



fostering  
therapeutically  
SINCE 1987

## Participation and Consultation

### SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

#### STANDARD 1

**The child's wishes and feelings and the views of those significant to them**

#### OUTCOME

- Children know that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care; are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act on their wishes in all circumstances; and know how to obtain support and make a complaint;
- The views of others with an important relationship with the child are gathered and taken into account.

### UNDERPINNING LEGISLATION

#### **Fostering Regulations:**

- Reg. 11 - Independent fostering agencies - duty to secure welfare;
- Reg. 18 - Independent fostering agencies - representations and complaints

#### **Children Act 1989:**

- S.22 - General duties of local authority in relation to children looked after by them;
- SS.61 and 62 - duties of voluntary organisations and local authorities in relation to children accommodated by or on behalf of the voluntary organisation.

### RELATED POLICIES

**Complaints, Representations and Compliments Policy and Procedure**

**Complaints Procedure for children and young people**

## RELATED INFORMATION

### Hear by Right – National Youth Agency

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## 1. Introduction

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Everyone involved in the receipt and delivery of services should be consulted about decisions which may affect them. This includes children, their parents, other significant family members and those charged with providing the service; including managers, staff, carers and professionals or colleagues from other agencies.

This means that people's views should be sought and taken into account in relation to all decisions which are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Consultation should take place on a regular and frequent basis with those who need to be consulted and assumptions should not be made about the inability or lack of interest of those who should be consulted.

Consultation should be carried out with children in a form they will understand in either their preferred language or using an appropriate alternative method of communication. Methods of consultation may include postal surveys, group discussions or exit interviews.

If, as a result of the consultation, change is not possible or is restricted for whatever reason, steps should be taken to ensure those affected and involved are informed of decisions as soon as practicable after they are made. An explanation for the decision should be given.

## 2. Children and Young People's Participation

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Participation of children and young people in decisions about their lives is an essential part of growing up and, if done well, it enhances children's safety and well-being and improves services designed to support and protect them. To be done well, it requires a commitment at all levels of an organisation to reflect on and promote:

- Positive attitudes to children and young people;
- Skills at communicating;
- Appropriate resources;
- Commitment to developing services which support children's participation.

ISP recognises that the quality of care that young people receive will affect their life chances more than anything else, and that the agency's services will be enhanced by listening attentively to the information provided by young people.

ISP also believes that the young people placed in our care will be more knowledgeable about what happens within the caring environment than many of those who look after them. Prior to their admission, they will (in the main) have experienced a variety of different caring environments and styles of parenting.

It is therefore very important that we are communicative with them and our stakeholders. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child stresses very clearly that children have a right to have their views heard on decisions that affect their lives. To this end, through our quality assurance systems, ISP will endeavour to take children's views seriously.

This means that young people will be helped to understand why they have been placed with foster parents, and be supported and involved in their Care Plans. They will be helped to understand their rights, to make choices and to consider all options available to them.

Throughout a child or young person's stay, their foster parents work as a team with ISP staff and other professionals, all of whom contribute to the care planning for each young person.

It is important that young people's views are sought about their progress and the care that they are receiving. Prior to each Statutory Review, foster parents encourage young people to contribute to the reports that are prepared about them.

Consultation should take place on a regular and frequent basis and assumptions should not be made about the inability or lack of interest of those who should be consulted. Therefore, a staff member sees children alone at least four times a year. The supervising social worker completes one of these visits.

Where people have communication difficulties of any sort, suitable means must be provided to enable them to be consulted. This includes access to advocates or representatives who may speak on their behalf. Consultation should be undertaken in a creative manner.

If action following consultation is not possible, or is restricted, for whatever reason, steps should be taken to ensure children and young people are informed of the decisions as soon as practicable thereafter. An explanation should be given, and the young person involved given the opportunity to make a comment and express their views.

If decisions are made against young people's wishes, they should be informed of the decision and the reasons for the decision should be explained. In these circumstances, the young person should be informed of any rights they have to formally challenge the decision, for example by way of the agency's complaints procedure.

ISP will ensure that children have access on a confidential basis to independent advice and support from adults who they can contact directly about problems and concerns, at a level which is appropriate for their age and understanding. Children are informed of their rights to advocacy, and of how to access an advocate or contact the **Children's Commissioner**. This information is provided within the ISP Children's Guide, which is given to children and young people at the start of placement.

### **3. The Role of the Manager**

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Managers must ensure that staff and carers have the time and resources available to them to ensure the effective participation of children and young people. This includes:

- Using supervision to consider issues relating to the voice of the child in on-going cases;
- Review complaints or concerns raised by children and young people and what actions have been taken to address these;

- Review compliments to build on these;
- Consider how representative issues raised by children and young people are in relation to such issues as gender, culture, sexuality and disability;
- Ensure processes designed to gather issues raised by stakeholders including children and young people are in place and are routinely being used, reviewed and assessed for their impact;
- Ensure Children are seen alone so they can share their views, wishes and feelings at least four times a year. The supervising social worker should complete one of these visits.
- Ensure processes are in place to provide feedback to stakeholders including children and young people what changes have been made and if not why not.

Unless otherwise stated in specific procedures in this manual, it is assumed that people working in this organisation will take reasonable steps to keep their managers informed of their actions; and will consult and seek their approval where they do not have decision-making responsibility delegated to them.

In order to facilitate this, managers must ensure that effective lines of communication are established and maintained.

#### **4. Consultation with Stakeholders**

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In addition to the views of the child, the agency will gather similar information from "significant others" in the child's life, social workers and commissioning bodies.