



North Tyneside Council

Fostering Handbook

Safeguarding everyone in our household

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What happens if an allegation or complaint is made against me or my family?

1. Introduction

Due to the lived experiences of children who come into your care, this can result in them or members of their family making allegations or complaints. These allegations or complaints can be made against anyone the children and family are working with including Foster Carers and members of their household.

When allegations are made against Foster Carers or someone in their household, the Local Authority have a legal duty to investigate. This process will ensure everyone's safety whether the allegation is believed to be true or not. It is acknowledged that this can place Foster Carers and members of their family in a difficult and distressing situation. The Fostering Service are here to support you through any allegation process.

Any allegation involving a child where significant harm has been reported will be investigated thoroughly. This investigation involves several different professionals such as

Lado- Local Authority Designated Officer, who is responsible for co-ordinating the investigations where an adult who works with children has had an allegation made against them.

Health/ Education- Information from both agencies will be gathered as part of the investigation.

Police- A decision will be made by the police whether the allegation is a criminal offence and wish to investigate further.

Children's Social Work Team/ Fostering Service- Continue to work alongside the child and Foster Carer.

Independent Social Worker- details will be provided to all carers who have had an allegation made against so that they can access independent Social Work Support.

It is important to note that consideration will always be given with regard to all children living within the fostering household, including the Foster Carers own children and it may mean that either members of the household or the children have to leave the home whilst the concerns raised are investigated.

It is also important to note that, although there may be insufficient evidence to support a Police prosecution, this does not mean that action cannot be taken to protect a child for example, a caution may be given. The Police outcome may have a direct impact on a person's ability to continue to foster.

Regardless of the Police outcome, the Fostering Service will need to consider how the allegation is investigated. Potential outcomes are:-

No Further Action (NFA)

Allegations Meeting held

Standards of Care Meeting held

Fact Finding report to be completed by the Fostering Service.

Section 47 Child Protection Enquiry is undertaken by the Child's Social Work Team.

For further information on the process please see the [allegations flow chart](#).

2. What Happens next.

During the investigation you may be suspended by the Fostering Service, should the concerns raised be of significant harm and the recommendation is that children should not be in your care whilst investigations are ongoing. Should this be the case, this will be fully explained to you by the Fostering Service and followed up in writing.

You will continue to receive your usual fee until the outcome of the investigation is known but not the child-based allowance as you will have no children within your care.

Should you be suspended from fostering and your Foster Care Review is due and would go out of timescales before the outcome of the investigation, then a conversation will be had with your Independent Reviewing Officer by your Supervising Social Worker as to the best way to proceed. Your Foster Care Review may go ahead with a recommendation that you continue to be on hold until the outcome of any investigation is known.

Whether or not you will be able to continue to foster following an allegation will have to be considered. The Fostering Service will take into consideration the outcome of the Police decision, LADO outcome alongside the information gathered during the Fact-Finding Investigation. The Fact-Finding report will usually be completed by someone other than your Supervising Social Worker. The assessing Social Worker will make a recommendation as to the continued suitability of you as a Foster Carer, which will then be presented to a Foster Care Review and then the Fostering Panel.

The Agency Decision Maker (ADM) will then review all of the information provided to them as part of the allegation process. From this the ADM will give a formal decision as to your continued approval as a Foster Carer alongside any changes to terms, you can Foster within.

Should you not agree with this decision you can appeal, within 28 calendar days, by following the guidance sent to you in writing at this point.

3. Ways of Reducing Risks

- To be conscious that everyone in the household is open to allegations
- Keep a daily record in line with the Fostering Service Policy
- Report any concerns, accidents or injury to the child's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker straight away.
- Share with the child coming to live with you what the household rules and expectations are for everyone in the home.
- Regularly updating your Family Safer Caring Policy and risk assessments.
- Ensure your training is kept up to date;
- Engage and be prepared for your supervisory visits with your Supervising Social Worker, alongside considering attendance at support groups.
- Consider the insurance cover for Foster Carers offered via the Fostering Network.
- Work closely with other professionals and talk to them about concerns in a timely way.

All Foster Carers will receive training and guidance to enable them to provide a safe environment for both the child you are caring for and other members of your family. Your Assessing/ Supervising Social Worker will support you to develop a Family Safer Caring Policy which is reviewed annually or updated whenever circumstances change. There will also be an individual risk assessment completed for every child who comes into your care.

When a child comes into your care, you will be provided with detailed information as to the child's background and in particular the context of why the child is no longer in their birth family's care. This information should also include any previous allegations made by the child and the context of these.

All Foster Carers must record on a daily basis the progress of children placed with them, including any incidents, allegations and complaints. This recording alongside the Family Safer Caring Policy can support to protect everyone in the household and can provide important evidence if an allegation is made.

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Fostering Service**

Allegations Flowchart

This flowchart is to be used when an allegation is made against a Foster Carer or a member of their household which is of a safeguarding nature.

- Duty Social Worker or Fostering Service Supervising Social Worker takes details of allegation.



- Discussion with Team Manager, Fostering Service. If information has not been received from current children's Social Work Services, Team Manager to liaise with relevant child's Social Worker Team Manager or Senior Manager. Decision re care of children and referral to LADO to be made. (Payment will continue until outcome of allegation known)
- If carer placed on hold or suspended from Fostering, Foster Carer to be told verbally and then this will be followed up in writing.
- North Tyneside Council LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) to be notified and consideration of whether an allegation meeting needs to be held.
- Form for Ofsted completed, Agency Decision Maker notified. Both to be kept up to date as necessary.

(If Foster Carer lives outside North Tyneside Council, notification sent by Fostering to Local Authority Child Protection Team where carer lives)



- If decided necessary an Allegation Management Meeting is to be convened within 1-3 working days. Timescale dependent on substance of allegation.



- Allegation Management Meeting will consider the circumstances of the allegation and make decisions re continued care of children (including any other members of the household under 18). Should the children be moved from the home and the carer suspended from Fostering then payment of fee will continue until outcome of allegation is finalised.
- Discussion needed around whether Foster Carer should be informed at this stage of allegation (although may not be full details). In cases where the Police intend to investigate the allegation, the Local Authority is not able to discuss the detail as this could jeopardise any future criminal prosecution.
- Team Manager and Fostering Service Supervising Social Worker attend Allegation

Management Meeting.



- When Foster Carer informed, worker to advise of Independent Social Worker (leaflet/contact details for ISW commissioned by NTC) and Fosterline telephone number. Should there be any police investigation Foster Carer to be given Standard Securities information if they have Foster Care Insurance. Note this will occur on day 1 if children removed or not returned to care of Foster Carers.



- Foster Carer placed on hold, financial support by way of fee continues. Fostering Supervising Social Worker to keep in contact via weekly telephone call or visiting, if Carer agreeable.



- Letter sent to Foster Carers to confirm payments they will receive whilst on hold.



Supervising Social Worker will communicate information as able to the Foster Carers. They will also ensure that Foster Carers are given:

- A copy of the Fostering allegations flow chart (this flow chart)
- Details of how to access legal advice and representation via fostering network;
- Understand the process of the enquiry and why it is taking place;
- Know when, where and by whom interviews will be conducted;
- Are informed of the independent support that will be provided;
- Are informed about the financial arrangements North Tyneside Council will make in relation to allowances/fees if fostered children removed or the carer is temporarily suspended from taking further children in care.

They must also ensure that Foster Carers:

- Know the reasons for the removal of children, if applicable and possible;
- Understand the current status of their approval to foster;
- Are assisted in communicating with investigating agencies;
- Are kept informed of the progress of their investigation.



Further Allegation Management Meeting

- Should it be necessary, a further Allegation Management Meeting can be held to look at further information obtained either from child, foster carer or other agency.
- Foster Carer will be notified of the outcome of this verbally by their Supervising Social Worker within 1 working day and in writing from Team Manager, within 3 working days.



Following outcome of Allegation Management Meeting/ discussion

- Concern unsubstantiated no further action
- Police investigation and/or Child Protection investigation Section 47 may be undertaken – police may dictate timescales depending upon nature of the allegations.
- A Fact Finding will be undertaken by Fostering Service and will be completed by a different Social Worker to that of the Supervising Social Worker. The Fact Finding should take no longer than 4 weeks and then be presented to the next Fostering Panel for a recommendation as to the Foster Carers suitability to continue fostering. The Panel recommendation is then given to North Tyneside Agency Decision Maker for the decision to be made.
- The meeting/ discussion will also need to consider whether there is a duty to refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service's (DBS) Children's Barred List.
- Manage the concerns via Standards of Care procedures if the concerns raised are found to be more related to practice issues than safeguarding concerns.
- Should the Foster Carers also be in a position where they work with children, it may be that their employer needs to know about the allegations. A carer will always be informed if their employer needs to be contacted.



- Foster Carers are encouraged, as standard practice, to produce their own report to the Independent Reviewing Officer, for their Foster Carer Review alongside attending panel, to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings are fully represented.



- Reports presented to a Foster Carer Review are shared in their entirety to the Fostering Panel. Any report's produced will outline the information, set out the findings and make a recommendation.



- Foster Carers will be invited to attend Fostering Panel, independent support may also attend. The Author of the fact finding report will also be present.



- Foster Carer's are advised of the recommendation by the Chair of the Fostering Panel in person if they are present or by telephone from their Supervising Social Worker / Panel Adviser within 1 working day
- The Foster Carer is notified of the Agency Decision by way of letter within 2 working days of the Fostering Service receiving the Agency Decision.



- If the Foster Carer receives a 'qualifying determination' letter please refer to the

flowchart for deregistration/Panel procedures

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Complaint Regarding Standards of Care

- Duty Social Worker or Fostering Service Supervising Social Worker (SSW) takes details of complaint.

- Discussion with either Team Manager, Fostering Services on the same day

- Fostering Service SSW or duty worker in absence of SSW will visit Foster Carers and discuss complaint. This can be a joint visit with Field Social Worker if required. Where Foster Carer requests information during initial telephone call this can be shared if appropriate. Independent social worker details to be provided to the Foster Carers.
- Independent Social Worker to be present for visit if Foster Carer requests this.
- Visit to be undertaken within five working days except where Independent Social Worker requested and unavailable.

- Following visit discussion with Team Manager. Verbal feedback to complainant and Foster Carer with outcome of complaint or details of further investigation within 1 working days of discussion. Further training and/or supervision can be recommended. At this point the Team Manager, Fostering Service can request a Fact Finding Report or schedule a Standards of Care Meeting.

- Team Manager, Fostering Service to send letter to complainant and Foster Carer within fourteen working days.

- Form for Inspector completed on Notification. but should only be emailed if meets Schedule 7 criteria.

Note: Complainant can proceed to formal complaint if unhappy with outcome. (Refer to Procedure for Children's Social Care) Complaints)

Fact Finding

- Fact Finding allocated to a different Fostering Social Worker of that as Supervising Social Worker.
- Fact Finding Report should take no longer than 4 weeks to complete. Independent Social Worker to be involved if requested by Foster Carer.

- The report will summarise the information, set out the findings and make a recommendation, as to the foster carers suitability to continue fostering, or whether further training and/ or support is required.

