

Health & Safety in the Foster Home Policy

Introduction

Health and Safety in the foster home is managed through a series of risk assessments that cover the main household, additional homes and high-risk leisure activities. These risk assessments are conducted for applicants to foster and then reviewed and updated at least annually. Foster parents are advised of any action required to comply with standards, and ISP will monitor these requirements until completed.

N.B. The social worker who undertakes the risk assessment is not a qualified Health & Safety officer and cannot confirm the safety of individual appliances (e.g. gas or electric). ISP may ask foster parents to arrange a safety assessment with a suitably qualified professional and provide evidence of this check.

Foster parents complete a mandatory Health & Safety training course and guidance is always available within the Foster Parent Handbook. Foster parents must:

- Notify ISP of any potential risks in and around the home, including vehicles and leisure equipment.
- Notify ISP if they take ownership of any holiday homes or touring/static caravans so that we can ensure the correct documentation is in place prior to foster children staying at the accommodation.
- Cooperate with risk assessments and risk management action plans.
- Arrange insurance and safety checks as set out in this policy or identified by a risk assessment.

This policy should be read in conjunction with health and safety advice provided within the Foster Parent Handbook, and the following policies and procedures:

- Risk Assessment and Safer Care Policy
- Accidents, Illnesses, Medication and First Aid Policy
- Assessment of Dogs and Pets Policy & Guidance
- CCTV Procedure
- Safer Sleeping Procedure

Risk Assessments

In addition to the household Health & Safety Risk Assessment (completed for the foster home and any second homes), there are assessments for specific risks:

- Boats and open water
- Caravans, mobile homes, tents and camping equipment
- Quad bikes, trail bikes and other motorised bikes, electric bikes/scooters, jet skis
- Smallholdings and farms (including horses)
- Swimming pools, ponds, lakes, streams/rivers
- Firearms and other weapons
- Dogs
- 3 or more dogs in a household
- Fire evacuation plan

These forms must be completed by the assessing social worker for applicants to foster, or by the supervising social worker if they become relevant at a later date.

Safety Checks, Legal Compliance and Insurance

Foster parents who are homeowners must provide evidence of safety checks for heating appliances, e.g. gas boilers and open fires with a chimney, conducted by the appropriate registered tradesperson. Tenants should obtain a copy of the safety certificate from their landlord.

In addition, tenants will need to obtain a copy of the electrical safety check certificate from the five-yearly check that is required for rented properties.

In the event of any building work to the home, including extensions and loft conversions, a Building Regulations Safety Certificate must be obtained. Any new electrical installations should also be carried out by a qualified electrician and a certificate of installation obtained.

Foster parent who are homeowners are required to have Home Buildings Insurance and Contents Insurance. Tenants are required to have Home Contents Insurance.

All drivers (if they do or might transport a fostered child) must have a UK driving licence* and appropriate insurance and all vehicles must be compliant with the law in terms of MOT and vehicle tax. It is recommended that vehicles are regularly serviced.

**A valid EU/EEA licence can be used in the UK. Other international licences are only valid for 12 months after arrival in the UK and thereafter the driver must apply for a UK provisional licence and take a UK driving test.*

ISP will ask for evidence of compliance with these requirements.

Foster parents are advised to inform their insurance companies of their status as a foster parent to ensure that they have adequate cover for risks and liabilities.

Key Safeguards*

- Items and substances that may be a risk to children in placement must be securely stored. The children's individual risk assessments will identify which items and substances need to be locked away and this might include alcohol, knives, medication, batteries and cleaning solutions.
- It is good practice to lock away all harmful chemicals and liquids that might be used for intensive cleaning or vehicle maintenance. Children must always be supervised when these chemicals are in use and ideally, they would be used when children are not present.
- Bunk beds should not be used for children under 6 years of age.
- Children under 3 years of age should not be permitted to play on a trampoline.
- Replace any window blinds that have loose cords that could be a strangulation risk.
- Children must always travel in a car with an appropriate car seat (subject to age and weight) and seat belt.
- Children must always be supervised around water. Always empty paddling pools after use, and ensure that ponds, pools, hot tubs and water tanks are covered or that access is prevented by a locked fence/gate.
- We recommend that all children, where physically able, are taught to swim.
- Children aged 5 and under must never be left alone in the bath, whilst children with additional needs and/or disabilities may need supervising until a later age.

****Health and safety advice is available in Part 5 of the Foster Parent Handbook.***