

# Key Principles for the provision of respite for children in Foster Care

These principles provide a framework for a consistent approach to how staff in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust approaches the Provision of respite for children in Foster care. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if a range of respite options are considered and planned with all key parties including the child and the foster carers, the child's social worker and the Family Placement supervising social worker.

These principles are as follows:

- Planning meetings at early stage should be in place to discuss respite needs and joint follow up reviews of respite arrangements.
- Family Options should be considered in the first instance.
- The need to ensure respite is with carers who are known to the child. Where this is not possible then children should meet the carers in advance.
- The promotion of activities for children/Young people should be considered and developed as part of the respite option e.g. summer activity timetables/outings/clubs/arts and crafts/young people's groups etc.
- The use of community based options should be considered.
- Ongoing training and advice to be provided to foster carers in respect of the impact of moves on children and good practice in respite ( preparing for a child coming to stay in their home/making a child feel welcome/contacting the child while they are on respite)
- Day respite instead of overnight respite should be considered where appropriate.
- Each child's specific needs and interests should be considered and plans for respite agreed individual to the child and with the Key principles at the fore
- Information in a child friendly format, about the respite foster carers identified for a child, should be shared with the child prior to placement. This will include details about who lives in the home, the family routines, bedroom etc.
- Information should be gathered by social work staff in respect of the child's experiences/views on the respite provision and feedback shared with family Placement supervision social worker to ensure practice is in accordance with the Key principles outlined and Competencies for Foster carers.
- Ongoing developments in respite provision should be part of future developments within Family Placement. Developments will take account of ideas such as Cluster groups of Foster carers/ A dedicated respite carer's scheme / Activity timetables for school holiday periods etc.