

Risk Assessment and Safer Care Policy and Procedures

Underpinning regulations and guidance

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011: Regulations 11, 12 and 13

National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011:

- Standard 4: Safeguarding Children
- Standard 5: Missing from Care
- Standard 6: Promoting good health and wellbeing

Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Vol 4

Children Act 2004

Children and Young Persons Act 2008

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

Department for Education Guidance on Information Sharing Advice for Practitioners
Providing Safeguarding Services 2015

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Associated Policies

- Safeguarding Policy
- Policy to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Bruising and Injuries in Non-Mobile Babies and Children Procedure
- ISP Children Missing from Care Policy
- E-Safety Practice Guidance
- Extremism and Radicalisation Practice Guidance and Procedure
- Placement in Foster Care Procedure
- Parent and Child Placements Policy
- Safeguarding Against Female Genital Mutilation Procedure
- Safeguarding Against Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage Procedure
- Safeguarding Children at risk from Exploitation Procedure
- Safer Sleeping Procedure

Introduction

The agency is committed to providing family-based care where children feel safe and are safe. We support our foster parents to encourage children to take appropriate risks as a normal part of growing up. We endeavour to support foster parents to take a proportionate approach to risk as well as ensuring they have important information about a child or young person that will help them to keep themselves and any children they care for safe from harm. There is an expectation that any assessment of risk will have a professionally 'shared' team approach and be reviewed on a regular basis.

This policy sets out the safer caring and risk assessment procedures which must be followed by staff and foster parents to help keep children and young people safe and manage the risks that they may face or pose. It is intended to support staff and foster families to:

- Enable all household members to have an understanding of the principles and rules for living together;
- Facilitate the inclusion of a child or young person within the family setting, whilst maximising the safety of all household members and minimising the risk of allegations or complaints;
- Ensure children and young people are cared for with sensitivity and acceptance according to their individual needs and to develop close, trusting relationships;
- Assist children and young people to feel safe and secure in placement

The primary focus of this procedure is safer caring plans and risk assessments in relation to children's needs, behaviours and circumstances. However, as safer caring also relates to all aspects of the home, a suite of health and safety risk assessments are also available for use in the assessment of applicants and foster parents, their homes, vehicles and pets etc. All agency risk assessments are identified in this policy.

Risk Principle

Risk is endemic in fostering and the purpose of risk assessment is to devise interventions that manage and reduce risk. ISP adopts the principles of dynamic risk assessment in order to mitigate risks that children may face.

Eileen Munro, in her work, 'Effective Child Protection' states that in order to manage risk, there is a need to identify:

- a. What has been happening
- b. What is happening now
- c. What might happen
- d. How likely it is
- e. How serious it could be
- f. A combination of seriousness and likelihood leading to an overall judgement of risk.

Previous behaviour and history of risk can be an indicator of future risk and therefore past experience and history should always be considered as part of a dynamic risk assessment.

Good risk assessments are characterised by certain factors – they construct a coherent story about the child’s circumstances; they appreciate that there will be ambiguity and uncertainty about some matters; they have been constructed through the testing of hypotheses and a curiosity; they are considered and thoughtful; and finally they allow for and enable change.

Risk Assessments and Safer Care Plans

For babies and children up to and including three years of age, use the **Child Specific Safer Caring Plan (birth – 3 years)**

For all other children and young people, use the **Individual Risk Assessment and Safer Care Plan**

All fostering households must have their own **Household Safer Caring Plan**

Risk Assessment Ethos

- Professional curiosity should be part of risk assessment and risk management procedures.
- Be observant and thorough in relation to risk assessment.
- Be ‘risk alert’ and not ‘risk averse’.
- There may be occasions where it is appropriate for a young person to ‘risk on purpose’, for example, in the transition from dependence to independence. During this process, we may encourage the young person to recognise danger themselves and act appropriately.
- In any plan that considers risk, there should be a consensus reached with the child or young person’s placing authority on the level of risk involved and how that should be managed.
- Where appropriate, the child or young person’s view will be sought, and taken into consideration when making plans to moderate risk.
- Try and recognise the triggers to risky behaviour for a young person. These may be prior to or following contact, episodes of rejection, specific times of the year, high anxiety, etc. The purpose of identifying triggers is to enable foster parents and staff to anticipate periods of higher risk, to be sensitive to this, and devise strategies to reduce risk.
- Risk is dynamic, i.e. it changes over time and in different circumstances. It is not static. Our risk assessments must reflect this and be revised as time goes by, as circumstances change, and when new information comes to light.

- We need to share information and seek information internally and from other professionals and agencies. This is particularly important when mental health concerns, self-harm, suicidal ideation or sexually harmful behaviour is involved.
- It is important to know what we don't know and not assume that we have been given all relevant information relating to the child or young person coming into our care.
- There may be occasions when immediate protective action is required prior to the completion of a formal written risk assessment. The absence of a risk assessment in place should not detract from taking proportionate protective measures based on what information is known at the time.
- Risk assessments should not exist in isolation and should refer to other risk assessments in place, e.g. Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment. The Risk Assessment should inform the Safer Caring Plan and ensure that it is compatible with the Household Safer Caring Plan. Please ensure reference is made on each assessment to other risk assessments in place and how they have informed the management of risk as a whole.