- This report to be presented to the Panel for consideration of the Foster Carers continued

- The Foster Carer is to have the completed report not less than 14 days before the Panel meeting and the Foster Carer has between 7-14 days to provide a written response.
- Foster Carer can waive this timescale.

- Foster Carers are invited to attend Panel
- Independent Social Worker or other independent support can attend Panel at Foster Carers request.

Standards of Care Meeting

- Team Manager schedules a Standard of Care Meeting taking into account level of current concerns or type and/or frequency of previous concerns. Where any concern is the third in one year, Team Manager to consider calling Standard of Care meeting.

- Team Manager notifies Foster Carer by letter of the concerns. Letter to be delivered by Supervising Social Worker alongside the Independent Social Worker details.
- This letter/Chronology of Complaints to also include date, time, venue and invitation list for this meeting. This meeting where possible to be scheduled within 10 working days. Timescale dependent on availability of key staff including Independent Social Worker if requested by Foster Carer.

- Refer to Standards of Care Meeting document for full details.

- Foster Carer Review to be rescheduled for a date no longer than 28 days after the minutes are available.

Fact Find Continued

- Foster Carer advised of recommendation by Chair of Panel in person if there or by telephone from Author of Fact Find or Panel Adviser on the same day.
- The Foster Carer notified of the Agency Decision by letter within 2 working days of the Fostering Service receiving the Agency Decision.

- If the Foster Carer received a qualifying 'determination' letter refer to the flowchart for de-registration/Panel procedures.

- Form for Inspector updated as required.

Standards of Care continued.

- This Foster Carer Review, the minutes of the Standards of Care Meeting and any other additional reports if applicable to be provided to the next Panel for consideration of issues and agreed actions.

- Foster Carer encouraged to present their own report with support of Independent Social Worker.
- The Foster Carer is to have the completed report not less than 14 days before the Panel meeting and the Foster Carer has between 7-14 days to provide a written response.

- Foster Carers attend Panel if they wish to.
- Independent Social Worker or other independent support can attend Panel at Foster Carers request.

- Foster Carer advised of recommendation by Chair of Panel in person if there or by telephone from SSW/Panel Adviser the same day.

- The Foster Carer notified of the Agency Decision by letter within 2 working days of the Fostering Service receiving the Agency Decision.

- If the Foster Carer receives a 'qualifying determination' letter refer to the flowchart for de-registration/Panel procedures.
- Form for Inspector updated as required

NORTH TYNESIDE COUNCIL

Fostering Service

Standards of Care Meetings

These meetings are in place to ensure that any concerns, that are not of a safeguarding nature, which are expressed by either children in care, Social Workers or others, in relation to the care offered by Foster Carers are fully explored and a record is maintained. It is the Fostering Team Manager's decision, often in consultation with Senior Managers and/ or LADO whether an allegation or complaint is managed under standards of care procedures or whether a fact finding report needs to be completed.

This meeting will be arranged where one of the following occurs:-

- Three incidents of concerns about a Foster Carers care or practice in any 1-year period

Note: all issues regarding standards of care are currently addressed with the Foster Carer by their Supervising Social Worker (or another member of the Fostering Service) as directed by the Team Managers, without delay. The Standards of Care Meeting is in addition rather than a change to current practice.

- Another Foster Carer uses the Fostering Service Whistleblowing Procedure and the Team Manager decides a meeting with greater attendance is required to fully address the concerns raised.
- An Allegation Management Meeting/ discussion has determined that the threshold of significant harm is not met, however concerns about the care offered or Foster Carers willingness to work with the Agency still remain.

Process

- The Foster Carer will be formally notified by letter, including the Chronology of Complaints, of the concerns and the date/venue and invitation list for the meeting. This letter/chronology will be delivered by the Supervising Social Worker and will be explained to the Foster Carer.

- The invitation list to include Foster Carer, Independent Social Worker at the request of the Foster Carer, current children's Social Worker(s) and if appropriate previous children's Social Worker, Team Manager and the Children's Services Team Manager. The meeting will be chaired by a Team Manager from the Fostering Service and it will be minuted by the Fostering Service Administrative staff.

Purpose

- To enable a full and open discussion on the identified concerns and identify a way forward. The potential outcome could be additional training and/or supervision of the Foster Carers practice to support development. Other potential outcomes could include a recommendation for de registration, or a fact finding report to be completed.
- A Foster Care Review will be held approximately three months following a Standards of Care Meeting (should continued approval be the outcome) to ensure that any recommendations following the Standards of Care Meeting have been actioned.

Meeting

- Reason for Meeting
- Any previous concerns in relation to the Foster Carer
- Sharing Information
- Work already undertaken to resolve the issue
- Agreed actions, date and by whom
- The Agency's recommendation as to the Foster Carers continued approval.

Complaints

If you have a complaint about the Fostering Service see [How Can I Make a Complaint against the Fostering Service](#). However, it is important to understand the difference between allegations and complaints. Please speak to your Supervising Social Worker in the first instance if you need further clarification.

Sometimes a child you care for or members of their family may make a complaint about the care you afford to the child. Complaints can also be made about other members of your household, extended family members or friends.

When children or members of their family make a complaint about another service or professional these are dealt with in a separate way, however, as their carer you may not be involved in this, but would be kept up to date to support you in your caring role. In such situations your role is to:

- Listen to the child/young person, take them seriously and make a written record of what they have said.
- Share the information, as soon as possible, with the child's Social Worker or your Supervising Social Worker.
- Advocate (speak on their behalf) for the child where appropriate.
- Make sure you are available to the child and listen to them throughout this process and ensure your written records are kept up to date.

How Complaints are Managed in the Formal Process

Stage 1:

At Stage 1, the complaint would be passed to the Manager with responsibility for the services provided to the child. The Manager would look at the complaint, and provide a response to you and the child, including what will be done to resolve the complaint. The Manager may arrange to visit you and the child to discuss the complaint.

Stage 2:

If after Stage 1 you and the child are still unhappy, you can ask that the complaint be investigated further by someone who is independent of the Fostering Service. They would produce a report for the service with their findings of the investigation and any recommendations on how to sort out the complaint. A Senior Manager within the Fostering Service will write to you and the child saying what will be done to resolve the complaint.

Stage 3:

Most complaints are resolved after Stage 2, but in some cases, if you and the child do not feel the complaint is resolved, it can be asked for the complaint to go to a Review Panel. A Review Panel makes decisions about the complaint and may make

other recommendations for the Fostering Service to think about. At Stage 3, a Senior Manager has to respond to the Review Panel's decision and any recommendations.

North Tyneside Council Fostering Service have prepared a Complaints Flowchart to guide you through the steps of making a complaint.

For information on making a complaint please see:

[North Tyneside Council's Make a Complaint or Suggestion](#)

If you are still not satisfied you have the right to make representations to the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

How can I make a Complaint against the Fostering Service.

If you are not satisfied with any aspect of the Fostering Service, you should follow the Council's [Complaints Procedure](#).

There are different sorts of complaints that need to be dealt with differently:

- Complaints on behalf of the child or young person.
- Serious complaints about the Fostering Service.
- Complaints about a decision made by the Service's Decision Maker or a recommendation made by the Fostering Panel.

This section explains the way in which you should deal with concerns that you have about the Fostering Service.

If you have any concerns about the service, you are receiving from the Fostering Service please speak to your Supervising Social Worker in the first instance. Should your Supervising Social Worker be unable to deal with your concerns then please speak to the relevant Fostering Team Manager, who will work with you to resolve your concerns. However, if you feel your concerns have not been resolved by the Team Manager you can then make a formal complaint by following the Council Complaints procedure.

In the unlikely event that your complaint has not been resolved via the council complaints procedure, Ofsted will be notified about the complaint.

Ofsted:

Ofsted inspect Fostering Agencies in relation to the National Minimum Standards. If you have a serious concern about the Fostering Service, you can contact Ofsted, their details are:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Whistleblowing Policy

This policy is based on North Tyneside Council's Whistleblowing Policy for Councillors and staff and amended to reflect the responsibilities of Foster Carers who are approved by North Tyneside Council.

1 Aims and Scope of the Policy

This policy aims to:

- Give Foster Carers the confidence to raise concerns about behaviour and practice
- Provide routes to express these concerns and to receive feedback on how they have been addressed
- Provide a route to follow if you are not satisfied with the way that your concerns have been dealt with
- Offer all reasonable guarantees that you will be protected from victimisation and harassment

2 How To Raise a Concern

The person with whom you should first raise your concern is your Supervising Social Worker or either Team Manager of the Fostering Services. If you have a complaint in respect of either Team Manager then the Senior Manager for Children in Care should be contacted.

Concern's can be raised via phone call, requesting a meeting, in writing or via email.

If you choose to express your concerns via a meeting you have the right to be accompanied by a person who can offer you some support.

3. What Will Happen

The person with whom you share your concerns will clarify your concerns, ensuring that you feel that they have been accurately recorded. In the event of the concerns being shared via your Supervising Social Worker this will be escalated to either Team Manager, without delay, for investigation. The investigation will always be done without prejudice and does not imply that your concerns have either been accepted or rejected; they are simply being investigated.

Within five standard working days of the Team Manager receiving your concerns, you will be sent a written response. It will:

- Clearly define the concerns you have expressed

- Say how the Council proposes to deal with it
- Say approximately how long it expects this to take
- Inform you about any enquiries that have been made and supply you with information on how you can be supported through the process

Depending on the nature of your concerns, they may be investigated by management, internal audit, or HR. If it is possible that the law has been broken, then the investigation may be undertaken by the Police or other external statutory agency, for example, the Council's external auditor. It is also possible that an internal and external investigation could run simultaneously.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If, however, your concern appears to be sufficiently serious or urgent to warrant immediate intervention, appropriate action will be taken with immediate effect.

In any event you will be kept informed of progress and any outcome of an investigation.

4. Safeguards

The Council will not victimise anyone who raises a concern under this policy. It will use its bullying and harassment policies vigorously to protect anyone mistreated by their colleagues for raising a concern.

The purpose of this policy is to encourage Foster Carers to express their concerns and to give them protection from any adverse consequences of doing so.

The Fostering Service is committed to the highest standard of openness, and accountability and therefore encourage Foster Carers to raise concerns within the Service rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

5. Untrue Allegations

If you make an allegation or express a concern in good faith, action will not be taken against you if it turns out to be mistaken. An allegation made maliciously or for personal gain, however, may lead to action being taken against you.

North Tyneside Council Children's Services

Fostering Service

Personal and/or Conflicts of Interest Policy

The overall aim of the Fostering Service is:

To work in partnership with other professional, agencies and Foster Carers, Parents and children to provide a high-quality service which offers the best possible alternative family care to meet the individual needs of children. Alternative care will take the form of high-quality fostering households compliant with both Regulatory Frameworks and Standards.

In achieving this aim, it is a primary responsibility of all Foster Carers and North Tyneside staff to declare any potential conflicts of interest.

Such "conflicts of interests" would be for example, where the child's Social Worker is related to the Foster Carer, or where the Foster Carer is related to or friends with the child's parent(s). Further examples would be where a Foster Carer is a landlord for the child's parent or member of their family or where the child's parent has previously been cared for by or lived with the Foster Carer. These are examples only and not a comprehensive list.

