**Safer Caring Policy**

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| **Family Name:** |  |
| **Composition of Family:** |  |
| **Current Approval:** |  |
| **Date Policy Agreed / Updated:** |  |

**Areas to consider:**

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| **The names you use:**  Carers should ensure that all foster children refer to them using their first names so as not to cause confusion. |
| I am/we are all known by our first names. I/we will always call a child by their given name, unless the social worker advises me/us to use a different name. When a child is old enough I/we will ask them what name they would like me/us to call them by. |
| **Showing affection:**  Carers should be aware of the need to ensure they have discussed any issues and previous experiences the child may have had with the child’s social worker. Also what all parties are comfortable with, including the child’s parents. If the child is able to make decisions about physical contact, the carer should ask them for permission before giving hugs and other affection. If a child is not of an age where they can make such decisions themselves then the carers may give physical contact when appropriate such as when feeding, cuddles, etc. |
| Carer will provide physical affection to babies and toddlers by giving them hugs and cuddles.  For older children who can decide if they want physical contact, Carer will ask if they would like a hug or a cuddle before doing so.  Where the child is unable to request affection using verbal communication, Carer will be open to non-verbal cues and being aware of the individual child’s history (i.e. past abuse) provide physical affection in an appropriate and safe manner. |
| **In the bathroom:**  As with all family members, privacy should be paramount in this area. If the child is unable to perform their own personal care and carer needs to provide personal care to the child, then carers should be mindful when bathing the child and may chose to keep the bathroom door open when doing so.  Family members must remember to close the bathroom door when they are using the bathroom themselves. |
| The bathroom door will be closed when someone is using the bathroom. It is fitted with a lock which should be used by everyone. Only one person should be in the bathroom at any time, unless a child is of an age where they need practical help or supervision with their personal care and toileting. This help will only be provided by Carer.  Carer will encourage a child/young person to take responsibility for their own personal care where this is age appropriate. Carer will provide appropriate advice and support if required.  At all times care will be taken to avoid situations where actions could be misconstrued and allegations made against anyone to protect the child/young person, other children being cared for in the home, and Carer. |
| **The way you dress:**  Different families have different routines. In this area both carers and any children should be dressed appropriately whether it be in day or night clothes.  After bathing foster carers and children should dress in the bathroom or wear a suitable dressing gown to return to their room. Dressing gowns should be worn over night clothes. |
| Adults and children/young people should be appropriately clothed at all times, and accordingly for the time of day. Children should be dressed suitably for their age, size, the temperature within the home, and the weather conditions if going outside. Dressing will take place in the bedroom or bathroom, with the door closed.  It is recommended that everyone in the household should wear nightclothes in bed and dressing gowns outside of the bedroom. |
| **Playing:**  Children need to feel part of the family. Carers need to be aware that until they get to know a child and are aware of what frightens them, etc, they need to introduce things at a pace appropriate to the child. You need to monitor whether a child was comfortable in given situations and record this in your records to discuss with the child’s social worker and your supervising social worker. |
| Carer will provide a safe, clean and stimulating environment with age appropriate toys which carry the CE mark, if appropriate. Young children will play downstairs supervised by Carer. Older children and young people may play in their room but should leave the bedroom door open. |
| **Clubs and community organisations**  Joining a club, such as Brownies, Guides, Cubs, Scouts, or sporting clubs provides a child with an interest outside the home that can be very positive, both socially and in terms of a child’s fitness and it can be a way of keeping children occupied in a positive way. Children in foster care should be encouraged to join such organisations if they wish to. Clubs and activities may be discussed, agreed and reviewed during any placement planning or placement review meetings to tailor them to the needs of each individual child or young person. |
| Carer will make appropriate arrangements for children and young people joining clubs. Carer will visit the club, see how it operates, meet the people in charge and ask questions about the way that the club is run. Carer will ask the leader if they have a CRB check. The more questions that you ask the less vulnerable the child in your care is. Before signing any permission slips for activities or overnight camps Carer must ensure they have delegated authority to do so or seek permission from the child’s social worker and/or parent as appropriate. |
| **Foster carers bedroom:**  No child should share a bed with any member of the family. Bedtime stories should not be read in the bedroom. Be aware of potential health and safety issues in your room, ensure electrical equipment and medication are securely stored. Ensure that the child knows where your bedroom is and how to alert you that they need you during the night. |
| When Carer cares for a baby, the baby may sleep in a cot in Carer’s room. Carer will never bring the baby into his/her bed. Everyone will sleep in their own bed in their own bedroom, no one will share a bed. If anyone wants to enter Carer’s bedroom they must knock on the door and wait to be invited in. |
