Respite

Foster Carer Handbook · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/respite/

Respite – planned breaths that safeguard carers and children

Caring for children whose early experiences were disrupted can be emotionally intense. A short, well-planned break allows carers to rest and return refreshed, while giving children a safe opportunity to practise flexibility and trust. Positive Aspirations therefore supports respite **when it is child-centred, predictable and relationship-based**.

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1 | Guiding principles

1. **Child's stability first.** A respite plan must feel like an ordinary extension of the child's support circle, not an unexpected "move."
2. **Familiar faces.** Whenever possible the child stays with an **Enhanced Support** person—someone already woven into daily life through meals, school runs or weekend outings.
3. **Parallel experiences.** If your birth children are going on the family holiday, foster children should normally go too. Separate breaks are agreed only when clearly in the child's best interests (e.g., GCSE revision retreat).
4. **Predictability.** Children are told early, shown photos of the respite home, and helped to pack favourite comfort items and SPARK activity materials.

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2 | Building your Enhanced Support

- Identify at least **one** trusted adult or family who is *unlikely* to holiday with you.
- Introduce them gradually: cuppa after school, Sunday park trip, overnight trial.
- They must:
  - complete the five mandatory training modules;
  - DBS and LA Check

- appear in the child's Placement Plan as approved overnight carers.

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3 | Requesting respite – step-by-step

1. **Talk to your SSW** as soon as dates are known (aim for 4–6 weeks' notice).
2. **Consider the child's calendar:** school exams, contact sessions, therapy, favourite clubs.
3. **Submit the Respite Request form**—SSW will seek social-worker and Local Authority consent.
4. **Complete a brief Respite Risk/Transition Plan** covering routines, medication, delegated authority and how the child's spark will be nurtured (e.g., take guitar to respite family).

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4 | When Enhanced Support is not available

If illness, bereavement or logistics rule out your network, the agency will try to match the child with another Positive Aspirations foster family who:

- has met the child at events or support groups;
- can maintain school and activity attendance;
- understands the child's Safer Caring Policy.

No move happens without the placing Local Authority's written agreement.

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5 | Financial arrangements

- **Weekly fostering fee and allowance** transfer to the respite carer for the exact nights provided.
- Your usual payment pauses—remember to budget for such gaps as part of routine financial planning.
- If respite is delivered by your Enhanced Support, payment is a private arrangement between you and them; the agency is not involved.

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6 | Trauma-informed transitions

Before the break	During	After

- Mark the calendar. - Pack memory book, favourite bedding and spark items. - Practise bedtime routine with respite carer present.	- Daily check-in call or video (if appropriate). - Respite carer keeps simple notes for Life-Story work.	- Warm reunion ritual (special meal, shared photo review). - Reflect with the child: “What felt good? Anything tricky?” - Update weekly recording and, if needed, Safer Caring Policy.

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7 | Links to policy & procedure

- **Delegated Authority Policy** – who can consent to outings, OTC medication, digital use.
- **Respite Policy** – criteria, notice periods, financial rules.
- **Respite Procedure** – templates for request, risk assessment and handover checklist.

Ask your SSW for copies or find them in the secure portal.

Key takeaway: respite is not a break **from** the child but a carefully planned break **for** everyone—protecting carers’ wellbeing while strengthening the child’s web of safe, trusted adults.