice and should underpin all work with children and young people.

## Regulations and Standards

### **The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011**

**Regulation 11** – Independent fostering agencies: duty to secure welfare

**Regulation 13** – Behaviour management and children missing from foster parents' homes

**Regulation 17** – Support, training and information for foster parents

### **Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards**

**Standard 3** – Promoting positive behaviour and relationships

## Relevant Guidance

[Positive and Proactive Care: Reducing the Need for Restrictive Interventions – Department of Health and Social Care](#) –

## Scope of This Chapter

This chapter provides guidance for carers and staff in relation to promoting positive behaviour.

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#### 1. *Introduction*

Soundly Fostering Agency is committed to a holistic approach that draws on established theoretical bases, research, best practice and guidance in order to promote and develop positive behaviour. We believe in a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding and supporting children and young people. There is an acknowledgement and commitment that our foster carers cannot and should not be expected to manage behaviour that can be very challenging in isolation, or in the absence of guidance and a shared understanding and agreement with regard to the strategies and support available.

The Agency is committed to gaining and sharing a robust assessment of need that determines the approach to be taken and the most effective matching of foster carers. The referral information, placement plan, risk assessments and reviews are central to the ongoing planning and evaluation of the support, in relation to the expression of trauma, need and behaviour that challenges us.

Soundly Fostering Agency's approach to behaviour support:

- Aims to understand and respond in a way that meets a child's communication needs.
- Aims to create a safe, caring environment.
- Ensures that all children have opportunities to become confident and achieve their full potential, and build self-esteem.
- Encourages the child's consultation and participation in setting rules and consequences, assisting in taking responsibility and recognising their own behaviour.
- Ensures that all children and young people live in homes where they have clear expectations in relation to their behaviour, are supported to understand and to develop alternative positive approaches to challenges within their lives.
- Ensures that all children and young people understand how positive behaviour is recognised and rewarded.
- Ensures that all children and young people are supported to understand that there are consequences to behaviour.
- Ensures that all foster carers and support staff understand and share the principles of positive approaches to behaviour.
- Accepts the individuality of children and young people and celebrates the diversity of their backgrounds.
- Recognises that homes are different, unique and represent many notions of family, yet they share a common value base.

## 2. *Positive Behaviour Support*

Foster carers play an important part in the day-to-day life of a child, therefore good parenting, supported by training on understanding the nervous system and trauma responses, relating and providing attuned care, as well as behaviour management techniques and strategies, will enable them to achieve and develop a more positive relationship with the child and a more harmonious life and will enable the child to feel good about themselves.

Foster carers are expected to understand, manage and deal with children's behaviour, including encouraging them to take responsibility for their behaviour and helping them to learn how to resolve conflict.

All fostering households will have clear, fair boundaries, to enable children to feel safe, encouraged and appropriately rewarded; and to help ensure that they will thrive and do well. Foster carers who tend to adopt this approach may also experience less instability and disruption.

The culture of the household, generated by the carers, is crucial.

When caring for foster children, foster carers should at all times endeavour to:

- Listen to and empathise with children, respect their thoughts and feelings and consider their wishes.
- Look for things that are going well, or any step in the right direction, and appropriately reward them.
- Use rewards creatively and diversely, specific to children's needs, capabilities and interests. This may mean that children are rewarded with activities or rewards that they enjoy. But all 'tangible' rewards should be accompanied by the use of 'non-tangible' encouragement and support, by carers demonstrating to children that they have done well. Such 'non-tangible' rewards include praising, smiling and hugging children.

Children usually benefit, early on, from rewards which may appear to outweigh what 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 are low may require forms of encouragement and reward which are intensive, frequent or even 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 an incentive for getting up on time for a few days.

Over time, as children achieve what is expected, such rewards should be reduced, or children should be expected to achieve more for the same or a similar reward.

### 3. *Minimum House Rules*

All carers should have house rules, setting out their expectations for how things are managed within the home. This should be explained to children, with the reasons for the rules, and they should also know that there are rules for everyone. They should not feel that they are being treated with less regard than other members of the household. Ideally, children should know these expectations before they are placed.

House rules will cover the following expectations:

- Keep your own bedroom clean and tidy, with help if necessary.
- Do not go into any other bedroom.
- If you have gone out, return home at the time your carer has said.
- Always be where you say you will be.
- If you want to change your plans when you are out, ask permission from your carer first.
- Do not hurt any member of your foster family.
- Do not hurt any pet of the foster family.
- Homework must be done.
- No smoking in the home.
- If you have been excluded from school, schoolwork will be done at home or in the relevant setting. Support will be offered.
- When you use the bathroom or toilet, always close the door.
- If you have any problems, try to talk to your carer or another adult.
- Try to consider other people's feelings.

