

DIVERSITY POLICY



Introduction

This paper has been produced to outline to children, parents, foster carers and social workers Foster Care Link's policy on valuing diversity.

Statutory framework

Section 22 (5)(c) of the Children Act 1989 states that when making any decision with respect to a child whom they are looking after or propose to look after or accommodate, the responsible authority should give due consideration to the child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011 requires fostering services to ensure that children and their families are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality (Standard 2).

Further requirements are imposed by the Standards include:

- providing each child and family access to foster care services which recognise and address their needs – this could include gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, and disability
- the need to provide carers with training in:
 - enhancing children's confidence and self-worth
 - respecting and preserving children's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background
 - supporting children in developing skills to help deal with all forms of discrimination
- the need to provide a child with a disability specific services and support to help her/him to maximise her/his potential and to lead as full a life as possible

Matching

Wherever possible children will be placed with carers that match their assessed racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic background. This includes sensitivity to the sects of Islam, and to the specific identities of other communities.

Where transracial or transcommunity placements are made, the carer will be provided with additional support, training and information to enable the child to be provided with the best possible care and to develop a positive understanding of her/his heritage.

If a placement is made in an emergency that is unsuitable in terms of the above, Foster Care Link will work with the referring agency to achieve an alternative, appropriate match within six weeks, even if this means placing with another fostering service provider.

See also Foster Care Link's Matching Policy.

Challenging Discrimination

Looked after children are amongst the most disadvantaged groups in our society. Many looked after children are further disadvantaged by the effects of discrimination because of their race, culture, language, religion or disability.

DIVERSITY POLICY



All staff and carers have a duty to challenge discrimination whenever and wherever it occurs. While this will be of particular importance when the discrimination is aimed at a looked after child, staff and carers should also be aware of the need to challenge discrimination aimed at others. By doing so looked after children will be provided with appropriate role models and be given the message that discrimination is wrong and should be challenged.

Where children see discrimination challenged and diversity valued they are also likely to form more secure attachments and develop enhanced confidence and feeling of self-worth.

Where a looked after child expresses discriminatory views these too must be challenged. Staff and carers should explain to the child why such views are damaging and offensive and that they will not be tolerated.

All allegations of discrimination by staff or carers will be investigated, with proven discrimination by staff or carers likely to lead to dismissal or de-registration.

Promoting Equality

Foster Care Link recognises that there are groups in society that face disadvantage and discrimination. As an organisation that specialises in providing services to these groups, it will strive to counteract this through a policy of equal opportunities for all in relation to all Foster Care Link activities and services.

Foster Care Link's equal opportunities policy seeks to ensure that, within the framework of the law, no service user receives less favourable treatment on grounds such as gender, marital status, disability, ethnicity, religious beliefs, age, sexual orientation or any other form of discrimination not aforementioned but applicable under UK and EU law.

Foster Care Link expects all staff and carers to abide by this policy, but also expects staff and carers to actively promote equality of opportunity by valuing diversity in all its forms.

Carers should ensure that children are exposed to experiences that celebrate diversity. This can be achieved in a number of ways including:

- the provision of appropriate play and reading materials
- visits to museums and other appropriate places of interest
- encouraging the child to form relationships with a diverse circle of friends
- ensuring the avoidance of stereo-typical roles within the foster household
- adults providing a positive role model and demonstrating a value and appreciation of difference
- encouraging the child to explore and develop their talents, interests and hobbies

Supporting Carers and Children

Foster Care Link expects carers to play a central role in ensuring that:

DIVERSITY POLICY



- children receive care which respects and preserves their ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background
- children are supported and encouraged to develop skills to help them deal with all forms of discrimination
- children are given encouragement to develop and pursue their talents interests and hobbies

Carers will be helped to achieve this through the provision of training and specific support, including financial support where necessary from the placing authority.

This will apply to all children, but Foster Care Link will seek to ensure for a child with a disability the provision of specific services and support to help her/him to maximise her/his potential and to lead as full a life as possible, including accessing as wide a range of activities as is possible for the child.

Services and support provided may include specialist equipment and adaptation of the carer's home and or vehicle. Foster Care Link will expect the placing authority to meet the costs of such practical support.

Foster Carer Training

Fostering services are required to ensure that foster carer's are provide with training in:

- enhancing children's confidence and self-worth
- respecting and preserving children's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background
- supporting children in developing skills to help deal with all forms of discrimination

These areas will be addressed in the Choosing to Foster Course that all applicants must attend before they can be approved as Foster Care Link carers.

In addition all carers must also complete a mandatory programme of training within two years of being approved as a carer. This programme includes the following courses to aimed at meeting the requirements of:

1. Preserving children's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background and helping children deal with all forms of discrimination
2. Working with social workers to enhance the child's confidence and self-worth
3. Building and maintaining children's self-esteem

Carers approved to foster children with disabilities will also be required to complete the course Caring for Children with Disabilities within two years of being approved as a carer.

Further relevant training will be provided as part of Foster Care Link's ongoing training programme.

Supervising social workers should ensure that they pay attention to the training needs of carers and other members of their household, addressing these in the appraisal of training and development needs, which must be documented in the annual review report. Social workers should encourage carers to make use of any available training opportunities run by Foster Care Link or external agencies.