

Guidance relating to the intervention and support offered to sons and daughters who foster with AFA

Whilst foster carers are the people who are approved to foster, it has to be recognised and acknowledged throughout the system that whole families are involved in the fostering task. In order for placements to be successful, it is essential that there is an increased awareness amongst all those involved in fostering of the importance of the role of sons and daughters of foster carers. For this to be fully recognised and for cultural change to be achieved everyone involved in foster care must:

- Recognise and acknowledge the importance of the role played by the sons and daughters of foster carers
- Ensure that the views and wellbeing of sons and daughters are taken into consideration throughout the fostering process and experience, from assessment, matching and placement, to placement endings and contact beyond placement
- Provide recognition and where appropriate, rewards, to sons and daughters
- Provide a range of support services to sons and daughters which promote their welfare and assist them in their role within the fostering service.

It is important to acknowledge that sons and daughters have no statutory responsibilities within fostering and therefore there must be no element of compulsion in their taking up any of the support opportunities on offer.

All the following recommendations refer to sons and daughters without any reference to their age or understanding. Clearly they need to be interpreted in ways that take account of the age and understanding of the son or daughter.

The following guidance will be followed by the agency:

1. In line with good practice and regulations, consider the views and the wellbeing of sons and daughters of foster carers at all stages in the fostering process, and provide appropriate support as required:
 - At the initial recruitment stage, gathering information on their views and thoughts about fostering and the types of child/young person they would be happy to welcome into their home
 - Identifying what information and support they need in order to understand their role in a fostering family and to be comfortable with it
 - During placements, when they will be consulted with as part of their parent/s annual review
 - As placements end, in considering issues of loss and separation and the possibility of ongoing contact with the foster family.
2. Designate a worker as the key contact for sons and daughters so that there is a channel for them to register their questions, concerns or complaints. This worker will ensure that sons and daughters know how to gain advice directly from the service, particularly when needed urgently. Prior to their parent/s approval this worker will be the person undertaking the Form F assessment, and following approval it will be the family's Placement Manager.
3. Provide sons and daughters of foster carers with a range of services which promote their wellbeing, which assist them in the challenges they face through their involvement

in fostering, and give recognition and reward for this role. Access should be age-appropriate and available through many sources including web sites, email groups and face to face contact. Children who foster will have:

- The opportunity to build a relationship with a key individual in the fostering team and to be able to speak with them from time to time and on request
 - Access to a support group that is fully funded on a permanent basis and that provides an opportunity to meet with other sons and daughters
 - Opportunities to receive further information/awareness raising on matters related to foster care
 - Appropriate recognition from a person in authority (e.g. an annual letter of thanks, a trip or a thank you present).
4. Ensure that the foster panel are properly trained and informed so that they fully understand the impact of fostering on sons and daughters and take into account the views and welfare of sons and daughters when making their recommendations and decisions.
 5. Encourage the practice of sons and daughters having quality time with their parents.
 6. AFA ensures that foster carers are aware they are entitled to a break. If respite is part of a plan in a permanent placement, it is important that it is handled sensitively so that children can feel positive about arrangements that are made for them when their foster carers take a break.
 7. Have clear policies regarding safe caring and the management of allegations which state clearly:
 - The expectation that sons and daughters have the necessary age-appropriate knowledge in order to function in a safe caring environment
 - Ensure that the Placement Manager sees sons and daughters on their own at least twice a year at a time suitable for the child who fosters, and more frequently if that is requested, in order to build up a positive, trusting relationship with them.