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Version No.	V1



North East Lincolnshire Fostering Service Bedroom Sharing Policy

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Lead Officer	Name: Glynis Tinsley Job Title: Fostering Service Manager
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1 Introduction

This policy provides the context for our foster careers and those supporting foster careers, who provide fostering homes for the children and young people of North East Lincolnshire about the bedroom sharing.

Guidance in the development of this policy has been sought from the [Fostering Services; national minimum standards](#). The National Minimum Standards (2011), Standard 10, specifically applies in this policy. Standard 10 requires the fostering provider to make available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment.

The policy has been developed by North East Lincolnshire Council's Fostering Services, supported by the Commissioning and Strategic Support Unit.

2 Scope and definitions

This policy applies to all Children in Care up to the age of 18 years old, who are residing within a fostering family home and are the responsibility of North East Lincolnshire Council.

A fostering family home includes:

- North East Lincolnshire Council Foster Carers, supported by our internal Fostering Services
- Foster Carers, commissioned by North East Lincolnshire Council via a third party to provide a fostering family home for a Child in Care
- Family and Friends Care

Bedroom sharing is where a child or young person does not have their own space, their bedroom, and is therefore sharing a bedroom space with another child (or adult).

This policy will cease to come into effect upon a young person turning 18 years old.

3 Purpose and aims

The Policy's aim is to deliver a consistent approach for all Children in Care where consideration may need to be taken to the appropriateness of a child or young person sharing a space with another child (or adult) when living with foster careers.

This policy sets out:

- The reasons why decisions to share a bedroom may need to be made
- How these decisions should be made
- Who should be involved in the decision-making process
- The outcomes of such decisions upon the child, young person, and foster career

The policy aims to enable the Fostering Service to provide a suitable physical environment for the foster child that is safe, healthy, and nurturing. We want all our children in care who live in a fostering family home to have their own bed and access to "private" spaces within their home setting, where there is an identified need.

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This policy will enable the Authority to meet Standard 10 of the National minimal standard.

4 Policy

4.1 National Minimal Standards

4.1.1 [STANDARD 10 - Providing a suitable physical environment for the foster child](#)

“In the foster home, each child over the age of three should have their own bedroom. If this is not possible, the sharing of a bedroom is agreed by each child’s responsible authority and each child has their own area within the bedroom. Before seeking agreement for the sharing of a bedroom, the fostering service provider considers any potential for bullying, any history of abuse or abusive behavior, the wishes of the children concerned and all other pertinent facts. The decision-making process and outcome of the assessment are recorded in writing where bedroom sharing is agreed.”

4.1.2 [STANDARD 15 – Matching the child with a placement that meets their assessed needs](#)

Standard 15 requires fostering providers to ensure that a child placed in foster care is carefully matched with a foster carer capable of meeting his/her assessed needs. In some circumstances, this may be identified as a child having his/her own bedroom.

4.1.3 In other circumstances, the sharing of a bedroom may be risk assessed as appropriate.

4.2 North East Lincolnshire Fostering Service Standards

4.2.1 Any child who needs to live within a fostering family home will have their needs assessed suitably to determine suitable matching with any potential fostering families who can provide a home.

4.2.2 As part of this assessment process, we shall consider the suitability a child sharing a space with another child. It is the view of the Authority that whilst we will strive to achieve compliance with standard 10, this will not be achievable for all children nor appropriate.

4.2.3 The Authority has a clear vision to enable our children who are in a need of fostering home to live locally to the borough, where this is appropriate. This enables our children to maintain their family connections throughout their care journey and supports children to maintain consistency in accessing local services that may already be well established i.e., Education, Health and Social activities. To maintain this local connection, it may be suitable for our fostering

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providers and social work teams to consider and assess the suitability of a child sharing a bedroom space, for them to remain within the borough and live in a fostering family home.

4.2.4 When determining the appropriateness of a child sharing a bedroom, the specific needs of the child should be taken into consideration e.g., enuresis, waking in the night, requiring the light on. For a child in adolescence, the provision of privacy and adequate personal space should be considered.

4.2.5 A child over the age of 5 years should not share a bedroom with a child of the opposite sex.

4.2.6 A child under the age of 2 years can share the foster carers bedroom.

4.2.7 A child should not share a foster carer's bed in any circumstances.

4.2.8 A child should not share a bedroom with a foster carers birth, adoptive or step children, irrespective of their age or sex.

