

## Section 7 - Enjoy & Achieve

### Key Outcomes

*Children are able to enjoy their interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged to engage in leisure activities.*

*Children are able to make a positive contribution to the foster home and their wider community.*

*The education and achievement of children is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood. Children are supported to achieve their educational potential.*

(Standard 7 & 8 of National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, 2011)

### 7.1 Policy

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering understands the single most important indicator of a child's life chances is that of their educational attainment.

In order to achieve better educational outcomes for looked after children, Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering recognises the crucially important and pivotal role that foster carers play in this and thus improve the educational life chances for the young people placed in our care.

To this end, Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering is totally committed to ensuring children and young people are placed with foster carers who:

- Promote, and are supportive of, the child's educational progress of children placed in their care to the highest standard
- Offer stability and continuity in their placements
- Praise their achievements
- Provide access to books and other learning medium
- Offer the child somewhere quiet to do their homework
- Provide access to out of school clubs where they can achieve non-academically and develop social relationships with young people who are not looked after.
- Understand their position and will advocate for them
- Maintain regular contact with each child's school and other education settings
- Attend all parents' meetings as appropriate
- Engage and work with schools, colleges and other organisations to support the child's education including advocating to help overcome any problems the child may be experiencing in their education setting.

- Maintain up-to-date information about each child's educational progress and school attendance record.
- Are provided themselves with appropriate training, advice, support and supervision

In addition to seeking positive educational outcomes for children, Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering is also fully committed to ensuring foster carers provide children and young people with a stimulating environment where they:

- receive every opportunity to pursue and enjoy individual interests and hobbies
- take part in a range of activities, including leisure activities and trips, and
- develop confidence in their emotional, intellectual, social creative and physical skills
- Are encouraged and enabled to make and sustain friendships, which may involve friends visiting and reciprocal arrangements to visit friends' homes.
- Can stay overnight with friends if foster carers consider it appropriate.

### **Responsibilities of Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering - monitoring**

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering has a duty under the Fostering Service Regulation 35(1) and Schedule 6 to monitor "Where applicable, the standard of any education provided by the fostering service" (FSR 35(1) and Schedule 6). To this end the Registered Manager will not only ensure robust monitoring is carried out at least 6 weekly of the education provided by the service but will also include an appraisal of the educational achievements, school attendance and progress of all children placed.

## **7.2 Ready for School**

Foster carers are expected to ensure, before a child starts school or begins at a new school, that they are prepared for this by:

- Checking whether the child has spectacles and if he/she wears them. An eye test will be booked as soon as possible after they are placed or at the earliest opportunity if there are any doubts about the child's eyesight.
- Having a full school uniform, if required, and encouraged to wear it with pride. Speak to your Supervising Social Worker about how this will be paid for if the child has only recently arrived to your home.
- Having all of the basic equipment needed such as pens, pencils, rulers, suitable calculators, geometry sets etc.
- Having clean PE equipment always available the night before the PE lesson is to take place.
- Having an understanding of what happens at lunchtime. Foster carers should confirm the details of these beforehand with the school so that both they and the child are clear about the arrangements.

Transport issues must be clarified and confirmed, to ensure that the student arrives on time, and can leave school at the end of the day confident that he/she knows how to get home. Dependent on their age and ability foster carers may be required to escort children to and from school until they are able to do so. Even where children are able to do this Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering believes it is good practice to accompany the child to and from school on their first day. It may be necessary for foster carers to accompany the child on the bus or train until such time as they have sufficient confidence to travel alone, if this is agreed is appropriate.

Foster carers will acquaint themselves of the name of the Headteacher, the student's class/form tutor and the person with direct responsibility within the school setting for your foster child. All schools now have to have a named member of foster carers with specific responsibility for Looked After children.

Foster carers will obtain a copy of the child's timetable for the term, and their homework timetable from the school.

