

## **Bedroom Sharing**

### **SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER**

This Chapter provides procedures for the sharing of bedrooms by children in Foster Care.

### **RELATED CHAPTER**

This Chapter should be read in conjunction with **Bedroom Sharing Guidance**.

For foster care to be successful for looked after children/young people and foster carers and their families, the fostering environment must promote the emotional well-being and physical safety of every person within the household.

Walsall Council, Family Placement Service's Bedroom Occupancy Policy has therefore been developed with the aims of protecting and valuing everyone in the household whilst recognising and taking account of individual's differing needs and families' diversities.

The policy promotes the Fostering Services National Minimum Standard 10.

Please refer to Bedroom Occupancy Practice Guidance for full details of the relevant National Minimum Standards and rationales for the policy decisions.

### **The Bedroom Occupancy Policy**

1. All foster carers registered by Walsall Council will have their own Safe Care Policy. The Safe Care Policy will have been developed by the carers in conjunction with all household members and the foster carer's assessing social worker or link worker in the family placement service.

For prospective foster carers, the Safe Care Policy will be completed prior to approval and reviewed at the point of the foster carer's first placement(s) and at their initial Foster Carer Review at 6 months post approval.

For existing foster carers, the Safe Care Policy will be reviewed when any looked after child/young person is placed, when there are significant changes in the fostering household and at a minimum of annually at the point of the Foster Carer's Annual Review.

Any significant event necessitating that a Foster Carer Review be undertaken, such as following a complaint or allegation, will also require that the Safe Care Policy for the fostering household is reviewed and updated.

2. No bedroom shares between any children or young people will be agreed by the relevant Family Placement Team Manager, unless a Risk Assessment has been completed.

The risk assessment format is included in the Family Placement Referral (WSS909 a) document which must be completed for all types of fostering placement and which must be completed or updated for any moves between placements.

The risk assessment component of the Placement Referral must detail any strategies proposed to minimise risks and indicate the foster carer's views on their abilities to implement the strategies effectively.

3. No bedroom shares for unplanned or emergency placements will be agreed by the relevant Family Placement Manager.

The only exceptions to this are for the unplanned or emergency placement of siblings together or for the Emergency Placement of children with Family and Friends Foster Carers under Regulation 38.2.

In these circumstances, the existing relationships between the children and/or the foster carers will be considered and agreement to make the placement can be based upon the child/ren's case holder and their line manager's Single Assessment.

The detailed Risk Assessment, along with the rest of the Family Placement Referral, should then be completed within 6 weeks of the placement(s) being made.

In the event that a risk that it is not realistically possible to minimise is identified at this stage, then a strategy or planning meeting will be convened to make a decision on whether the placement is to be ended or whether it is possible to provide additional supports that will assist the continuation of the placement.

4. Bedroom shares between unrelated children will be considered for pre-planned Permanent Placements, subject to completion of the Risk Assessment.
5. Bedroom shares between unrelated children in Temporary or Short Term Break or respite placements will not be considered.
6. Bedroom shares between foster carer's own household member children, including permanently placed looked after children, will not be considered.

Exceptions to 5 and 6 above will only be considered for pre-planned bedroom sharing arrangements where a detailed risk assessment has been completed and there are strong supporting factors that indicate a significant benefit to the children for whom the bedroom share is proposed. It is anticipated that such situations will be rare and that the consent of all involved parties, including the

children, their parents/guardians, foster carers, case holder and relevant Family Placement Manager must be obtained.

7. Ideally only babies aged between 00 - 24 months maximum should be sleeping in a cot in a foster carer's bedroom. Family Placement Services will, therefore, only place babies aged between 00 -18 months with foster carers who have no other appropriate bedroom available. If a baby is 6 months old or more at the time of placement and it is known that the placement duration is likely to be 12 months or more, then the baby will only be placed with a foster carer who will have a suitable bedroom available to move the baby on to at the time appropriate for the baby.
8. Where it is known that a child/young person has abused or significantly harmed another child/young person or where the risk assessment identifies that a child/young person's behavioural presentations are likely to be harmful to other children/young people, then a bedroom share will not be agreed.
9. Female and male children should not share bedrooms with one another beyond the oldest child being 5 years of age.

Discretion can be given by the Foster Panel at the time of foster carer approval in relation to Family and Friends Foster Carers where the children have a significant established relationship and subject to a detailed risk assessment and action plan to minimise potential risks and to cater for each child's developing needs.

10. Each child in the household needs to have their own bed. Each child needs space to store clothes and personal possessions. Each child needs wall space to display pictures of importance to them and be able to securely store items they regard as private or valuable. Each child needs to have space to be able to do home work and if this is not in their bedroom another area of the home should be identified and respected as a place for them to study.

### **Foster Carer Bedroom Occupancy Recruitment Policy**

The foster carer recruitment component of this policy has been devised to underpin and promote the entire bedroom occupancy policy. It aims to ensure that the service recruits new carers who are able to provide bedroom accommodation appropriate to the fostering task/type.

Walsall Family Placement Services will consider fostering applications in from people who meet the following bedroom availability criteria in relation to the type of fostering they are wishing to pursue:

1. **Short Term Break Placements (for children with or without disabilities)**

It is not necessary to have an unoccupied bedroom fully available for fostering purposes. However, applicants need to be able to ensure that a bedroom will be available for the sole purpose of fostering for the duration of the proposed short term break periods.

## **2. Temporary Placements (including respite placements)**

At least one bedroom needs to be fully available for the purpose of fostering. Potential bedroom shares with existing household children will not be considered.

For applicants proposing to care for babies in a cot in the prospective carers' bedroom, a suitable bedroom to move the baby on to at approximately 24 months old also needs to be available.

## **3. Permanent Placements.**

Ideally one bedroom should be fully available for the purposes of fostering. Bedroom shares between existing child household members and permanently placed children will be discouraged. However, Family Placement Services can consider such applications subject to extensive exploration of the involved issues in the foster carer assessment, preparation process and on completion of a detailed risk assessment. Such bedroom sharing proposals are recommended only in situations where the children it is proposed to share have existing significant relationship between them, e.g. family and friend placements; temporary foster carers being assessed as permanent carers.