

Manual:	Foster Carers Handbook
Title:	Holiday Guidance (FCH/008)
Last Reviewed:	04/12/2014
Next Review Due:	04/12/2017

INTRODUCTION

Carers must notify their fostering social worker and child's social worker immediately when they are considering taking a child on holiday, before they inform the child or confirm the holiday booking. This is for both for both U.K. as well as holidays abroad. It is important that details of the intended holiday are given to Children's Services to enable them to log the information, in the event of the Department needing to contact the carer and vice versa. Carers need to consider how well they know the child and how long the child has been in placement before taking them on holiday and consider whether they could manage any potential problems in a foreign country or could they be managed better on a UK holiday. For holidays abroad as much notice as possible must be given in order to seek permission and obtain passports.

Whether foster carers are taking holidays abroad or in the U.K. they should always carry a letter confirming their status as DCC foster carers and that the holiday has been agreed. (For those carers who regularly take caravan holidays in the U.K., it is suggested that this is discussed/agreed at the initial placement meeting).

Individual needs of child/risk assessment

Each child's individual needs should be assessed in conjunction with the fostering supervising social worker and child's social worker prior to going on holiday in order to risk assess and meet individual needs.

Holidays Abroad

Permission must be sought from SW, parents and a letter giving permission from the appropriate strategic manager to confirm when and where the children are going for every single trip out of the country. (Please note, a child/young person on a Care Order, can not be taken out of the U.K. for more than a month without the consent of everyone with parental responsibility or court's leave i.e. permission from the court).

Holiday Insurance

Carers need to ensure appropriate holiday insurance cover is in place for foster children taken on holiday out of the country.

E111 Cards

Carers should obtain a E111 for LAC children going on holiday in the EU, to enable them to access any medical treatment required.

Foreign Office Advice

Carers should seek advice from the foreign office around current guidelines and advice around potential dangers and risks and if vaccinations are required for the trip. The fostering service encourages carers to follow the advice from the foreign office.

Holiday Clubs

It could be viewed as a stigmatizing, if LAC a child is not allowed to participate in activities when other children of a similar age, understanding and ability can. Emphasis is made that the foster carers must be within the vicinity to ensure child/young person is safe and not to use this as a babysitting service e.g. going off site elsewhere and leaving child in the care of holiday club staff for long protracted periods. It is the Foster Carers responsibility to ensure that any child or young person is appropriately supervised at all times whilst on the holiday with them.

Child going missing

Carers should ensure they have all emergency contact numbers for both within the UK and the country they are visiting such as local police, British Consulate and Durham's Emergency Duty Team.

Activities

The foster carers must take responsibility at the time for allowing children to participate in activities in the same way they would in their local area and need to find out all of the information regarding the activity and risk assess accordingly at that point.

Bedrooms

Generally it is thought to be safer, that carers and children share a family room than a child occupying a room of their own, this is obviously dependant on the layout of the accommodation, as well as child's age, understanding and maturity. (Many establishments will not allow young people under the age of 16/18 to occupy a room of their own). This would require a risk assessment being undertaken. All children must have their own bed, under no circumstances should there be any bed sharing between children/adults. (It is good practice to include the foster carers own children/grandchildren in this). A revised safe care policy to cover the time of the holiday needs to be carried out and strictly adhered to at all times. It is suggested that dressing and undressing is to take place in the bathroom and appropriate clothing to be worn at all times. In relation to LAC children who have a history of sexual abuse, sexualised behaviour or have made allegations in the past, may be deemed too much of a risk to share a bedroom and decisions about the suitability of the such a holiday for the family/child(ren), will need to be made on a case by case situation.

A risk evaluation is required, based upon the individual needs of the child and the carers circumstances through discussion and agreement with the fostering supervising social worker, child's social worker and the foster carer.

A conclusion may be that it is too great a risk to allow a carer(s) on their own, to share a bedroom with a child(ren) on holiday.

Supervision of children

Child/baby listening service must not be used as a baby sitting service. Children must be appropriately supervised by an adult at all times. No child/young person should be left in an apartment unattended at any time.

Swimming pool and in the sea

Children under the age of 11 years should not be unattended by an adult, in a swimming pool/sea area. This is regardless of whether they are a competent swimmer or not. The carer needs to be satisfied that suitable supervision/monitoring are offered to all young people regardless of age depending on the child's needs.

In relation to access to the sea, it is the carers responsibility to advise/assess, as to the suitability to access the sea at any given time. This is after taking into account the local safe bathing instructions and guidance. This applies to children/young people of all ages.

Caravans and Camping Holidays

Carers who own caravans or tents and use them on a regular basis.

There could be a higher risk if sleeping arrangement/habits in these situations have been formed over a period of time. Carers need to review safe care arrangements with particular attention to sleeping arrangements. A safe care policy should be drawn up by the foster carer to cover the specific holiday situation, and shared with the Fostering Social Worker. A health and safety risk assessment document should also be completed by the foster carer in relation to the caravan/tent, and shared with the Fostering Social Worker.

If carers have a static caravan then such details as Site details, Pitch No. and emergency land line details should be made available in the event of emergencies or EDT are required to make contact with the carer(s).

A new holiday to new facilities (Caravans or tents not owned by the carers).

Carers should request a copy of the layout of the caravan and then plan/risk assess accordingly around sleeping arrangements in conjunction with their fostering supervising and the child(ren)'s social worker. All children must have their own beds and risk assessments to be completed on any potential bedroom sharing.

Please note, it is the responsibility of the foster carer to complete the safe care policy and health and safety risk assessment, and to share with and discuss with the fostering social worker.

Where possible, the Fostering Social Worker should see the caravan, although this will not always be possible due to geographical location.

Emergency holiday packs

Carers should take photocopies of passports, medical consent forms, emergency contact numbers etc with them.

Complacency on Holidays

Foster carers should not "let your guard down" or "let safe care practices slip", whilst on holiday.

Children should never be entrusted to any adults that they or their carers happen to meet on holiday for any reason.

Carers should moderate their alcohol consumption on holiday, as this can impair judgement and ability to keep themselves and children in their care safe.

Children under 18 years must never be given any alcohol.

Children over 11 years of age wishing to engage in organised activities may be allowed to do so, as long as the foster carer has assessed any risk factors involved in the activity. The risk assessment should take into account the "wider picture", considering such things as any background factors relating to the child, their maturity, as well as any interests and abilities they have in relation to the particular activity.