Where a Foster Carer or a member of staff have reason to believe that there may be a conflict of interest, it is important that they immediately raise this issue. In the case of a Foster Carer, the appropriate person to contact is their Supervising Social Worker, and in the case of a member of staff for the Fostering Service, the Team Manager of the Fostering Services should be contacted.

The process for the resolution of such situations should involve discussions between managers at the level appropriate to the circumstances. The outcome should be recorded with a copy provided to those persons directly affected by the potential conflict of interest. Except in situations where, in the view of the decision-making body, it is not in the best interests of the child or any of the people concerned that this is done.

Should an instance of a conflict of interest not be declared, this would be regarded as a serious breach of trust that may result in further action being taken.

If the child you are caring for goes missing.

Introduction

Whenever a child comes to live with you, you will be given a referral form which details the child's history and lets you know any likelihood of the child going missing.

For children who are identified as at risk of going missing an additional risk assessment (part of Northumbria Police '*Philomena Protocol*' a process followed to respond to children who may be at risk of going missing and subsequently do go missing) will be completed. This will be done by the Social Worker and shared with Northumbria Police to make them aware that there is a child in your care who is at risk of going missing from home. This will also include a photo of the child.

It is important to remember that a child can go missing or not be where we expect them to be at any stage of their childhood. The care you provide should minimise the risk of the child going missing. A large part of this is letting them know there are people they can talk to if they ever feel like running away from home alongside the risks associated with running away from home according to their age and vulnerability.

Children should also be helped to understand some of the risks of being missing and be supported to take some responsibility for their own safety, again, dependent upon their age and understanding.

There may be a variety of reasons for the child going missing and it is through building a trusting relationship that you are most likely to understand and be able to deal with the issues that can make them want to leave. You can do this by agreeing coming home times with them and letting you know where they are and who with.

For children who are experiencing interest in their whereabouts for the first time, you may experience some resistance from them letting you know who they are with and where they are going. As your relationship and trust builds, they will begin to understand this is about caring for them, not preventing them from being with their friends.

Common reasons for going missing include peer group influence where they are being encouraged to stay out later than agreed or not return home at all. Family problems may be another reason. There may be some encouragement from family members to go against the plan so these are all things to be mindful of.

The child's referral you received should note any history of the child going missing and what to look out for. There may be triggers to them going missing and signs to look out for such as behaving in a certain way. Remember, there may also be no signs at all. The use of persuasion alongside your relationship with them, is the most powerful tool that you have, to prevent children and young people going missing. Reassurance that they have a safe home to return to is also key.

As part of the Philomena Protocol a list of named people who the child knows or has regular contact with should be kept by you and updated regularly so that if you do believe the child in your care is missing the police have this information immediately.

When a child is not where they should be

When a child is 'not at a place where they are expected to be or, the child's *'whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests that they may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another'*, you should make proactive attempts to locate the child, including:

1. Physical checks of the residence, including the child's bedroom and any other location the child may be hiding within the house / building.
2. Physical checks of any garden, garage, sheds, grounds, and surrounding area(s).
3. Attempt to contact the child directly, via mobile phone, text, or social networking sites (i.e. Twitter / Facebook / WhatsApp etc).
4. If appropriate contact the child's wider family and friends to ascertain if the child is there or has contacted them.
5. Wherever possible, go and look for the child at usual places they go to or their friends' homes.

Contacting Northumbria Police

Where your enquiries do not establish the whereabouts of the child, and you believe that the child may have come to some harm you should report the incident to Northumbria Police. This should be done by calling 101 unless you are concerned that there is a serious concern or risk of immediate harm which would require a 999 response.

When Northumbria Police are informed of an incident, they will take details by asking a standard set of questions which informs their risk assessment. They will ask you what you have done to try and locate the child, what (if any) the arrangements were for their return home and why you think they are missing and at risk.

You must continue to try and locate the child even once you have notified the police of your concerns.

The police may call to your home to collect the list of named persons the child is known to.

For children placed outside of North Tyneside, you must contact the relevant local police force.

Notifying the Local Authority

Where Northumbria Police are notified of a missing episode of a Child in Care by North Tyneside Council and placed within North Tyneside, they will notify North Tyneside Council directly about the episode, however the carer should also always make contact with either the allocated worker or the Emergency Duty Team depending on the time the child goes missing.

Where a child is placed by North Tyneside Council outside of North Tyneside, you are responsible for notifying North Tyneside Council of the missing episode. This is because there is no arrangement between the Local Police Force and North Tyneside Council to do so.

You should also inform your Supervising Social Worker as soon as possible, please do not presume your Supervising Social Worker is aware of the situation if the child has gone missing outside of office hours, as it can take time for all of the notifications from out of hours and the Police to come through.

When a child returns home

You should make a record of all incidents when a child goes missing. You should also record the circumstances in which they return, the reason they give for going missing and where they say they have been. This is known as a 'Welfare Check'. This information will help you and the Social Worker develop a plan to try and help prevent the child going missing again.

Where a child returns home on their own accord or you have located them and collected them, the Police should be notified as soon as possible by you, to let them know they are home.

The Police will then arrange to visit them (known as a 'Safe & Well Check'). The Police will ask them if they have been harmed, if they have harmed anyone or if they have taken part in any criminal activity.

If a child is located by the Police, unless there are exceptional circumstances, the Police are likely to require you to collect and return the child to your care. The Police will then notify North Tyneside Council directly. However, it is good practice to let your supervising Social Worker know.

Where a child is placed by North Tyneside Council outside of North Tyneside, the carer has responsibility to notify North Tyneside Council that the child has been located and/or returned home. This is because there is no arrangement between the local Police Force and North Tyneside Council to do so.

It is important that when the child returns or if they have been returned to you, that you are welcoming and ensure that the child is ok, you should offer them something to eat and drink and allow them to get some sleep. By you being calm and welcoming will help the child to realise that it is ok to return home without fear of reprisal and will help strengthen your relationship with them.

The Offer of ‘Return Home Conversation’

Whenever a child who has been missing is located and returned, North Tyneside Council will offer the child the choice of either a return interview by a Social Worker or someone from the advocacy team. It is important that as carers you promote the take-up of this offer. Return Home Conversations provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help reduce the risk of the child going missing again and offer an opportunity to explore the reasons why they ran away.

This will occur wherever the child is placed. If a carer does not think that a Return Home Conversation has been offered or there appears to be delay of more than 72 hours, please contact your child’s Social Worker for this to be arranged.

Preventing Future Missing Episodes

The child’s Social Worker should call a meeting to look at why the child went missing to look at ways of preventing it from happening again. The child’s risk assessment may need reviewing; your Supervising Social Worker and the child’s Social Worker will do this with you and the child, wherever possible. This will make sure that everyone knows what actions will be taken and by who and will help to look at what can be done to prevent the child from running away again. Whenever a child runs away from a foster home you should fill in the appropriate missing notification and give this to your Supervising Social Worker.

Where a child is regularly being reported as missing from home, the Social Worker for the child will consider referring the case to MSET panel (Missing, Sexually Exploited Trafficked). This is a panel consisting of multi-agency professionals who will consider if the case should be escalated and if there are any further actions to be considered or taken by the care team for the child.

Definitions

There are various terms which are used in relation to missing children:

[Statutory Guidance On Children Who Run Away Or Go Missing From Home Or Care](#) (January 2014) uses the following definitions:

Missing Child:

A child reported as missing to the Police by their family or carers.

Missing from Care:

A Child in Care who is not at the place they are expected to be (e.g. home with you or school) and their whereabouts are not known.

Away from home without authorisation:

A Child in Care whose whereabouts are known but who is not at their home or the place they are expected to be, and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the Local Authority or the Police.

Young Runaway:

A child who has run away from their home or Fostering family or feels they have been forced or lured to leave.

Northumbria Police Missing Persons Policy: [Northumbria Police guidance on Missing Persons.](#)

Missing Notification

Name of Missing Young Person:	Date of Birth:
Name/address of Carer:	Date:
Time last seen:	Time reported to police:
Person Recording incident (if not Carer):	Police

Circumstances of Going Missing:

Action	Yes/No	Comments (if applicable)
Search of immediate location		
Telephone to young persons mobile (if applicable)		
Telephone calls to others		
Telephone calls to others		
Police informed		
Social Worker informed		
Care Call informed		
Fostering Service informed		
Other actions		

Time and date of Return:	Duration missing days/hours:
Circumstances of return / Further actions:	

Young Persons view:
Signature: Date:

Manager Monitoring:
Signature: Designation: Team Manager, Fostering
Date:

Please email to pdwfostering@northtyneside.gov.uk

Internet, Photographs and Mobile Phones

1. Introduction

Safe use of the internet and mobile phones is important for all children; when a child first comes to live with you, you will be told by the child's Social Worker whether there should be any restrictions around phone and internet usage. This could be for a variety of reasons and these will be made known to you by the child's Social Worker who will support you in managing this alongside your Supervising Social Worker.

It is important that all Foster Carers develop an understanding of different social media platforms, and that you learn how to safeguard children when using the internet and mobile devices. Alongside this Foster Carers should also be mindful of the challenges that children and young people can face when using social media including, bullying and grooming behaviours. Training in keeping children safe online will be provided to you from the Fostering Service. It is important that should you have any worries or concerns about the child you are caring for that you raise this with their Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker who will provide advice and guidance to keep the child safe.

For more advice on cyber bullying please see – [Cyber bullying -Advice for Parents and Carers \(Department for Education, 2014\)](#).

2. Supporting with safe internet use

Foster Carers must take an active interest in any child's use of the internet who is living in your family. This includes completing homework, the use of social media, and gaming platforms. It is therefore important that conversations about the positive and negatives of internet usage are explored, including ways to keep themselves safe when online.

Some suggested guidelines are;

- Clear rules and time limits on computers which are agreed with the child/young person;
- Foster Carers ensure that appropriate internet security is used on any devices to prevent access to inappropriate material;
- Ensuring that electronic devices are used within areas of the household where adults can have an overview of what the child is accessing.
- Never allow a child to arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they "meet" on the internet.
- Through the guidance and support of a Foster Carer the child should be able to make you aware should they ever receive messages that are rude, threatening, or

makes them feel uncomfortable. This should be explored by Foster Carers encouraging children to talk about their experiences online. However, it is acknowledged that not all children will be open and honest. It is therefore vital that you regularly check their device history to ensure the appropriateness of what they have accessed, and messages sent to and from them.

- Both the child's and Foster Carers social media platforms should have their settings to private and care taken when accepting other people to view their social media accounts.

Where children and young people are using social media, it is important that you support them in setting up any new profile on a social media platform and talk to them about appropriate guidelines in keeping themselves safe. This should include information they are posting online about themselves and other's including any information which may identify where they are living or which school they attend. As this is not always safe for some children and may increase potential risk of harm to them.

Foster Carers should make themselves familiar with any social media platform's that the child you are caring for is using. This includes the sites terms and conditions, including any age restrictions and you should spend time explaining this to the child so that they to understand the expectations of the media platform they are using.

