

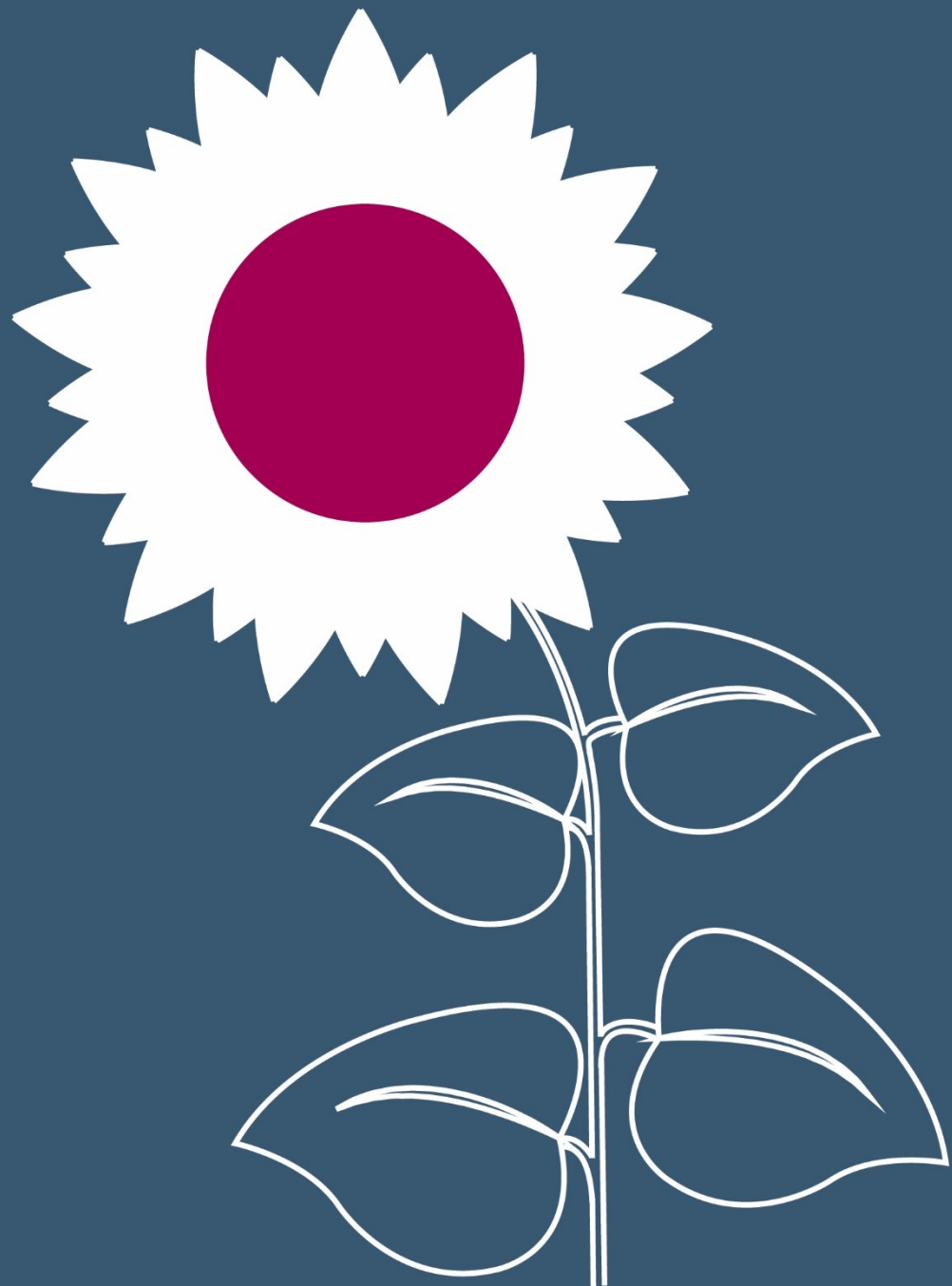


City of  
**Stoke-on-Trent**

# Bedroom Sharing Policy

Tri x 5\_1\_14 July 2022

Review July 2023



# Bedroom Sharing Policy

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 For foster care to be successful, the fostering environment must promote the emotional well-being and physical safety of every person within the household, including foster children, foster carers and their families.
- 1.2 This policy has therefore been developed with the aim of protecting and valuing everyone in the household whilst recognising and taking account of individual's differing needs and families' diversities.
- 1.3 It is aimed at ensuring that all children have their own bed, space to store clothes and personal possessions, wall space to display pictures of importance to them, and to enable them to securely store items they regard as private or valuable.
- 1.4 Each child needs to have space to be able to do homework 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.
- 1.5 This policy adheres to the National Minimum Standards 6.4, 6.5, 9.1 and 9.3.

