



Quality. Integrity. Respect.

Safeguarding Policy

"Anglia Fostering Agency aims to provide quality care with integrity and respect."

AFA aims to provide a high **quality** service and will strive at all times to provide children and young people with stability in their lives and the opportunity to maximize their individual potential. In line with the National Minimum Standards AFA will put the child's welfare, safety and needs at the centre of all we do.

AFA will work with **integrity** at all times and we believe that all relationships should be underpinned by a commitment to this value. AFA aims to provide the highest possible standards of care for children and young people, ensuring that their faith, culture and individuality is recognised and promoted.

AFA will demonstrate **respect** for all, with a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice. We will always show respect for the children and young people placed with us, as well as for their families. We work in full partnership with our colleagues to ensure that children and young people have access to the services and support they need. We are committed to our foster carers and value what they do in providing a safe and nurturing home for children and young people who are unable, for whatever reason, to live with their own birth families.

Anglia Fostering Agency (AFA) aims are:

- A commitment to provide safe, caring and professional foster care for every child placed with them, recognising the particular vulnerability of children with disabilities;
- To celebrate the diversity of gender, ability, language, sexuality, ethnic origin, faith and culture. AFA believes that every adult and child should be respected and valued;
- To offer placement choice to ensure that children are matched to foster carers who can meet their needs;
- To work closely with colleagues and other professionals to ensure that every child placed is provided with a care experience that provides them the opportunity to succeed;
- To support carers to provide care which improves the life chances of children and young people and helps them to be healthy, stay safe and make a positive contribution to society.

AFA will achieve these aims:

- By children and young people being facilitated to communicate their wishes and feelings about decisions that affect them and, where these cannot be acted on, to give a clear and honest explanation;
- By involving children and young people in quality assurance and encouraging them to contribute to the development of the service;
- By supporting children and young people to develop their self-care and independence skills, commensurate with their age and understanding, to help them reach their full potential and play an active role in their community and society as a whole;
- By ensuring that all staff working with foster carers, and the children living with them, will be appropriately qualified and have access to supervision and training to ensure they prioritise safeguarding for every child in our care;
- By foster carers being supported to care for children to the best of their ability by providing a high standard of supervision and training;
- By ensuring that children, young people and foster carers who are dissatisfied with the service or support provided will be given advice and information on complaints' procedures, both AFA and independent.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 (DfE 2013) and The Children Act 1989 define the safeguarding and promoting of children and young people's welfare as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Anglia Fostering Agency (AFA) recognises that the welfare of children and young people is paramount, as stated in The Children Act 1989. Therefore, the purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect children and young people who receive a service from AFA;
- Protect the children and young people of foster carers who provide a service on behalf of AFA;
- Ensure staff and foster carers are familiar with the policies and procedures regarding safeguarding;
- Provide children and young people, foster carers, their families and support carers, and all staff employed by AFA, with training, information and guidance relating to safeguarding and child protection procedures.

Risk Assessment of Children and Young People

All children and young people referred to the agency should be referred with a risk assessment, to assist in clarifying the child's needs in this area and will always carefully consider such information to allow appropriate matching to take place. If this risk assessment is not received, the referral's coordinator will request from the Local Authority placement team that this information is provided at their earliest convenience.

Once a child is in placement with the agency, the agency's Placement Manager for that family will update the carer's safer caring policy to allow for any child's specific needs or risks that have been identified at the point of initial referral to be managed appropriately. This may involve consultation with the Social Worker and also consideration at the Placement Planning Meeting.

AFA recognises the importance of continuing to consider safeguarding issues for all children in our care and also for all families who foster. Therefore, risk assessment will be regularly reviewed and updated as a continuous process. As a minimum, the agency is committed to this being completed at each Looked After Review meeting. This will allow for contributions from other professionals, to ensure the updated risk assessment is completed with all information available. Any amendment to a risk assessment will be documented on the agency's risk assessment form and then be placed on the child's electronic record (CHARMS), with copies being sent to the Local Authority social worker and anyone else who it is agreed at the review should have access to the information. Any changes in the perceived risk will then be considered with the carer in terms of updating the safer caring policy. Safer caring and safeguarding is also discussed at each monthly supervision meeting with carers and so continues to be considered in the interim.