## **7.3 Attend & Enjoy School**

### **Promoting education**

Foster carers are expected, in order to assist the child to establish themselves in school to ensure, as soon as possible, a routine around getting to and from school, homework, packed lunches (if taken) and providing PE equipment, Food Tech. ingredients etc. when needed.

Foster carers should promote the child's education by:

- Ensuring the child(ren) have age appropriate reference books e.g. dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopaedias, and where agreed, a home computer available to the student.
- Praising all effort and achievement, however small.
- Making a quiet place and time available each night to enable homework to be completed.
- Establishing a habit of checking the homework diary, or the home-school book, if one is available.
- Making sure that the student has, if necessary, a clean uniform available each day.
- Providing a special place for school bags to be put the night before.
- Establishing the child(ren)'s wishes for packed lunches if these are taken. Making the packed lunch with the child may be a way of helping them get them into a routine.
- Checking everything through at a set time each evening.
- Fixing a copy of the child(ren)'s timetable up on a wall, and checking this each afternoon when they return from school, to ensure that PE kit and cookery (food tech.) ingredients are available on the correct day etc.
- Always enquiring, when the child(ren) returns from school about how the day has been and listening to what he/she is saying (getting into a routine of a drink and a biscuit on

the child's return from school to create a relaxed situation where their day can be discussed can help).

- Not expecting children to necessarily sit down and do their homework the minute they return home.
- Encouraging, especially where the child expresses an interest, to learn to play a musical instrument and join extra-curricular clubs e.g. football, theatre.
- Encouraging the child(ren)'s learning and social skills by playing board games with them on occasions, e.g. Monopoly, Scrabble etc.
- Reading regular bedtime stories.
- Always attending Parents Evenings.
- Making sure that whenever possible, they watch things like football matches, practice games and plays or recitals that the child participates in.
- Making sure, regardless of whatever has happened at school that the foster home is a safe environment where someone will listen objectively, and provide support and encouragement.
- Making sure, if the behaviour has been poor that it is the behaviour that is rejected and NOT the child.

Foster carers must keep Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering foster carers, or the school, informed about anything that is out of the ordinary for the child e.g. contact visits, a sick animal, ill health within your home, upsetting telephone calls with birth family, special dates for the child etc. particularly if these are likely to have an impact upon the child's behaviour. If communication is effective, the school foster carers may be able to avoid problems escalating, and therefore reduce the chance of a major incident at school.

Foster carers are encouraged, if they can make the time available, to join the PTA, and get involved with school life wherever possible.

## **Education terminology**

All professions use jargon. Unfortunately, it is often forgotten that it is not language used by everyone. Here are a few terms and abbreviations that new foster carers may not know but which they might hear bandied about at meetings:

**LEA** - Local Education Authority

**SEN** - Special Education Needs

The provisions to meet such needs are identified through a process called the SEN Code of Practice, and fall into different categories in order that local authorities may cater appropriately to them. This code has recently been revised and is now presented as a three stage approach:

1. Early years/school action

2. Early years/school action plus
3. Statemented provision

Within each stage, the areas of SEN are divided into:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Behavioural, emotional and social development
- Sensory and/or physical

Young people will/are likely to still be described as having:

- Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD)
- Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)
- Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)
- Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) - This includes dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and a variety of other educational problems exhibited by children.

**Year Groups** - Children can enter reception class in September following their 4<sup>th</sup> Birthday or they can start school at five years old and finish statutory education at sixteen, thus spending up to 12 years in education.

**Designated Teacher** - Every school will have a Designated Teacher with the specific responsibility for overseeing the education of any young people within the school who are “Looked After”.

**SENCo** - All schools have a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator whose responsibility it is to ensure that the child or young person identified as having special needs is appropriately supported.

Schools receive a delegated budget to meet such needs at the lower end of the spectrum, whilst specific funding is allocated to children who present with extreme levels of need on an individual basis.

**Head of Pastoral Care** - In secondary schools there will be a, usually responsible for the general well-being of all students.

**Counsellor** - Some schools (very few) employ a counsellor to enable students to discuss their problems, and seek solutions without accessing outside help.

