



Fostering Therapy Education Social Work

ALCOHOL, DRUGS & SOLVENTS POLICY

Updated December 2020

Outcome

Children and young people live in a healthy environment where their physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted and where they are able to access the services to meet their health needs.

Underpinning legislation

This Policy is compliant with the [Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and The Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011, Standard 6, Promoting Health and Wellbeing.](#)

Fostering Regulations:

- Reg. 15 - Health of children placed with foster parents. • Children Act 1989:

- S.22 - General duties of local authority in relation to children looked after by them
- SS.61 and 62 - duties of voluntary organisations and local authorities in relation to children accommodated by or on behalf of the voluntary organisation

1. Prevention and Planning

The Agency will ensure that foster parents and children/young people have access to up to date information, guidance and advice on the risks and strategies that may be adopted in relation to smoking, alcohol or other harmful drugs and substances.

If children are known to be at risk of smoking or misusing alcohol or other harmful drugs and substances, it must be addressed in their Placement Plan with strategies for cessation or reduction.

2. Purchasing/Obtaining drugs or substances - General

Substances are defined as any substances, whether restricted or prohibited, which may have a harmful effect upon a child, such as:

Alcohol, Cigarettes, Tobacco, Aerosols, Gas, Glue, Magic Mushrooms (Amanita), Petrol, Solvents and all controlled substances such as Amphetamines, Barbiturates, Cannabis, Cocaine, Hallucinogens, Hashish and Heroin.

It also includes substances previously referred to as legal highs which are substances that mimic the effects of illegal drugs such as ecstasy and amphetamines, and which are now controlled by the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

For procedures regarding smoking, see our smoking policy.

All reasonable measures must be used to reduce or prevent children from obtaining drugs or substances which may harm them.

If it is known or suspected that children are obtaining products which may harm them, whether off the streets, from dealers or traders of any kind, foster parents must notify the Agency, and consult the social worker to decide what actions to take.

If the problem persists or is serious, relevant specialists or bodies, including Trading Standards or the Police, should be informed.

3. Alcohol

Children and Young People

Under no circumstances may children consume alcohol without the approval, in writing, of the local authority social worker and if appropriate the child's parents. See 'The Law and Alcohol' below.

Where it becomes evident or foster parents suspect that a child or young person has indulged in alcohol, a range of responses are relevant depending on the quantity of alcohol consumed and its effects on the young person's health and wellbeing. These options are outlined below:

- Offering fluids - water, squash;
- Periodic monitoring and checks - 10 minutes, 30 minutes, hourly, etc;
- Contacting health professionals for advice i.e. G.P. or casualty department; •
Hospitalisation for day patient or overnight stay, etc.

Foster parents should never simply ignore a child or young person who appears drunk or under the influence of another substance.

The law and alcohol

In England and Wales, licensing is governed by the Licensing Act 2003. However, despite what it says legally, some placing Local Authorities/parents may have different views, and their wishes should be followed.

Young people under 18 can be stopped, fined or arrested if they are caught drinking alcohol in public. It is illegal for them to buy or try to buy alcohol, and it is illegal for shops to sell them alcohol.

The law permits parents to allow their children, over the age of 5 years, to drink alcohol in the home. A young person over 16 is also allowed to drink (but not buy) alcohol in a pub or restaurant as part of a meal with their parents. The Chief Medical Officer for England's guidance on alcohol and young people states that:

- An alcohol free childhood is the healthiest option. However, if children drink it should not be until, at least, the age of 15 years.
- If young people aged 15 to 17 years consume alcohol it should always be with the guidance of a foster parent or in a supervised environment.

- Foster parents and young people should be aware that drinking even at the age of 15 or older can be hazardous to health. If 15 to 17 year olds do consume alcohol they should do so infrequently and certainly on no more than one day a week.
- Young people should never exceed the recommended adult daily limits when they drink. Consumption should usually be below such levels. (The maximum recommended intake in one day is 2-3 units for women and 3-4 units for men)

Foster parents cannot, without the permission of the Local Authority and anyone else with parental responsibility, give alcohol to a young person in foster care. Where permission has been given, this should include expectations around the quantity of alcohol that is permitted to be given, and in what circumstances. These arrangements should be included in the young person's risk assessment and safer care plan. When making decisions about allowing a young person to consume alcohol, consideration should be given to their prior experiences with alcohol and/or the misuse of alcohol.

Foster parents

Experience tells us that children coming in to ISP care may have experienced negative and complex behaviours from adults, related to, or as a result of, alcohol consumption.

These experiences need to be taken into consideration by foster parents and their visitors when consuming alcohol in the presence of children. Our aim at ISP is to support children to grow up with a healthy attitude to alcohol, which will be modelled by ISP foster parents in their various social situations. ISP encourages foster parents to follow Government guidelines on safe levels of alcohol consumption (see drinkaware.co.uk) and always be available to respond to emergencies.

4. Aerosols, Gas, Glue and Petrol

Medical Emergency: Also see our Medication and First Aid policy.

Foster parents must ensure that aerosols, gas, glue, petrol and similar substances are only used for the purpose they were designed for; and that all reasonable measures are taken to restrict their use to children who are known to pose no risk to themselves or others if they have access to them.

5. Emergency

If it suspected that a child is misusing harmful drugs or substances and no strategy exists to reduce or prevent the behaviour, the Supervising Social Worker or Registered Manager must be notified, who may consult the local authority social worker. If there is an immediate urgent risk e.g. that the child or another person may be injured or that a serious crime may be committed, the foster parents should take what action is necessary to protect themselves, the child or others e.g.

- a. If there is a risk of serious harm, injury or of a serious criminal offence and foster parents are unable to manage safely, the Police should be notified;
- b. If solvents are involved, allow air to circulate freely and extinguish naked lights;

- c. If any person is unconscious, in a fit or convulsing or otherwise seriously ill, emergency first aid should be given and an ambulance requested. The emergency services should be informed that there are suspicions of drug or solvent misuse;
- d. The drugs/substances should be removed or confiscated, preferably with the co-operation of the young person. Only the police, or a pharmacist are legally entitled to possess drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act and any drugs/substances found should be taken without delay to either a pharmacy or a police station. Foster parents should phone the destination before setting off to check that someone is in a position to receive the substances, and get that person's name.

No further action, beyond making the situation safe and attempting to confiscate harmful drugs or substances.

6. Notifications

Any incidents must be notified immediately to the Supervising Social Worker and the relevant Managers within 1 working day.

Serious incidents e.g. if the Police or other emergency services are called, consideration should be given as to whether the incident is a Notifiable Event.

Also see our Notifications of Significant Events to Other Agencies policy.

7. Recording and Review

All incidents must be recorded. The child's Placement Plan may need to be reviewed with a view to incorporating strategies to reduce or prevent future incidents.

Related information

Drinkaware.co.uk

[Frank Website](#)

[NHS Website](#)

[New Psychoactive Substances \(NPS\): Resource Pack for informal educators and practitioners \(Home Office\)](#)