The Risk Assessment should also be reviewed and updated at points of change, when there is an incident or where new information has to come light which would affect potential risk factors. AFA is committed to reviewing the assessment at such times, which may include the following:

- Any incident or change where the child has placed self or others at significant risk
- Any incident or change where the child's change in health needs has increased existing risk.
- Where a risk incident means that a criminal offence has been committed.
- Where a risk incident has occurred and there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm, and/or a criminal offence may have been committed.
- Where a risk incidence involving a young person in foster care meets the criteria for a Schedule 7 notification,
- Where a risk incident occurs that constitutes a serious threat to the life of the child,

In all such situations, the Local Authority social worker must be informed in a timely manner that the risk has changed and a new assessment be completed. If the risk remains manageable in the family, also taking into account any support or training that can be offered to the carers to mitigate risk factors, the safer caring policy for the carers must be amended to reflect this. However, if the risk is so significant that the placement is no longer manageable, it is hoped that short term interim measures can be put into place to maintain the placement, to allow for a planned move to take place. In any such situations, careful liaison with the Local Authority social worker and placement teams will be essential.

Safer caring

Statutory framework

Regulation 12 (1) of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 requires fostering service providers to prepare and implement a written policy which is intended to safeguard children placed with foster carers from abuse or neglect.

Aims and objectives of Safer Caring Policies

Safer Caring Policies contribute towards:

- keeping children safe from abuse by adults in the household.
- keeping children safe from abuse by other children in the household.
- keeping children safe from abuse by access to inappropriate material, in print, television, video, games or online.
- minimising to an acceptable everyday level the risk of accident and injury within the household.
- keeping members of the foster family safe from false allegations of neglect and/or abuse.

Application of Safer Caring Policies

Safer Caring Policies must be provided and kept up-to-date for each Looked After Child cared for by AFA. A generic policy will be written with the carers during their assessment period. Individual policies for children placed should then be written during or immediately following the placement planning meeting, when the needs of the individual child have been considered and the risk assessment provided by the local authority has been reviewed

A copy of each carer's policy in respect of each Looked After child they care for will be maintained on both the child and the carers (electronic) file by their Placement Manager. Where the child is of sufficient age and understanding, the policy should be shared with the child, in an age appropriate way.

Review of Safer Caring Policies

Safer Caring Policies will need to be revised as the circumstances of the household and the child change. This should be completed alongside the updating of the risk assessment for the child or young person (see 'Risk Assessment of Children and Young People Policy')

This should be done immediately if there are significant changes, at the point of the child's Looked After Review, if changes have been identified or annually at the time of the foster carers' annual review to ensure they remain up to date and appropriate.

Thinking about the uniqueness of each family

The strategies that families have to make sure that everyone stays safe within the home vary from family to family, and are more or less formal depending on the circumstances and preferences of each family. In most families, these strategies are unwritten and frequently unspoken. Children learn how the family operates as part of their day-to-day development and generally accept this as the 'norm' as they have limited experience of anything else.

Foster carers need to be aware of the strategies in operation in their household for two reasons:

- Firstly, they need to consider the impact of the way the family functions on a child joining the household. Adjustments are likely to be needed and carers need to think about ways of minimising the disruption to family routines whilst being responsive to the needs of the child coming into the family - children will usually already have experience of family life and the strategies used in their own homes may be very different than those in operation in the foster home. Some will come from chaotic households where there are few boundaries, and adjusting to a more formal structure could be difficult. Others will come from a very rigid and structured background where they have had little control over their own lives, and adjusting to new-found freedoms may be problematic.
- Secondly, carers will need to identify behaviour or practices within their own household that might be acceptable to them, but will increase risk in a foster home - some perfectly acceptable routines in families could put both children and carers at risk in foster homes.

Developing Safer Caring Policies

Safer Caring Policies should not mean changing everything that carers do. They are about considering which elements of the way the household operates might put children or household members at risk. Once these elements are identified, carers need to develop strategies that minimise these risks.

It is neither desirable nor the aim of Safer Caring Policies for carers to produce a complicated, rigid set of rules for their household. They should be as concise as possible and only include those elements that will enhance safer caring.

