

Multiple topics

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 Exercises¹.

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

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

Process

Working in pairs, read the introduction and think 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

Multiple topics

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)ⁱⁱ

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.

Multiple topics

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		

Multiple topics

What children want	Specific child or young person's needs	Are needs being met? If so, how? If not, what are the gaps?
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		

ⁱ Research in Practice (2005) *Fostering Now: Fostering Service Development Exercises*

ⁱⁱ Sinclair, I. (2005) *Fostering Now: Messages from Research*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London.