



Safer Caring: A New Approach supplementary resources (2017)

Chapter 3: A family placement

Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Professional carer and committed parent: managing professional/personal boundaries](#)

[Learning from the experience of others](#)

Introduction

Chapter 3 acknowledges the unusual position held by foster carers in terms of having a professional role as a child's parent figure which they perform at home for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and which involves a child being integrated into their wider family network. In this way, traditional views about boundaries between 'work' and 'family' are unhelpful.

Professional carer and committed parent: managing professional/personal boundaries

Research by the University of East Anglia found that some foster carers identify primarily as professional foster carers, while others see themselves primarily as committed parents. However, those who could adopt aspects of both roles and flexibly move between them found the two roles could enrich one another, rather than leading to tensions and conflict.

Safer Caring: A New Approach seeks to promote the status of foster carers within the team around the child, but also emphasise the importance of the parenting relationship between the foster carer and the child. The UEA research illustrates how, if carers are helped to understand and move flexibly between these roles, they can enrich the experience of both carers and children and help to provide the secure base and sense of belonging in which children can thrive (see further information on the secure base model in Chapter 7).

The social pedagogy 'Three Ps' model recognises that we are all made of three parts: our professional self, our personal self and our private self. In each relationship and situation we find ourselves in, we must reflect on the mix of the three spheres we choose to bring with us.

Learning from the experience of others

Foster care works well for many children who have the opportunity to grow up in safe, supportive environments in which they can thrive, and this is mainly due to the commitment and professionalism of the foster carers who look after them.

However, it is important to learn from our own and other people's experiences as we continually seek to improve upon what we do. Safer caring: A New Approach is focused on finding ways to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are fostered and their foster carers and their families. It acknowledges that sometimes things go wrong, and it considers some of the reasons why a small number of foster carers do harm to children in their care.

The Fostering Network is continuing to introduce the [Mockingbird Family Model](#) to the UK alongside our partner agencies: a model of extended family care which promotes a network of relationships for carers and children offering greater support and protection to all.

Serious case reviews – conducted after a child dies or is seriously harmed as a result of abuse or neglect – are a way to help professionals improve the way they work together to safeguard children. Two examples of serious case reviews in relation to cases of harm to children in foster care are [Hackney](#) (published in 2015) and [Croydon](#) (published in 2017). In both cases, the recommendations reflect the crucial role that working to agreed plans regarding the care of children, and of robust systems for support, supervision and review, have in keeping foster carers and children safe from harm.