

Manual:	Foster Carers Handbook; Fostering Service Procedures
Title:	Health and Safety Guidance (FCH/038)
Last Reviewed:	17/04/2015
Next Review Due:	17/04/2018

INTRODUCTION

Employers have a duty to minimise the risks to the health and safety of their employees and others effected by their undertaking, including voluntary workers, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and to formally assess those risks under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 Foster carers, although not employed by the local authority, provide care to foster children on behalf of the authority.

The local authority, therefore, has a responsibility to ensure the environment in which a child is placed is, as far as possible, is free from hazard or where hazards exist that actions are taken to minimise any risk involved.

Standard 6 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services also places requirements on the Fostering Service to ensure that the home promotes a safe physical environment for a child.

Expectations

The Fostering Service expects that:

- The foster home can comfortably accommodate all who live there and who are proposed to live there (Standard 6.2).
- The home is warm, adequately furnished and decorated and is maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene (Standard 6.3).
- Each child placed has her/his own bed and bedroom unless a risk assessment indicates otherwise (see Room Sharing) and accommodation arrangements reflect the child's assessed need for privacy and space or for any specific need resulting from a disability (Standard 6.4).
- The home and immediate environment are free of avoidable hazards that might expose a child to risk of injury or harm and contain safety barriers and equipment appropriate to the child's age, development and level of ability (Standard 6.6).
- Where the foster carer provides transport for the child this is safe and appropriate to the child's needs (Standard 6.8).

Assessment

Fostering Supervising Social Workers in conjunction with carers, will in the course of a Form F assessment or Regulation 38 assessment (Social Workers), undertake a Health and Safety Risk Assessment. They are required to look around every room in the house including the garden and grounds. This involves:

- **Identifying hazards** - Looking out for anything which has the potential to harm.
- **Assessing risk** - Judging the likelihood of injury or damage actually occurring. Injury can be physical or psychological.
- **Introducing precautions** - Implementing affordable and practical measures which minimise the risks.

The Fostering Standard 12.6 makes clear to the carer their role in helping to promote any child in their care giving attention to health issues in everyday care of the child. (This also applies to safeguarding children's health in relation to second hand smoke).

For each hazard identified the risk of it causing harm needs to be assessed. For example – a cooker is a hazard but if it is correctly installed, in good condition and has a pan guard around it, it is unlikely to present a significant risk to a child in the household. However, if the cooker plug is cracked and the appliance itself is in poor condition and there is no pan guard then the risk of this appliance causing harm is higher.

Where there are identified risks the Fostering Supervising Social Worker will discuss with carers means of rectifying or minimising the risk to an acceptable level.

In situations where the household and/or its environment would pose considerable risks to any child placed and no action can be taken to remove or minimise the risk, the Fostering Supervising Social Worker may not be in a position to recommend the approval of the carers. Recurrent risks or refusal to take advice about risks would be also be of concern and would be addressed in the Foster Carer Review.

The risk assessment is extensive because it considers the wide range of children requiring foster care. Not all of the standards may need to be met by all carers e.g. if carers are looking after very young children a stair gate will be required but if they are looking after older children it may not. With regard to essential equipment for children and young people, if carers do not have this and it is on the approved list of essential equipment, the Fostering Service will provide the equipment on loan.

It is intended that carers complete these assessments with the Fostering Supervising Social Worker undertaking their assessment. If carers have any concerns or queries they are required to raise these with the assessing officer or their Fostering Supervising Social Worker.

The Risk Assessment will be reviewed at least annually as part of the Foster Carer Review. It will also be reviewed if there are any significant changes in the carer's circumstances.

Guidance

Guidance on the above process will be provided by the assessing Fostering Supervising Social Worker. The Fostering Supervising Social Workers have access to advice and support from the Health and Safety Officers and other bodies such as the Community Safety Unit of the Fire and Rescue Service and nurses responsible for Looked After children.

Event of a Fire

As part of the assessment process the Fostering Supervising Social Worker will ensure that each family has appropriate safety equipment and an agreed family policy on actions to take in the event of a fire. This must be included in the Family's Safe Care Policy.

There are many ways a fire can start in the home and the usual precautions should be taken to help in prevention of a fire in the same way as in any family home.

NOTE: The Community Fire Safety Department can also be contacted to arrange a 'Home Fire Safety Visit'.

