

Health and Safety in Foster Care Policy

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About This Document

Title	Health and Safety in Foster Care Policy
Purpose	Policy for the Fostering Service to ensure that foster carers homes are safe
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Approved by	Jenny Boyd, DLD Children and Families
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Version Control

Date Issued	Version	Summary of Changes	Created by
September 2015	4.0	Updated dog assessments to include all pets.	Rosemarie Cronin
July 2018	5.0	Updated information as to where the health and safety guidance can be obtained for foster carers	Rosemarie Cronin
July 2018	5.1	Inclusion of sharing the smoking policy with any carers who vape	Rosemarie Cronin
July 2018	5.2	Added in information regarding health and safety checks in holiday homes	Rosemarie Cronin

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1. Introduction and Legal Framework

1.1 It is important that children live in a home which is of a suitable standard and where their development is promoted. It is therefore important that this environment is a safe one for the child considering the ages or likely ages of the children who are going to live there.

1.2 Standard 10 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards state that:

- 1) The foster home can comfortably accommodate all who live there including where appropriate any suitable aids and adaptations provided and fitted by suitably trained staff when caring for a disabled child.
- 2) The foster home is warm, adequately furnished and decorated, is maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene and is in good order throughout. Outdoor spaces which are part of the premises are safe, secure and well maintained.
- 3) Foster carers are trained in health and safety issues and have guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities. Avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a family home.
- 4) Foster carers understand the service's policy concerning safety for children in the foster home and in vehicles used to transport foster children. The service's policy is regularly reviewed in line with the most recent guidance from relevant bodies.
- 5) The foster home is inspected annually, without appointment, by the fostering service to make sure that it continues to meet the needs of foster children.
- 6) In the foster home, each child over the age of three should have their own bedroom. If this is not possible, the sharing of a bedroom is agreed by each child's responsible authority and each child has their own area within the bedroom. Before seeking agreement for the sharing of a bedroom, the fostering service provider considers any potential for bullying, any history of abuse or abusive behaviour, the wishes of the children concerned and all other pertinent facts. The decision-making process and outcome of the assessment are recorded in writing where bedroom sharing is agreed.

1.3 The Fostering Guidance (2011) also states that "The fostering service must have a written health and safety policy, which should be covered in the assessment and training of foster carers. Foster carers should be supported to ensure that their homes are free of avoidable hazards, in keeping with family life. Every foster home must be visited without appointment by a supervising social worker of the fostering service at least once a year, as a check on the standard of care being provided" (Guidance 3.82).

2. Procedures regarding health and safety within the foster home

2.1 During assessment of potential carer or carers who are temporarily approved.

- 2.1.1 Assessing social workers must inspect all areas of the home and garden and complete a health and safety checklist. As part of this there should be discussion with the carers about any potential areas of risk and ways in which the risks can be minimised.
- 2.1.2 All carers are provided with the Essex Fostering Service health and safety guidance document. This is available for foster carers on the Essex County Council website and for fostering staff on the Children's Social Care Procedures Manual.
- 2.1.3 All carers should have a fire risk assessment and ensure that there is a smoke alarm on all floors of the house and in any bedrooms that are being used or likely to be used for looked after children.
- 2.1.4 Assessing social workers should also discuss the Fostering and Adoption smoking policy with carers where there may be people in the household who may smoke/vape.
- 2.1.5 If the carer being assessed has any pets or animals in the household an assessment should be completed.
- 2.1.6 If the carer has any firearms within the home the firearms questionnaire should also be completed during the assessment process, ([See Firearms policy, on our website](#)).
- 2.1.7 A family safe care plan should be completed which involves all family members. This should also include safer use of computers, the internet and social media ([see fostering guidance for safer use of computers, the internet and social media with children and young people](#)).
- 2.1.8 If children are sharing or likely to be sharing a bedroom then a risk assessment must be completed ([see bedroom sharing policy on our website](#)).

2.2 After Approval or Temporary Approval

- 2.2.1 All fostering households must be visited by the SSW without an appointment. During this visit the home should be fully inspected to ensure that the health and safety standards have been maintained.
- 2.2.2 If a foster carer moves home a new health and safety checklist and fire risk assessment should be completed.
- 2.2.3 The family safe care plan should be updated if there is any change to the household composition including new children or young people being placed. This should include safer use of computers, the internet and social media ([see fostering guidance for safer use of computers, the internet and social media with children and young people](#)).
- 2.2.4 If there is any change within the household in terms of pets or guns then the appropriate assessment should be undertaken.
- 2.2.5 Any new potential bedrooms sharing which is being considered should have a risk assessment completed ([see bedroom sharing policy](#)).
- 2.2.6 New foster carers should undertake First Aid and Health & Safety training. First Aid training should be updated every three years.
- 2.2.7 If carers have a regular holiday home, they should undertake a health and safety assessment and discuss this with the supervising social worker.