**Teaching Assistants/Classroom Assistants** - come in all guises, and provide support for both foster carers and pupils. They are deployed through the SEN department to meet the needs of children/young people and may work with individual pupils, or small groups, depending on the situation. They rarely work in a lead position with the whole class, but will probably know all the children quite well through their interaction within the classroom setting.

**Educational Psychologist** - employed by the LEA they will visit all schools, and have a designated amount of time to spend in each establishment. These psychologists are sometimes involved with training the teaching foster carers or classroom assistants, but generally spend the majority of their allocated time assessing children, and making recommendations regarding the “statementing” process.

**Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** - These clinics often enable young people to access psychiatric help as well as counselling. Within this service there may be therapists, psychiatric Social Workers, counsellors, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses.

**Advisory Teachers** - Some Local Authorities will employ specifically trained foster carers to oversee the education of young people in public care. These members of foster carers may also be referred to as **Corporate Parenting Officers**, or **Liaison Teachers**.

**EWO - Education Welfare Officers** - in some authorities referred to as **Education Social Workers** are employed by the LEA to monitor attendance, and provide help and support to families who have problems persuading their children to maintain good school attendance. They may bring legal action against families who fail to observe the law regarding statutory education for children aged 5-16.

**The Youth Service** - this is the department responsible for a wide range of activities for young people. Youth Clubs and Out of School activities, as well as in some areas, alternative education. Activity based courses may be accessed through this department.

**Connexions Service** – a service providing all 13-19 year olds with information, advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities for in England. See 6.5 for more information.

## **7.4 Helping young people to achieve national educational standards at primary and secondary school**

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering aims to ensure children and young people are enabled to meet their full potential and achieve the best possible educational standards at both primary and secondary school. By following the guidelines listed in 7.3 foster carers will maximise the child’s chances of this happening.

### **Extra help and support**

Where children are seen to be struggling with certain subjects, foster carers are expected to discuss this with the school. Special attention should be paid to helping them with their homework in these subjects, and to speak with the school about accessing homework clubs. Alternatively, foster carers should speak with their Supervising Social Worker about the possibility of a private tutor to bring them up to speed.

Where foster carers have concerns they should contact their Supervising Social Worker foster carers, and/or the named person to contact at the child's school.

## **Special educational needs**

Many of the children placed with Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering have learning difficulties; they find it harder to learn than other children of the same age, may have behaviour problems or specific difficulties learning to read. Some might have physical difficulties like poor co-ordination or poor hearing.

A child with learning difficulties or special educational needs should receive extra help at school. Usually this help is given in ordinary mainstream schools. 1 in 5 of all children will have special educational needs at some time in their lives, for children in public care this figure is much higher.

## **Exclusion**

Looked after children are 10 times more likely to be permanently excluded than the average. Where a child has been excluded Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering will help carers appeal on the child's behalf ensuring that all the relevant facts are known and that the child has been given the opportunity to put his or her version of the events. Support will be given at exclusion appeals.

## **7.5 Helping young people to develop their personal and social skills and enjoy recreation to the full**

### **Personal and social development**

Many young people who have been in care find it difficult to make relationships and can end up with traumatic experiences when they leave care or being isolated or lonely. The experience of being in a foster family provides the opportunity for personal development, a period of stability and for any special help.

Foster carers and other family members and friends may be able to help and improve the ways in which a young person relates to other people by:

- Encouraging the young person to make friends with young people outside the care system e.g. through school, college, or local youth clubs and leisure activities.
- Helping disabled young people to access mainstream leisure activities to build up a wider friendship network.
- Encouraging the young person to develop friendships with suitable adults outside the care system, e.g. volunteer adult befrienders.
- Continuing to take an interest in the young person even when the placement has ended.
- Encouraging parents to stay in touch.

- Helping young people from ethnic minorities to have contact with adults and young people from their own cultural backgrounds and with youth clubs or voluntary organisations set up for people from their culture.
- Helping with sexual education and sexual relationships (where agreed that it is appropriate for the foster carers to be doing this).

