

Safer Caring Plan

Guidance for foster carers

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1. Fostering Network's guiding principle to Safer Caring

- One of the most important responsibilities of a foster carer is to keep children and young people safe. At the same time, foster carers must keep themselves and their families safe from any harm that could arise through fostering, including the risk of complaints or allegations.
- Foster carers constantly have to balance risks in the everyday decisions they take for themselves, their own children and children in care. The difference with a child in care is that foster carers are caring for them on behalf of the state, and so are accountable for the day-to-day decisions they take. They will be asked by their fostering service to do some things differently than they might with their own children, to keep everyone safe.
- Children and young people in care are often particularly vulnerable due to their previous life experiences, so foster carers need to understand and manage the risks they may face while helping children to have as normal a childhood as they can.
- It is not possible to eliminate risk from everyday life but trying to do so can have negative side effects and can prevent children from learning and developing their own awareness of risk and how to stay safe. So, the key to good, safer caring is about foster carers being aware of the risks involved for certain children in different situations and making well thought through decisions, in partnership with the child's social worker and the fostering service.
- Safer caring is all about being "risk-sensible", not risk-averse. It is about foster carers working in partnership with children and young people, their parents wherever possible, and the key facets for social workers to develop the right safer caring plan for that child; and day-to-day, understanding and balancing the risks involved in a activity or decision, rather than applying a set of rules in all circumstances.

2. Safer Caring

- 2.1 Safer caring helps foster carers to look after children in a safe environment, within a caring home. Foster care should be a positive experience of family life for foster children, and an opportunity to build good attachments with carers. Safer caring should enable attachments to be built, and at the same time keep all members of the family safe from abuse and allegations of abuse.
- 2.2 Abuse and neglect of children includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Any safer caring plan should protect children and young people from all types of harm and protect carers from allegations of physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect.

- 2.3 Safe caring is applicable to all foster carers regardless of the specific registration details and approval status, whether they are approved to provide long-term, short-term, short-break or Connected Persons' care.
- 2.4 Safeguarding children in foster care from abuse and neglect is a mandatory requirement under: <https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/safeguarding-children>

3. Safer Caring Plan

- 3.1 A Safer Caring Plan should be used in the assessment process where families will be able to draw up plans for the protection of all household members. The safer caring plan needs be adopted for the specific needs for each child placed.

- 3.2 The aim of a Safer Caring Plan includes:

- To keep the foster child safe from abuse by adults;
- To keep the children in the foster home safe from abuse by other children in the household;
- To keep members of the foster family safe from false allegations of abuse;
- Safer caring practices should enable children to receive the care, love and attention they need in order to form positive attachments, to grow and develop to reach their full potential.

- 3.3 The Safe Care Plan template:

- Requires completing in full before the first placement;
- Requires amending/updating when foster carers are asked to consider and agree to a new placement;
- Needs revising when a specific child's information should cause the foster carer to consider if any changes are necessary;
- Needs revising if the foster carer's household composition or circumstances change in any way;
- Should be reviewed at least annually with the fostering social worker.

4. Keeping a diary and recording information

- 4.1. Foster carers need to keep a daily record of the events in the life of the child and the rest of the household. This will help provide clear information when they contribute to making plans about a child's future. See [Fostering Team Recording Procedure](#)

5. Safe Care Plan template

5.1 Names to use

Foster carers should think about what the children should call them; what feels right and comfortable for the foster carer and for the child. The child should not be confused about relationships e.g. the foster carer is not their 'Mum/Dad'. Also, there may be cultural or other reasons why a child should not call adults by their first names; a title such as 'aunty' for instance might work in those situations.

5.2 Showing affection

All children need nurturing, but this needs to be done in a way that is comfortable for them and for the foster carer and in ways that are not going to be misinterpreted by the child. Everyone needs kind and appropriate physical affection, but no one should touch another's body without permission. Play fighting, wrestling etc. can be a cover for abuse and easily misinterpreted, so is not appropriate. Foster carers should think how they will meet the child's emotional needs and how they will help the child/young person feel safe and cared for. Expressions of affection can be given through practical things like brushing or washing a child's hair or spending planned one to one time doing an activity of the child's choice.

5.3 Children's play

Foster carers should consider where it is safe for children to play. Are there potential problems with children playing unsupervised or behind closed doors? Is the garden enclosed and safe? Foster carers should consider how they will promote healthy/safe play. For ideas for using play to promote attachment as well as fun, please see [Theraplay activity ideas](#) which can be used at home.

5.4 Secrets

Foster carers should think about how they will promote open and appropriate communication with children in their care. They should remember that the child may previously have been pressurised into keeping 'secrets' by an abuser and that 'surprises' may also be difficult for some children to manage.

5.5 Language and behaviour management

Foster carers should consider how they will deal with offensive/inappropriate language and challenging behaviours. Warwickshire County Council has a 'no smacking' policy and does not support punitive punishment-based models of behaviour management or the physical restraint of children. Foster carers

need to support and encourage the development of appropriate, safe behaviours in for the children in their care.

There are several training courses which cover behaviour management strategies. See also [Promoting Positive Behaviour Guidance for Foster Carers](#)

5.6 Reporting accidents, incident and near misses.

It is vital that every single time there is any accident, incident or near miss that this is reported using the council's reporting system available [here](#)

Foster carers must ensure every single incident is reported. This might be a physical accident e.g. slip or fall but it could also be a threat received or verbal abuse. After an incident is reported this is reviewed and responded to by operations managers. For more information on how and why to report incidents follow this link [here](#).