### 4. *Managing Behaviour That Challenges*

Behaviour that feels challenging can occur for several reasons, for example:

- As a way of expressing emotions.
- As a result of trauma.
- As a result of developmental delays or learning disabilities.
- As a result of attachment/relationship difficulties with staff/carers.
- Learned behaviours in which challenging responses have become habit in the face of frustration or anxiety.

It is helpful if staff and carers can understand the causes of the child's behaviour and help the child and support them to manage their difficulties more acceptably. It is unusual for challenging behaviour to be targeted at an individual because of dislike or any wish to harm them. Therefore, although it may seem personal at the time, this is usually not the case, and the response to the incident should be calm, reflective and controlled.

When working with or caring for children with behaviour that challenges, it is useful to bear in mind the following:

- The age and emotional maturity of the child, and also their experiences.
- Any positive behaviour management aims to help the child learn how to behave more appropriately, and not to punish or to keep the child under control.
- Challenging or undesirable behaviour should not result in emotional distance between the child and the staff/carer.
- No matter how difficult or challenging a child's behaviour, staff/carers should never resort to similar behaviour.
- The more staff/carers are able to understand a child's behaviour and are able to meet their needs in a consistent manner, the less likely they are to encounter difficulties with control.
- Consider your own responses to the behaviour and any triggers.
- Consider that the child's behaviour may be a response to something they are finding difficult or have experienced.

Children need understanding as well as clear boundaries, and to know what is expected of them.

The key points of a positive behaviour approach are:

- The ground rules are discussed with the child and their family/carers so that their views can be taken into account.
- Staff and carers should be honest about any non-negotiable issues, such as smoking on the premises.
- Rules need to be realistic and ideally phrased as a "do" rather than a "do not". If "do not" predominates in your rules, consider what children are supposed to do if they are cross/angry for good reason, when your rules say they cannot, for example, shout, swear or hit out? Children need to be helped to express

themselves and need to know what is acceptable for them to do when they are faced with a situation which will provoke unacceptable behaviour.

- Children may need to be reminded from time to time of the expectations we have regarding their behaviour and of why we have rules.

A child may have disabilities that affect their behaviour, social skills and understanding, and so require extra help to be able to behave within acceptable boundaries. Others may be faced with a variety of stresses that are difficult for them to manage without support.

It is imperative that we have realistic expectations of children according to their emotional age, experiences and ability to regulate their feelings. Children with disabilities, however, are unlikely to benefit when adults fail to assist them in realising their potential to behave appropriately.

Staff/carers need to be aware that children under pressure can have strong feelings of frustration, distress or anger. Adults can help children to behave in a more socially acceptable manner when they legitimise children's feelings. For example, acknowledging that a child's feelings are legitimate may help them to understand that their behaviour, e.g., hitting out or swearing, is not legitimate.

Some disabled children may resort to challenging or unpredictable behaviours due to difficulties in making themselves understood. It is important that such behaviour is seen in the context of the child's disability. Any behaviour plans to address these situations should use appropriate communication methods, and any sanctions should be suitable and understood by the child. If there are known trigger factors which appear to impact how the child/young person behaves, then these should be recorded clearly in the care plan, and every effort should be made to avoid such situations from happening. Such information should be sought from parents, teachers, and college staff, or from anyone who has worked with and knows the child well.

## 5. *Sanctions*

### *5.1 Guidance on the Use of Sanctions*

Sanctions can be very effective, but care must be exercised in imposing them. If they are used on their own, they become punitive and ineffective and, in turn, impact the relationship between the child and the adult.

Many children who are fostered will experience shame and have come to view themselves as bad or failures. Sanctions may have been imposed inconsistently or unfairly, or as acts of revenge.

Before imposing sanctions, carers should do all they can to support and encourage children to do well. If children do not behave acceptably, strategies should be adopted that are encouraging and rewarding.

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 TV at bedtime for getting up on time, rather than taking the TV away for getting up late.

The former is discouraging and causes resentment; the latter is encouraging, can improve self-esteem and relationships between children and carers.

Be creative, think outside the box!

If children continue to behave in unacceptable ways, they should be reminded about what is expected and given further encouragement to get it right.

Where sanctions are used, they must be reasonable and the minimum necessary to achieve the objective. Also, there should be a belief that the sanction will have the desired outcome, increasing the possibility that acceptable behaviour will follow.