4.2.8 Arrangements that involve sharing a bedroom in holiday circumstances should be subject to a separate risk assessment. Similarly, the sharing of bedrooms, upon friends/family visiting the foster household, should be subject to a separate risk assessment. Where such arrangements are time limited, a review may not be required. This will be determined by the fostering social worker.

5. Decision making

5.1 Where a potential offer of a fostering home has been identified the relevant matching process and documentation needs to be completed.

5.2 If the potential offer would require "bedroom sharing" for any child, the fostering social worker and the children's social worker shall jointly assess the viability of "bedroom sharing" as part of the matching process. This shall be actioned using the [Bedroom Sharing Risk Assessment Template](#).

5.3 Where there is no need for "bedroom sharing", but a child is asking to share a space i.e. with a sibling, the same process must be completed.

5.4 Following the assessment being completed, this will need to be shared, reviewed, and signed off by the Fostering Service manager. The children's social worker will need to ensure a copy of the signed assessment is recorded within the child's records via the appropriate system.

5.5 The Fostering social worker will update the foster carers records and assessment to reflect the decision made.

5.6 Copies of the signed assessment will be shared with the foster carer.

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5.7 Where appropriate, the views of all the children impacted should be sought and recorded as part of this process.

5.8 In an emergency in which providing a shared bedroom space enables a child's immediate needs to be met, safely, a child can move into a new fostering home. Where it is identified that bedroom sharing is the only option, or requested by the child, children, or foster carers the acting Out of Hours manager is delegated to authorise this arrangement, by the Fostering Service manager, for an interim period of no more than 5 days. This decision must be recorded on the child's record, with notification also being made to the Fostering Service manager, fostering social worker and allocated child's social worker. The Fostering social worker and allocated child's social worker will then be required to review and assess this arrangement within the following 2 working days.

5.9 Should any assessment conclude bedroom sharing is not appropriate, suitable steps should be taken by both the Fostering social worker and the Children's social worker. This may include implementing an action plan to mitigate risks, until a suitable arrangement or new home can be matched. Where such steps are being taken but require the child to remain in the home as an interim plan, the Fostering Service manager should be notified. The Fostering Service manager will determine how often the assessment and plans should be reviewed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child and the fostering family.

5.10 An assessment must be completed for each child who it is proposed may share a bedroom. This is to ensure that the individual and collective needs, risks, and views can be assessed and recorded.

6. Reviewing decisions

6.1 The assessment and arrangements shall be reviewed at least on an annual basis, led by the fostering social worker as part of the foster carers annual review. Consultation with the children's social worker will be required as a minimum. It may be suitable to consult with other professionals supporting the child i.e. The IRO and Health professionals if the child has any specialist or specific support needs.

6.2 The annual review will need to be signed off by the Fostering Service Manager and be recorded on the relevant records for both the foster carer and child.

6.3 If a change of circumstance or change of child's presentation or behaviour is clear, the above points shall be repeated.

7. Exceptional Circumstances

7.1 In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to act outside of this policy. Such a circumstance could, for example, involve the bedroom sharing arrangements for an emergency request to provide a home for a child. In such

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circumstances, the rationale for acting outside of the policy should be clearly recorded on the foster carer's file.

7.2 Any decision to act outside of the policy should be made by the Fostering Service Manager, unless otherwise delegated as stated within this policy.

8. Impact analysis

8.1 Equality This policy has been created with due regard for the Council's public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010, s149. All staff connected with the implementation of this policy, in the exercise of their public functions, must also have due regard to the matters within s149(1).

8.2 No areas of concern have been identified as part of the impact assessment.

9. Implementation

9.1 This policy will be disseminated internally within the Authority.

9.2 This policy and supporting documents will be published via Tri-ex. This system can be publicly accessed, enabling the policy to be shared electronically with foster carers and any third parties.

10. Policy monitoring and review

10.1 This policy will be reviewed in 12 months' time by the Fostering Service.

10.2 Earlier review may be required in response to exceptional circumstances, organisational change or relevant changes in law/ guidance, as instructed by the senior manager responsible for this policy.

10.3 Use of the policy will be monitored by the Fostering Service.