

## **SESSION ONE**

### ***Establishing the group***

During the first session, carers are introduced to each other and to the facilitators, and are given an overview of what the whole programme will cover. Carers are asked about their own goals and expectations of the training.

### ***How children Thrive and Develop Resilience***

Carers are encouraged to reflect on what they think children need to thrive, and ideas such as love, encouragement, guidance, boundaries, routines, good food and good education are discussed.

### ***Experiences of Looked After Children***

This is an exercise during which themes such as separation from family, uncertainty about the future, and experience of former caregivers are considered. It provides a context for introducing the principles of calm, sensitive and consistent care-giving.

### ***Developmental Stages***

Describing the cognitive and emotional stages that all children go through can help carers to think differently about behaviour that they have been regarding as bad, mean or naughty.

### ***Tracking & Observing Behaviour***

Carers are asked to think about both desirable and difficult types of behaviour and how to observe and record incidences of both as part of their 'home practice'. *Example: When Carole clears the table after dinner. When Jo starts shouting abuse when asked to go to bed.*

---

## **SESSION TWO**

### ***Context of Behaviour***

How behaviour is shaped by antecedents and consequences. Medical, situational, physical and emotional, family environment (past and present) and personality characteristics are discussed as factors which can influence a child's behaviour.

### ***Attachment – Child and Carer***

Attachment theory is central to the programme, and time is spent on reviewing the latest theories and evidence that supports them. The effect of disrupted care-giving on the attachment relationships of looked after children is considered.

### ***Social Learning Theory***

The role of antecedents and consequences in maintaining behaviour ('ABC's) is considered i.e. how both positive and negative behaviour can be influenced by the environment and, importantly, by relationships with carers.

### ***ABC Analysis of Behaviour***

Antecedents and triggers are discussed in more detail. For example, a place, person or even a time of day can cause anxiety in a child. Strategies for dealing with behaviour that escalates out of control are discussed.

---

## **SESSION THREE**

### ***The relationship between need and maladaptive behaviour***

Children who have grown up in environments of neglect and abuse may be less able to express their needs in appropriate ways. Dysfunctional behaviour may have emerged as a response to these needs.

### ***Praise***

This session is experiential. In small groups carers are asked to remember their experiences of being praised. This raises awareness of the importance of praise and can be painful for carers who were not praised as children themselves. Other exercises include practicing how to give effective praise, following the theoretical input. Carers give labelled praise to each other, they then praise themselves. There is a space to discuss their views about the benefits of and any resistance to praise. Their home practice for the week is to identify particular behaviours that they are going to praise in their young people, to ensure they praise their young person 5 times a day as well and to praise themselves last thing at night for something they did well as a caregiver that day. Practicing giving and how it feels to receive praise is an important part of the training.

### ***Positive Strategies***

Practical strategies for using praise and positive attention to enhance children's self-esteem and social skills.

### ***Obstacles to Praise and Using Praise effectively***

How praise needs to be specific, sincere, immediate and appropriate. Examples to illustrate how praise can be used with impatient, impulsive or defiant children.

---

## **SESSION FOUR**

### ***Using Praise to Support Learning***

The relationship between self-regulation and children's ability to learn and achieve in school. Qualities such as the ability to concentrate, to pay attention, think flexibly, motivation and confidence are considered as part of the domain of self-regulation.

### ***Developing a Positive Environment***

Ways in which carers can use their attention to support and facilitate the child's development

### ***Play***

The function of play in the development of skills from physical co-ordination to creative, linguistic and cognitive skills. Many looked-after children have not experienced play and caregivers need to be skilled in facilitating and supporting their children's play.

### ***Attending***

How to follow the child's agenda during play without imposing expectations on the child gives the carer an opportunity to experience the world from the child's point of view, and results in an increase in the child's positive feelings about themselves and a stronger sense of trust in their carer.

### ***Descriptive Commenting***

Carers are encouraged to describe what their children are doing out loud, rather than relying on constant questioning which children find intrusive and distracting. Children enjoy being the focus of attention and feeling that the carer has a genuine interest in their activities.

---

## **SESSION FIVE**

### ***The Importance of Focusing on Children's Ability to Understand and Manage Emotions***

How children develop emotional skills when carers both notice and are sensitive to the child's emotions and when carers model awareness and effective use of their own emotions. Identifying the skills involved in good listening and sensitive responding.

### ***Effective Communication***

Techniques for reflective listening (listening to the child as if from their own perspective) are introduced e.g. stop and look at the child, allow the child to say what they need to, try to see things from the child's perspective.

### ***Sensitivity to The Expression of Feelings***

The importance of being able to interpret and respond to the child's non-verbal as well as verbal communications. Awareness that feelings and concerns may be expressed through, nightmares, phobias, loss of appetite, sleep difficulties or behaviour problems.

### ***Expressing Feelings***

The benefits of adults showing their feelings to children (e.g. "I" felt pleased when I saw your school report).

### ***Using Questions***

Types of question to ask children which show that the carer is interested, without making excessive demands or being intrusive.