Risk Assessment and Plans

Every ISP fostering family will develop their own Household Safer Caring Plan at the start of their fostering career, with the support of a social worker. The plan will be reviewed and updated in response to significant events with the home, or at the time of the family's annual review. In addition to this document, every foster child has their own Individual Risk Assessment and Safer Care Plan. This includes consideration of safer caring strategies specific to that child's individual needs, and gives due consideration to the potential vulnerability of a foster parent when looking after, for example, a young person who presents with sexualised or over-familiar behaviour. This document is developed by the ISP team, including the foster parent, and the views of children and young people will be sought where appropriate. Safer care is specifically considered at the matching and placing stage.

The child's Individual Risk Assessment and Safer Care Plan is submitted for approval to the placing authority social worker, and strategies are agreed by all parties. In the event of disagreements about appropriate strategies and permissible activities, ISP will raise appropriate practice challenges to the local authority and escalate these when needed to ensure that approaches are consistent, in line with the child's Care Plan, and ensure the safety of all members of the fostering household.

The Individual Risk Assessment and Safer Care Plan, and the Household Safer Care Plan are dynamic documents that will be discussed with foster parents in supervision and regularly updated (at least every six months and in response to any significant events). The local authority is informed of all significant events and changes to safer care practice. Any significant changes to the Risk Assessment or Safer Care Plans will be discussed in a multi-agency meeting/discussion or a Care Plan Review for approval and agreement unless urgent and immediate action is required to safeguard the child or other persons, in which case this

will be discussed and agreed with the placing agency social worker at the first opportunity and followed up with a multi-agency meeting/discussion.

Children and young people are visited at home on a quarterly basis. In addition, the views and experiences of the child/young person are sought on an ongoing basis to ensure that plans are implemented in practice.

Foster parents are expected to take individual responsibility for safe care in the household, and all adult members of the household are personally accountable for their actions and decisions. Foster parents will support each other, share consistent boundaries and work together to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all members of the household. This is particularly important when caring for a child/young person who may have suffered sexual harm and presents with sexualised behaviour or over-familiar behaviour. In such circumstances, specific consideration will be given to how the safer care practices are agreed, implemented and overseen to ensure that the care of the child meets their needs and maintains a safe environment for the child and all family members.

For example, if a foster parent may be expected to ensure that they are not alone with the young person, consideration will need to be given to how this can be effectively implemented and monitored.

The foster parent's local team is available to provide support, advice and guidance and foster parents may also use the out-of-hours service for safer caring guidance and support if needed on evenings, weekends and public holidays.

Comprehensive safer caring guidance can be found in Chapter 11a of the Foster Parent Handbook.

Additional agency risk assessments

Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment and Intervention Plan

This assessment is completed in addition to the Individual Risk Assessment and Safer Care Plan where there is an indication or concern that the child or young person is at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). The CSE Risk Assessment provides a method of establishing the level of risk the young person is of being subject to exploitation and focuses on the known vulnerabilities and indicators of CSE. The assessment must be considered alongside the Individual Risk Assessment and they should inform each other.

Parent and Child Risk Assessment

Parent and Child placements carry additional risk in that there may be another adult moving into a fostering household. All information relating to the parent within a Parent and Child placement must be requested prior to the placement commencing or as soon as possible once the placement is made. It is essential to have a good understanding of the parent's history,

including any risks that partners or relatives may pose. While a DBS check is not required in respect of an adult parent joining the household, the agency will request from the placing authority that a Police National Computer (PNC) check is undertaken for the parent and any visiting partners to the foster home. All Parent and Child placements must have a risk assessment in place and the procedures with regard to the completion and review of these assessments are the same as for the Individual Risk Assessment and Safer Care Plan. There is clear guidance in the Parent and Child Placements Policy regarding the need for heightened child protection awareness, and serious case reviews have highlighted the importance of the Parent and Child Risk Assessment linking to the Household Safer Caring Plan.

The Parent and Child Risk Assessment may not cover all risk associated with the placement, and additional risk assessments may be required, e.g. Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment if the young parent is at risk of sexual exploitation.

Health & Safety Risk Assessments

All applicants to foster have a household health & safety check, and this is reviewed at their annual fostering review. The household Health & Safety Risk Assessment is completed by the assessing social worker and considers the safety of all parts of the home, garden and vehicles. There are supplementary risk assessments for specific aspects of health & safety, to be used if relevant:

- Boats and open water
- Caravans, mobile homes, tents and camping equipment
- Firearms and other weapons
- Quad bikes, trail bikes and other motorised bikes, jet skis
- Smallholdings and farms
- Dogs
- 3+ dogs

Bedroom Sharing Risk Assessment

This risk assessment is used in all situations when children are to share a bedroom. It should be used for continual sharing or when sharing is limited to a short period of time, such as on holiday. For young children, safer sleeping principles are included.

Holiday Information and Risk Assessment

This risk assessment is used for each holiday, whether in the UK or abroad. It includes sleeping arrangements, planned activities and insurance arrangements.

Risk Assessment for Activities

This risk assessment can be used for new activities planned for a young person and includes consideration of location, supervision and relative gains for the young person that may mitigate identified risk areas.

Contact Risk Assessment

This risk assessment is used for contact supervised by ISP and considers risk factors relating to the visiting family members which may necessitate additional supervisors or restricted movement within the community to ensure the safety of all parties.