

Medicines in the Foster Home:

Essential information for foster parents

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Medicines and the law

The law categorises medicines in ways that determine how the medicine can be obtained and how it should be stored, administered and safely disposed of. Some medicines can be purchased freely by anyone over the age of 16 years (general sales medicines), while others can only be sold by a registered pharmacy, or prescribed by a medical practitioner. Some medicines are “controlled” under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971) and must always be stored securely to prevent unlawful access.

As a foster parent, if you are caring for children under 16 years of age (or older but with reduced capacity to make decisions for themselves), you will be given ‘delegated authority’ by the child’s Local Authority/parent to administer medication on their behalf. With this ‘delegated authority’ you will be able to:

- Give the child over-the-counter medication such as paracetamol and ibuprofen for minor ailments
- Take the child to a pharmacy for minor ailments and obtain medication on the advice of a pharmacist
- Take the child to a GP or other registered health professional and administer prescribed medication.

Delegated authority should be confirmed prior to placement wherever possible, especially if the child is taking medication at the time of placement.

You will need to record all medication given (see section on recording of medication given) and it is important that you:

- Follow the prescriber's instructions
- Don't vary doses without the prescriber's consent
- Only give the medication to the child for whom it was prescribed.

Storage of medication

Medication must be stored in its original packaging, with the child's name and dosage instructions clearly displayed on the label.

Within the home, all medication must be kept locked way/safely stored to safeguard children. You might need to acquire a small lockable box for any medication that requires refrigeration. The safe storage of medicines should be discussed as part of the child's risk assessment and safer care plan.

Administering medication to a child

Before giving prescribed medication to a child, check that the child's name is on the label, and confirm the dosage level.

When giving over-the-counter medication such as paracetamol for minor ailments, consult with the child's GP if symptoms persist for more than two days. Unless you have been advised to do so by a doctor/pharmacist, do not give both paracetamol and ibuprofen to a child at the same time and do not give aspirin to children at all.

If the child is taking any prescribed medication, do not administer any over-the-counter medicines without checking with a pharmacist/doctor that it is safe to do so.

Record all medication given to children.

Recording of medication given

Notify your Supervising Social Worker (SSW) of the child's ongoing health conditions and any prescribed medication they are taking. They will record this on CHARMS within the child's 'personal details' tab. You will be able to see this information.

Record all medication given on the child's CHARMS progress record. Use either:

'Monitoring Event – Prescribed Medication' or

'Monitoring Event – Non-prescribed medication'.

Follow the prompts in the notes box to provide full information.

When multiple doses of medication are given to treat the same incidence of ill-health, do not record each dose as a separate event – update the 'notes' box with subsequent doses so that each medication event is recorded once, with all treatment logged in the 'notes' box.

When medication is prescribed long-term, record the individual doses in the daily log rather than within the monitoring event progress line.

Disposal of medication

Dispose of any medication that is no longer required by taking it to a community pharmacy. Do not put medication in the household waste, or household drains.

Regularly check your medicine cupboard, checking for and disposing of any out-of-date medicines.

Reporting of problems

If you experience any problems when administering medication to a child – for example the child refuses a dose, experiences side effects or an incorrect dose has been given – take the following action:

- Seek medical advice for any adverse health effects. This might involve phoning the child's GP, or NHS 111, or 999 for an emergency response.
- Seek advice from the child's GP if they are refusing medication. Do not crush tablets to aid administration without checking that it is safe to do so.
- Notify ISP – call your local centre or the out-of-hours service. ISP will notify the child's Local Authority and complete any reports

Please refer to the First Aid and Medication Policy for additional information.

More information about medication in the foster home can be found in the Foster Parent Handbook (www.i-space.org.uk/chapter-13-health).

Complete the 'Medicines in the Foster Home' training. This is available as a short course on Microsoft Teams.