

Caring for children and young people



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Unit SC14-Establish, sustain and disengage from relationships with clients

Legislation, policy and good practice

Question 4

The answers to question 1 and 3 influence the development of a relationship with a child a great deal. Due to the Foster Care Regulations which I explained in question 1 outline all the duties for the foster carer which enables them to tend to the individual needs of the children depending on their personality and background. This helps develop a relationship, as the child feels safe, secure and trust you because you are treating them as an individual and seeing to their needs. By the child knowing what he/she can and cannot do and the foster carers knowing what they can and cannot do makes it easier for a relationship to develop as the child and foster carers know what to expect from each other and what is required of them in order for a smooth relationship to be sustained and by knowing all these things enables the foster carers and child to concentrate on forming and developing a stable relationship.

When fostering there a number of meetings, which take place in, order to monitor the progress of the child such as reviews and P. E. P meetings. These are to insure that the development of the child is heading in the right direction. This can help and hinder the development of a relationship between the child and the foster carers. They help as they give the child an opportunity to voice their opinions regarding how they are being looked after, what changes need to be made and generally how their life is going. This helps, as the child will be able to suggest changes in their life, which are

making them unhappy, and hopefully they will rectify any problems in order to make the child happier and then the relationship can be concentrated on.

The meetings can hinder the development of a relationship between the child and foster carers as there may be complaints from the child about the foster carer or vice versa which could cause friction in the relationship as both are at the meetings listening to each other. The parents are also invited to attend these meetings in most cases, which can create problems for the child as they may feel torn between the foster carers and their parents, leaving the child confused and feeling awkward, as they believe they have to take a side.

Question 5

There are many limits to the job of being a foster carer. One of the main ones is that parental responsibility is not granted to the foster carers, it is the local authorities and the child's parents who have this. So foster carers do not have the opportunity to make decisions regarding the child's care, contact, health and education. It is the foster carer's job to carry out the wishes of social services and care for the child in the way that the local authority permits them to do so. It is important to explain this at the beginning of the relationship between the foster carer and the child so that the child does not expect the foster carer to be able to change things that the child is not happy with. Also so that the child does not become angry with the foster carers for any decisions made. So that the child knows from the beginning that if any problems occur regarding any decisions made that they should consult with their social worker or parent.

A lack of money also limits the foster carers role because on many occasions it is not enough to provide everything that the child needs let alone what the child wants. The small amount of money a foster carer receives has to cover clothes, food, bills, holidays, outings and presents. The amount of money a foster carer receives does not always stretch to fill all these requirements which could leave the child feeling resentful towards the foster carers so it is important to explain to the child at the beginning of the relationship that they cannot get everything they want and it is not the foster carers fault. If they want something that the foster carer cannot get them they should be encouraged to save up themselves or ask social services.

Fear of allegation is a big limit on the job of the foster carer, which stops them doing certain things, which could cause an allegation to arise. Because the majority of children in care have emotional baggage and have had a traumatic start to life, foster carers have to be careful how they interact with the child in certain situations in order to protect themselves and the child from anymore trauma. Things such as bathing, rough playing, sleeping arrangements and going out have to be thought through to protect the foster carers and other children in the placement from alleging each other. It is advised that all interaction with the children in the above situations should be carried out with another person present so that no one adult is alone with any one child. This can affect the relationship as the fear of allegation is always there and makes certain tasks become unnatural. That is why it is important at the beginning of forming a relationship and placement of a child these precautions should be put in place so that they can become a routine for the foster carers and the child so that it does not present a problem.

Question 6

The rights of the children in care are very important as their welfare is the priority and what they want in their life is important. With the children having rights it enables all children to be treated equally and it sets out what the foster carer and local authorities relate to the children and how they are treated.

There are many rights that children have in order for them to lead a safe and enjoyable life.

All children should be given equal rights regardless of race, sex, religion etc. This is important, as a child's race or religion may be very important to them so it is important for the foster carer to allow the child to carry out their religion even if it doesn't match theirs. Foster carers may have a number of children who are of different sex, religion and race and it is important for all the children to be treated equally and for each child's needs to be met as they have most probably had enough mistreatment in their lives already so it is not the aim of the foster care system to cause the child anymore emotional damage.

The child should have the right to express their opinions on their life and decisions made about their life and complain if anything is not working for them. It is the job of the local authorities and the foster carers to listen to the child and take into account what they are saying, as the main priority is for them to be happy and by listening to the child it may result in this happening. So at the beginning of a relationship with a child it should be

explained that it is ok for them to have an opinion and if they are unhappy about anything to talk about it with the foster carer or the social worker.

The child has a right to privacy, which should mean having their own room, space to keep their belongings safe and to be on their own when they want to be. It is the job of the local authorities to find a child a placement in which he/she can have their own room. It is the foster carers job to explain to each child that they have their own room and that no one is to go in to each others room without the permission of the occupier of the room. If the child tells the foster carers/social workers anything in confidence it is the responsibility of them to not tell anyone who is not authorised to know. This enables the child to build a trusting relationship with the foster carers and the whole care system.