| **Child’s bedroom:**  If the child is of an age where they can make decisions, agree with them how their bedroom will be decorated, what posters can be displayed etc. Be clear about what you will do and what they will do to keep it clean and tidy. Encourage the child to tidy away their toys.  Be clear and consistent regarding bedtime routines and age appropriate bedtimes. Check with the child’s social worker or family member if there are any particular requirements such as an overnight light on in the bedroom or landing. |
| The child / young person’s room is a place of safety and security where they can expect peace and quiet. Their bedroom is their own personal space which will be respected. Anyone wishing to enter should knock first and wait to be invited in before entering (this will be age dependent). Carer will only enter the bedroom without invitation if the child/young person is considered to be at risk in any way. Children and young people will be encouraged to keep their room tidy, appropriate to their age and ability. |
| **When you go out:**  If you are going out without the child you should use a babysitter. The NSPCC recommends the minimum age of a babysitter is 16.  Make sure the children have met the person who will be looking after them, and are happy to be looked after by them. Ensure the person is informed about the child’s behaviours and routines. Ensure that you provide details of where you are going, how you can be contacted, medical consent, and the Emergency Duty Services number to the babysitter in case there is a problem and they cannot contact you. Record the outing in your record keeping. |
| If Carer goes out they can ask an adult who is well known to them and who they trust to babysit. They will ensure the person is informed about the child’s behaviours and routines, including bedtime. They will provide details of where they are going, how they can be contacted, medical consent, and the Emergency Duty Services number to the babysitter. Carer will explain to the babysitter who to contact if an emergency should arise. Carer will record the outing in their record keeping. |
| **When they go out:**  If a child is too young to go out alone or there is a specific reason why they should not go out alone they must be supervised by the foster carer.  If a child is old enough to go out alone, ensure you have asked the child who they will be with, where they are going, when they should return home and contact numbers. |
| It should be agreed with the child’s social worker and parents at the placement planning meeting if the child is considered old enough to be allowed to go out alone. If they are allowed to go out without Carer, Carer will ensure they have asked the child where they are going, who they will be with, have a contact number if possible, and agree a time to return. |
| **Travelling by car:**  The vehicle must be taxed, have a current MOT and you must hold valid insurance to drive the vehicle. Age appropriate car seats must be used in line with current procedures, these should be checked regularly to make sure they are correctly positioned and do not need to be replaced. Children should not be left in the vehicle unsupervised. Mobile phones should not be used whilst driving. If children are crying then you should pull over in a safe place and deal with the situation. |
| All children/young people will be expected to wear seat belts at all times when in the car. All children under the age of 12 will use a car seat appropriate to their age, height and weight, and travel in the rear of the vehicle. Baby car seats will not be used in the front seat of a vehicle fitted with airbags.  Carer will ensure that the vehicle is taxed, has a current MOT and is insured for employers business, and driven by a driver who holds a full driving licence. |
| **Taking photos and videos:**  Check with the child’s social worker and parents what photographs they are happy to be taken and whether they would like a copy. Photos and videos must never be taken of a child who is not dressed or is in the bath.  Carers need to be aware not to submit photos of children to appear in magazines, newspapers, on the intranet or be used in promotional material. You should check with the child’s social worker regarding school photos.  Check that the child does not mind having their picture taken and doesn’t become distressed. Photos should be put into an album for the child so that the child has a durable record of their time with you to look back on when they have moved on. Write dates and locations on the back of photos/ in the album as well as what the family did. This is extremely important for children. |
| Carer will take photos which will be used for lifestory work. The child will be dressed appropriately, for example photos in swimwear are acceptable if taken on the beach or in the paddling pool. Carer will not take photos of a child who is undressed or in the bath. If a child is of an age where they can make decisions, Carer will ask permission before photos are taken. Carer will not post photos of children on Facebook or similar. |
| **Education about sex and sexuality:**  Even very young children have a wide range of words they use to describe various areas of their body. Work towards agreed names that everyone understands as if the child is hurt or needs assistance everyone understands what they are saying and what they want or need. |
| Carer will establish agreed labels for parts of the body that everyone understands so that if a child is hurt everyone understands what the child wants or needs.  Carer will answer any questions asked by the child in a way that is suitable to the child’s age and understanding. |
| **Record Keeping:** |
| Carer will keep diary sheets about the children and young people placed with them. This will be in accordance with the requirements of the child’s social worker and supervising social worker and also fostering services policies and procedures. Carer will record the date and time when children have any medical appointments including dentist, optician appointments, and health appointments, and carer will record the reason for the appointment and the outcome. Carer will record date and time of LAC medicals, LAC reviews, PEP’s and any other meetings that Carer is asked to attend, as well as any visits to the home by professionals. Separate diary sheets will be used for each child. Carer will record any significant incidents relating to the children s/he is caring for, and will complete medication sheets when required. If it is necessary to refer to another child in a child’s diary notes then initials and date of birth (if known) for the child will be used. Carer will show these records to their SSW every month to be signed off. Carer will store records relating to children securely. |
