

# SHORT-TERM BREAKS POLICY



## Introduction

Short-term breaks (sometimes referred to as respite care) are most commonly used as part of a package of support to children and families to prevent the need for a longer period of accommodation.

While historically short-term breaks have been used most frequently for children with a disability, often to give their primary carers a break, increasingly the value of short-term breaks for other children is being recognised.

In such circumstances, the parents usually remain the primary carers for the child and this policy seeks to recognise the specific needs of such children and the approach necessary by parents, staff and carers to meet these needs.

## Statutory Framework

The activities of both foster carers and fostering services are governed by the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

The Standards require fostering services to have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

They also require different arrangements, where appropriate, from those children being fostered for longer periods and that in particular, parents remain central to the promotion of health and education needs.

## Carers Providing Short-term Breaks

Applications from potential carers who wish to offer short-term breaks will be welcomed by Foster Care Link and we believe that such carers enhance the service we are able to offer referring agencies and children and their families.

All Carers providing short-term breaks will be assessed, approved, supervised and supported as any other carer approved by Foster Care Link.

## Practice Issues

Referrals of children for short-term breaks will be dealt with in accordance with Foster Care Link's usual policies and procedures.

While consideration of matches with carers specifically approved to provide short-term breaks would be seen as a priority, potential matches will not be restricted to such carers. The aim will always be to identify the most appropriate match.

Foster Care Link will seek to ensure that children referred for short-term breaks are wherever possible placed with the same carer on each occasion a placement is needed.

The frequency and length of short-term breaks must be agreed in advance by the primary carer, the foster carer, the referring agency, Foster Care Link and, if of

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sufficient age and understanding, the child. No changes to these arrangements will be allowed without the prior approval of Foster Care Link.

The usual planning and review requirements apply to short-term breaks. Foster Care Link will expect carers to be provided with all relevant paperwork in respect of the child, including LAC Essential Information Records and Care Plans.

A placement agreement meeting will be expected prior to the commencement of a series of short-term breaks and the primary carer will normally be expected to attend such a meeting.

The child's social worker and primary carer will be expected to meet with the foster carer on a regular basis to review the child's progress, both in and outside the placement.

The primary carer will retain the central responsibility for promoting the child's health care and educational needs and is expected to attend any necessary appointments or meetings.

The foster carer's role in meeting the child's needs, including those in respect of health and education must be made explicit in the Placement and Care Plans.

The foster carer will be expected to inform the primary carer and the child's social worker of any significant incidents in relation to the child as they occur and ensure the primary carer is fully briefed on how the placement has gone at the end of each short-term break.