

Guidance on Overnight Visitors to the Foster Home

Related policies and procedures:

- Fostering Annual Review Procedure
- Guidance on Assessing a New Partner of an Existing Single Foster Parent

To ensure the safety and protection of children in placement, foster parents are required to notify ISP of any intended change of household membership, including any new relationships that result in a regular visitor to the home or any new visitors who regularly stay overnight (or stay for an extended period of time).

Regular visitors to the home, new household members, and anyone staying for an extended period of time, will require a DBS check and a Local Authority check, and these will be arranged by ISP. There may also be a requirement to conduct a review of approval or a new fostering assessment if a partner joins a fostering household as a co-foster parent. Please refer to the related policies listed above.

In addition, there may be times when a friend or family member comes to stay for a short period of time, e.g. to celebrate a religious festival or family event, or whilst visiting from abroad. ***This policy and procedure relates to such non-regular overnight visitors.***

N.B. Please see the end of this document for guidance on the meaning of 'regular' and 'non-regular' in this guidance.

1. Notifying ISP

Foster parents must notify ISP of any adult visitor when the intention is for the visitor to stay in the foster home overnight. This is necessary for all planned overnight stays, even if for only one night. If the stay was unplanned, and/or in an emergency, the foster parent should notify ISP the following working day that there was a visiting adult in the home over night, and the circumstances of the arrangement.

ISP will request details of planned visitors, and ask the foster parent and visitor to read and sign their agreement to ensure that the visitor does not have unsupervised contact with any fostered children, and is aware of the need to keep any information that they become aware of regarding the children private and confidential.

2. Notifying the local authorities for children in placement

ISP will notify the local authorities for all children in placement that there is a planned overnight visitor. The local authority may wish to request a police check for the visitor, but ISP does not arrange a DBS check/LA check for overnight visitors unless the visits are considered to be on a regular basis.

In the event of an unplanned/emergency overnight visitor, ISP will notify the local authorities for all children in placement of the visitor and circumstances of the visit.

3. Expectations

- The foster parent is responsible for the safeguarding of all children in their care and ensuring that the Household Safer Care Plan is always adhered to.
- Visitors will not be left alone with any child who is looked after by the foster parent.
- Visitors will not be responsible for babysitting duties during their stay in the foster home.
- Visitors will not have childcare responsibility for the children.
- The foster family will share relevant parts of the Household Safer Caring Plan with the visitor so that they are aware of appropriate dress, use of bathrooms, not entering other people's bedrooms etc.
- Children will be reminded that they are not allowed to enter the visitor's bedroom.
- If there are any concerns, the foster parent will raise these to the attention of ISP without delay.
- The foster family and visitor will read and sign the Child Safeguarding Checks Form for Overnight Visitors. This will be shared with the local authorities for all children in placement, who may wish to conduct their own safeguarding checks. The form should be uploaded to the foster parent's Charms record under 'Overnight Stay'.

Note regarding the meaning of 'regular', 'non-regular' and 'extended period of time' in this guidance

'Regular' refers to actions that are recurring and predictable – they can be presumed to happen again soon. One-off overnight visitors do not require a DBS check. The decision about whether a visitor to the foster home should be considered 'regular', or a visit viewed to be 'extended' will involve careful consideration of the circumstances and be at the discretion of the Registered Manager. We would also consider the view of the child's local authority.

'Regular' overnight visitors might include:

- The partner (or a friend) of an adult birth child who stays overnight at least once a fortnight
- Extended family members/friends who visit the home every other month, and usually stay overnight when they visit

Non-regular visitors might include:

- Family members who visit from overseas once a year and stay for a week or two
- Friend of an adult birth child who stays overnight after an event, once or twice a year

An 'extended period of time' would ordinarily be considered to be in excess of two weeks.