If sanctions are imposed, carers should apply the following principles:

- Sanctions must be the exception, not the rule – a last resort.
- Sanctions must not be imposed as acts of revenge or retaliation.
- Thought must be given before imposing a sanction, rather than it being applied in the heat of the moment. Take time to reflect before imposing the sanction, and maybe discuss with the child.
- Sanctions may only be imposed upon children for persistent or serious misbehaviour, where reminders and reprimands have already failed or are likely to fail.
- Sanctions should only be used if there is a reasonable chance they will have the desired effect of making the point and reducing or preventing further unacceptable behaviour.

- Before applying any sanction, make sure the child is aware that his/her behaviour is unacceptable and, if possible, warn him/her that sanctions will be applied if the unacceptable behaviour continues.
- It is the certainty, not the severity of sanctions, that is important.
- Sanctions should only last as long as they need to, allowing the child the opportunity to make a fresh start as quickly as possible.

### *5.2 Non-Approved Sanctions*

The following sanctions are non-approved, which means they may never be imposed upon children:

- Any form of corporal punishment, i.e., any intentional application of force as punishment, including slapping, punching, rough handling and throwing missiles.
- Any sanction relating to the consumption or deprivation of food or drink.
- 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. This does not prevent contact or communication from being restricted in exceptional circumstances, where it is necessary to do so to protect the child or others:
- Any officer of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service appointed for the child.
- Any social worker for the time being assigned to the child by his placing authority.
- Any Independent Visitor.
- Any person authorised by the Regulatory Authority.
- Any requirement that a child wear distinctive or inappropriate clothes.
- The use or withholding of medication or medical or dental treatment.
- The intentional deprivation of sleep.
- The modification of a child's behaviour through bribery or the use of threats.
- Any sanction which may humiliate a child or could cause them to be ridiculed.
- The imposition of any fine or financial penalty, other than a requirement for the payment of a reasonable sum by way of reparation. The court may impose fines upon children, which staff should encourage and support them to repay.
- Any intimate physical examination of a child.
- The withholding of aids/equipment needed by a disabled child.

- 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.
- Swearing at the child or the use of foul, demeaning or humiliating language or measures.

### *5.3 Approved Sanctions*

The following sanctions may be imposed upon children:

- Confiscation or withdrawal of a telephone or mobile phone, to protect a child or another person from harm, injury, or to protect property from being damaged.
- Restriction on sending or receiving letters, or other correspondence (including the use of electronic or internet correspondence), to protect a child or another person from harm, injury, or to protect property from being damaged. Agreed by those who have PR.
- Reparation, involving the child doing something to put right the wrong they have done, e.g. repairing damage, or returning stolen property.
- Restitution, involving the child paying for all or part of the damage caused, or the replacement of misappropriated monies or goods. 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. If the damage is serious or the size of the payment particularly large, then the child's social worker should be informed of the matter.
- Additional chores, involving a child undertaking additional chores over and above those they would normally be expected to do. (within reason and with support).
- Early bedtimes, by up to half an hour, or as agreed with the child's social worker.
- Removal of equipment, for example, the use of a TV or DVD player.
- Loss of privileges, for example, the withdrawal of the privilege of staying up late.

### *5.4 Recording of Sanctions*

If a child receives a sanction, this should be recorded on their daily/ weekly log and the supervising social worker alerted, both the reason for the sanction and what the sanction included.

## 6. Searching

Carers are not permitted to conduct body searches, pat down searches, or searches of clothing worn by children.

Should carers suspect that a child is carrying or has concealed an item which may place the child or another person at risk, they should try to obtain the item by co-operation/negotiation.

If carers suspect that a child is concealing an item, which may place themselves or another person at risk, they must notify the agency or, in an emergency, the Police.

## 7. Serious Incidents and Use of Physical Intervention

In the event of any serious incident, e.g. accident, violence or assault, property damage, carers should take what actions they deem to be necessary to protect children/themselves from immediate harm or injury and then notify the agency immediately.

If there is a risk of serious injury/harm or damage to property, carers should not use any form of physical intervention except as a last resort to prevent themselves or others from being injured or to prevent serious property damage. If any form of physical intervention is used, it must be the least intrusive necessary to protect the child, carer(s) or others.

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

The agency will endeavour to deal with as many of the challenges as possible that are involved in caring for children without recourse to the involvement of the police, who should only be involved in two circumstances:

- An emergency necessitating their immediate involvement to protect the child or others.
- Following discussion with the supervising social worker, fostering manager, or the fostering agency out of hours.



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If any serious incident occurs or the police are called, the supervising social worker, fostering manager or the fostering agency out of hours (if out of office hours) must be notified without delay and will then notify the relevant social worker(s) and arrange for a full report to be made of the incident and actions taken. The Regulatory Authority must also be notified.

