**Key questions**

**Methods**

Suitable for self–directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

**Learning Outcome**

To review the interpersonal characteristics that help to build and maintain positive relationships.

**Time Required**

30 minutes review and 30 minutes reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

**Process**

Think of a recent case where positive relationships have been built and maintained and answer the following questions:

* What are the signs of personal chemistry?
* What are the indicators of success or otherwise that you might observe between the prospective carer and child on visits or at meetings?
* What questions could you ask the child afterwards? (Think of questions that would be appropriate at different ages and stages in the process.)
* What methods can you use to build an understanding of the child’s views – for example, through a learning mentor or friend of the child?

**Key questions**

**Methods**

Suitable for self–directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

**Learning Outcome**

To review the interpersonal characteristics that help to involve children and young people in discussions.

**Time Required**

30 minutes review and 30 minutes reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

**Process**

Think of a number of recent cases where you have involved/or had difficulty involving children and young people in discussions and answer the following questions:

* What helps or hinders the development of a strong relationship between the child and their social worker?
* What approaches have enabled you to involve children and young people in discussions?
* What can you or your service do to make sure social workers are able to invest in these relationships?

**Key questions for information sharing and communication**

**Methods**

Suitable for self–directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

**Learning Outcome**

To review how information can be shared and effectively communicated.

**Time Required**

30 minutes review and 30 minutes reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

**Process**

Think of a number of recent cases where information has been successfully/less successfully shared and communicated and answer the following questions:

* What do you and your agency perceive to be child-friendly information?
* What might children and young people want to know?
* Bearing in mind that children who are anxious may find it difficult to listen, how can you and the other professionals involved ensure that information is heard and retained by children and young people?
* How can children, young people and foster carers be supported to prepare – including in an emergency?

**Group discussion points for the team around the child**

**Methods**

Suitable for a group discussion as part of a team meeting or facilitated session for the team around the child.

**Learning Outcome**

To identify and clarify the roles of each team member.

**Time Required**

30 minutes discussion.

**Process**

Discuss the role of each member of the team around the child in the matching process including the child’s social worker, the supervising social worker, the independent reviewing officer, the foster carer and the birth parents.

* What are the roles and responsibilities of each of the team members?
* How can you facilitate a better understanding between team members?

**Meeting the placement needs of children**

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 |  |  |

**Meeting Needs**

**Methods**

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

**Learning Outcome**

To review how needs are assessed and identify ways of measuring if they have been met.

**Time**

30 minutes plus 10 minutes feedback, if the discussion is part of a facilitated workshop.

**Process**

Consider DfE Guidance, Standard 15 and work in a small group to discuss the questions below.

**Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (DfE 2011) Standard 15**

*The fostering service only suggests foster carers to local authorities as a potential match for a child if the foster carer can reasonably be expected to meet the child’s assessed needs and the impact of the placement on existing household members has been considered.*

* What do we mean by needs?
* What might influence our assessment of needs?
* What do we mean by meeting needs and do we all have the same idea?
* How will we know if we have succeeded in meeting needs?
* What criteria could we measure this by?

Questions from David Quinton (2012) *Rethinking Matching in Adoptions from Care[[3]](#endnote-3)*

**Information Sharing – the perspectives of carers and children**

**Methods**

Suitable for a discussion in a team meeting using information on a BAAF Form E relating to a known child. Alternatively it can be used in a facilitated workshop with the facilitator preparing a Form E, as a hand-out for participants, drawing on phrases and statements that are commonly used. Flip chart paper and pens are required for small group discussion.

**Learning Outcome**

To promote understanding of what prospective carers and children need to know.

**Time Required**

40 minutes (includes 20 minutes for small group discussion).

**Process**

Divide the larger group into two and give everyone time to read the Form E (10 minutes).

* One group should consider the content from the perspective of a foster carer.
* What other information or clarification would they need if the child were coming to live with them next Monday?
* If they have other children living with them, what additional information may they need?
* One group should consider the content from the perspective of the child.
* What would the child want to know about the family and their household?
* What will be important to this child?
* What would they need reassuring about?
* Whole group discussion to consider key learning points from exercise. (10 minutes).

**Involving children and parents in placement decisions**

**Method**

Suitable for a small group discussion in a team meeting or as part of a facilitated workshop. Additional prompts to discussion are provided for a longer session.

**Learning Outcome**

To review your everyday practice and identify actions that could improve children’s involvement in planning and decision-making.

**Time Required**

40minutes or 60 minutes if the prompts for further exploration are used.

**Process**

Consider the findings of The Care Inquiry in relation to involving children and parents in placement decisions.

Work in a small group to discuss:

1. The practice in your team.
2. What is working well in involving children in decisions about their life?
3. Where are the gaps or barriers and how can these be overcome?
4. What steps can be taken in your team to promote and support children‘s involvement in planning and decision-making?
5. Use the prompts (below) for further exploration if longer sessions are planned.

|  |
| --- |
| [**The Care Inquiry 2013 - Making not Breaking: building relationships for our most vulnerable children**](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/Care%20Inquiry%20-%20Full%20Report%20April%202013.pdf)  **RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT INVOLVEMENT**  **Involving children in decisions about their life**  Everyone involved in decisions about children in care must value the active contribution that children and young people can make to decisions about their life. This requires a willingness to promote and support that involvement. |

|  |
| --- |
| Before any placement with carers who are unknown to the child, including in an emergency, children and young people should receive child-friendly information about the family and home to which they are moving, provided by the carers.  Children and young people should be fully involved in decisions about where, and with whom, they live, and their views must be taken into account. For example: local authorities should identify more than one suitable placement and should involve the child or young person in identifying which is best for them, and other than when they move in an emergency, children and young people should visit or try out a placement before a final decision is made.  **Involving parents**  Save in exceptional circumstances, parents should be helped to be involved constructively in planning and decision-making for their child. This will enable children to have continuing relationships with people who are important to them.  **Prompts for further discussion**  *In a consultation[[4]](#endnote-4) children said they would prefer placements to be open-ended not initially thought of as permanent so they could try them out. Discuss the implications of this.*  *How much weight is given to a child’s view about a placement?*  *If all other parties were in agreement would you try and persuade a child to give it a go if they said they didn’t want to?*  *What message does this give the child?*  *What would a child need to say or what behaviour would they present that would make you rethink the match?*  *Birth parents have said they want* ***information****,* ***involvement*** *and* ***understanding*** *(Schofield 2010.)*  *Discuss how you could involve a birth parent in matching decision, what difficulties might arise and how can these be overcome?* |

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)
3. Quinton,D. (2012) Rethinking matching in adoptions from care, BAAF Publications, London. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. OCRD. (2012) Consultation with Children. The Ministers Discussion Group with Young People on Being in Care: *A children’s views report* Office of the Children’s Rights Director for England London, OCRD. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)