Foster Carers need to be mindful that social networking sites can be used by perpetrators as an easy way to access children and young people for sexual abuse. This is alongside radical and extremist groups who may also use social media to attract children and young people into their ideologies. Specific training can be afforded to Foster Carers and any advice and information is always available to you from the Fostering Service should this be needed.

Internet Abuse is categorised into four main areas.

- Sharing and creating explicit images of children via social media platforms or via text or email.
- Grooming a child or young person for the purpose of Sexual Abuse.
- Exposure to pornographic or other offensive material.
- The use of the internet, and in particular social media, to engage children in extremist ideologies.

3. Photographs

Foster Carers should take photographs of children and young people to collate memories of their time living with you and your family. Depending on the child's age Foster Carers should always ensure they have the child's permission in taking photographs and consideration must always be given as to the appropriateness of the photographs you are taking. For example, photographs should not be taken when the child is in any state of undress or in the bath. You may take pictures of children who are in swimming costumes for example who are playing in your garden or on the beach.

Foster Carers must also be mindful of any safeguarding risks that taking photographs may pose for each individual child you are caring for. Particular notice must be given when taking photographs which may identify the child's education setting or area they live in, as for some children this may pose increased risks. These areas should be set out within the child's risk assessment and delegated responsibility form for each child you are caring for.

Foster Carers should never post any images or information about children living with them on any social media platforms.

4. Mobile Phones, Social Networking Sites and Apps

Most young people have mobile phones and it is imperative that any children coming to live with you are afforded the same opportunities as their peers. This includes access to age-appropriate social media platforms and when they are old enough afforded a mobile phone suitable for their age. However, any new devices and the child's social media presence must be agreed by the child's Social Worker and Care Team to ensure they are safeguarded appropriately when using these.

Each fostering household will have their own house rules surrounding the use of social media for both their own children and children they are caring for, to follow. Consequences when these rules are not followed should also be made clear for example, devices may be removed, or the internet switched off for a period of time.

Some household rules may include.

- Leaving their phone or devices with you at the end of each day to ensure they are not disturbed, or online during the night when they should be asleep.
- Checking device history regularly to ensure that Foster Carers are aware of any inappropriate communications or accessing of inappropriate materials.
- Should any family time arrangement include the use of mobile devices there will be guidelines set by the child's Social Worker for this to be managed safely. Any concerns related to this should be reported back to them immediately. Your Supervising Social Worker can also provide help and support.

Any Foster Carers who wish to set up a phone contract on behalf of a child they are caring for, must first discuss this with the child's Social Worker and their Supervising Social Worker, so everyone is clear how this will be managed should the child move from their care. Call and messaging usage and phone top ups need to also be agreed regarding who is responsible for these, i.e. the child via their pocket money or the Foster Carer.

Mobile phone network providers operate a barring and filtering mechanism to prevent those under 18 years accessing 18 rated content. The service can be provided for both contract and pay as you go phones. You are advised to explore this with the network provider that a child/young person uses or see what other services they offer.

Bullying

It is the responsibility of all Foster Carers to create an environment where children feel safe, supported and have a sense of belonging and are not exposed to any form of bullying or manipulation. The environment should also make them feel secure enough that they can talk to you should they feel they are experiencing bullying outside of the home. However, it is acknowledged that not all children will talk about, or ever recognise the bullying that is taking place, therefore it is imperative that Foster Carers can recognise changes in the child's behaviour which may indicate that they are being bullied. Any such concerns must be shared with the child's Social Worker and your Supervising Social Worker.

Your individual Safer Caring Policy should address bullying and cover:

- Clear rules within the household that bullying of any form or by anyone is not acceptable. There should also be a clear plan for what actions will be taken if anyone raises any concerns that they are feeling the target of bullying.
- The clear expectations around acceptable child and adult behaviours, which are modelled by the adults in the home.
- Outline how as a Foster Carer you will provide children and young people with opportunities to talk and learn about different forms of bullying.

Any child can experience bullying in a variety of settings including school, online, or in the community.

Bullying can include:

- Name calling and teasing.
- Threats and theft.
- Physical violence.
- Damage to belongings.
- Leaving people out of activities deliberately.
- Spreading rumours.
- Online Bullying via mobile phone, text message, e-mail or social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

Some signs of bullying can be:

- Not wanting to go to school, visit friends, go out in the community etc.
- Coming home upset or quiet perhaps with unexplained injuries or missing clothing or belongings.
- Requesting additional money.

- Appearing tired, emotional, irritable, or behaving secretly
- Sudden loss of appetite
- Feigning illness
- Information shared by school/ nursery regarding changes in behaviours.
- Self-harming (recognising the various forms this may take)

When it is identified that a child is the subject of bullying, or that they may be being bullied then the child's Social Worker will take the lead in co-ordinating any actions that are deemed appropriate for the child's individual circumstances. During this time, you as a Foster Carer will be supported by your Supervising Social Worker. The actions taken will be determined by the child's Social Worker, which may include in some cases, police involvement. There will be meetings held for all professionals to share information around the incidents and associated risks to all of those involved. Such meetings may be Strategy Meetings, Care Team Meetings or Allegation Management Meetings.

When considering any issues of concern your Foster Carer recording will be used as part of any evidence gathering by the Child's Social Worker.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

1. Introduction

The exploitation of children now includes crime whereby children are groomed and become involved in committing crime often with no personal gain. This is also closely linked to 'County Lines' whereby children are recruited and exploited in relation to drugs.

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether the child is aware of what is happening or not. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

The definition of child sexual exploitation is as follows:

It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Child sexual exploitation takes different forms - from a seemingly 'consensual' relationship where sex is exchanged for attention, affection, accommodation, or gifts, to serious organised crime and child trafficking. Child sexual exploitation involves differing degrees of abusive activities, including coercion, intimidation or enticement, unwanted pressure from peers to have sex, sexual bullying (including cyber bullying), and grooming for sexual activity. However, the key issue in relation to any exploitation is the imbalance of power within the 'relationship'. The perpetrator always has power over the victim, increasing the dependence of the victim as the exploitative relationship develops. There is also increasing concern about the role of technology in sexual abuse, including via social networking and other internet sites and mobile phones.

Many children and young people are groomed into exploitative relationships, but other forms of entry exist. Some young people are engaged in informal economies that

incorporate the exchange of sex for rewards such as drugs, alcohol, money, or gifts. Others exchange sex for accommodation or money because of homelessness and poverty. Some young people have been bullied and threatened into sexual activities by peers or gangs which is then used against them as a form of extortion and to keep them compliant.

Children and young people may have already been exploited before they came into care; others may become targets of perpetrators during the alternative care arrangement away from their family. They are often the focus of perpetrators of abuse due to their vulnerability. You should therefore create an environment which educates children and young people about child exploitation and where possible encourage them to discuss any concerns they might have.

2. Indicators of Possible Sexual Exploitation

You should be aware of the key indicators of child sexual/criminal exploitation.

They include:

Health

- Physical symptoms (bruising suggestive of either physical or sexual assault).
- Chronic fatigue.
- Recurring or multiple sexually transmitted infections.
- Pregnancy and/or seeking an abortion.
- Evidence of drug, alcohol, or other substance misuse.

Education

- Truancy/disengagement with education or considerable change in performance at school.

Emotional and Behavioural Issues

- Volatile behaviour exhibiting extreme array of mood swings or use of abusive language.
- Involvement in petty crime such as shoplifting, stealing.
- Secretive behaviour.
- Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults.
- Reports of being seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation, such as shopping centres, parks, taxi offices and takeaway food outlets.

Identity

- Low self-image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour, e.g. cutting, overdosing, eating disorder, promiscuity.

Relationships

- Hostility in relationships with staff, family members as appropriate and significant others.
- Physical aggression.
- Care arrangement breakdown.
- Reports from reliable sources (e.g. family, friends or other professionals) suggesting the likelihood of involvement in exploitation.
- Detachment from age-appropriate activities.
- Associating with other young people who are known to be exploited.
- Sexual relationship with a significantly older person, or younger person who is suspected of being abusive.
- Unexplained relationships with older adults.
- Possible inappropriate use of the internet and forming relationships, particularly with adults, via the Internet.
- Excessive receipt of text messages or phone calls.
- Multiple mobile devices
- Adults or older youths loitering outside the foster home.
- Persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation.
- Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for despite whereabouts being unknown.
- Missing for long periods, whereabouts unknown.
- Going missing and being found in areas where they have no known links.

Please note: Whilst the focus is often on older men as perpetrators, younger men and women may also be involved and staff should be aware of this possibility.

Social Presentation

- Change in appearance.
- Leaving the foster home in clothing unusual for them (inappropriate for age, borrowing clothing from older young people).

Family and Environmental Factors

- History of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse; neglect; domestic violence; parental difficulties, criminal activity.

Housing

- Pattern of previous street homelessness.
- Having keys to premises other than those known about.

Income

- Possession of large amounts of money with no plausible explanation.
- Acquisition of expensive clothes, mobile phones, or other possessions without plausible explanation.
- Accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding.

This list is not exhaustive.

You should be aware that often children and young people who are exploited do not see themselves as victims. In such situations, discussions with them about your concerns should be handled with great sensitivity. If you have concerns that a child or young person is involved in, or at risk of, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation; you should discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker or Emergency Duty Team for out of hours support. You may also need to contact the local Police regarding possible criminal offences.

In assessing whether a child or young person is a victim of exploitation, or at risk, careful consideration should be given to the issue of consent. It is important to bear in mind that:

- A child under the age of 13 is not legally capable of consenting to sex (it is statutory rape) or any other type of sexual touching.
- Sexual activity with a child under 16 is also an offence.
- It is an offence for a person to have a sexual relationship with a 16 or 17-year-old if they hold a position of trust or authority in relation to them.
- Where a 16 or 17 year old is incapacitated through drink or drugs, or the victim or their family has been subject to violence or the threat of it, they cannot be considered to have given true consent; therefore offences may have been committed; and
- Non-consensual sex is rape whatever the age of the victim; and
- Child sexual exploitation is therefore potentially a child protection issue for all children under the age of 18 years and not just those in a specific age group.

You should record any concerns you have and seek advice as soon as possible from your Supervising Social Worker.

3. Children and Young People Who go Missing

A significant number of children and young people who are being sexually exploited may go missing from care and education, some frequently. If a child goes missing, refer to [The Missing Children Policy](#).

Extremism and Radicalisation

Introduction

Children and young people can be drawn into violence or can be exposed to the messages of extremist groups by many means.

These can include through the influence of family members or friends and/or direct contact with extremist groups and organisations. Increasingly, the internet and social media are being used to share extremist ideologies and views. This can put a young person at risk of being drawn into criminal activity and has the potential to cause significant harm.

There is no obvious profile of a person likely to become involved in extremism. The process of radicalisation is different for every individual and can take place over an extended period or within a very short time frame.

Radicalisation is the process by which people come to support terrorism and violent extremism and, in some cases, take part in terrorist groups and activities.