| **Confidentiality:** |
| All records relating to children in Carer’s care will be securely stored. Carer will not discuss the history of any children in their care with, or in front of, friends and acquaintances, family and other children in placement who are of an age to understand UNLESS there is a piece of information that the person needs to know in order to keep the child and/or them safe. For example advising a babysitter that a child is to have no contact with parents and to call the police if parents arrive and ask to take the child.  If Carer is supervising contact with a child’s family member or adopters, for example, they will ensure there are no other visitors to their home at the same time. |
| **Family pets:** |
| Any pets (except fish and caged animals) will not be left unsupervised in a room with a baby. |
| **Mobile phones, internet, computer and games console use:**  Carers with access to the internet need to establish internet usage policies for their household. If children and young people are to have access then measures including securing access and protective/blocking software should be taken. Setting up a written agreement with older children about usage should also be considered. |
| Carer will establish general house rules relating to mobile phone, internet, computer and games console use. These can be discussed, agreed and reviewed during any placement planning or placement review meetings.  If a young person is using the computer or games console with internet connection, the door will be left open in the room to ensure use of the computer/sites is monitored. Carers should always ensure that internet usage is adequately supervised.  Carer will be aware of the age ratings for any computer or console games to ensure any child or young person does not play games rated for older children or adults.  Carer will ensure that a child or young person takes regular and adequate breaks when using a computer or games console. |
| **Television and Video/DVD watching:**  Carers have a responsibility to ensure that the material that the children and young people are viewing is suitable for their age and stage of development. Children should not be viewing films with sexual and violent content. It is important to be mindful of a child’s pre-placement experiences and the impact that such viewing may have on the child, the carer should consider this when selecting viewing. The amount of TV viewed should be appropriate. As a general rule, young children should watch TV for no more than two hours per day. Television, DVD’s or console games should not be used as a ‘babysitter’. Limits should be set on the use of media. Establishing house rules in advance helps to reduce conflict. For example no TV before school, during meals or before homework is completed. Consider if it is appropriate for a child or young person to have a TV in their bedroom. Be mindful that TV viewing before bed can disturb sleep if emotion-invoking images are viewed. Set a good example by being selective and limiting your own TV viewing. |
| Carer will establish general house rules relating to TV and DVD viewing. These can be discussed, agreed and reviewed during any placement planning or placement review meetings to tailor them to the needs of each individual child or young person.  Carer will be alert to the programmes and DVDs children and young people are watching to ensure they do not watch programmes or films rated higher than their chronological age. Carer should also consider a child’s developmental age when making decisions about the suitability of a programme. |
| **Communication with parents:** |
| Carer will ensure communication with the child’s parents and/or family members is kept on a professional level. |
| **Behaviour management:** |
| Carer will seek to promote good behaviour through encouragement, praise and distraction techniques, and also through the setting of age appropriate boundaries, taking into account the child’s developmental age.  Carer will explain to the child or young person what behaviour is acceptable and what behaviour is not acceptable and encourage them to take responsibility for their actions.  Physical punishment will not be used.  Carer will seek the support and advice of the child’s social worker and/or the supervising social worker if they are experiencing difficulty in managing a young person’s behaviour. |
| **Visitors to the home:**  Carer’s need to be mindful of the possible past experiences of any visitors to their home (including family, friends, previously looked after children and young people) and if this would render them vulnerable to allegations of abuse from the child or young person currently being cared for. Carer’s should exercise discretion when considering if any visitor to the home should or should not be left unsupervised with a child or young person, this is to protect both the visitor and the child in placement. If in any doubt then carer’s should discuss any issues with their supervising social worker and/or the child’s social worker. Any areas of concern should be raised immediately. |
| The child or young person’s friends are welcome to visit and stay overnight but overnight stays should be planned in advance. Any such visits to the Carer’s home will be recorded on the carers diary sheets.  Visits by members of the child’s family (contact visits) would be undertaken as discussed and agreed in the placement planning meeting or contact review meeting. Unannounced visits from family members will not be accommodated and the child’s Social Worker informed. |
| **Water Features:**  Consider if there are there any water features that present a drowning hazard. These include fountains, ponds, fish ponds, hot tubs and swimming pools. What measures have been or can be put in place to mitigate risk, such as installation of netting or grills to ponds or fencing and gating areas |
| Paddling pools will be emptied immediately following use and put away so they do not fill with rainwater. Uncovered tubs etc that could fill with rainwater will not be left in the garden. Rainwater butts will be enclosed. |

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| **Signed**  **Foster carer :** | **(print name):** |
| **Signed**  **Foster carer :** | **(print name):** |
| **Signed**  **Supervising Social Worker :** | **(print name):** |
| **Date :** |  |