

Placement Request Guidance: Being Trauma-Informed in our Placement Requests

The Purpose of this Guidance

To ensure our placement requests are trauma-informed and present a balanced and positive picture of the children and young people we are seeking homes for. We want to ensure placement searches achieve the Right Placement, First Time for all children and young people. By being trauma-informed, we are more likely to find the right home for children and young people that meets their longer-term needs.

How Our Children and Young People Adapt to Trauma

When we search for homes for children and young people, we need to consider risks and any concerns we have for them and anybody else that they might be living with. In doing so, we need to think about the language we use to describe behaviours and presentation and the context of this. Not only is this the right thing to do for any description or narrative we write about a child / young person, it also means we are more likely to be successful in finding a suitable home for them that is appropriately 'matched'.

Instead of talking about 'what is wrong' with a child or young person; talk about 'what has happened' to that child or young person and consequently how they present, at times.

Some suggestions for context we might offer, around certain presenting behaviours:

Experiences in earlier childhood	Presenting behaviours
Being coerced, forced, frightened into doing things.	Avoidance, not turning up, not engaging, withdrawing.
Being neglected, dismissed, unheard, unseen.	Not seeking or accepting help, not talking, not sharing information.
Being lied to, being told to lie, not being believed.	Lying.
Being betrayed by trusted adults.	Not trusting anyone, being hostile and angry.
Being made to feel inferior, powerless, disempowered.	Not taking responsibility for own actions.
Being hurt, harmed, wounded, put at risk.	Engaging in dangerous and dramatic behaviours.

Suggestions for Ways to Mitigate / Support:

It's crucial we are clear about what can help this particular child or young person when they are presenting distressed or struggling to regulate their emotions. Here are some suggestions to consider based on your knowledge of them. Do speak with parents, previous carers and most importantly the child or young person themselves to find out what has helped and worked well in the past.

- Transparency / being open and honest with them.
- Curiosity rather than making statements about them – “I wonder....”
- Flexibility – “Oh sorry, I misunderstood...”
- Acknowledgement – “I’m aware this is yet another change for you....”
- Compassion – “I am sorry this happened to you...”
- Validation – “That sounds upsetting...”
- Gratitude – “Thank you for telling me...”
- Normalising the responses that they have, based on the trauma they’ve experienced.
- Mentalising – “Oh, you thought I was angry? What I was actually thinking was...”

One of the simplest ways to support children and young people who have experienced trauma is to give them choice and control. Be sure to capture the views of the child or young person, in a meaningful way that gives them as much choice and control as it is safe to do so.

Questions to Consider:

- When has this child or young person’s presentation been different? What was different about the occasion? Was something done that left them feeling safer?
- What could we offer/propose/request to reduce the impact of trauma and help this child or young person to be successful in any future home they move to?
- When ‘rupture’ occurs; how will all involved be supported to ‘repair’ this? How will opportunity be given to adults to think about how they could have responded differently? How will adults be better prepared to respond to the trauma in the future?
- How do we ensure the rupture does not lead to a single story of the child or young person and labelling children or young people e.g. ‘aggressive or violent’?

- Is a preoccupation with risk presenting a barrier to working with someone in a trauma-informed way?

- Have you acknowledged strengths? This child or young person will have shown strength and resilience in a variety of ways to the trauma and loss they have experienced. We need to be clear about the strengths that must be present to have achieved this.

Research & Further Information

- Research in Practice - <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/children/publications/2018/august/trauma-informed-approaches-with-young-people-frontline-briefing-2018/>
- Van der Kolk, B. (2015) The Body Keeps the Score. Penguin.

Version	Name	Role	Approved By
V1. & V.2 January 2021	Karl Knill	Placements Team Manager	Rachel Nall Principal Social Worker
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