The risk of radicalisation is the product of several factors and identifying such risks among young people in your care requires you to exercise professional judgement and seek further advice from the police or Children's Social Care as necessary. Indicators that a young person is being radicalised may include:

- Use of inappropriate language
- Possession of violent extremist literature
- Behavioural changes; increasingly centred around an extremist ideology
- The expression of extremist views
- Advocating violent actions and means
- Association with known extremists
- Seeking to recruit others to an extremist ideology
- A change of style of dress or personal appearance to accord with the group
- Loss of interest in other friends and activities not associated with the extremist ideology.

The above list is not exhaustive and there may be other indicators that the child or young person is at risk of violent extremism and radicalisation.

If you are concerned about a child or young person in your care you must report these concerns to your Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker or the Emergency Duty Team for out of hours support if it is urgent. It will be their responsibility to take the concerns forward through the appropriate channels.

On-line content in particular social media may pose a specific risk in normalising radical views and promoting content that is shocking and extreme; children can be trusting and may not necessarily appreciate bias, which can lead to being drawn into such groups and to adopt their extremist views.

Consideration should also be given to the need for an emergency response - this will be extremely rare but examples are where there is information that a violent act is imminent or where weapons or other materials may be in the possession of a young person or member of his or her family. In this situation you should call 999.

For more advice please see [Educate Against Hate](#) - practical advice for parents, teachers and school leaders on protecting children from extremism and radicalisation.

Safer Caring and Annual Checks

Within your assessment you will have worked with your Assessing Social Worker to develop a Family Safer Caring Policy, Health and Safety Checklist, Fire Safety Plan alongside a Pet Questionnaire, should you have any pets.

These checks are completed so that Foster Carers can ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children within their care. They will also aim to protect the wellbeing of carers and their families also. The checks cover a broad range of themes considering the protection of each member of the household alongside the wider family network.

Foster Carers have to constantly balance risks in everyday decisions they take for themselves, their own children alongside the children they are caring for on behalf of the Local Authority. These checks therefore consider how Foster Carers will balance some of the risks around their pets, their home and how they manage their home life to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone involved.

All checks will be reviewed at least annually with your Supervising Social Worker to ensure that they remain relevant. The checks should also be reviewed in circumstances such as:

- Children come to live with you for the first time
- You move home, or when on holiday/ staying anywhere that is not your usual residence with the children in your care.
- Any new pets that stay or live in your household
- An escalation in a child's behaviours
- A risk of/ or an allegation being made against anyone in the household

It is the Foster Carers responsibility to ensure that any changes to the checks are communicated to the rest of the household to ensure compliance and the safety of everyone involved.

If you have any concerns or feel your policies need updated at any point in time, please speak to your Supervising Social Worker.

Family Safer Caring Policy

All fostering applicants make a Family Safer Caring Policy, generally in the latter stages of their assessment:

- To think through the 'unwritten rules' of your family life and whether there should be any changes that would make fostered children and all other household members feel and be safe with each other.
- To help consider whether particular children who may be placed with you will need anything additional to keep themselves and yourselves feeling and being safe.
- To detail your agreement with the Fostering Service about the safer caring steps you have agreed to provide.

Your Family Safer Caring Policy needs to reflect your thinking and commitments in relation to the age group you are intending to foster.

For instance, if you are going to care for school-aged children, how you will be helping them with bathing will be different to how you would help a toddler: so, in your Policy, talk about your expectations and plans in relation to school-aged children, not in relation to toddlers.

As and when children come to live with you, your Family Safer Caring Policy should be reviewed, as different children present different challenges.

Guidance for Making your Family Safer Caring Policy

Guiding principles

Creating family life that feels physically, socially and emotionally safe for all household members is a key responsibility of parents. When 'ordinary' families become fostering families, doing this becomes that bit more complicated. In considering your 'Family Safer Caring Policy', it is important that the needs of ALL household members are considered and talked about.

It is impossible to eliminate all risk. The approach taken to risks should be to identify them and then think through what would be a 'sensible' and 'proportionate' response, either to minimise the risk or to cope with potential problems that could result.

Children in your care, be they your own birth children or children in care, need to feel cared for and secure. Meeting their attachment needs is fundamental to providing safer care. Enabling children to learn self-regulation and the ability to manage life's risks is an important parental and foster caring responsibility.

There is no 'one size fits all' for family safer caring. There are, however, aspects of family life that need to be tailored to the needs and situation of children in care and the consequent risks that can come from opening your home to someone else's child.

What follows are comments on some of the key areas to consider. For each, decisions need to take into account the child's age and development, their history, how long they have been in your care and their care plan.

Affection, love and touch

Like all other children, children and young people in care should not be deprived of physical touch. Blanket decisions about hugging, kissing, wrestling, tickling etc are not helpful; all of these are normal family activities but for some children they are inadvisable, particularly whilst the child is still settling in. Think this through with your Supervising Social Worker and/or the child's Social Worker, so that you consider a range of perspectives beyond just what you would do with your own child.

Remember as well that it is right to be respectful of the child's verbal and non-verbal messages whether or not s/he is happy to receive a reassuring hug or a kiss. Children need to learn that they can say no, as well as learn how enjoyable 'safe touches' can be.

In thinking about physical touch, be most cautious when you are new to a child and s/he is to you. Think about how you can convey affection and comfort in a manner that gives the child or young person room to communicate to you (often non-verbally) how they feel about your touches.

If there is reason for the child or you to feel insecure about touches, think about where best to do this – in public may be better than in private, on the shoulder may be better than on the face, and brief touches may be better than sustained ones.

Also consider what children in care will be seeing you do with other children you are fond of; children in care are very alert to ways in which they are treated differently.



If areas of life need to be different, talk to them in a reassuring manner about why this is.

Lastly, think about how the children in care's birth parents will feel about witnessing affectionate touches between you and their child, and how best to minimise any likely tensions about this.

Privacy and personal care

Bedrooms provide private space, for all family members. Because of this, the unobserved nature of life in bedrooms can present unwanted risks. It can be useful to have a family expectation that bedroom doors are open when children are playing inside and that visitors are entertained in communal areas of the house.

When you plan to go on holiday in a caravan, tent or other accommodation in which children in your care will be sharing with others, think about what precautions may be helpful in reducing any foreseeable risks. Talk this through with your Supervising Social Worker before making your arrangements.

Almost without exception bed-sharing between children should not be allowed and adults should not allow children to join them in their bed. Talk to your Supervising Social Worker before making a change.

For bedtime stories, adults and older children reading to little ones should always sit reasonably upright and if reading in the bedroom it's best not to sit on the bed itself.

The adult/older child should be dressed in daytime clothes, not in nightwear. Many families decide that 'bedrooms are for sleeping,' so that bedtime stories are read

downstairs and the child knows that once in their bedroom they are expected to go to sleep.

Children who come to your bedroom in the night should be reassured and settled back into their own bed, to ensure they are not confused about the expectation not to join the adults in their bedroom.

When children and/or adults in your home are in their nightclothes be aware of whether they are adequately covered, giving consideration to the ages and genders of others in the household.

Some children and young people feel unsafe and vulnerable during bath times. If you don't know the child's feelings about this or know there is reason to be especially careful with a particular child, leave the door ajar, talk to the child about what you are doing and why, and encourage them to cope as independently as their age, development and ability allows. Be alert for signs from the child of any unease.

When cleaning very young children's bodies, use a flannel or sponge rather than your hand. Once children are about four years of age, cleaning of their 'private' areas normally should be done by the child her/himself. It can be advisable at around this age for an adult of the same gender as the child to take responsibility for their bath time attention. When the child becomes shy about their developing body, it is important to respect this and to ensure they have privacy in the bath or when changing their clothes.

Don't take photos or video recordings of children or young people in a state of undress.

Therapeutic Parenting

North Tyneside follows the therapeutic parenting approach. This is a highly nurturing parenting approach with empathy at its core. Therapeutic parenting uses firm but fair boundaries and routines so children may gain their trust in adults.

There is training available to support you with this parenting approach starting with our attachment training, Solihull training building up to the therapeutic parenting course.

Foster carers are expected to use positive behaviour management techniques based on reinforcing desired behaviour, negotiating and de-escalating strategies and agreed sanctions. No foster carer should ever use any form of smacking or parenting approaches which leave a child feeling shamed for their behaviour.

Safety in the community

Carers need to be safety conscious about physical risks and hazards for children when they are out and about, for instance by ensuring seat belts are used in cars and that use of challenging playground equipment is supervised.

Additionally, carers need to consider how best to manage the risks for children who may have poor impulse control, indiscriminate approaches to others, provocative behaviours or poor awareness of their environment. Such children will need a behaviour management plan to keep them safe and to build their own skills in self-regulation.

Bullying

Bullying has to be tackled assertively wherever it occurs and whatever its form. You may need to work collaboratively with schools and/or other agencies to deal with issues and reassure affected children that the adults caring for them are committed to trying to keep them safe.

Digital and internet technologies

Given that internet access is so important to children and young people, it is important to agree with all concerned what access they will have to items such as mobile phones, laptops and internet-connected gaming devices.

All computers in the home should be fitted with age-based filters. Access to computers should be in communal areas of the household, when possible.

Communication and involvement with children and young people about what they are accessing via the internet are keys to improving their safety. For instance, setting up your own Facebook account will help you monitor what a young person is receiving and communicating to others.

Make sure children and young people in your home feel they can come to you or someone they trust if they are worried about anything they encounter online.

Overnight stays, play dates, going out with friends, using babysitters

Foster carers are given delegated authority to make ‘everyday decisions about children in their care.’ Unless you have been informed that a person or household is not an allowed arrangement, you can exercise your own judgment, as you would as a ‘good parent.’

It is important to record how and why you made each decision.

Within your assessment you should identify who in your support network is likely to give you the practical support. This may be in the form of babysitting, supporting in emergencies or for day care whilst you are on training for example. A very short (Back up carer) assessment will then be completed with the identified person along with DBS checks to allow for you to use your delegated authority with your trusted individual. Should this support care for the children overnight please speak to your Supervising Social Worker in the first instance.

Sex and sexual health

Planning around how to handle issues of sex and sexual health for a placed child or young person should be shared with your Supervising Social Worker and the child’s Social Worker, who can consider whether and if so how to include the child’s parent/s in any decisions that have to be made.

For foster carers who have an under two sharing their bedroom, thought is needed about where and when the adults’ sexual relationship can take place, so that the child does not witness sexual activity. If other members of the household (including a fostered child or young person) also are sexually active (including masturbation) it needs to be understood that all sexual activity is kept private.

Working with other agencies and services

Creating a safer caring plan that responds effectively to the individual needs of each child in the household may well require coordinated work with other agencies, such as schools, CAMHS, police, etc. Ask your supervising social worker to help ensure you have support from other agencies as needed, and make sure you are clear about the roles and commitments made by others.

Planning for who can take what decisions

When drawing up the Placement Plan for any particular child or children, completion of the '*Delegated Authority form*' is very helpful in clarifying who has authority to give consent / agreement or to undertake tasks related to ensuring and promoting the wellbeing of the child being placed with you. Consulting this when unsure of your authority is an important safer caring action. The '*Delegated Authority form*' is provided by the child's Social Worker.