In the event of a fire the carers' Fostering Supervising Social Worker and Child's Social Worker (or their Team Managers in their absence) need to be informed that a fire has occurred in the Foster Carer's home.

In the event of a fire there is to be a review of the carers Safe Care Policy (Fire Precautions) and Health and Safety checklist, to assess any further potential risk.

If a fire occurs outside of office hours and advice is needed, Social Care Direct is to be contacted on **03000 26 26 79** Or Emergency Duty Team **03000 26 26 79**

Moving and Handling

Moving and handling are terms applied to the transporting, lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, carrying, moving or supporting of any load either by hand or other bodily force. A load means any item, person or animal.

Moving and handling is something that occurs on a daily basis within a foster home. When foster carers undergo their medical, the assessing GP and the fostering service Medical Advisor will assess the moving and handling involved in the fostering task and take into consideration when recommendations are made.

Training in moving and handling techniques is provided as part of foster carer training.

If a child is placed who has specific needs additional training will be provided as appropriate.

It is the foster carers responsibility to take care of their own and foster children's safety. We recommend that foster carers:

- Participate in training.
- Advise the fostering service of any change in your health or deterioration of any existing condition that affects their abilities to move or handle objects.
- Participate in any identified risk assessment.
- Use any equipment provided in the correct manner and for the purpose it was intended.
- Do not use any unauthorised moving and handling equipment or techniques.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

SS301 Risk Assessment Form

Protection and Prevention of Infectious Diseases

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL – CHILDREN’S SERVICES

SS301 HEALTH & SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT – FOSTERING SERVICE

Name:

Address:

Name of people completing this Risk Assessment:

Date of Completion:

Location and Access	Yes	No	Comments: please detail any issues arising and measures required to minimise risk
Does the location of the property pose any risk to visitors?			
➤ Is the property easily accessible?			
➤ Are the approaches even and uncluttered?			
➤ Is the lighting to and from the home adequate?			
Is there any threat from pets or non-domestic animals? If, YES, the Pet or Dog Owners Questionnaire must be completed.			

Living Environment	Yes	No	Comments: please detail any issues arising and measures required to minimise risk
➤ Do any members of the household smoke? If so, have the carers addressed smoking cessation?			
➤ What areas are designated smoking areas, are these appropriate?			
➤ Are passageways and stairs free from obstacles or hazards?			

➤ Are the floors free of such hazards as worn carpets, trailing cables, loose rugs, uneven floors?			
➤ Are sharp edges on furniture covered by protectors?			
➤ Does the overall state of cleanliness in the home represent any risk to health?			
➤ Are there any indications that the life habits of the family would endanger life?			
➤ If alcohol kept at the home – how is it stored?			
➤ Are stair gates fitted to stairs?			
➤ Is basic protective equipment available?			
➤ Are light switches in a visibly sound condition?			
➤ Are power points available?			
➤ Is there any visible damage to power points e.g. cracks or scorch marks?			
➤ Are sockets overloaded? (multiple plugs)			
➤ Are power points sited to allow easy use?			
➤ Are socket protectors used?			
➤ Is there any evidence of damp conditions or poor ventilation e.g. mould growth?			
➤ Is the Gas Certificate available and dated within the last year? Does this test for carbon monoxide? Does it include all gas appliances?			

➤ What measures are taken to prevent accidents caused by glass doors and low windows?			
➤ Where there is risk of climbing out of windows, what measures are taken to prevent this?			
➤ Are candles/burners used? Are they supervised?			
Garden	Yes	No	Comments: please detail any issues arising and measures required to minimise risk
➤ Is the garden free from dog/cat fouling?			
➤ Is the garden free of scrap metal, household waste etc?			
➤ Are all fences, steps, paths and walls in good condition?			
➤ Where and how are garden chemicals stored?			
➤ Where and how are garden implements stored?			
What electrical appliances are used in the garden?			
➤ Are they as far as visible in good working order?			
➤ If visible does wiring appear to be in good order and without damage?			
➤ Is a circuit breaker (RCD) used? Is this tested regularly?			
➤ Is there a pond/swimming pool? Does this present any hazard?			
➤ What play equipment is available? Are there any concerns about its safety?			

