16 OVERNIGHT STAYS

Looked after children should as far as possible be granted the same permissions to take part in normal and acceptable age appropriate peer activities as would be reasonably be granted by the parents of their peers.

Looked after children and young people naturally want to do the same things as their non-looked after peers, and will sometimes ask to stay overnight at the home of a friend. Overnight stays, where appropriate, should be allowed.

Decisions on overnight stays should in most circumstances be delated to foster carers and residential care staff and arrangements for such decisions should be written into the Placement Plan.

The Government’s intention is that foster carers should be able to make decisions about overnights stays as if the fostered child was their own child, and act as a protective parent would. The delegated authority to the foster carer to make decisions about overnight stays should be set out in the Placement Plan, along with restrictions on overnight stays that may be necessary in exceptional circumstances. (Supporting Placement Planning; handbook on delegated authority 2011)

There is no statutory duty for DBS checks to be carried out on adults in a private household where a child may stay overnight. DBS checks should not be sought as a precondition of an overnight stay.

Good practice guidelines:

At the beginning of each placement there should be a discussion about overnight stays. This discussion should normally take place at the Placement Planning meeting and needs to involve the child / young person, parent, carer, social worker and supervising social worker.

The child or young person should be involved in the formation of the agreement. The child should be given reasons for all the decisions.

Regardless of how much authority is delegated to them, the carer is never prohibited from consulting the social worker if they so wish.

The name and address of anyone whose contact with the child or young person is restricted or forbidden, and details of any court order or recommendation restricting contact, should be given at the Placement Planning meeting, and recorded in the placement information record.

Further clarification required:

Delegated Authority Policy (October 2013)

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