

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD  
6<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2008**

**BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT POLICY  
MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE**

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**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to share, with members of the corporate parenting board, the contents of a 'Behaviour Policy' which was written following the annual fostering inspection of October 2007. The Ofsted Inspection Report (as reported to this meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board) required that the service must "prepare a written policy on acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline of children placed with foster parents (Regulation 13 (1))".

**BACKGROUND**

2. A 'Statutory Requirement' must be met in order that 'the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given time-scales.' The action was to be completed by 18<sup>th</sup> January 2008. This time-scale was met.
3. The Standard to which this action relates is Standard 9 of the National Minimum Fostering Standards, which is, 'The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation' (9.1). Within this standard sit points 9.2 to 9.8 covering the issues of foster care preparation, training and development, safe care, the monitoring of allegations against foster carers, provision of information relating to children being placed with foster carers, and children going missing from placement.

4. Middlesbrough Council's 2007 Ofsted Inspection report is testament to the fact that the service meets each of these requirements to a good standard. The service's Foster Carer's Handbook, written in 2000 and revised in 2007, provides comprehensive information and guidance to carers in respect of understanding and responding to our children's behaviour. However, this inspection highlighted that, although the information was available and widely disseminated, it did not constitute a 'written policy'. Hence, the statutory requirement to comply.
5. The Behaviour Policy, which is attached as appendix 1, is therefore drawn from a variety of sources, which are already familiar to the service, the foster carers and in use in other child care settings. This should ensure a consistent, 'corporate' approach to responding to vulnerable children and the report itself illustrates the emphasis placed upon understanding the individual child and the care team's responsibility for providing positive, flexible behaviour management techniques.

## **FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS**

6. There are no financial implications arising from this report. There would have been legal implications, had we failed to implement the statutory requirement outlined earlier in this report. As the service covers the whole of Middlesbrough, this report will be of interest to all Members.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

7. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the development of a Fostering Service Behaviour Management Policy.

## **REASONS**

8. The Council is responsible for providing high quality care for its children and for complying with statutory requirements.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report;

- *The National Minimum Standards and Fostering Services Regulations 2002*
- *The Ofsted report of 12<sup>th</sup> October 2007*
- *Middlesbrough Foster Carer's Handbook*
- *Gleneagles Behaviour Management Policy*

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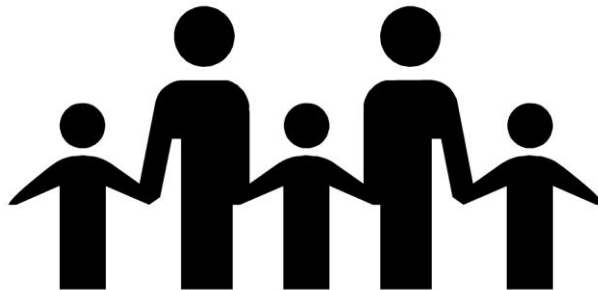
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# Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service



## BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT POLICY

Issued in December 2007 by  
Middlesbrough Fostering Service  
Middlesbrough Teaching & Learning Centre  
Tranmere Avenue  
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# 1. Policy Statement

Middlesbrough Fostering Service provides family placements for children who cannot, for a variety of reasons, live with their own family or friends.

It is important that parents and social workers of the child needing a placement feel that they will receive the highest level of care, and that the child him or herself feels safe and secure, in a caring environment.

This behaviour management policy sets out how behaviour is to be managed positively and professionally and with regard to:

- ❖ The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the associated Regulations (2002) - Reg. 13(1)
- ❖ The Children Act 1989 and its associated guidance and regulations (s23 and 49)
- ❖ Taking Care - Taking Control - Department of Health Training Pack, developed by the Social Services Inspectorate, November 1996
- ❖ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- ❖ Middlesbrough Fostering Service Foster Carer's Handbook – Section 5

## **The following principles should be observed:**

- ❖ The well being of the child is paramount.
- ❖ Every reasonable step should be taken to understand the wishes and feelings of the child.
- ❖ The wishes and feelings of the parents/carers should be listened to and recorded.
- ❖ In general, behaviour should be managed by good professional relationships being developed between the foster carer and the children and young people for whom they care.
- ❖ In so far as is possible, a child/young person should experience consistency between home (if appropriate), school, and the foster carer with regard to how behaviour is managed i.e. a 'care team' approach.
- ❖ Every effort should be made ensure that the behaviour of one child does not cause unreasonable concern or distress to another.
- ❖ Every effort will be made to understand why any challenging behaviour occurs.
- ❖ Appropriate behaviour will be promoted at all times by the clear and expressed approval of the foster carer and, where appropriate, by the use of suitable rewards.