## 2. Basic Principles

- 2.1 All fostering households will have a room identified for fostering which is equipped to take children within their age range approval. The exception to this will be for baby placements up to the age of 18 months where it has been agreed through panel that a cot can be placed in the carer's bedroom (see 5 below).
- 2.2 Each child living in the foster home, whether they are a child of the foster family or a child in care should have a bedroom of their own.
- 2.3 Sharing *may* be appropriate in the following circumstances:
  - Siblings of the same gender and where sharing has been risk assessed and in the case of older children they are in agreement.
  - Siblings of different genders up to the age of 6 may share, as long as the risk assessment indicates this is appropriate.
- 2.4 Unrelated children **should not** share a bedroom unless there are exceptional circumstances; e.g. children of the same gender and aged 5 or under; and where the placement has been matched and risk assessed; or there are strong supporting factors that indicate a significant benefit to the children for whom the bedroom share is proposed.

- 2.5 Where it is known that a child/young person has abused or significantly harmed another child, or where the risk assessment identifies that a child's behaviour is likely to be harmful to other children, then a bedroom share **will not be agreed**.
- 2.6 If a bedroom or bathroom has been adapted to meet the specific needs of a child with a disability and this has been funded through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), then the child, who the adaptations have been made for, should be the sole person using that Bedroom, whilst that child is in placement.

### 3. Safer Caring Plan

- 3.1 All Foster Carers registered by Stoke-on-Trent City Council will have their own 'Safe Care Plan' which has been developed by the carers in conjunction with all household members; the Fostering social worker and the child's social worker when there are children in placement.
- 3.2 For *prospective* foster carers, the Safer Caring Plan 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 12 months (post approval).
- 3.3 For existing foster carers, the Safer Caring Plan will be reviewed when any looked after child 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.
- 3.4 Any significant event, such as following a complaint or an allegation, will also require that the Safe Care Plan be reviewed and updated.

### 4. Risk Assessment

- 4.1 No bedroom share between any children will be agreed unless a risk assessment has been completed.
- 4.2 The risk assessment must be completed with the involvement of the foster carer, child's social worker and the Fostering social worker, and signed off by the relevant manager.
- 4.3 The risk assessment must detail any strategies proposed to minimise risks and indicate the foster carer's views on their abilities to implement the strategies effectively.

## 5. Emergency placements

- 5.1 No bedroom shares for unplanned or emergency placements will be agreed unless they adhere to the categories identified in point 1.
- 5.2 The only exception to this is for the emergency placement of children with Family and Friends Foster Carers under Regulations governing 'immediate' placements (regulation 38 and regulation 24)
- 5.3 In these circumstances, the existing relationships between the children and the immediate/emergency carers will be considered, and agreement to the placement will be made by the child's social worker and their Principal Manager.
- 5.4 The detailed Risk Assessment should then be completed before the **Placement Plan & Agreement** meeting.
- 5.5 In the event that the risk assessment identifies issues that cannot be realistically managed, then a 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.

## 6. Babies sharing with foster carers

- 6.1 Babies aged between 0 – 24 months max can sleep in a cot in a foster carer's bedroom.
- 6.2 The Fostering Service will, therefore, only place babies aged between 0 -18 months with foster carers who have no other appropriate bedroom available, unless it is for planned respite or on an emergency basis, which is agreed by a Strategic Manager. 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 for 12 months or more, then the baby will only be placed with a foster carer who will have a suitable bedroom available at the time appropriate for the baby to move into a separate bedroom.

## FOSTER CARER BEDROOM OCCUPANCY RECRUITMENT PLAN

The aim is to ensure that the service recruits new carers who are able to provide bedroom accommodation appropriate to the fostering task/type.

The Fostering Service will consider fostering applications from people who meet the following bedroom availability criteria in relation to the type of fostering they are wishing to pursue:

## 1. Family Link Placements (for children with disabilities)

- 1.1 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 breaks.

## 2. Task Centred Placements (including respite placements)

- 2.1 At least one bedroom needs to be fully available for the purpose of fostering. Bedroom sharing with prospective foster carer's own children will not be considered.
- 2.2 For applicants proposing to care for babies in a cot in their bedroom, babies aged 0-18 months may be placed. However, once a child reaches 24 months a suitable bedroom must be available for the child to move into.

## 3. Long Term Placements

- 3.1 A bedroom should be fully available for the purposes of fostering. **Unrelated children** should not share a bedroom unless there are exceptional circumstances; such as there are strong supporting factors that indicate a significant benefit to the children for whom the bedroom share is proposed and there is an existing relationship.

## 4. Foster Carers & the 'Bedroom Tax'

- 4.1 Following a ministerial statement on 12 March 2013 the following amendment was made; *"People who are approved foster carers will be allowed an additional room, whether or not a child has been placed with them or they are between placements, so long as they have fostered a child, or become an approved foster carer in the last 12 months."*
- 4.2 The Stoke-on-Trent Fostering Service will provide a letter to confirm the above status.