Blanket bans and exceptions to the rules

For children in care, we all need to be alert to statutory guidance that must be followed. You can access this at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2011/581/contents/made>

Beyond statutory guidance, North Tyneside, as all fostering agencies, has policies that provide guidance; most of these will be available in your Fostering Handbook. All policies should be followed unless it is agreed and recorded that an exception is being made. If a decision or position does not seem to fit the needs of the child or young person you are caring for, say so and debate its appropriateness.

Reducing the risk of allegations

Thinking through your Family Safer Caring Policy, keeping it 'alive' and under review as family members and family circumstances change is key to being robust in reducing risk of allegations.

Building and maintaining positive relationships and regular communication with those who are important to any child in your care is very important. Talking through your dilemmas, taking advice, sharing responsibilities and recording fully the rationale for decisions and actions you take also are very important, as is reporting incidents and allegations promptly to your supervising social worker.

Family Safer Caring Policy

This Policy should reflect the understanding of all members of the household and the Assessing / Supervising Social Worker.

For all applicants or fostering families:	
Applicants' / Foster carers' names	
Names and ages of children or other adults who are permanent members of the household	
Names and ages of regular visitors to the household	
Who has helped to complete the plan?	Assessor / SSW: Child's SW: Other:

Has Safer Caring training been completed?	Yes/No	Date:
Are there any on-going or current safer caring issues about which a written agreement has been made with the Service? If so, include detail in the 'any other issues' section of this plan.	Yes/No	Date:
Were there any safer caring issues that have been agreed for deletion in the making of this plan?	Yes/No	Date:
Date this form as been completed		
For fostering families with children in placement:		
Names of children in placement		

Risk Assessment completed?	Yes	No
If so, please give detail of any risk(s) identified <i>[This may be from a member of the child's family or an aspect of the child's behaviour]</i>		
Rate the level of overall risk	High Risk	Medium
	Low Risk	
Has all relevant information been shared with carers? <i>[if not, what information needs to be accessed?]</i>		

We have drawn up these 'home rules' in order to help make our family safe for any child or young person placed with us, for our own children, for ourselves, for other members of our extended family and for other people who share our life.

1. The names we use
2. Showing affection
3. Playing and leisure activities

4. The way we dress
5. Adult/s' bedrooms
6. Child/ren's bedrooms
7. Bedtime routines
8. In the toilet / bathroom
9. In the kitchen
10. Travelling by car

11. When children or young people go out (with or without us)
12. Staying overnight with friends
13. Babysitters
14. When we have visitors
15. Education about sex and sexuality
16. Sexual activity / access to sexual information and images within the home
17. Taking photos and videos

18. Computers and internet access
19. Our pets
20. Other issues

Name/s	Signature	Date

To be signed by all members of the fostering household who are over the age of 18

NTC Fostering Service Health and Safety Checklist

Applicant/s' or Foster Carer/s' name/s	Assessor's or Supervising Social Worker's name

Please note that the assessor reviewing the Health and Safety Checklist is not legally responsible for the following:

- **Certifying any electrical engineering**
- **Conducting gas checks**
- **Issuing gas safety certificates**

Kitchen	Safe	Needs attention	N/A	Comments / proposed actions
Is the chest freezer lockable/kept locked?				
Are kettle flexes short?				
Are knives safely stored?				
Are surfaces kept clean?				
Is the fridge clean and is food stored safely?				
How will safety around the cooker be ensured?				
Are cleaning materials stored safely?				
Is there a carbon monoxide detector?				
How is hygiene maintained in the kitchen, if there are pets?				

Living area	Safe	Needs attention	N/A	Comments / proposed actions
Are rooms clean and in good decorative order?				
Is flooring clean and safe?				
Is furniture in good order?				
Does furniture conform to BSS safety standards?				
Are there any glass tables, etc, that could be a potential hazard?				
Are larger areas of glass of the safety variety or are they covered with safety film?				
Is a fire guard required?				
Are 12, 15 and 18 certificate DVDs/computer games stored out of view and reach?				

Hallway/stairs/landing area	Safe	Needs attention	N/A	Comments / proposed actions
Is flooring safe and in good condition?				
Are the stairs safe?				
Are banisters filled or have a maximum gap of four inches?				

Are smoke detectors fitted and working at each level of the house?				
Are stair guards required?				
Is the area clear of clutter or any fire hazards?				
Is the key to the front door kept out of reach of young children?				

Bedrooms	Safe	Needs attention	N/A	Comments / proposed actions
Are suitable locks fitted to the windows?				
Can the windows be exited in case of fire?				
Are tall units fixed to the walls				
Is the room in good decorative order?				
Is the flooring clean and safe?				
Is the radiator/heating free from obstacles? I.e. the child's bed				
Is there a suitable bed and bedding?				
Is there suitable storage space for the child's belongings? (wardrobe and chest of drawers)				

Bathroom	Safe	Needs attention	N/A	Comments / proposed actions
Is the bathroom clean and hygienic?				

Are facilities sufficient for the proposed occupants of the house?				
Is there a suitable lock on the door that could be opened in case of emergency?				
Is the light or any heater operated by a pull chord or on a switch outside the room?				
Are shampoos and cosmetics stored out of reach of young children?				
Are razor blades and any electrical devices stored safely?				

Cars/garage	Safe	Needs attention	N/A	Comments / proposed actions
			Date:	
Are all vehicles taxed up to date?			Click here to enter a date	
Are all vehicles covered by comprehensive insurance with business use? On what date were the certificates seen?			Date: Click here to enter a date.	
Do all vehicles have an up-to-date MOT? On what date were the certificates seen?			Date: Click here to enter a date.	
Are the applicants aware of the regulations regarding the safe carrying of children?				
Are any potentially hazardous DIY fluids safely stored?				

Is all DIY equipment /tools safely stored?				
Is there a chest freezer in the garage? Is it lockable?				
Is the garage kept locked?				

Garden	Safe	Needs attention	N/A	Comments / proposed actions
Is all gardening equipment stored safely in a locked shed?				
Is the back garden securely fenced in?				
Is any play equipment safe and securely attached?				
If there is a trampoline, does it have a safety net?				
If there is a sandpit, is it clean and hygienic?				
Are any garden ponds safely covered or securely fenced in?				
Are there ponds or hazards in neighbouring gardens that might pose a risk?				
Is any greenhouse fitted with safety glass and kept locked?				

Is the garden kept clear of pet waste?				
If there is a swimming pool or hot tub, is it kept safely covered?				
Is there a gas BBQ and is this stored safely / where is the gas stored				

General	Safe	Needs attention	N/A	Comments / proposed actions
Is alcohol stored safely and out of reach?				
Are cigarettes, lighters, matches and e-cigarette liquids stored safely and out of reach?				
Are gas appliances and boiler serviced annually? On what date were the safety certificates seen?			Date: Click here to enter a date.	
Is there a fire escape plan? (template available)				
Are medicines stored safely and securely?				
Is there a first aid box with suitable and in-date contents?				
Do any toys in the home appear clean and safe and comply with safety standards?				
If there are guns in the house, are they securely stored and is there a licence for them,				

that has been checked?				
Is there adequate buildings and contents insurance? On what date were the certificates seen?			Date: Click here to enter a date.	

Financial security				
			Date:	
Has a check been made that rent or mortgage payments are up to date?			Click here to enter a date.	

Signed:	
Applicant/s / foster carer/s:	Date: Click here to enter a date.
Assessor / supervising social worker:	Date: Click here to enter a date.

Health and Safety Checklist Sign-Off

Applicant/s' or Foster Carer/s' names		Assessor's or Supervising Social Worker's name
Actions needed if approved / re-approved:	Action's	By when
Authorising manager:		Date: Click here to enter a date.

Foster Carers(s) Fire Safety Escape Plan

Remember the basic rule: GET OUT, CALL 999 AND STAY OUT

Escape route (the best route is your normal way in and out of your home)		
Alternative route if first one is blocked (this may be via a window if you live on the ground floor)		
If you can't escape, which room will you take refuge in? (this should have a window and a telephone)		
Downstairs:		
Upstairs:		
Does everyone know the escape routes?	Yes/No	
Are the escape routes unobstructed?		
Does everyone (including babysitters) know where the keys are to the doors and windows?		
Is your address by the telephone so children can read it out to the emergency services?		
Is there a reminder of what to do in a fire in a prominent place, like on the fridge?		
Have you read the advice in the leaflet provided by the Fire Service?		
Foster carer(s) name(s):	Signature(s):	Date:

The fire plan may need to be modified depending on the child/ren in placement and the specific needs they may present

Home Fire Safety Visits – Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

What is a home fire safety visit? Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service will visit you at home to offer advice on how to make your home safe and where appropriate fit a smoke alarm for free. They can assist you in thinking through the most sensible fire safety escape plan.

If you would like a free home safety visit from your local Fire and Rescue Service, please contact the Community Fire Safety Service on 0191 444 1500 or alternatively you can request a visit online at <https://www.twfire.gov.uk/safety-advice/home/home-safety-checks/>

If you live outside of the area, please contact your local fire service to enquire about a home fire safety visit. Contact Details for all UK Fire and Rescue Services can be found on <http://www.fireservice.co.uk/information/ukfrs>

North Tyneside Council

Health, Education, Care & Safeguarding Directorate

Fostering Service

Pets: Guidance for Foster Carers

Pets are an important and central part of many families' lives and they can play a valuable part in your matching. However, pets can also pose a danger to children – by way of transmittable diseases, accidents and injuries.

A lot of pleasure and benefit can be derived from children knowing, understanding and caring for pets but this must be tempered with common sense and clear guidelines, especially when children are taken into a new environment which changes the familiar routine of the animal in the household.

Please read the following guidelines so you are clear of your responsibilities. With any pet the child's safety is paramount and it is the responsibility of the Foster Carer to demonstrate their ability and awareness to not only keep the child safe but also to enable the child and pets to live together successfully.

DOGS

What are the dangers?

- ❖ A dog may attack/bite the child.
- ❖ A large dog may lean against/lay on/knock over a child.
- ❖ A dog may intimidate/frighten the child by jumping up and barking.
- ❖ Children can become involved in accidents with the dog's "fixtures and fittings" – tripping over leads, bowls, beds etc.
- ❖ Children can become infected with transmittable diseases such as toxocara canis, ringworm, salmonella and parasites.
- ❖ A child may have a pet allergy.

Minimising the danger

- ❖ The safest way for dogs and children to be in the same household is to keep them apart. This could be by the use of "baby" gates. Then at appropriate times have the dog and children together for short periods.
- ❖ The golden rule is absolute supervision at all times – 1 adult, 1 child, 1 animal.

DOGS SHOULD NEVER BE LEFT ALONE WITH BABIES VERY YOUNG CHILDREN OR CHILDREN THAT ARE VULNERABLE IN ANY WAY WHEN THE CHILD IS SLEEPING

- ❖ The child must be very carefully introduced into the dog's environment. The dog may be used to its own family and surroundings but with the introduction of other children it may react unexpectedly. It may not like the children or may not like the way they behave. They may disturb or frighten the dog or the dog may become over-friendly with them. Excited or noisy children can provoke unexpected reactions from dogs.
- ❖ Dogs should be regularly wormed and sprayed against fleas.
- ❖ All pet dishes should be washed separately from other dishes.
- ❖ Floors must be kept clean for children to play on.

