

Safe Care Family Policy (Foster Carers)

SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

This chapter provides guidance to Foster Carers on developing a Safer Caring Family Policy.

Contents

1. Why is a Safer Caring Family Policy needed?

2. When Should a Safer Caring Family Policy be Developed or Reviewed?

3. Points to Consider when Developing a Safer Caring Family Policy

1. Why is a Safer Caring Family Policy needed?

Foster carers need to be very aware of the complex issues involved in caring for children and young people, particularly those who may have been the subject of abuse.

Abuse can take many forms including emotional, physical, sexual and neglect. The effects of abuse on children and young people are varied and substantial. Many children and young people lose their trust in adults and need to be helped to feel safe again.

The Safer Caring Family Policy covers a number of areas designed to help fostered children and young people feel safe, emotionally and physically, and to help Foster Carers safeguard everyone in their household.

The policy should ensure that any child or young person, who has been abused in the past, feels safe in their foster placement. Often we are unaware of the "triggers" which may re-awaken memories of abuse therefore everyone must adapt their care accordingly. For example, what each family considers normal teasing and touching can give very different messages to a child or young person who has suffered significant harm in the past.

There are times when it is not known whether a child or young person has been the subject of abuse. The safer caring practices outlined in the Safer Caring Family Policy should be followed with every child or young person.

2. When Should a Safer Caring Family Policy be Developed or Reviewed?

A general Safer Caring Family Policy must be completed with the Supervising Social Worker when Foster Carers are first assessed (see Appendix 1).

The policy must be reviewed with the Supervising Social Worker at least once a year as part of the Foster Carer Review process or when a new child or young person is placed.

In respect to new placements the child or young person's needs should be considered and an individual Safer Caring Family Policy agreed. This should be undertaken prior to, or at the latest, at the child or young person's Placement Meeting and any changes recorded. The agreement should be signed by the Foster Carers, child's Social Worker, Supervising Social Worker and child or young person if appropriate.

The policy should be shared with the child or young person in placement where possible, as well as those connected to the family who may be affected by the placement and able to understand its implications.

There may be times when it may be necessary to revise and update the policy more frequently, depending on individual circumstances.

Any update to the Safer Caring Family Policy should be noted at the Foster Carer's supervision.

3. Points to Consider when Developing a Safer Caring Family Policy

- A Safer Caring Family Policy is designed to protect everyone.
- Children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse can demonstrate sexualised behaviour and respond inappropriately. This could make the child or the carer's family very vulnerable. In some instances it may be better that the child or young person is not left with only one Foster Carer, whenever possible, if this pattern is emerging.
- Children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse may not have had caring physical contact and may misinterpret such actions from Foster Carers. A cuddle or an arm around the shoulder may give a very different message to a child who may have been abused, as may a kiss goodnight.
- Foster Carers are required to think and adapt household rules relating to privacy e.g. clothing, bedrooms. This may seem trivial at the time but it is important to continually reassess situations, as no family is static.

- Children and young people who have experienced abuse may have a pattern of behaviour which he/she knows will please an adult. This can create very vulnerable situations. Any policy must address practices in all of the areas detailed in the Safer Caring Family Policy template. This should always remain a “live” working tool.
- Behaviour Management - This will be derived from the Risk Assessment and Matching Report. This should be kept with the Safer Caring Family Policy. There must be one policy document for each child or young person in placement.
- Any information in relation to a child or young person to be placed or in placement, needs to be considered when drawing up an individual Safer Caring Family Policy.

Safer Caring Family Policy.(Area of safe care to be discussed, agreed and implemented).

Family Name;

Child's/Young person's Name;

1. The names children call carers by.
2. Sharing affection.
3. Bathtime.
4. Dress Codes.
5. Playing/Activities.
6. Access to carers' bedrooms.
7. Access to children's bedrooms.
8. Bedtime.
9. Baby-sitting.
10. Travelling by car/and other transport.

11. Computer usage/access to internet.

12. Photos and videos.

13. When carers go out.

14. When children go out.

15. The family pet.

16. Smoking rules.

17. Health & Safety and fire drill.

18. Mobile phone use.

THE INDIVIDUAL CHILD/YOUNG PERSON

19. Managing the individual child's needs safely.

20. Any other safeguarding agreements or actions required.

21. How will the safe care policy be explained to the child.

Completed.

Signed
Foster Carer

Date

Signed
Child's Social Worker

Date

Signed
Supervising Social Worker

Date

Signed
Young Person

Date