- ❖ Inappropriate behaviour will be addressed by the clear and expressed disapproval of the foster carer, in a manner which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the child, and in line with agreements with parents and the placing social worker.
- ❖ When sanctions are used they will be recorded by the foster carer in their diary and reported to parents/social worker in keeping with the established lines of communication within children looked after procedures.
- ❖ Physical restraint will be used only as a last resort, for example, when there is immediate danger to the child or another person, or serious risk to the environment in which the incident is taking place.

## **2. Practice Guidance**

### **A) Actions to be taken prior to a child/young person's placement with a foster carer**

Only in exceptional circumstance should children come to, or receive a service from, the Fostering Team without prior planning. Normally, therefore, there will be time to adequately plan and prepare for a child's placement, and such planning should include a consideration of the child's behaviour and any actions that need to be taken in response to this. The placement part one and part two meetings should be used to this end.

Children in foster care may well exhibit unusual or difficult behaviour, possibly as a consequence of their history and experiences prior to becoming looked after. This can be further exacerbated by the move from their primary care giver and a change to their usual routine.

Prior to a child's placement with foster carers, the following documentation should have been completed:

- ❖ Assessment of Need
- ❖ Plan and Agreement
- ❖ Care Plan including risk assessment and consents
- ❖ Placement Agreement Parts 1 and 2
- ❖ Essential Information Parts 1 and 2

This documentation carries vital information about a child's behaviour and about how that behaviour is usually managed by the child's parents/ carers/ school.

There may be additional information available in relation to the child's circumstances, which may assist the foster carer to respond appropriately to the child's needs and presenting behaviours. This should be made available to the carer wherever possible.

All children and young people becoming looked after should be given a copy of the 'Children's Guide to Fostering' and information about our complaint procedure. Wherever possible, they should also have had planned introductions to the foster care family or, as a minimum, have received information about them.

## **B) Actions to be taken if there are difficulties in managing a child or young person's behaviour**

Some children do occasionally exhibit challenging behaviour; this might be for a variety of reasons, as stated earlier. For some children, there can be an added frustration about not being able to communicate effectively, which can be a major cause of distress and difficulty for them.

Good planning and preparation should keep difficulties to a minimum, but there will still be occasions when incidents involving challenging behaviour do occur:

This might include:

- ❖ Self harming behaviour
- ❖ Challenging behaviour directed at the foster carer
- ❖ Challenging behaviour directed at other children or young people
- ❖ Damage to property
- ❖ Offending behaviour

In extreme and dangerous situations, foster carers will be expected to take immediate action to prevent injury to the child/young person or any other person, or major damage to property. Physical restraint may be used as a last resort and, if it is used, the procedures taught during 'team teach' training should be adopted – though it is possible that every carer may not have had this input at the point they first encounter behaviour which requires 'restraint'.

Prior to this, the foster carer will have considered all other possible responses, as per the guidance given in their Foster Carer Handbook, and these might have included:

- ❖ Being calm and relaxed
- ❖ Being reassuring
- ❖ Giving good regard to the use of body language, including use of eye contact
- ❖ Being assertive
- ❖ Respecting the need for personal space
- ❖ Defusing situations
- ❖ Removing dangerous objects or potential missiles
- ❖ Removing a child/young person from a particular situation
- ❖ Requesting assistance from someone else in the household, or, if the situation requires it, from the child's social worker or the supervising social worker
- ❖ Using a distraction technique
- ❖ Talking to and reasoning with a child
- ❖ Using physical presence to guide a child away from a difficulty or prevent the child accessing some danger point.
- ❖ Briefly holding a child

N.B. Holding should not be used for prolonged periods. Holding discourages a child from doing something but does not actually prevent it. Anything more than this constitutes restraint.

