



## Respite Policy

### Introduction

This policy concerns the provision of respite breaks for foster parents. The overall aim of respite is to support placement stability.

ISP recognises that fostering has a significant impact on all members of the household and acknowledges the need for adults and children to be able to access planned periods of respite throughout the year.

There will also be some occasions when the foster child and foster family will need time apart due to particular circumstances which may require emergency respite to be arranged.

ISP is committed to providing up to 22 nights' respite per year for foster families as a way of ensuring that foster parents and their families have a chance throughout the year to re-charge their batteries and have adult and family time together.

N.B. The term 'respite' can have negative connotations for children and young people. Alternative terminology can be used in practice and should be used when discussing the break with a child.

### The child's view

Some children enjoy a change of environment, and view respite as a 'holiday', with a welcome change from the usual day-to-day household routine. For other children, however, respite can provoke feelings of uncertainty and anxiety and change can be disorientating. It is important that respite is well-planned and that, wherever possible, children's wishes are respected. Respite arrangements must reflect a child-centred approach, and respite will not ordinarily be agreed if it coincides with children's birthdays or other significant dates such as religious festivals. Respite within school term time can only be approved where arrangements support the child's school routine.

We aim to provide continuity of respite care, so that the child can develop a relationship with the respite family and enjoy their time away from home. Some children prefer to

remain in the foster home, and this can be achieved if there is a family member who can move in while the foster parent is away. Alternatively, children may go to stay with members of their foster parent's extended family, or close family friends with whom they are familiar. These families can become 'accredited' with ISP to provide respite care for the children of specific foster families.

When a child is due to stay with an unfamiliar family, it is important that introductory visits take place. Children need to feel accepted and welcomed by respite families and they will need clear information about what to expect in the new home environment and how long they will be staying for. To ensure the success of all respite placements, clear agreements must be reached between the full time carers and respite carers as to each child's needs and routines.

Although it may not always be possible, some children will benefit from continued contact with their foster family during the break, for example a telephone or video call to reassure them that they are held in mind while they are apart.

## **Outline of provision**

- Families can choose to take up to 22 nights' respite each year. The calendar year runs from 1 April to 31 March.
- Should additional respite be required in exceptional circumstances (e.g. emergencies or to support placement stability), this must be agreed with the Registered/Centre Manager.
- Foster parents taking a respite break will be paid their usual 'foster parent fee' but not the 'child allowance' element of their usual full weekly fee. Current rates can be seen in the Foster Parent Finance Handbook.
- The family providing respite will receive their full weekly fostering fee, including the 'child allowance'.
- Respite will not usually be agreed within two months of a child coming in to placement.
- Respite will not ordinarily be agreed if it coincides with children's birthdays or other significant dates such as religious festivals.
- Respite requested during school term time can only be approved if arrangements support the child's school routine.

- A period of respite will not normally exceed two consecutive weeks.
- Respite placements will ordinarily be with approved ISP foster parents or respite carers. In exceptional circumstances, respite may be arranged with foster families from another agency within the Polaris Community or the child's local authority may agree specific alternative arrangements which must be discussed and arranged via the centre.
- There is no provision for the payment of respite not taken during the calendar year, nor the 'carrying over' of untaken respite.

### **Arrangements for respite**

- Written permission from the children's local authority social workers must be sought by ISP and agreement given if placing alongside other children.
- At least one month's notice is required for a respite request, unless respite is a response to an emergency situation.
- Foster parents should not book a holiday before the respite request has been accepted.
- The foster parent should discuss their respite request with their fostering advisor. They should then complete a Respite Request and Matching Report in detail and return this to the fostering advisor. This will be shared with the identified respite foster family.
- The respite foster parent will discuss the referral with their own fostering advisor.
- Foster parents and respite foster parents should liaise over transport of the child between homes. ISP does not provide transport for respite.
- Where possible, all respite requests will be organised within the child's own centre, by fostering advisers and SSWs in consultation with the Registered/Centre Manager and local authority social workers.
- It is a requirement that the child's views regarding respite placements are sought and taken into account when making decisions about respite. The child's view should be clearly recorded on the respite request form.