

**Adoption West: Behaviour Management Policy**

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**1. Encouraging and Rewarding Children**

Whilst children bring their own values and behaviours to placements, early permanence carers play a key role in influencing children.

The culture of the home, generated by the carers, is crucial. Early permanence carers are expected to understand, manage and deal with young people's behaviour including encouraging children to take responsibility for their behaviour and help them to learn how to resolve conflict. A restrictive, unsupportive, discouraging and punishing culture will result in instability, hostility and possibly severe disruption.

All looked after placements should have clear, fair boundaries, where children feel safe, encouraged and appropriately rewarded, so that they will thrive and do well. Early permanence carers who adopt this approach will also experience less instability and disruption.

Early permanence carers should at all times endeavour to:

1. Listen to and empathise with children, respect their thoughts and feelings and take their wishes into consideration;
2. Look for things that are going well, or any step in the right direction, and appropriately reward it;
3. Use rewards in a creative and diverse way, specific to children's needs, capabilities and interests. This may sometimes mean that children are rewarded with toys, games, activities or monetary rewards. But all 'tangible' rewards should be accompanied by use of 'non-tangible' encouragement and support - by carers demonstrating to children that they have done well. Such 'non-tangible' rewards include praising, smiling, touching and hugging children.  
     
   Children usually benefit, early on, from rewards which may appear to outweigh that which 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 is 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 are appreciated;
   * A child who has previously been unable to get up for school may be offered a reward or activity for getting up on time for a few days;
   * However, it should also be borne in mind that some children cannot tolerate praise as it undermines the low perception they have of themselves. For these children smaller more specific praise is needed.

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.

**2. Minimum House Rules**

All carers should have a safe caring policy for their own household. This should be explained to children, with the reasons for the rules and they should also know that 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 these expectations should be known to children (depending on their age) before they are placed.

1. No smoking;
2. Keep own bedroom clean and tidy;
3. Do not go into any other bedroom;
4. Be dressed all the time;
5. If you have gone out, return home at the time your carer has said;
6. Always be where you say you will;
7. If you want to change your plans when you are out ask permission from your carer first;
8. Do not hurt any member of your foster family;
9. Do not hurt any pet of the foster family;
10. Homework must be done;
11. If you have been excluded from school, school work will be done at home;
12. When you use the bathroom or toilet always close the door;
13. If you have any problems try and talk to your carer;
14. Try to consider other people's feelings.

**3. Sanctions**

**3.1 Guidance on use of Sanctions**

Sanctions can be very effective but, before imposing them, think about it.

Most looked after children have come to view themselves, and are viewed, as failures. They have had their fill of sanctions, usually imposed inconsistently, unfairly or as acts of revenge.

Before imposing sanctions, Early permanence 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 video or TV at bedtime for getting up on time; rather than taking the TV away for getting up late. Same deal, different meaning!

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

**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. If misbehaviour persists or is serious, effective use of reprimands can act as a either a disincentive or a firm reminder. If this does not work, or may not, sanctions may be effective.

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, early permanence carers should apply the following principles:

1. Sanctions must be the exception, not the rule. A Last Resort;
2. Sanctions should not be imposed as an act of revenge or retaliation;
3. Think before imposing the sanction; don't apply it in the heat of the moment;
4. Sanctions should only be imposed upon children for persistent or serious misbehaviour where reminders and reprimands have already failed or are likely to fail;
5. Sanctions should only be used if there is a reasonable chance they will have the desired effect of making the point and in reducing or preventing further unacceptable behaviour;
6. 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;
7. It is the certainty not the severity of sanctions that is important;
8. Sanctions should only last as long as they need to, and allow the child the opportunity to make a fresh start as quickly as possible.

**3.2 Non-Approved Sanctions**

The following sanctions are not acceptable, which means they may never be imposed upon children:

1. Any form of corporal punishment; i.e. any intentional application of force as punishment, including slapping, punching, rough handling and throwing missiles;
2. Any sanction relating to the consumption or deprivation of food or drink;
3. 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. (NB This does not prevent contact or communication being restricted in exceptional circumstances, where it is necessary to do so to protect the child or others);
4. Any requirement that a child wear distinctive or inappropriate clothes;
5. The use or withholding of medication or medical or dental treatment;
6. The intentional deprivation of sleep;
7. The modification of a child's behaviour through bribery or the use of threats;
8. Any sanction used intentionally or unintentionally which may humiliate a child or could cause them to be ridiculed;
9. The imposition of any fine or financial penalty, other than a requirement for the payment of a reasonable sum by way of reparation;
10. Any intimate physical examination of a child;
11. The withholding of aids/equipment needed by a disabled child;
12. 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;
13. Swearing at or the use of foul, demeaning or humiliating language or measures.

\*The persons with whom the child may have contact, in relation to c. above, are:

1. Any officer of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service appointed for the child;
2. Any social worker for the time being assigned to the child by his or her placing authority;
3. Any person appointed in respect of any requirement of the procedure specified in the Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations 1991;
4. An Independent Visitor;
5. Any person authorised by the Regulatory Authority e.g. Ofsted;

**3.3 Approved Sanctions**

The following sanctions may be imposed upon children:

1. Confiscation or withdrawal of a telephone or mobile phone in order to protect a child or another person from harm, injury or to protect property from being damaged;
2. Restriction on sending or receiving letters or other correspondence (including the use of electronic or internet correspondence) in order to protect a child or another person from harm, injury or to protect property from being damaged;
3. Reparation, involving the child doing something to put right the wrong they have done; e.g.: repairing damage or returning stolen property;
4. Restitution, involving the child paying for all or part of 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 payment particularly large then the child's Social Worker should be informed of the matter;
5. Curtailment of leisure activities, involving a child being prevented from participating in such activities;
6. Additional chores, involving a child undertaking additional chores over and above those they would normally be expected to do;
7. Early bedtimes, by up to half an hour or as agreed with the child's Social Worker;
8. Removal of equipment, for example the use of a TV or video/DVD player;
9. Loss of privileges, for example the withdrawal of the privilege of staying up late;
10. Suspension of pocket money for short periods.

**3.4 Recording of Sanctions**

If a child receives a sanction it should be recorded by the early permanence carer on their daily recording log.

**4. Searching**

Early permanence carers are not permitted to conduct body searches, searches of clothing worn by children or of their bedrooms.

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.

**5. Serious Incidents and use of Physical Intervention**

In the event of any serious incident (e.g. accident, violence or assault, damage to property), Early permanence 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, Early permanence carers should not use any form or Physical Intervention except as a last resort to prevent themselves or others from being injured or to prevent serious damage to property. 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 early permanence carer(s) act unless they are confident of managing the situation safely, without escalation or further injury.

The early permanence carers should endeavour to deal with as many of the challenges 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 child's social worker and/or relevant senior manager from the local authority.

If any serious incident occurs or the Police are called, the child's social worker must be notified without delay and will then notify the relevant senior manager within the local authority and arrange for a full report to be made of the incident and actions taken. The Regulatory Authority must also be notified.

Any use of physical intervention, or any serious incident, must be fully recorded in the early permanence carers daily log and reported immediately to the agency.