### **Enabling young people to develop their self-esteem**

Young people in care need encouragement to value themselves, to understand their family history and the experience of being in care and to be able to explain it to others.

Foster carers can help young people by:

- Ensuring young people have an understanding of their family background and all aspects of their cultural and individual identity.
- Helping them understand how they came to be cared for.
- Presenting the young person's individual identity and cultural background in a positive light.
- Assisting with Life Story Books.
- Facilitating contact with positive role models.
- Giving disabled young people information about their impairment and advice support and information about tackling disabling barriers.

All preparation for leaving care and providing after care must take account of the religious persuasion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background and other needs of the young person.

Disabled young people may face more barriers than other young people and may also have needs specifically related to impairment. It is essential to ensure that these needs are met when preparing young people to leave care and in the arrangements for after care.

## **Policy in relation to meeting the racial, cultural, religious and linguistic needs of children and young people**

### ***Legislative and regulatory framework***

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering, in offering placements to children/young people looked after by Local Authorities, seeks to observe the legislative, regulatory and good practice requirements set out in:

- The UK National Standards for Foster Care 1999
- The Children Acts 1989 & 2004
- The Childcare Act 2006 (England & Wales)
- The Protection of Children Act 1999
- National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (England) 2011



- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Every Child Matters: Change for Children 2004
- Care Matters: Time for Change 2007

### **Commitment to diversity/promoting equality – foster carer recruitment, assessment and training**

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering is committed, by a variety of methods, to recruiting a wide range of foster carers from diverse backgrounds to meet the needs of children and young people referred for placement. The agency's recruitment policy and strategy recognises that targeted recruitment activities are sometimes required to achieve this aim.

The agency's expectation is that all foster carers, whatever their background, are able to demonstrate understanding and sensitivity to the needs of individual children and young people.

All Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering carers are expected to demonstrate or develop an understanding of the needs of ethnic minority children/young people, an understanding of racism and a commitment to challenge racism or discrimination and to helping a child or young person maintain or develop positive links in terms of his/her racial, cultural, religious and linguistic needs.

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering pre and post-approval foster carer training contains input in relation to diversity, promoting equality and helping children/young people combat discrimination. There is a specific focus on how foster carers, of all backgrounds, must provide care which respects each child's racial, cultural, religious and linguistic background and this is a feature of supervision of foster carers by Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering social work foster carers.

### **Requests for placement/placement decisions**

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering believes that the assessed needs of a child or young person should be paramount in all placement decisions. The needs of a child or young person in relation to racial origin, culture, religion and language will be thoroughly detailed and fully taken into account by Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering when receiving placement requests from Local Authorities. Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering's response will always be to try and identify a suitable 'match' in terms of a foster family whose racial and cultural origin, religion and language is the same as that of the child or young person or where as many of these placement considerations as possible can be met.

When a child or young person is referred to Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering for placement, every effort will be made to place him/her with a family which reflects his/her racial and cultural background. Where possible every effort will be made to enable

the birth parents and/or family members to maintain regular contact with the child or young person as promoted in the Children Act 1989 (England and Wales) and for the child or young person to maintain meaningful links with his/her community. It is essential that a black child or young person does not lose his/her identity, or feel that they have to 'lose' their identity by virtue of being in public care.

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering embraces Regulation 11 of the Fostering Services Regulations (England) 2011, which places a specific duty on independent fostering agencies, comparable to that for Local Authorities, when making placement decisions to give due consideration to a child or young person's persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background. Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering also acknowledges

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering's position is that for most looked after children/young people placement within a foster family is the best means of providing care and nurture. In practice this means that a child's racial, cultural, religious and linguistic needs will not be solely determining or decisive considerations but will be balanced alongside other placement needs identified at the point of placement request. Where a transracial/transcultural/ transreligious/cross community placement is being considered then the placement decision will be analysed, justified and authorised by a Director or Manager. It is the responsibility of all Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering Directors and Managers to maintain an overview of all transracial/transcultural/transreligious/cross community placements to which they have given agreement. It is important to ensure that such placements are always appropriate given the identified needs of a child or young person and do not become long term by default.

