

BfFC IFA Involving Children in Decision Making Policy

Efforts have been made to involve foster children in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Recognizing the importance of their voice and ensuring their well-being, several initiatives and guidelines have been put in place to promote participation and empower foster children. Here are some key aspects relating to involving foster children in decision making:

1. **The Children Act 1989:** The Children Act places a legal duty on local authorities to ascertain the wishes and feelings of children who are in care, including foster children, and to take these into account when making decisions about their welfare.
2. **Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs):** Foster children have the right to an Independent Reviewing Officer, who is responsible for reviewing and ensuring that the child's views and wishes are heard and considered during the decision-making process. The IRO advocates for the child's best interests and facilitates their involvement in decisions.
3. **Foster Care Regulations:** The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Fostering National Minimum Standards provide guidelines and requirements for fostering services. They emphasize the importance of consulting and involving foster children in decision making regarding their placement, education, health, and other aspects of their lives.
4. **Advocacy services:** Independent advocacy services are available to support foster children in expressing their views, wishes, and concerns. These services aim to ensure that the child's perspective is heard, understood, and given due consideration in decision-making processes.
5. **Children Looked After Review Meetings:** Regular review meetings are held to discuss the child's progress, well-being, and any necessary changes in their care arrangements. These meetings provide an opportunity for the child to express their views and contribute to decisions regarding their care.
6. **Care Planning:** Care plans for foster children are developed collaboratively, involving the child, their foster carers, social workers, and other relevant professionals. The child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when formulating these plans.
7. **Participation in decision-making forums:** Efforts are being made to establish forums and platforms where foster children can express their opinions and be involved in shaping policies and practices that affect them. These forums create spaces for dialogue and enable foster children to advocate for their rights.

It's important to note that involving foster children in decision making can be challenging due to their diverse needs and circumstances. However, efforts are continuously being made to improve participation, promote their rights, and ensure their voices are heard throughout the decision-making process.

At BFfC's IFA, we collate children's views via different routes and create opportunities for them to share their views with the foster carers' social worker, the registered manager and Family Placement Reviewing Officer. We ask children in care to complete feedback forms after placements and for foster care annual reviews. Their social workers can support them in completing this feedback. This is in addition to seeking children's views during activities organised by the agency and an annual survey.