### ***Being Non-Judgemental***

The need to take a non-judgemental stance when looked-after children talk about their history or their feelings. How to help the child to restructure their understanding of past events.

### ***When Listening is Difficult***

How to proceed sensitively and cautiously when a child is silent and withdrawn.

---

## **SESSION SIX**

### ***The Educational context of looked after children***

How to encourage emotional regulation in an educational context and how this promotes the emotional, social, and cognitive skills that have a positive effect on learning and academic attainment.

### ***Special Educational Needs***

The importance of a thorough knowledge and understanding of the education system, given the high level of looked after children with special educational needs. Strategies to assist carers in communication with professionals.

### ***Importance of Carers Supporting their Child in Reading***

The links between good attachment, reading and attainment. Reading together as an opportunity not only to learn, but also to discuss feelings, events and ideas in a safe and thoughtful space.

### ***Carers' Role in Supporting Learning More Generally***

The importance of carers' involvement in school events, interests and homework. The value of extracurricular and leisure activities. The rights of looked after children to have the same access to culture, arts, sports and leisure as their peers.

### ***Different Styles of Learning***

Visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners and their learning preferences.

### ***Managing Carers' Thoughts and Feelings***

The CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) model for helping carers to think about how to solve problems encountered while working with their children's education. For example, children with a history of rudeness to the teacher, resulting in exclusion. Learning how to understand how negative reactions to behaviour can produce emotional, physiological and behavioural consequences for carers.

---

## **SESSION SEVEN**

### ***Assertive Communication and "I" messages***

How carers can communicate effectively with other professionals. Techniques to help carers cope with feelings of being rejected and taken for granted.

### ***Reinforcing Positive Behaviour Through Rewards***

Social rewards (praise and attention) and tangible rewards (treats, activities, pocket money)

### ***Using Consequences***

Describing effective consequences (positive or negative). Reward Charts and choosing rewards; token systems.

### ***"Extinction"***

The importance of consistency in decreasing undesirable behaviour (e.g. tantrums in supermarkets).

---

## **SESSION EIGHT**

This session concentrates on techniques for encouraging compliant behaviour and discouraging undesirable behaviour.

### ***Giving Effective Instructions***

How to avoid conflict by giving clear and precise instructions, followed by praise for compliance.

### ***Differential use of attention: selective ignoring***

How children misbehave to attract negative attention, and ignoring minor misbehaviour can bring about changes in difficult behaviour

---

## **SESSION NINE**

### ***Positive Discipline***

Styles of discipline and constraints on carers' use of discipline; safe caring

### ***Setting Limits Through Family Rules***

The function of family rules and how they contribute to the harmonious running of the home.

### ***Natural & Logical Consequences***

Guidelines for the positive and effective use of logical consequences i.e. discussion in advance of setting rules, appropriate consequences with immediate effect. Helping the child to learn the negative consequences of their choices.

---

## **SESSION TEN**

### ***Punishment***

Myths and unhelpful assumptions that carers may hold about punishments. Rather than thinking in terms of punishment, we ask carers about their preferred term e.g. discipline, sanction or guidance.

### ***'Time Out' From Positive and Negative Reinforcement***

How to address things in the environment that reinforce undesired behaviour. Appropriate uses of time out. What procedures to use. What happens during time out and at the end.

### ***When The Child Does Not Co-operate With Time Out***

How to deal with a child who refuses to go to time out or is destructive

### ***Problem-Solving Strategies***

How to empower looked after children to clarify the choices they have, and to implement decisions

### ***The Stop, Plan and Go Approach to Problem-Solving***

How to discourage children from rushing into acting without thinking and to realise that there are a whole range of potential solutions to a problem. Putting the child's strategies into action and helping them to think about how well they achieved their desired outcome.

### ***Managing Carers; and Children's Feelings in Problem-Solving***

Carers' negative feelings when listening to a child and guidelines for problem-solving communication.

---

## **SESSION ELEVEN:**

### ***Endings & Review***

Providing carers with the opportunity to think about the ending of the Fostering Changes course, and to review some of the skills then have acquired during the programme.

### ***Carers' role in Helping Children to Understand Their Life Story***

Helping children to make sense of their lives: how carers should help the child integrate information from their past into their existing situation.

### ***Looked After Children and Endings***

Facilitating Positive Endings: Making the end of placement a positive experience

### ***Transition to Secondary School***

Preparing children for changes which may make them feel anxious

---

## **SESSION TWELVE**

### ***Taking Care of Yourself***

The last session focuses on the carer and encourages them to take stock of their achievements and take enough care of themselves in order to ensure that they have the resources to fulfil their role as carers.

### ***Self-Esteem***

The effects of working in isolation on self-esteem. Giving carers space to think about themselves.

### ***What I Appreciate About You***

Carers are asked to think of and state one thing they want to praise themselves for, and one thing to thank the group for.

### ***Certificate Giving, Celebration and Goodbyes***

Carers often bring refreshments to contribute to a farewell party. They are thanked for their effort and the time they have shared together, and wished well in their career as caregivers.