The task of the Channels and Choices Social Worker involved in the placement match will be to identify 'gaps' in the match between the child or young person and foster family and to ensure that there are arrangements to compensate for these. This may involve deciding upon support specifically needed for the child or young person – for example help with identity and self-esteem, maintaining religious observance/practice, opportunities to communicate in his/her first language and deciding how, when and by whom this support will be provided and how the provision of this support will be reviewed. For any child or young person for whom there are specific dietary requirements arising out of his/her cultural or religious background, or personal choice, then these will be fully adhered to. Additionally the Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering Principle Social Worker will identify what additional training, support and information may be needed by the foster family to ensure that they are able to help a child develop and/or maintain a positive understanding and appreciation of his/her heritage. This work will be identified at placement agreement meetings, whether held pre or post placement.

### **Fostering a child or young person with special needs or a disability**

You may be fostering a child or young person with a physical or learning disability or communication difficulties. The disability may not always be obvious at the time when the child or young person is placed with you e.g. dyslexia.

## **Policy for children/young people with disabilities**

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering will only offer a placement to a child or young person if they are sure that the child or young person's needs can be met.

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering recognises that children/young people with disabilities have the same rights and needs as all other children and should be treated as individuals and consulted about their futures.

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering ensures that whenever possible the child or young person is enabled and encouraged to take part in mainstream activities.

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering ensures that each child or young person with a disability receives specific services and support to help him/her to maximise his/her potential and to lead as full a life as possible.

## **Placements**

Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering will only offer a placement to a child or young person if they are sure that the child or young person's priority needs can be met. For a child or young person with a disability this will mean providing foster carers who are able to provide specialist care required and have suitable accommodation.

In some cases Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering and the Local Authority will be able to arrange for adaptation of the foster carers home and/or vehicle to make the placement possible.

## **Making the placement**

Once the placement has been agreed the Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering Social Worker will discuss with the local authority Social Worker and foster carer(s) what preparation and planning needs to take place before the placement is made.

Where possible, an introductory visit or visits are arranged. This gives the child or young person an opportunity to express an informed view on the placement and to get to know the foster carer's family before moving in.

The Local Authority Social Worker may also try to bring together the Channels and Choices Therapeutic Fostering foster carers and the previous carer (parent or foster carer). Being able to share information on the child or young person's daily routines, capabilities, habits, fears, likes and dislikes will help you settle the child or young person into the placement.

This will not always be possible especially where placements are made in emergencies or at short notice.

## Leisure activities and recreation

In 2003, the Government outlined through *Every Child Matters*, its aim to ensure that all children and young people should be provided with a range of opportunities for recreation and exercise.

Our own children generally tend to be naturally motivated and have the confidence to take on a wide range of activities such as horse riding, music and ballet lessons, or participation in the local or school sports e.g. football teams. However, research shows that for too many Looked After children the experience of separation and trauma or frequent placement moves often results in a lack of motivation or poor self-esteem that prohibits their participation in such extra-curricular activities.

Apart from the simple pleasure they can provide, leisure and recreational pursuits are an important part of a child's social education and development, as well as vital to the holistic development of the child's sense of 'self'.

Whether a leisure pursuit is just for enjoyment or perhaps one where a young person is particularly gifted, foster carers are expected to consult with young people for their wishes and encourage their participation in a range of activities.

A performance indicator from *Every Child Matters* is that children should participate in activities that provide them with at least two hours of physical activity each week. Foster carers will ensure, unless there is an agreed reason for not doing so, that children are provided with the opportunity to achieve this.