Restraint should only be used as a last resort and when it is necessary to intervene to prevent injury or serious damage to property. It must be possible to show, via diary recording, that unless immediate action had been taken, injury would have followed.

The following shall not be used as disciplinary measures:

- ❖ any form of corporal punishment
- ❖ any punishment relating to the deprivation of food or drink
- ❖ any restriction on
  - A child's contact with parents, relatives or friends
  - Visits to him by parents, relatives or friends
  - Communication with solicitor, social worker etc
  - Access to telephone help line
- ❖ any requirement to wear distinctive clothing
- ❖ withholding of medication
- ❖ the intentional deprivation of sleep
- ❖ the imposition of any fine except by way of reparation
- ❖ any intimate physical examination
- ❖ the withholding of aids or equipment
- ❖ any measures which involve;
  - Any child in the imposition of any measure against any other child
  - The punishment of a group of children for the behaviour of an individual child.

Immediately following any incident involving challenging behaviour, reassurance and support should be offered to the child and any other child or individual involved.

The foster carer should discuss the incident with the child's social worker, their supervising social worker and the parent/carers (if appropriate) as soon as possible after it occurs.

All documentation concerning how a child's behaviour is managed will be reviewed as part of the Children Looked After processes and, if necessary, updated following any serious incident.

The level of supervision required by the child will also be reviewed and consideration given as to whether further advice should be sought.

Options that might be considered include:

- ❖ Discussion with professionals e.g. social workers, teaching staff
- ❖ Increase of supervision level
- ❖ Seeking additional support or advice from a specialist service such as CAMHS

It should be remembered that behaviour can be viewed as a form of communication, and challenging behaviour can be viewed as the communication of unmet need. Behaviour can and will also change as the child grows and develops and this is to be expected and prepared for.

A change in behaviour may be an indication that the child is unhappy and foster carers should use their diary recordings to assess whether there is a pattern to the behaviour



and any associated 'trigger', for example school, contact with family/friends and so forth. This should then be discussed fully with other members of the care team.

Every attempt should be made to understand why the incident occurred. It is recognised that this can be particularly difficult where children have severe communication difficulties, or where other difficulties such as autism or epilepsy impact upon behaviour.

## **C) Foster care approval and training**

Prospective foster carers undergo a preparation process, which meets the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the associated Regulations. During this process, prospective foster carers will be made aware that they may encounter challenging behaviour and that they will need to manage behavioural difficulties effectively.

Once approved, foster carers will receive the support of a supervising social worker, who will be responsible for ensuring that the foster carer has all information available to them as new carers. This includes the Foster Carer's Handbook, which has a section devoted to behaviour. The information provided places great emphasis on understanding behaviours; defusion; positive responses; communication; and how age, history and development impacts upon a child's behaviour. It also provides scenarios and practical guidance for carers to use.

Post approval, foster carers are expected to undertake a minimum of four sessions of training per annum, all of which will have some focus upon the carer's response to a child's presenting behaviours. Specific training in relation to managing difficult behaviours may be provided on a case-by-case basis, i.e. where risk assessment indicates such a need. Further training will also be provided on a rolling programme basis, for example 'Team Teach', a course which covers issues around behaviour management including:

- ❖ Causes of challenging behaviour
- ❖ Defusion techniques
- ❖ Break away techniques
- ❖ Physical restraint

The Foster Care Mentoring Scheme allows newly approved carers to seek the support and advice of experienced carers about the role. This may include discussions about responding to difficult behaviours, though this should not be regarded as a substitute for other essential information sharing as outlined in (B) above.

In writing this policy, it is acknowledged that Middlesbrough Council foster carers undertake a crucial role in safeguarding, parenting and protecting our children. The policy, in turn, should serve to guide and protect the foster carer as they seek to respond positively to this vulnerable group of children and young people.