

THE INTENSIVE FOSTERING PROGRAMME

1. The Intensive Fostering Programme has been developed in the USA at the Oregon Social Learning Centre and has had 35 years of researched and evidenced success with young offenders; the model has created much interest, and is being used in many other countries as well as the UK.
2. The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales is running a 3 year pilot scheme offering Intensive Fostering as an alternative to custody. This pilot scheme is being evaluated by a research team from the University of York and this will inform the further use of Intensive Fostering with young offenders.
3. Action for Children, Intensive Fostering is one of the three schemes across the UK commissioned by the Youth Justice Board to pilot this innovative Programme. Your court is in a pilot area and has the opportunity to participate by using Intensive Fostering as a sentencing option.
4. This Programme is appropriate for those children who may otherwise have received a custodial sentence and where the family circumstances/peer relationships are a contributing factor in the offending. The child being sentenced by the court to Intensive Fostering (as part of a 2 year Supervision Order) is placed, the same day as sentencing, with experienced specialist foster carers, where they will stay while on the Programme, this is usually between 9 and 12 months. **Standard breach procedures apply in relation to any non –compliance.**
5. Intensive Fostering is a community based sentence but not an easy option for the children sentenced, it teaches new skills to improve emotion regulation and social functioning. The programme has high expectations of the behaviour of children on the Programme. Behaviour is monitored by the programme staff in all settings; School/College, community, and placement.
6. The goal of the Intensive Fostering Programme is to decrease the antisocial behaviour and increase the appropriate (pro-social) behaviour of troubled children in the community. This goal is achieved through the *4 protective aims* of the Programme:-
 - Provide the child with close supervision.
 - Provide the child with fair and consistent limits and consequences for negative behaviour.
 - Provide a supportive relationship with the child.
 - Minimise association with negative/offending peer group.
7. During their time in this specialist foster placement the emphasis is on deterring negative peer associations (unlike a custodial sentence, where they will be meeting other children who have also offended) and changing patterns of behaviour that are associated with offending.

8. The Intensive Fostering Programme simultaneously facilitates the core programme components for the young person, their families and the foster carers as follows:-

The child's programme includes

- Daily structure and support via a point and level system
- Close supervision of whereabouts and associations
- Daily attendance at school / education / training which is closely monitored and compulsory
- Daily mentoring by foster carers
- Weekly individual therapy
- Weekly skill building and advocacy
- Planned weekly contact with parents / frequent home visits
- Hobbies and interests are encouraged

Work with the child's family includes

- Weekly family consultation with a member of the Programme staff focussing on increasing effective parenting skills
- Empowerment and parent power through behaviour management methods
- Crisis back-up 24 hour, 7 day on-call support
- Continued support for up to 3 months following successful completion of placement

The Foster Carers

- Implement the young persons programme
- Have received specialist training
- Receive on-going training
- Attend and contribute to weekly support meetings
- Provide a structured points and level system to the young person
- Receive daily telephone calls to provide data to the Programme
- Receive 24 hour 7 day on-call support

The Intensive Fostering Team

The Intensive Fostering Programme has a team of staff who work simultaneously with the child, their families and the foster carers. The programme is planned with the foster carers, the targets and goals are set at the weekly foster carer and staff team meetings. The team and carers work with the child on modifying behaviour through teaching skills and modelling positive behaviour, using a points and levels system, to deter negative and reward positive behaviours.

Each child will have the support from the following people on a weekly basis:-

Programme Supervisor – responsible for setting rules and boundaries and co-ordinating the entire placement and work of the supporting staff.

Skills Coach – model pro-social behaviour and focus on helping youth learn and use skills that are necessary to get along with peers and adults in a variety of settings.

Individual Therapist - supports the youth's adjustment in the programme and acts as his advocate. The therapist focuses on identifying strengths and building upon them to develop new pro social skills.

A Family therapist – works with the family or other identified aftercare resource to prepare them for the youth's return. The focus is on enhancing parenting strategies that will maintain and support the youth's success.

9. The team and carers work with the child on modifying behaviour through teaching skills and modelling positive behaviour, using a points and levels system, to deter negative behaviours and reward positive.

10. The Points & Levels System in brief

On all three levels the child is closely supervised and monitored. Mobile phones, open access to money and contact with anti social friends are prohibited for the duration of the Programme. The foster carers carry out room and bag searches; education, training or work is mandatory. Progress at these institutions is monitored through a card which, enhancing the daily points, the child must get signed by his tutor or manager. The child earns the right to have a radio or CD player in his/her room. This privilege is withdrawn for one night if the child fails to gain the daily required points. Loss of points impacts on the child's ability to gain other privileges and activities which are still given but to a lesser degree. The emphasis is always on the reward for positive behaviours. At all levels the foster carer is contacted daily for data information to monitor the child's behaviours and the carer's reaction and ability to cope. This information is collated and monitored by the Oregon Social Learning Centre.

Level 1

This level usually lasts for three weeks. On the **first** night the child will be in his/her room by 8.30 p.m. The child needs to earn 100 points per day; a total of 2,100 is required before he/she can move to the next level. To achieve the points the child must comply with basic everyday tasks to earn points which can be spent the next day on simple privileges such as a later bedtime or choice of an activity. During level 1 the child has only one 20 minute phone call home. This is to ensure the child and foster carer develops a sound relationship. All other contact with home is through the Programme Supervisor who will also keep other involved agencies informed of progress.

Level 2

Progression to Level 2 is at the discretion of the Programme Supervisor. On this level the child continues to work within the Programme framework of points, rewards and privileges. A daily total of 120 points is required to ensure he/she does not regress to level 1 for a night (early bedtime, no radio). On this level the points are accrued and spent on a weekly basis teaching the child to budget and plan for the coming week. Of prime importance is the purchase of a bond; the child needs 12 bonds to progress, with the Programme Supervisor's recommendation, to level 3.

Family contact is gradually introduced and increased leading to overnight visits as the parents gain confidence in using their version of the points system with the child.

Level 3

All restrictions, supervision and monitoring remain unchanged. The child may be given more responsibility depending on his/her progress. This level continues for the duration of the Programme.

Once the child 'graduates' from the Programme the staff team continue to work with and support him/her and the family for a period of up to three months.

“The Intensive Fostering Programme attempts to surround the child with positive role models and mentors. The Children are isolated from negative peers and taught the skills they missed earlier in their development that lead to pro-social interaction”

Paul Hargreaves.
Programme Supervisor.

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