**Meeting the placement needs of children**

This learning activity supports:

* Topic 9: Communicating effectively with children and young people
* Topic 13: Matching
* Topic 14: Placement stability and permanence
* Topic 15: Managing risks and benefits of contact
* Topic 16: working with birth parents

This exercise has been adapted from the Fostering Now Fostering Service Development Exercises[[1]](#endnote-1).

**Method**

Suitable for a small group discussion in a team meeting or as part of a facilitated workshop.

**Learning Outcome**

* To identify the child’s or young person’s needs in relation to placement.
* To explore priorities of need.
* To work out how best to address gaps in meeting children’s needs in existing placements.

**Time Required**

60minutes (40 minutes in pairs with 20 minutes whole group feedback).

**Process**

Working in pairs,read the introduction andthink about a child or young person you know who has been, or is in foster care.

Use the hand-out to identify the child’s or young person’s needs under each of the headings and:

* prioritise those needs,
* identify your reasons for prioritising particular needs,
* consider what difficulties there may be in meeting those needs.

Be prepared to feedback your ideas to the whole group.

**Introduction**

*Longer staying foster children want normality, a family which accepts them, respect for their origins, an important voice in decisions about them and a springboard to a better life. Most probably need an experience of ‘good enough parenting’, support for developing or maintaining attachments, encouragement to enjoy school and do well there, and support for developing a sense of identity.*

Fostering Now: Messages from Research (Sinclair 2005: 57)[[2]](#endnote-2)

**Key Points to consider**

* The complex nature of the matching process/finding the right placement.
* Attention paid to individuality and detail (e.g. over the precise nature of contact).
* The voice of the child – listening to what the child wants.
* Involving family members.
* The importance of relationships.
* How important these issues are in discussions with social workers.

**Hand-out**

| **What children want**  | **Specific child or young person’s needs**  | **Are needs being met? If so, how? If not, what are the gaps?**  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Relationships with foster carers AND parents and siblings |  |  |
| Not to feel the odd one out in the family, to belong |  |  |
| Warmth and encouragement |  |  |
| Discipline that they see as reasonable |  |  |
| Appropriate contact with close and extended family, and other adults they are close to |  |  |
| Appropriate contact with friends |  |  |
| Knowledge of their care plan  |  |  |
| Respect and attention for their origins and identity including ethnicity, religious beliefs and practice  |  |  |
| To be treated as normal, not singled out as different |  |  |
| A clear sense of identity, and understanding about their situation |  |  |
| An opportunity to grow and develop in a safe environment |  |  |
| A good education and a chance to acquire skills, including skills in later life |  |  |
| An opportunity to grow and develop in a safe environment |  |  |
| To keep in touch after the placement ends |  |  |

1. Research in Practice (2005) Fostering Now: Fostering Service Development Exercises [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Sinclair, I. (2005) *Fostering Now: Messages from Research*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)