OTHER PETS

What are the dangers?

Many of the dangers of injury or infestation by dogs also apply to other household pets.

Minimising the dangers

- ❖ Cats should be kept separate from children if they are at all vicious, bad tempered or likely to harm the child.
- ❖ Cats should be regularly de-wormed, de-fleaed as necessary and should have regular veterinary checks and treatment as required including vaccination.
- ❖ Children should be kept away from any cat litter trays and feeding bowls.
- ❖ All floors and furniture should be regularly vacuumed so that cat hairs do not become a source of allergens to children.
- ❖ Small caged animals such as hamsters, mice, gerbils, rats and caged birds are usually kept indoors in cages and provide a great deal of interest to young children as do caged animals usually kept out of doors, ie rabbits. However, children should only be allowed to handle these animals under adult supervision and cages should be kept clean and should not be positioned where they can be pulled over by a child. Again, caged animals should be protected against vermin infestations.
- ❖ Aquarium fish present no particular dangers to children but the glass should be considered as a hazard alongside all other household glass. Outside ponds and pools are a potential drowning hazard and should be covered whenever a child has access.
- ❖ Reptiles, insects and spiders should be kept locked in an inaccessible cage or tank.
- ❖ If in doubt keep the animal away from the child.
- ❖ Good hygiene is essential and all children should be supported to wash their hands after handling a pet or their toys/cage etc.

Cat Questionnaire (one per cat)

Cat Questionnaire	
Name of Applicants / Foster carer(s)	
Name of cat:	
Sex	Male/female
Age	
Breed	
Neutered?	Yes / no
How long have you had the cat?	
Size of cat	S / M / L
Briefly give us a history of the cat – (its temperament and how it reacts to children).	
Which parts of the house does the cat use?	
Does it jump onto any areas that present health risks? (e.g. on the kitchen worktops, onto pillows, etc)	Yes / no
Does the cat use a litter tray?	Yes / no
Where is the litter tray kept? (for pre-school children, is this out of their reach?)	
What arrangements can you make to prevent a child coming into contact with cat waste indoors and outdoors?	

How does the cat behave when it meets new people?	
--	--

Dog Ownership Questionnaire for Foster Carers

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help you look, with your assessor or supervising social worker, at how dogs and children may live together happily and safely. Please complete a separate form for each pet.

Dog Ownership Questionnaire	
Name of foster carer(s) or applicants	
How many dogs do you own?	
Name of dog this questionnaire applies to:	
DoB/Age:	
Breed or type: <i>For mongrels, please detail what breeds you think are in their ancestry and why)</i>	
Sex	Male/Female
Neutered? Note: all male dogs should be neutered	Yes/No
Size of dog: (Please tick as appropriate)	Small <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Large <input type="checkbox"/>
How long has the dog been a part of your family?	Yrs/mths
Where did you get the dog?	Breeder <input type="checkbox"/> Pet shop <input type="checkbox"/> Rescue Centre <input type="checkbox"/> Previous Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>
What were you told of the dog's personal history?	

Which parts of the house does the dog use?	
Kitchen <input type="checkbox"/>	Living Room <input type="checkbox"/>
Bedroom <input type="checkbox"/>	Dining Room <input type="checkbox"/>
Please specify other areas:	
What are is exclusive (if any) to your dog?	
Indoor kennel <input type="checkbox"/>	Outdoor kennel <input type="checkbox"/>
Garden <input type="checkbox"/>	Enclosed compound <input type="checkbox"/>
Please specify other areas:	
The care of your dog	
What training has your dog received? (please give details of type of training, when and by whom)	
Who is mainly responsible for looking after your dog?	
Who exercises your dog, where and for how long each day?	
If you are the breeder of the dog(s), where does this take place? And what happens to the puppies?	
Where does your dog sleep during the day and at night? (Does this provide them with peace and quiet and protection from intrusion?)	
Where does your dog eat?	
Is dog food out of reach of a child?	Yes/no
Are dog and human utensils kept separately?	Yes/no
Is the dog allowed to beg when humans are eating?	Yes/no
In relation to preventative health care, is your dog:	

Regularly wormed?	
Treated for fleas and lice?	
Groomed?	
Where does the dog go to the toilet and, if applicable, how is the waste disposed of?	
What other measures do you take to ensure suitable hygiene, concerning your dog's presence in the home?	
Do you have insurance with third party liability to cover you if your dog hurt someone? <i>(please provide details and confirm the assessor has viewed this policy)</i>	Yes/No
Your dog's temperament	
Describe the temperament of your dog <i>(circle all that apply)</i>	
Boisterous	Usually placid
Nervous	Docile
Protective of property	Obedient
Playful	Submissive
Possessive	Protective of people
	Disobedient
Does the dog fight with other dogs? <i>(If yes please give details)</i>	
Does the dog destroy property? <i>e.g. chew shoes, scratch doors etc</i> <i>(If yes please give details)</i>	
Does the dog worry people in public or when they are visiting your home? <i>(If yes please give details)</i>	Yes/No
Has the dog ever snapped or snarled at anyone? <i>(If yes please give details)</i>	
Has the dog ever bitten anyone? <i>(If yes please give details and what treatment was given)</i>	
What contact has the dog had with children, including children staying overnight in the home?	
If you own more than one dog, is this dog a leader or a follower?	

How your dog behaves in some given situations:	
Situation	Dog Behaves
How does your dog behave when he/she meets new people?	
When meeting new people does your dog settle quickly after any initial excitement?	Yes/No
Does your dog mind being stroked?	Yes/No
Does your dog mind being groomed or having the vet examine (for example) his/her teeth or ears?	Yes/No
Does your dog like to play and if so with what (e.g. likes toys thrown so that he /she can retrieve and get you to throw again)?	Yes/No
Can you remove toys from your dog if he/she is very excited?	Yes/No
Can you touch the dog's food bowl when he/she is eating?	Yes/No
How does your dog respond to noise particularly high pitched sounds?	
How does your dog respond when you run around?	
Are you able to push your dog around in a rough and playful manner?	Yes/No
Does your dog chase and/or kill small animals?	Yes/No
Does your dog listen to your commands?	Yes/No
How does your dog respond to you the owner?	
Choices open to you if a child and the dog do not get on	
If the dog and a child placed with you do not get on, what will you do?	

Would you consider re-homing the dog if necessary?	Yes/No
Medical records for your dog	
Please indicate the frequency of your dog's veterinarian checkups: _____ times per year.	

Dog Owners' Undertaking

Following the dog assessment above, the ages and other characteristics of children whom my assessor/SSW thinks are most likely to encounter any difficulty living happily with my dog are <i>(give reasons)</i>	
The specific points I have agreed I need to address with my dog or in my household in order to minimise the chance of any risks in relation to my dog are	
When do the above changes need to be put in place; who will check these and when?	
<i>For current foster carers:</i> Are there any agreed restrictions in placements until the above changes have been established?	

As the owner of a dog in a foster home, I/we undertake to provide supervision whenever the dog and the child(ren) are in the same area together, to minimise the chance that an unfortunate incident will occur.

Signature foster carer 1	
Signature foster carer 2	
Date form completed	

Pet Questionnaire

For use with pets other than dogs or cats:

Pet Questionnaire	
Family name	
Total number and type of pets	
Gender of pet/s	
Is/are your pet/s neutered?	Yes / no
Age of pet/s	
Size of pet/s	Small / Medium / Large
Why do you have a pet/s?	
If you are a pet breeder, where in the house does this take place?	
Are the offspring kept?	Yes / No
If not, what happens to them?	
Training	
Has/have the pet/s been trained?	Yes / no
If so, please outline the training received:	

Who trained the pet/s and what pet training qualifications do they have?

House Access	
Where is/are the pet/s allowed in the house?	
What area is exclusive (if any) to the pet/s?	
Where does/do the pet/s sleep at night?	
Where does/do the pet/s sleep during the day?	
If the pet/s is/are potentially dangerous animals e.g. snakes, are they kept in a locked cage? Where are the keys kept?	
Health and Hygiene	
What are the feeding routines?	
What do you feed the pet/s?	
If the pet/s use/s a litter tray, where is it kept?	
How often is/are the pet/s cleaned and by whom?	
Has/have the pet/s been known to cause allergic reactions in people? If so, please explain.	

Behaviour	
How would you describe the pet's temperament? - Boisterous / Placid / Playful / Possessive / Nervous /Docile / Submissive / Protective / Other (please state below)	
How does/do the pet/s behave around children?	
Has/have the pet/s ever snapped or snarled at anyone?	Yes / no
Has/have the pet/s ever bitten or scratched anyone?	Yes / no
If yes, what treatment did the victim require?	
Does/do the pet/s ever fight with other pets?	Yes / no
Does/do the pet/s ever frighten other people when in public or visiting the home?	Yes / no
Do you have any concerns that your pet could potentially harm a child in your care?	Yes / no
What steps would you take if your pet/s injured a foster child?	
Do you intend to get more pets / replace present pet/s?	Yes / no

Signature of Applicant/s

Print name/s

Date

Risk Management Plan

From reviewing this questionnaire, are any changes or protective measures agreed, to minimize risks to fostered children?

Signature of assessor:

Signature/s of applicant/s: Date:

Monitoring and Notifications -

When I need to tell other people about things

1. Introduction

Should there be a significant event involving a member of your household (including the child in your care) you must notify the Fostering Service without delay.

The following information tells you which agencies must be notified by the Fostering Service whenever critical incidents or notifiable events happen. Please see the Notifications table in respect of the Fostering Regulations 2011 for further information -

[see the Notifications Table](#)

The Fostering Service will send notifications in line with schedule 7 after the event has occurred.

A copy of the form will be:

1. Sent directly to the relevant Statutory Authority(ies) within 24 hours - including weekends, as per schedule 7.
2. Placed on the relevant child and or your electronic file.

2. Critical Incidents

Critical Incidents are not always as clear as notifiable events; however, if you have any doubts or are uncertain you should always seek advice from the Fostering Service.

Examples are;

- Assault by a child in your care on you or a member of your household.
- Serious accident or injury to you whilst carrying out your duties.
- Any event which may result in media interest.
- Conduct of any Foster Carer, not directly connected with their role, which may raise questions about their suitability as a Foster Carer.

All Foster Carers have a responsibility to report to the Fostering Service who will inform the relevant Team Manager of the incident. There should be no delay in reporting the incident or event.



North Tyneside Council HEALTH, EDUCATION, CARE & SAFEGUARDING DIRECTORATE

Format for Notifying the Fostering Service of Accidents, First Aid & Emergency Treatment

For completion by Foster Carer

Name of Child:..... DOB:

Name of Child..... DOB.....

Name of Child..... DOB.....

Name of Foster Carer:.....

Address.....

..... Postcode:

Name of Supervising Social Worker:

Which Event: Accident
 First Aid
 Emergency Treatment
 (please delete as appropriate)

Date:

Circumstances:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

To be completed by Social Worker

Date Form given.....

Name of Social Worker.....

Signature.....

