**WIRRAL FOSTERING SERVICES**

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**SAFE CARE PLAN**

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| **Introduction** |
| We need our looked after children to enjoy and experience as ‘normal’ a family life as possible and we want our foster carers to enjoy the rewards of fostering. But, and as you will recall from your preparation and assessment, fostering can sometimes be a ‘Risky Business’, therefore every foster carer household needs a Safe Care Plan. The Local Authority expects Foster Carers to care for looked after children ‘as their own’ but looking after other people’s children is not quite the same - it comes with additional responsibilities, restrictions and risks. The aim of a Safe Care plan is to protect Foster Carers, placed children and friends and family members from these risks. Unfortunately, it is not possible to eliminate all risks completely. We must be ‘realistic and proportionate’ in our approach. Foster Carers need to identify as many potential areas of risk as possible and then develop strategies in order to avoid, minimise and manage these. This Safe Care Plan template can help you formulate a plan suitable for your family and for children who are placed with you. **This Safe Care Plan template:** * **requires completing in full before your first placement**
* **requires amending/updating when you are asked to consider and agree to a new placement**
* **needs revising when a specific child’s information should cause you to consider if any changes are necessary**
* **needs revising if your household composition or circumstances change in any way**
* **should be reviewed at least annually with your Supervising Social Worker**

The Fostering Service has a duty to support its Foster Carers and this support will include regular supervision and professional development through training relevant to the tasks you are undertaking. Your Supervising Social Worker (SSW) must support and guide your development and will offer general advice on fostering and procedural matters but also enable your access to more specialist advice and support where necessary. Equally, Foster Carers have a responsibility to take advantage the support and advice available to them including Supervisory Visits; Foster Carer Reviews; Support Groups and other groups and organisations offering support. There is a core training course ‘Safer Caring’ provided, and a range of other mandatory and core training available which reference Safe Care and Safe Care planning. |

**YOUR SAFE CARE PLAN TEMPLATE**

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| **Names you use**Please think about what the children should call you; what feels right and comfortable for you and for them. We don’t want them to be confused about relationships …e.g. You are not their ‘Mum/ Dad’. Also, there may be cultural or other reasons why a child shouldn’t call adults by their first names … a title such as ‘aunty’ for instance might work in those situations |
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| **Showing Affection**All children need nurturing but this needs to be done in a way that is comfortable for them and for you 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. Think how you will meet their emotional needs and how you will help them feel safe and cared for. |
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| **Secrets**Please think about how you will promote open and appropriate communication with children you look after. Remember that they may previously have been pressurised into keeping ‘secrets’ by an abuser. Please remember that ‘surprises’ may also be difficult for some children to manage. |
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| **Language and Behaviour Management**Consider how you will deal with offensive/inappropriate language and challenging behaviours. Remember that Wirral has a ‘no smacking’ policy and does not support punitive punishment based models of behaviour management or the physical restraint of children. We need to support and encourage the development of appropriate, safe behaviours in placed children. |
| (N.B. A number of training courses cover behaviour management strategies. Any form of ‘incident’ must be recorded on an Incident/Accident Report Form. You may also wish to discuss with your SSW whether an Individual Crisis Management Plan is required). |
| **The way you dress**Adults, children and young people should be appropriately clothed at all times. Think how you need to promote and actively achieve this and how you would need to explain ‘appropriate dress’ to a child or young person. |
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| **Education about Sex and Sexuality**Good and clear age appropriate sex education is important for all the family. Consider how you express and ‘model’ your intimate relationships and how this might affect or impact on the children you foster. Also consider who might be the most appropriate person to talk about sex and sexuality with a child/young person and where you might get further advice and support if needed. |
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| **In the Bathroom**Consider everyone’s privacy and who is the most appropriate person to attend to the personal and intimate care needs of children. Are any of your household members more or less suited to this role for any child or for a specific child? |
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| **Bedrooms (Children)**Wirral does not generally support bedroom sharing on the grounds that everyone needs their own space and privacy. It might be a house rule that no-one enters another person’s bedroom without knocking and you may also need to consider whether it is safer to have ‘story time’ in living rooms rather than in the child’s bedroom. Also, think about arrangements when you 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 – taking into account children’s ages, gender, profiles, behaviour and past experiences – these need to be authorised by a senior manager) |
| **Bedrooms (Foster Carer)**Consider your own privacy needs and how might you support a child/young person to respect the privacy of others in the household. Does your bedroom need to be out of bounds at all times or might it be okay for children to come into your bedroom at some agreed times? |
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| **Children’s Play**Consider where it is safe for children to play. Are there potential problems with children playing unsupervised or behind closed doors? Consider how you will promote healthy/safe play. |
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| **Taking Photographs**Do you need permission? Where should you not take photos? Are there any other considerations – e.g. some children may have been photographed in negative circumstances previously. Consider how you will assist the child’s needs to understand their life story and keep positive photographic memories. Looked after children’s photos should never be published on Facebook or similar social media. |
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| **Alcohol**Always ensure general health & safety has been considered regarding alcohol storage. 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 |
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| **Medication**Who uses what and where is it kept? Is it prescription or ‘over the counter?’ Record the administration of any medication to children (refer to Medication Policy for guidance). |
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| **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, how will you 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. How might you assist them to obtain maximum benefit whilst minimising any risk to their well-being? |
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| **Use of Cars/Transport**The Department expects all Foster Carers to use appropriate car seats and restraints when transporting children (as per Car Seat Safety Regulation 2006). These are provided as essential fostering equipment but you 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: |
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| **When you go out/babysitting arrangements**Foster Carers have delegated authority to decide who should babysit for them but it is important to choose a responsible adult to maximise Safe Caring as you are ultimately responsible for the child. Who do you have to babysit when you go out? How will you help them to understand your Safe Caring principles in order to keep everyone safe without compromising Confidentiality? |
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| **Visitors to you home**Who visits your home – adults and children? How do you greet/say goodbye to family and friends? Do friends or family sleepover and where will they sleep and how will fostering impact on this?Will a looked after child be able to have visitors – to play, to tea, to stay overnight? How might this be managed by you for maximum benefit with minimum risk? Consider whether you have delegated authority to make this decision or whether you need to talk to the child’s Social Worker. |
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| **Smoking**The Department has a stated aspiration for all fostering households to become smoke free and employs a No Smoking policy for those foster carers supporting placed children under five years of age. If you do smoke, do you allow anyone else to smoke in your house or around children? If so, what might you need to do differently? |
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| **Notes*** Keep this completed Safe Care Plan template in your Child’s Information file.
* You may need to share or discuss this plan with the child’s Social Worker or your Supervising Social Worker.
* For detailed advice, please refer to your ‘Recording and Record Keeping Guidance’ document or discuss with your Supervising Social Worker
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| **Printed: Foster Carer/s** |  |  |
| **Signed: Foster Carer/s** |  |  |
| **Printed: SSW** |  |  |
| **Signed: SSW** |  |  |
| **Date:** |  |  |