5.7 Appropriate dress

Adults, children and young people should always be appropriately clothed. Foster carers should think about how they need to promote and actively achieve this and how they would need to explain 'appropriate dress' to a child or young person.

5.8 Education about sex and sexuality

Good and clear age appropriate sex education is important for all the family. Foster carers should consider how they express and 'model' their intimate relationships and how this might affect or impact on the children in their care. They should also consider who might be the most appropriate person to talk about sex and sexuality with a child/young person and where they can get further advice and support if needed. [The Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines](#) help people who work with children to balance the need to listen to children's wishes with the responsibility to keep them safe.

5.9 In the bathroom

Foster carers should consider everyone's privacy and who is the most appropriate person to attend to the personal and intimate care needs of children. They should consider whether any of their household members are more suited to this role for any child or for a specific child?

5.10 Bedrooms (children)

Warwickshire County Council does not generally support bedroom sharing on the grounds that everyone needs their own space and privacy though space does not make this always possible. It might be a house rule that no-one

enters another person's bedroom without knocking and the foster carer may also need to consider whether it is safer to have 'story time' in living rooms rather than in the child's bedroom. The foster carer will also need to think about arrangements when they are away from the household (e.g. on holiday) and if extra vigilance is required given changed bedroom arrangements e.g. caravans/holiday accommodation etc.

(Any room sharing must be fully assessed as appropriate, considering children's ages, gender, profiles, behaviour and past experiences. These need to be authorised by the children's team manager.

5.11 Bedrooms (foster carers)

Foster carers should consider their own privacy needs and how they will support a child/young person to respect the privacy of others in the household. They should consider whether their bedroom is always out of bounds or whether it is okay for children to go into their bedroom at some agreed times. However, foster carers should consider giving children time and attention outside of their bedroom. It is not advisable to allow children into the foster carers own bed.

5.12 Taking photographs

Although it may seem natural to take photographs of children, sensitivity may be needed if there has been a history of abuse for the child where photography has been used.

Foster carers should consider:

- Do they need permission?
- Where should they not take photos?
- Some children may have been photographed in negative circumstances previously;
- How they can assist the child's needs to understand their life story and keep positive photographic memories.

Photographs of children in care should never be published on Facebook or similar social media.

5.13 Alcohol

Foster carers should always ensure general health and safety has been considered regarding alcohol storage. They should also consider that some children may have had difficult previous experiences of parents/carers use of alcohol/substances and may have continuing fears about a carers use of them.

Some useful websites:

- <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice/underage-drinking/the-law/>

- <http://www.ias.org.uk/Alcohol-knowledge-centre/Young-people-and-alcohol.aspx>
- https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyDocs/Children-and-families/Foster_Carers_frank_drugs.aspx

5.14 Medication

Foster carers should consider:

- Who uses what and where is it kept?
- Is it prescription or 'over the counter'?
- Record the administration of any medication to children.

5.15 Use of TV, computers, mobile/smart phones, social media and the internet

If children have access to a TV and/or computer in their own room, foster carers must consider how they will monitor age appropriate TV viewing and computer use, particularly the internet. Given the range of phones and other devices available, children and young people need support and guidance on using them safely and securely, particularly internet and social media use e.g. Facebook. Foster carers should consider how they can assist them to obtain maximum benefit whilst minimising any risk to their well-being.

Technology is developing rapidly and is often an area of concern for carers. More detailed guidance is available here: -

- [Internet and Social Media Guidance and Code of Conduct for Foster Carers.](#)
- [Using Social Media](#)

Foster carers may also want to consider using the delegated authority form to record any decisions made. See [Delegation of Authority to Foster Carers Policy](#) for further information.

Useful websites:

- <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/social-media-and-online-safety>
- <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/social-media-advice-hub/>

5.16 Use of cars/transport

The Department expects all foster carers to use appropriate car seats and restraints when transporting children. These are provided as essential fostering equipment, but they will also need to consider whether any individual driver should travel alone with a specific child and/or where any child should sit in relation to the driver. For the latest legal requirements in relation to car seats, please see <https://www.childcarseats.org.uk/the-law/>

See [Transporting children procedure](#) for further information.

5.17 Going out/baby-sitting arrangements

Foster carers have delegated authority to decide who should baby-sit for them, but it is important they choose a responsible adult to maximise safe caring as they are ultimately responsible for the child. Foster carers should consider:

- Who baby-sits when they go out?
- How they will help the baby-sitter to understand the foster carer's Safe Caring principles in order to keep everyone safe without compromising confidentiality.

5.18 Visitors to the home

Foster carers should consider:

- Who visits their home - adults and children;
- How the foster carer greets them or says goodbye to family and friends;
- Do friends or family sleepover and where will they sleep and how will this impact on their fostering arrangements;
- Will a child in their care be able to have visitors to play, to have tea or to stay overnight? How might this be managed by the foster carer for maximum benefit with minimum risk? Foster carers should consider whether they have delegated authority to make this decision or whether they need to talk to the child's social worker.

5.19 Smoking

Foster carers are to provide a smoke free environment for all children in care. Carers should not smoke in the presence of children and young people or allow others to do so. If foster carers who do smoke, then this must be outside of their home. Carers must try and ensure that children are not exposed to smoke when visiting friends or relatives of the carers.

Foster carers to request that their friends and family visiting the home will not smoke in the presence of the children or in the home.

Foster carers should not smoke in their cars prior to or when transporting children. Further information is available in the [Smoking Policy](#)

6. Further Information

- [Foster carer's insurance](#)
- [Health & Safety Advice for Foster Carers](#)
- [Household Pets Policy](#)
- [Record Keeping for Foster Carers](#)