

Fostering

Alcohol, Drugs and Solvents

The Trust Board has granted the Chief Executive of the Sandwell Children's Trust the authority to approve this document.

Alcohol, Drugs and Solvents

Regulations and Standards

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011:

[Regulation 15 - Health of children placed with foster parents](#)

Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards

[STANDARD 6 - Promoting Health and Wellbeing](#)

Related Information

[FRANK \(website\) – Worried about a child? Advice for parents and carers](#)

[New Psychoactive Substances \(NPS\) Resource Pack for Informal Educators and Practitioners \(Home Office\)](#)

Contents

1. Prevention and Planning
2. Alcohol
3. Drugs and Substance Misuse
4. Emergency

1. Prevention and Planning

The agency will ensure that carers and children have access to up to date information, guidance and advice on the risks and strategies that may be adopted in relation to smoking (including e-cigarettes), alcohol or other harmful drugs and substance misuse.

If children are known to be at risk of smoking or misusing alcohol or other harmful drugs, it must be addressed in their placement plan with strategies for cessation or reduction.

All reasonable measures must be used to reduce or prevent children from obtaining drugs or substances which may harm them.

If it is known or suspected that children are obtaining products which may harm them, whether off the streets, from dealers or traders of any kind, carers must notify the agency, who will consult the child's social worker to decide what actions to take.

2. Alcohol

Children and Young People

Under no circumstances may children be granted permission to consume alcohol.

Where it becomes evident or carers suspect that a child or young person has indulged in alcohol, a range of responses are relevant given variations in the severity and extent of the abuse. These options are outlined below:

- Offering fluids - water, squash;
- Periodic monitoring and checks - 10 minutes, 30 minutes, hourly, etc;
- Contacting health professionals for advice i.e. G.P.;

Hospitalisation for day patient or overnight stay if required, etc.

Carers should never ignore a child or young person who appears drunk or under the influence of another substance.

Carers

Foster carers and their visitors should not consume alcohol in the presence of children, except on special occasions, and then the amount consumed should be reasonable.

Once children have gone to bed or are visiting their parents, carers and visitors may consume alcohol but should always be in a position to respond to emergencies, which may mean that one carer should abstain and be able to drive a vehicle legally.

As a guide, carers should be mindful of the consequences of drinking prior to looking after a child or young person. Work, performance and the ability to drive can be affected the day after drinking. Similarly, the after effects of drinking could be, shaking, excessive thirst, indigestion, headache, sickness etc. This may be apparent to children or young people and have serious effects on the foster carers' ability to perform their duties in a professional manner.

Alcohol, young people and the law

See: [GOV.UK website](#).

3. Drugs and Substance Misuse

Substances are any substances, whether restricted or prohibited, which may have a harmful effect upon a child, such as:

aerosols, gas, glue, magic mushrooms (amanita), petrol, solvents and all controlled substances such as amphetamines, barbiturates, cannabis, cocaine, hallucinogens, hashish and heroin. This can also include alcohol, cigarettes and tobacco.

It also includes new psychoactive substances which can cause a very similar range of problems to the drugs which they mimic, including a risk of dependence developing with repeated use. Some appear to be more dangerous even than the traditional drugs they mimic.

See: [Frank - New Psychoactive Substances](#) and [Frank - Drugs A-Z](#).

See also: [Frank Drugs and the Law](#).

Some possible indications of drug and substance misuse are:

- Sudden changes of mood;
- Irritable;
- Loss of appetite;
- Increased appetite - possibly want sweet things more;
- Drowsiness or sleepiness;
- Evidence of telling lies;
- Unexplained loss of money or belongings;
- Unusual smells, stains or marks on the body, clothes or around the house.

It is important not to jump to the wrong conclusion, but speak to the child's social worker or your supervising social worker if you are concerned. Further specialist training may be available on drug and alcohol misuse and there are people who specialise in working with young people on these issues. Access to these services should be done in conjunction with the child's social worker. You could be held responsible for any illegal drugs that are kept in your home so having clear boundaries about drug use is important.

Young people often have access to a range of domestic products that are harmful and potentially fatal to them when inhaled. Foster carers should be vigilant with children/young people around aerosol products, nail varnish, corrective fluid, glues etc.

4. Emergency

If it is suspected that a child is misusing harmful drugs or substances and no strategy exists to reduce or prevent the behaviour, the supervising social worker or the fostering manager must be notified, who may consult the child's social worker. If there is an immediate urgent risk e.g. that the child or another person may be injured or that a serious crime may be committed, the carers should take what action is necessary to protect themselves, the child or others e.g.:

- If there is a risk of serious harm, injury or of a serious criminal offence and carers are unable to manage safely, the Police should be notified;
- If solvents are involved, allow air to circulate freely and extinguish naked lights;
- If any person is unconscious, in a fit or convulsing or otherwise seriously ill, emergency first aid should be given and an ambulance requested. The emergency services should be informed that there are suspicions of drug or solvent misuse;
- The drugs/substances should be removed or confiscated, preferably with the co-operation of the child(ren).

No further action, beyond making the situation safe and attempting to confiscate harmful drugs or substances, should be taken without consulting the supervising social worker or fostering manager.