

GUIDANCE FOR FOSTER CARERS

EDUCATION POLICY

The learning and educational needs of each child or young person in foster care must be given a high priority and encouragement and support must be provided to enable them to gain their full potential.

Foster children always have difficult lives and their educational performance can be poor as a result of the instability of their circumstances.

Kirklees Fostering services as corporate parents have a collective responsibility to address the barriers to education which exist for children in foster care.

These barriers include:

- Lack of effective advocacy
- Lack of stability due to moves and school changes
- Prolonged periods of exclusion
- Low expectations
- Failure of services to share information

Everything possible needs to be done to ensure that foster children are happy in school, that they are not bullied and that they are able to take part in activities which they enjoy. All of these should help build self-esteem.

Foster carers are the key to breaking down barriers by valuing and supporting the education which children receive. They are expected to help assess the child's education and progress, to aid the planning and review process and assist in personal education plans.

Prioritising education must include:

- Regularly helping children with reading
- Ensuring regular and punctual attendance at school
- Supporting and encouraging children to do homework and out of school activities
- Liaising with parents, school, designated teachers and social workers on major decisions related to school work and any social or school problems
- Having high expectations and communicating this to children to help them build confidence and reach their potential
- Providing necessary uniform and school equipment, the cost of which will be covered by fostering allowances or extra payments (in some cases only)
- Providing a quiet space to complete homework with priority access to a computer for all children over the age of eight

- Liaising and co-operating with the looked after children education support team
- Keeping to an absolute minimum the number of days that a child is absent from school due to holidays or other events. Always discuss the need for these with the social worker and obtain their permission before making arrangements for absences for reasons other than illness or medical appointments.

PROCEDURE FOR FOSTER CARERS

EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL

The local education authority's policy for inclusion should ensure that all foster children have equal opportunities and access to education. For the majority this should be a full time place in an educational establishment which meets their needs. However, a child may be excluded from school temporarily or permanently.

In cases where the foster child is excluded the following procedure must be complied with:

1. The foster carer must inform the social worker and record the absence in the young person's daily record or diary
2. Social workers should ensure that young people have effective advocacy and support and their foster carer may be the best person to provide this. However, this should be planned in liaison with the social worker and Education of Looked After Children (ELAC) support team.
3. Foster children excluded from school will be provided with educational support and advice arranged through the ELAC Education Support Team
4. Foster children excluded for less than seven days should receive homework from their school.
5. Children excluded from school should be expected to spend part of every day doing structured homework that is provided in liaison with the school.
6. School exclusions put extra stresses on the carer and can threaten the stability of a placement. In every case, consideration should be given to providing extra support to the carer during school hours. This could be day care with another foster carer or extra financial support for organised activities to be planned taking into account the needs of the young person and their carer or foster family.
7. Provision of finance for organised activities needs to be discussed with the social worker to decide if it is necessary.

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