The child has the right to health care and education and it is the job of the foster carers and the local authorities to provide the child with this. The child should also have an input into which school they go to if it is possible as it will make them more comfortable about starting a new school. It is important that the child knows if they feel unwell that they have the opportunity to go to a doctor, dentist etc in order to get help.

The final one I am going to mention is that the child has the right to have his/her placement reviewed regularly to insure that it is the right placement for them and that everything in the placement is going well if that is not the case then it can be discussed at these reviews. This give the child confidence and security as they know that people are there to listen to him and he has someone to turn to if things are not going well.

Question 7

With regard to placement plans, Social Services should know the foster carers well enough to match the most suitable carer to each child's needs and should be able to carry out the placement plan for the child based on the child's individual needs, delegating tasks and responsibilities, consulting with both the parents and foster carers to what is best for the child and the timescale to which the placement will last. The plan prevents drift and helps focus work with the family and child. By a placement being put in action it provides security for the child and lets everyone involved know what the short term and long term future plans are.

Contact arrangements and frequency of contact should be decided early on in the placement in order for the child to be secure and by them knowing when they will be seeing their parents and how often, will enable the child to settle down in the placement and get back to normality. The decision should be based on the relationship between the child and the parent, when it is convenient and most importantly as much as possible the wishes of the child. It is up to Social Services to organise the time and venue for the contact as in a lot of cases the parent does not feel they can form a positive relationship with the foster carers, so to prevent any bad tension the contact details should go through social services and it is the foster carers job to prepare the child for the contact.

Question 8

The planning of a placement and contact is very important as it enables plans to be made in the best interests of the child and makes sure that

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everyone involved knows what is expected of them and what their responsibilities are in order for the child to have a smooth placement with as little trauma as possible. By the child, foster carers, and parent knowing when the contact leaves to avoid confusion and the child knowing when their parent should be coming to see them and if they fail to turn up that it is not the fault of the foster carers or Social Services. It is important for children to express their views and feelings so I can support them knowing what they would like i. e. at reviews or if they find talking to a Social Worker hard. It makes a child feel valued and is required by the Children's Act.

Question 9

The agency's policy about the recording, storing records and giving information to others follows the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

This act is a set of rules, which must be followed if personal information is being used by somebody other than the individual themselves.

In the case of a foster carer they receive a great deal of personal information regarding children in their care such as their medical history, life history and family history.

When the foster carers receive the information it is their responsibility to keep that information confidential and safe so that no unauthorised people will find and use the

information as this would be a breach of the Data Protection Act. Foster carers must not alter the information given to them without the authorisation of the individual or a person in charge of the interests of the child (Social

Services). The information must be stored in a safe place and any back up copies made must also be kept safe and confidential.

Question 10

It is obviously nice when a placement ends as planned but as this is not always the case; the best for the child must be the first priority even if it is not the best result for the foster carers.

If a foster carer thinks a placement is starting to breakdown they should contact the social worker to try to stop the breakdown or limit the damage of the breakdown by resolving the problem of finding the cause of the problem which could be just a lack of communication or a complete clash of personalities too.

This could mean that the child has to move to a new foster placement but it must be done so that the child does not feel that the foster carers are rejecting them. With a court decision this is final and must be adhered to even if the foster carers disagree with the decisions. Agency policy will hopefully be the best outcome for the child so should be carried out all through the placement. I do feel quite sad if a placement ends as they may be let down and could it affect their self-esteem. They may not feel valued.

Question 11

The importance of the above policy is as I've already stated above the main task when a placement does not work out is to rectify the problems with as little damage caused to the child as possible as they child has already been through enough, so their interests are paramount. The child should not feel

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rejected at anytime during a placement breakdown and it is important for the foster carers and social worker to insure that this doesnt happen and that the placement ends with no bad feelings from either party and the child can hopefully go on and live happily in another placement or at home with their parent. This helps a child feel valued and cared for also you give the child confidence.

The review process helps a great deal with as any problems regarding the placement can be detected early on and hopefully be resolved before a breakdown of a placement should occur. Also plans should be made at the review so that everyone knows what to do if there is a placement breakdown and that everything is organised to prevent damage to the child in anyway.

With the preparations that are made to make breakdowns as painless as possible, it enables both the foster carers and child to get the support they need to deal with the breakdown and to get on with their lives.

Services and Products Question 12

There are many support/resource systems set up for children in care to help them emotionally, mentally and educationally.

There is the Education Welfare, which works with the child, and their school to insure that the child is reaching their full potential and the child can gain help rectifying any problems that occur through their P. E. P meetings. These also provide the child with options about their future in terms of education and career and highlights the support they will receive from the local authority.

