



BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT IN THE FOSTER HOME

POLICY STATEMENT

To be read in addition to the Polaris *'Positive Relationships and Behaviour Management Policy, Procedure and Guidance'*

Aim

The aim of this Policy Statement is to inform foster parents and staff about the values and practice of therapeutic behaviour support for young people in the foster home.

Together with the Polaris '*Positive Relationships and Behaviour Management*' policy, procedure and guidance, it is intended to assist foster parents and staff to respond to children and young people in a positive and effective way. Children and young people who have experienced trauma will have difficulty in stressful situations and can present with a range of challenging behaviours, and we have a responsibility to:

- Protect children and young people and those working with them;
- Support children and young people to be able to express their feelings and manage their behaviour;
- Enable foster parents to effectively support them in the process;
- Facilitate responses that promote a sense of care, self-autonomy, safety and effect positive change.

Outcome

Children and young people are able to enjoy positive relationships with their foster family, interact positively with others and behave appropriately in different situations. They live, grow and develop in environments that are safe, nurturing and supportive, and in a way that assists them in achieving their full potential.

Introduction to ISP Behaviour Support

We aim to enable children and young people to get to know who they are and to grow and live in harmony with themselves and others. To achieve this we provide an approach to therapeutic fostering that is specifically designed to improve the psychological and emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people. Therapeutic concepts relating to the effects of trauma, abuse and neglect are used to enable staff and foster parents to view children's sometimes challenging behaviour as communication of confusion and distress in their internal world alongside, rather than simply as behaviour to be managed.

We recognise that children with additional care needs and disabilities are significantly more vulnerable to abuse than children without these. We are committed to safeguarding all children and young people in our care in an environment free from harassment and bullying and in a manner that is appropriate to their developmental needs.

Principles of Positive Care

Being able to promote positive behaviour and manage young people's behaviour well is central to the quality of care provided in any foster home. Building positive relationships with young people underpins our model of behaviour support. Foster parents need to be able to respond positively to each young person's individual behaviour and to be skilled at defusing difficult situations, preventing situations from escalating, and in recovering and strengthening relationships in the event of conflict.

Promotion of positive behaviour in young people is not just a matter of containing challenging behaviour; it should involve supporting young people to assume responsibility for their behaviour in a way that is appropriate to their age and abilities and encourage their awareness of the needs of others. This is more likely to be achieved by helping young people to feel significant, to enhance their own feelings of self-worth, to develop resilience and to enable them to have as much control over their own lives as possible. Foster parents who are uncertain about how to develop techniques to raise the self-worth of young people can expect the support of their Registered Manager, Supervising Social Worker and Fostering Adviser, and should be supported to participate in suitable training. Management of behaviour should be a regular topic at supervision meetings.

A Network Based Approach

At ISP we are committed to a multi-disciplinary team approach that underpins our practice. Our therapeutic fostering, therapeutic pathway training and PRICE training provide a positive integrated framework that draws on established theoretical bases, research, current thinking, best practice and guidance in the arena of promoting positive behaviour. Within our multi-disciplinary approach, there is an acknowledgement and commitment that our foster parents cannot and should not be expected to manage very challenging behaviour in isolation or in the absence of guidance and a shared understanding and agreement for the strategies of support.

Assessment, risk assessment, planning, intervention and evaluation will always be important in promoting positive behaviour, and should involve all members of the team around the child. From the outset, ISP is committed to gaining and sharing a robust assessment of need that determines the approach to be taken. The mechanisms of referral information, initial placement meeting, placement plan and reviews are central to the ongoing planning and evaluation of the support in relation to behaviour.

It is recognised that this is often a fluid process given the changing dynamics of children and young people and their lives. Children and young people who present more

complex and demanding behaviours will be subject to an individual Behaviour Support Plan.

A central aim will always be to provide a framework that can prevent and, where possible, de-escalate crisis, manage challenging behaviour, provide effective coping strategies and reduce the need for higher level interventions.

A Therapeutic Response to Children's Behaviour

Our young people have often had a painful history that has deeply affected their development. We believe that these children need therapeutic care to reach their emotional, social and educational potential.

Our young people have experienced things as having gone very wrong in their lives and are likely to have been traumatised by this. This often results in behaviour that adults find difficult to manage at home and at school. We aim to contain, understand, empathise and best manage their behaviour as we gradually help them to feel safe and be able to develop within long-term meaningful relationships.

Our therapeutic training pathway helps our foster parents to develop skills to identify and understand the thoughts and feelings that lead to challenging behaviour, and to respond in ways that promote recovery and strengthen relationships. We ask our foster parents to avoid the use of punishment, as this is not an effective learning tool for children with trauma. Instead, we encourage an approach that acknowledges the child's feelings, gives them space to pause and restore a sense of calm, and invites them to share in finding solutions to problems.