Will children have access to the garden?			
➤ Will access be supervised?			
➤ How would carer ensure garden is secure?			
Bathroom	Yes	No	Comments: please detail any issues arising and measures required to minimise risk
What arrangements are there for storing -			
➤ Razors, scissors, cosmetics, perfume/aftershave			
➤ Cleaning materials			
Is any electrical equipment used in the bathroom? If so, is it designed for that purpose?			
What methods are used to ensure correct water temperature for showering or bathing?			
➤ Are non-slip mats available for bath/shower?			
Kitchen	Yes	No	Comments: please detail any issues arising and measures required to minimise risk
What electrical appliances are used in the kitchen?			
➤ Are they as far as is visible, in good working order?			
➤ If visible does wiring appear to be in good order, correct and without damage?			
➤ Are there any trailing wires?			
Power points			
➤ Are power points available?			
➤ Is there any visible damage to power points e.g. cracks or scorch marks?			
➤ Are sockets overloaded? (multiple plugs)			

➤ Are power points sited to allow easy use?			
➤ Are socket protectors used?			
Hygiene			
➤ Are the areas to be used for food preparation maintained in a hygienic condition?			
➤ Are there facilities for the safe storage of food? ➤			
What are the arrangements for the storage of -			
➤ Sharp knives or other sharp objects			
➤ Items which may be hazardous e.g. polythene bags			
➤ Cleaning materials e.g. bleach, disinfectant			

Infection Control/Medicines	Yes	No	Comments: please detail any issues arising and measures required to minimise risk
➤ What arrangements are there for the storage of medication?			
➤ Does the household have a first aid kit? Is it adequately stocked?			
Sleeping Areas	Yes	No	Comments: please detail any issues arising and measures required to minimise risk
Does each foster child have a bedroom of their own? (if no, a Room Sharing Risk Assessment must be completed and available on file)			
Is there adequate furniture to meet the needs?			

Is furniture: ➤ Positioned away from windows?			
➤ Positioned away from radiant heat sources, including radiators?			
Does furniture -			
➤ Meet kite mark standards e.g. cot bar widths, inflammable materials?			
➤ Have any necessary safety bars and in case of bunk beds secure ladders?			
Are electric blankets and/or hot water bottles used?			
Are window locks fitted?			

* In the case of Bunk beds in room and it is occupied by two people, it must by law now have a fire alarm in the bedroom.

Disabled Children	Yes	No	Comments: please detail any issues arising and measures required to minimise risk
➤ Are there any attributes of the child, which need special consideration?			
➤ Are any aids, adaptations or equipment required?			
➤ Are these readily available?			
➤ Is any necessary hand or grab rails fitted?			
➤ Does the positioning of the furniture present any hazard or risk?			
➤ Is any specialist protective equipment needed?			

Motor Vehicles	Yes	No	Comments: please detail any issues arising and measures required to minimise risk
➤ Are car seats appropriate for the car and age of the child?			
➤ Are cars fitted with BSS approved seatbelts and carrycot restraints as appropriate?			
➤ Is MOT and insurance on car up to date?			
➤ Are keys to vehicles kept in a safe place to avoid children and young people getting in unattended?			

Fire Safety	Yes	No	Comments: please detail any issues arising and measures required to minimise risk
Does the family have a Fire Policy?			
➤ Are all members of the household aware of it?			
➤ Are smoke detectors fitted and working? NB a minimum of 2 – one upstairs and one downstairs. Are batteries checked regularly?			
➤ Smokers: how are matches, cigarettes, lighters and lighter fuel stored?			
➤ Is any flammable substance left near to the fire, including toys?			
➤ Is there anything on the mantelpieces to attract children to the fireplace?			
➤ Is a fireguard available and used?			

Open Coal Fires			
➤ Are the fire and surrounds in good condition?			
➤ Is the fire allowed to go out or is it kept on overnight?			
➤ How is coal stored and accessed?			
➤ Are chimneys swept regularly?			

SUMMARY OF ACTION REQUIRED TO MEET STANDARDS

Please detail below actions to be taken to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements.

Details should also be given of the timescales in which they will be achieved.

Actions to be taken	By Whom	By When	Date completed

GENERAL COMMENTS/SUMMARY/CONCLUSION?

Signed Date
 Fostering Supervising Social Worker

Signed Date
 Foster Carer

REVIEW

Date of Visit:

Please detail any significant changes since last Risk Assessment:

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Actions to be taken	By Whom	By When	Date completed

GENERAL COMMENTS/SUMMARY/CONCLUSION?

Signed Date
Fostering Supervising Social Worker

Signed Date
Foster Carer