This section to be completed by Team Manager or person nominated to do so.
Actions necessary by service.

Date of notification and to whom

Name.....

Signature..... Date.....

Date Notified on Event.....

Name of Supervising Social Worker

Signature.....

This section to be completed by Team Manager

Actions necessary by Service

Date of notification and to whom

Outcomes (including dates)

Name.....

Signature..... **Date**.....

Missing Notification

Name of Missing Young Person:	Date of Birth:
Name/address of Carer:	Date:
Time last seen:	Time reported to police:
Person Recording incident (if not Carer):	Police

Circumstances of Going Missing:

Action	Yes/No	Comments (if applicable)
Search of immediate location		
Telephone to young persons mobile (if applicable)		
Telephone calls to others		
Telephone calls to others		
Police informed		
Social Worker informed		
Care Call informed		
Fostering Service informed		
Other actions		

Time and date of Return:	Duration missing days/hours:
Circumstances of return / Further actions:	

Young Persons view:
Signature: Date:

Manager Monitoring:
Signature: Designation: Team Manager, Fostering
Date:

Please email to pdwfostering@northtyneside.gov.uk

New Partner Policy

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Expectations of Foster Carers
3. Initial stages of the new relationship - *no contact with child(ren) in care*
4. New partner visiting the Foster Carer household - *contact with child(ren) in care*
5. New partner overnight stays in the Foster Carer household
6. Before a new partner moves in the Foster Carer household
7. New partner proposes to join Foster Carer's household
8. Changes to the household without notification
9. New children coming into your home.

1. Introduction

Some carers apply to foster as single Foster Carers, and others may experience separation or divorce whilst fostering. This policy considers changes to existing and new partnerships/relationships and the processes that follow.

Single Foster Carers may at some point form new partnerships and significant relationships after their initial approval therefore any subsequent changes in the fostering household need to be considered and a re-assessment completed.

Forming a new relationship, joining households, and taking on a joint fostering role are all significant changes and require careful assessment. Forming new relationships requires the investment of energy and time and the impact of developing new relationships need to be reviewed to ensure that the fostering role is not adversely affected.

The Supervising Fostering Social Worker (within the supervision process), will ensure that all Foster Carers are clear about their responsibility to notify the Fostering Service before any change in the composition of their household occurs or where there is any significant change in their circumstances and the importance of this.

Sharing information about personal/household changes are a key part of the supervisory relationship and rely on openness and transparency between carers and the Fostering Service. Foster Carers will be supported to understand the reasons why such information is required, how it may impact on their role, and consider the needs of the children in their care.

2. Expectations of Foster Carers

Foster Carer's are required to give written notice to the Fostering Service without delay as per the terms of the Foster Carer's Agreement in relation to:

- Any intended change of address
- Any change in the composition of the household
- Any change in their personal circumstances
- Any event affecting either their capacity to care for any child placed or the suitability of the household

3. Initial stages of the new relationship - *no contact with child(ren) in care*

The Foster Carer should let the Supervising Social Worker know they have begun a new relationship as soon as possible.

Consideration will need to be given to the stage of the relationship and how this may impact on the fostering role and the fostering household including when and where their contact takes place and how they view this in line with their fostering responsibilities.

The Supervising Social Worker should explore with the Foster Carer, the new partners understanding of the carers fostering role alongside assessment and training requirements.

The needs of children in the fostering household should be given careful consideration and new partners should not be introduced without prior discussion with the Supervising Social Worker and the child's(ren) views about this should be gathered.

The Safer Caring Policy should be reviewed to include the new partner as a result prior to any introductions.

The Supervising Social Worker should formally record this discussion in the supervision minutes, and this should be recorded on LCS as a significant event, the Foster Carer should also be given a copy of the New Partner Policy.

4. New partner visiting the Foster Carer household - *contact with child(ren) in care*

Once the Foster Carer has confirmed the status of the relationship with a new partner within supervisory visits the Supervising Social Worker should discuss the nature of the relationship and explain the assessment process if their relationship develops. It is recognised that this period may be uncertain as relationships are still forming.

The frequency and duration of visits to the Foster Carers home by the partner should be discussed with the Supervising Social Worker alongside the impact of any change in dynamics within the household prior to the new partner meeting the children.

How and when a child in care is informed of a new partner needs to be carefully considered by the carer, Supervising Social Worker and child's Social Worker considering their needs, understanding and impact alongside the status of the relationship.

The child's Social Worker should also talk to the child about their understanding of the situation and their views (words and pictures may be suitable at this point). This conversation must take place prior to the new partner having any contact with the children in care.

The Safer Caring Policy should be used and updated as necessary and a New Partner Risk Assessment completed (within 4 weeks) alongside a DBS for the new partner. This would be prior to any unsupervised contact with the children in care.

5. The new partner proposes to stay overnight

Where the Foster Carer wishes his/her partner to stay overnight this should be discussed with the Supervising Social Worker. Sleeping arrangements should also be confirmed and an updated risk assessment must also be completed. The frequency of planned overnight stays should also be discussed. As with new partners visiting the fostering home a DBS must be completed prior to any overnight stays taking place.

The Safer Caring Policy must be updated and discussion on safer caring issues undertaken with the new partner by the Supervising Social Worker. The fostering responsibility remains with the approved carer.

The Fostering Manager must authorise the risk assessment or any agreement for overnight stays.

6. Before a new partner moves in

Proposed changes to the fostering household must be discussed in supervisory visits. Once the Foster Carer has notified the Supervising Social Worker of their intentions for their new partner to move into their home this will trigger a new partner assessment.

The same procedure for this assessment will be carried out as for any Foster Carer application and the assessment will be presented to the Foster Carer Review which will need to be arranged with the IRO and then presented to the Fostering Panel and the Agency Decision Maker.

There will be no presumption that any such assessment will be approved, and the assessment will usually not be carried out by the Supervising Social Worker who is supporting the Foster Carer. Another Social Worker from the Fostering Service will be allocated to undertake this work.

Both partners (including the current Foster Carer) may complete the Skills to Foster training together.

It should be acknowledged that the assessment of a new relationship may be one that is relatively untested particularly regarding taking on a joint fostering role. While suitably as joint carers are being assessed, relationships may still be forming and will require careful consideration.

During the assessment process the Foster Carer remains the approved carer and responsible for the duties this entails until any changes are made by the ADM.

Recommendations for approval should consider the new family dynamics and may need to change accordingly.

On occasion there may be (exceptional) circumstances when a new partner moves into the household before a full assessment has been completed. In these circumstances an Annual Review must take place highlighting the timescales for a full assessment to be completed.

The Safer Caring Policy and Risk Assessment must be updated (4-week timescale) prior to the Review. The approved Foster Carer retains the responsibilities as the primary carer including transport; family time; meetings etc. DBS checks and local area checks must be completed, However, due to the timescales of DBS checks being undertaken, a PNC check must be actioned immediately. The approved Foster Carer retains responsibility for ensuring confidentiality.

7. Foster Carer proposed to join new partner's household

Foster Carer(s) should inform their Supervising Social Worker of any planned changes of accommodation including moving to a new partner home/setting up a new home together. The process in section 6. *Before a New Partner Moves in* must be followed.

8. Changes to the household without notification

If the Fostering Service discovers that there has been a change in the Foster Carer's household without prior notice, the Fostering Manager must be informed, and a Foster Carer Review must be convened with within 4 weeks, to consider the Foster Carer's approval.

In these circumstances, deregistration of the Foster Carer's approval may have to be considered at the review. The child(ren)'s Social Worker and the child's IRO should be informed.

A risk assessment must be undertaken on the new partner and presented to the review alongside an immediate PNC check. If concerns are identified at any point, consideration must be given to the children remaining in the Foster Carers care.

9. New placements

The National Minimum Standards for Foster Care (11.2) highlights that children are carefully matched to a Foster Carer's household. Children should not normally be matched to a fostering household when changes to the household are being assessed.

Bedroom Sharing in Fostering Households

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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1. Introduction

This policy confirms the procedures to be followed when considering the bedroom arrangements for a child in care in a fostering household. All children in care should have adequate space and privacy and should be cared for safely. The National Minimum Standards (2011), Standard 10, specifically applies to this policy.

Standard 10 requires the fostering provider to make available Foster Carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. Each child placed has his/her own bed and accommodation arrangements reflect the child's assessed need for privacy and space or any specific need resulting from a disability (10.1).

Standard 10.6 states that each foster child, aged three years and over, should have her/his own bedroom. This is NOT a regulatory requirement and, if the child has the potential to display bullying behaviour or, is known to have been abused, or it is known that the child has abused another child, then the child's needs and the needs of all other children in the foster home are assessed before any decision is made to allow sharing of bedrooms. The decision-making process and the outcome of that risk assessment is recorded in writing. (10.6). The responsibility for undertaking this assessment lies with the supervising worker in conjunction with the children's Social Workers and the children.

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

2. Fostering Provider's Position

It is the view of North Tyneside, that whilst striving to achieve compliance with Standard 10.6, this will neither be achievable nor is appropriate in every child's circumstance.

North Tyneside Fostering Service would require that unless the children are siblings that they are not sharing a bedroom in the Foster Carers home.

3. Bedroom Sharing

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 and night terrors. For a child in adolescence, the provision of privacy and adequate personal space should be considered.

A child over the age of 10 years should not share a bedroom with a child of the opposite sex.

A child under the age of 2 years can share the Foster Carer's bedroom.

After the child's second birthday it is expected that they should have their own bedroom unless there are exceptional circumstances or needs. If this is the case the SSW should undertake an assessment of the risks and issues and ensure this is recorded on the Foster Carer record.

A child should not share a Foster Carer's bed in any circumstances.

Where possible the Fostering Service will aim for all children in care over the age of three to have their own bedroom.

If children will be expected or would prefer to share a bedroom a risk assessment must be carried out for each individual child prior to the children sharing a bedroom. This should be done in conjunction with the child's Social Worker(s) and must include the wishes and feelings of all the children who would be involved in this arrangement. The template for the risk assessment is on the Foster Carer electronic filing system.

A copy of the risk assessment should be kept on the Foster Carer's file. If it is concluded that sharing a bedroom is the best way to promote the child's welfare and keep them safe this should also be recorded by the assessing or supervising Social Worker on the Foster Carer record.

If there is a change in the circumstances of any of the children who are sharing a bedroom which will impact on the welfare or safety of that or any other child the risk assessment must be updated and reviewed.

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.

4. Documentation for Completion

The request for a fostering household and accompanying risk assessment should identify the Child's needs.

The Foster Carer's Safe Caring Policy and the Foster Carers' Health and Safety Assessment should both address the bedroom arrangements, within the foster household, and the space available for the child.

The bedroom sharing assessment should be reviewed at least annually at the time of the carers' review and following any change of circumstances or a change of the child's presentation or behaviour.

5. Exceptional Circumstances

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 a sibling group should the children be over the age of 10 and of opposite genders. In such circumstances, the rationale for acting outside of the policy should be clearly recorded on the Foster Carer's file. The decision to act outside of the policy should be made by the relevant Team Manager (Fostering Service).

6. Records

All risk assessments will be held on the Foster Carers electronic recording system.