Also there is the Mental Health of children and young people in public care which is a great help to children in care who need help dealing with painful backgrounds which can leave them with emotional baggage and also current problems they may be going through. Counselling and support is provided in order for the child to deal with these problems in a way and pace that suits them and hopefully then they will be able to get on with their lives. In some cases when the child is not able to deal with certain aspects of their lives this system is here to continually support them throughout their stay in public care to try and help them lead as normal life as possible based on the emotional damage they have received.

The Aftercare and Youth Support Team are set up to help young people of 16 years and older prepare for their future. They are there to insure that these young people have the skills to care for themselves and common sense to be able to live independently in a safe way. They help the young person to map out their future education and career and how they will survive on their own having to financially supporting themselves and have the responsibilities that come with reaching adulthood.

Reviews and P. E. P meetings give a child the opportunity to express their views about their lives and the way they are being looked after. And thus resulting in them have an input into decisions made about them so that they do not feel trapped and unable to do anything. They can discuss how good or badly their life is going and what they would like to change in order for them to be as happy as possible whilst in the care of the local authorities.

Social workers are allocated to each child in which they provide the child with support and advice on their everyday lives. Making sure that the child is progressing in a positive and working with the foster carers to making sure that the child reaches their full potential. The child is hopefully able to build a solid and trustworthy relationship and will be able to talk to the social worker about anything that is troubling them.

An independent visitor can be appointed to a child if they are having infrequent or no contact at all with any relatives, which insures that the child does not feel totally rejected. The independent visitor will go and see the child and spend time with them and hopefully build a relationship with them so that the child feels they have someone they can trust and that wants to see them.

There are other people and agencies you can go to or get in touch with such as F. C. S. C., the Marigold Centre, Girls Brigade, youth club, after school clubs, nan or aunt.

Question 13

The fostering agencies complaints system in order for a child to complain is made up of a number of steps, which enable a child to make a genuine complaint regarding their care in the easiest and least traumatic way.

Firstly, they have to formulate their unhappiness into words, which they can communicate to somebody who they trust and who they know they will listen to them.

Many of the issues children feel unhappy about are deeply personal issues. Children who are anxious about being blamed, humiliated or threatened by powerful adults are not going to get to this stage of the process unless they feel supported and re-assured.

The basis of this is in safe, on-going relationships with adults.

It is also important to recognize that children do not find it easy to put their unhappiness into words. They often communicate through action or behaviour and this may take many forms – from angry outbursts to becoming withdrawn. It may take some work on the part of adults the child has routine access to get behind this behaviour in order to understand that a child is feeling unhappy about decisions or plans made about them.

Recognition has to be given to the needs of children with communication impairments. Agencies and carers must ensure that the child and adults have access to communication systems appropriate to the child. It is also important that agencies are required to develop innovative materials for children including the use of modern forms of communication such as e-mail or web services in order for them to make their complaints.

Recognition must also be given to the needs of children who do not have English as their first language. Children who are accompanied or unaccompanied refugees will also need particular consideration. The role of the children's complaints officer may therefore come some way into the formulation of a complaint. They may however, also be in a position to offer advice and support to the child or an adult about complaining. They might also advise adults on proactively helping children who seem unhappy with

decisions or plans made about them where a case for a complaint seems to exist

It is important for a child to have the opportunity to complain about their care as the local authorities may not be provided the best care they can for the child and may not be taking in to account the best needs for the child so therefore something needs to be done and a complaints system allows this to happen.

Factors which influence what you do

Question 14

There are many things children in care think that a foster carer can and cannot do and the information that a child finds out about this can help or hinder a relationship between the foster carers and the child. Foster children in some cases believe that the foster carers are the people who make all the decisions, as they are the ones who carry them out. But this is not the case as it is the local authorities that make all the decisions and it is left to the foster carers to enforce these on the life of the child. This is ok when they are good things but when a decision is made that the child does not agree with then they tend to blame the foster carers who have no control over the decisions made and the child then becomes angry towards the foster carer and a stable relationship is unable to be formed.

Most children know when they go into care that a foster carers cannot use physical punishment on them. For children who have only had this as a form of punishment when they lived with their parents believe that they cannot

misbehave and do what they want as they believe the foster carers has no authority over them and cannot do anything to stop them. This creates problems as the foster carer has to concentrate on controlling the child's behaviour in a way that they are permitted to do so and therefore a relationship can not develop and a placement breakdown may occur unless the child realizes that that physical punishment isn't always the answer and that the foster carer has authority and an influence in what they do. This behavior can often stem from the contact the child has with the parent as in a lot of the cases the child's parent feels resentful towards the foster carers and therefore enforces in the child's mind that they do not have to listen to the foster carers and that they do not have to respect them and their home,

A child when they go in to care are hoping and expecting from their foster carers a safe secure home where they will be wanted and looked after and loved. So that they will be able to live the rest of their lives as normally as possible. These are things that a foster carer can provide and therefore the child feels at home with the foster placement and is able to settle and form a relationship with the child. What the foster carers will provide for them should be explained to the child by the social workers or foster carer and in return the child should be told what is expected of them.