

Manual:	Fostering Service Procedures; Foster Carers Handbook
Title:	Safe Care Family Policy (Foster Carers) (FCH/013)
Last Reviewed:	16/02/2015
Next Review Due:	16/02/2018

INTRODUCTION

Foster carers need to be very aware of the complex issues involved in caring for children, particularly those children or young people 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 are varied and substantial. Many children lose their trust in adults and need to be helped to feel safe again. This is one reason why foster carers are required to develop a Safer Caring Family Policy.

The safer caring family policy covers a number of areas designed to help fostered children feel safe emotionally and physically and to help carers safeguard everyone in their household. The policy is also there to ensure that any child, 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 who has suffered significant harm in the past.

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

- A general Safer Caring Family Policy must be completed with the Fostering Social Worker when carers are first assessed. This policy must be reviewed with the Fostering Social Worker at least once a year as part of the Foster Carer Review process or when a new child is placed.
- In respect to new placements the child(rens) needs are to be considered and an individual safer caring family policy be agreed. This is to be undertaken prior to, or at the latest, at the child's **Placement Meeting** and any changes recorded. The agreement should be signed by the carers, child's Social Worker, Fostering Social Worker and young person if appropriate. There may be times when it may be necessary to revise and update the policy more frequently, depending on individual circumstances.
- The policy should be shared with the child 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. Any update to the safer caring family policy should be noted at the foster carer's supervision.

POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN CONSIDERING A SAFER CARING FAMILY POLICY

- A Safer Caring Family Policy is designed to protect everyone.
- Children 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 is not left with only one carer, whenever possible, if this pattern is emerging.
- Children who have experienced sexual abuse may not have had caring physical contact and may misinterpret such actions from 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.

- 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 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 in placement.
- Any information in relation to a child to be placed or in placement, needs to be considered when drawing up an individual Safer Caring Family Policy.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Safe Care Family Policy Template – Appendix 1

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.