Involvement in any activities where there is a perceived risk or health & safety issues will only be allowed after discussion and agreement. Where needed, a Channels and Choices Therapeutic Supervising Social Worker will carry out a risk assessment and submit this to the child's Social Worker for their view and where necessary, agreement.

### Finding the right activity for children and young people

The child or young person's school is a good place to start research about what is age appropriate and available in the area. The local library will also house directories about the Arts, Music, Singing and Drama. Leisure Centres will have information about swimming, squash and Badminton groups/clubs etc.

The Internet is also a good way to glean information. [www.wizziwizz.co.uk](http://www.wizziwizz.co.uk) is a website that provides a one-stop-shop giving details of children's clubs, sports and activities as well as possible days out, shopping or holidays all over the UK. [www.localeye.info](http://www.localeye.info) and [www.vivastreet.co.uk](http://www.vivastreet.co.uk) are other websites with information about all kinds of workshops and activities in the Kent area.

If a foster carer believes a child for whom they are caring has hidden potential in a specific area, then they should try and find a resource that will enable that potential to be fulfilled. This will not only help build self-esteem, but will also develop the child's social skills and resilience.

Many organisations offer summer schools, or weekend workshops. Some will have regular weekend clubs or evening activities available in the local area. Many of them will offer discounted fees for children "in need" if approached on an individual basis.

The following is a list of companies and their contact numbers and websites, which may be helpful:

### *Music*

If a child shows an interest in learning to play a musical instrument, then the first thing to do is talk to either the music teacher at school, or the Headteacher and find out what is available on site. Alternatively, music teachers can be accessed through the local authority music service (the telephone number for this will be available through the County Council switchboard). The LEA music service should also be able to put you in touch with an independent local youth orchestra, if this is appropriate.

For a child to be taught privately on a 'one to one' Please discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker.

The Thanington School of Music in Canterbury is DBS checked and offers tuition for adults and children on a variety of instruments. Beginners are welcome.

Website: [www.freddunn.co.uk/music.html](http://www.freddunn.co.uk/music.html) Tel: 01227 768637

The following numbers may be helpful if local help is not forthcoming:

National Children's Wind Ensemble - Tel: 01582 713333

National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain – Tel: 01223 234090

National Youth Music Theatre – Tel: 0207 734 7484

### *Singing*

As with music, the first person to talk to about a child's interest in singing is the school's music teacher and/or the LEA before considering private singing teachers.

Again, if this does not provide a result then information concerning forthcoming attractions, general training or residential courses can be got from:

National Youth Choirs of Great Britain – Tel: 01484 687023

### *Drama & Dance*

If a foster child expresses a more general interest in the performing arts, then there are many national and local organisations that offer weekend clubs and activities throughout the school holidays. Use the websites listed above to search out them out although also check out the Chicken Shed Theatre Company who are establishing local branches throughout England. Chicken Shed specialises in “inclusion” and will encourage students at every level of ability and from any background to become involved in their projects.

Contact: [www.http.chicken-shed.org.uk](http://www.chicken-shed.org.uk) or telephone 0208 351 6161

National Youth Theatre of Great Britain - holds auditions between February and May around the country. If successful, there are two-week courses for 13-16 year olds at Easter, and three-week courses for 16-19 year olds in the summer. You must write in for an application form, or access one from the website. There is an audition fee. The National Youth Theatre does not offer concessions, but will help foster carers with information around sponsorship, if needed.

Contact: [www.nyt.org.uk](http://www.nyt.org.uk) or telephone 0207 281 3863

### *Sports*

There are various health and safety issues connected with some sporting activities, and age restrictions around such activities as “Body Building”. Discuss these with your Channels and Choices Therapeutic Supervising Social Worker before offering to organise something that may not be possible.

Before becoming involved in discussions around sports which may be seen as “aggressive” (although many Martial Arts are actually defensive) discuss the situation with your Supervising Social Worker. Activities such as boxing and wrestling may not be deemed suitable, and if the child concerned is “Accommodated” under Section 20, written consent may need to be obtained from the birth parents before any activity can begin.