Particular regard should be given to the guidance available for carers and Placement Managers (please see foster carer handbook and Placement Managers Process Guide for more details)

Recording

One of the most effective ways that carers can protect themselves from false allegations is to ensure that they record regularly and to an appropriate level of detail everything that occurs when they are caring for a Looked After child. AFA provides a system for carers to record a log on a daily basis, whether in the format of weekly or daily recording, onto the online database, and this would be a very important resource when determining whether an allegation has any substance. If a child's behaviour and demeanour is noted over time, then patterns can be ascertained and the circumstances around any allegation fully explored within the context of a comprehensive record of the care provided.

E-safety and Safe use of Images

AFA strongly believe that children and young people should have an awareness of the internet and technology, but at the same time, recognise the importance of safeguarding children from the potential dangers on the internet. This policy aims to identify how best carers can put in place safety mechanisms in the home.

Parental control software - Appropriate parental control software **MUST** to be installed on the internet service provider and/or on any computers children have access to along with up to date anti-virus software and recognised internet security software. There is further guidance in the Foster Carer's handbook

Monitoring a child's use of the internet - Discussion of how to manage internet use should be discussed at the placement planning meeting (see placement with foster carers policy).

AFA run regular training on Internet safety and computing, this training is facilitated by a CEOP ambassador and provides further information and practical guidance for all areas covered in the safeguarding guidance available for Foster Carers through their handbook.

AFA recognises how having access to electronic equipment in their own personal space can put children and young people at more risk. It is hoped that through implementing programmes that limit access, this will mean that restricting their use will not be necessary. Particular consideration should be made about the use of mobile phones. With mobile phones, contact with family members, where unsupervised or unlimited contact is not agreed, may mean that carers will need to safeguard young people by restricting their use. This issue will again need to be discussed at the placement planning meeting and reviewed throughout the placement. This is particularly important, given the likely changes in relationships and contact arrangements over time.

Use of Images - In all cases the carer should discuss the taking of photographs and videos with the child's Social Worker before doing so (or have it previously agreed under Delegated Authority measures). The permission of the child should also be sought if the child is of sufficient age and understanding. No child should be photographed or filmed in the bath, in their night-clothes or underwear, or undressed.

It should be clear in the Placement Plan who can sign to agree for the child's photo or video footage being taken in settings such as school. This will also be discussed as part of the Delegated Authority Decision making toolkit, as detailed in the Delegated Authority Policy.

Child protection/Safeguarding referrals

The welfare and safety of children is a shared responsibility and AFA believes it is unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse or neglect. AFA recognises its legal and ethical duty to safeguard the welfare of children, to protect them from harm and respond quickly where there are concerns that a child is or may be suffering significant harm. AFA works in partnership with Local Authority Children's Services, Police and other relevant agencies to ensure that child protection concerns are handled sensitively and professionally with the best interests of the child at the forefront of any decision making.

This policy is also relevant to the recruitment and employment of staff and foster carers, employee and carer conduct and disciplinary procedures, health and safety policies and confidentiality. Where there are concerns that a child in an AFA placement has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of actions, committed or omitted, by a foster carer or member of staff, the Managing Allegations against Staff and Foster Carers procedures must be followed.

This policy relates to concerns relating to Child Protection, regardless of the status of the alleged abuser, which may include the child's family or friends, carers, known or unknown adults, AFA or other agency employees or unrelated children and young people.

Aims regarding child protection

The aims of this part of the safeguarding policy and procedures are:

- To provide protection for all children placed with AFA.
- To provide foster carers and members of staff with guidance and timescales on the procedures they should follow if they have been told or suspect that a child may be experiencing, or be at risk of abuse or neglect.
- To ensure staff and foster carers respond expediently and appropriately when reporting child protection concerns.
- To ensure this policy is in line with all other AFA policies and compatibility with local and national Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures.
- To ensure that AFA policies and procedures relating to Child Protection and Safeguarding are shared with all other agencies.
- To support staff and foster carers in managing concerns relating to Safeguarding or Child Protection issues and provide clear guidance as to AFA expectations, which includes contact, at the earliest opportunity, with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- To provide training, which is regularly updated, and information to all staff and foster carers to ensure they are aware of current knowledge and research relating to Safeguarding and Child Protection.
- To alert staff and foster carers to the risks to children and young people from external sources, for example, tradesmen who visit the foster home or AFA offices, or the use of social media.

Reporting concerns or allegations

For concerns or allegations relating to AFA foster carers or staff see 'Managing Allegations against Staff and Foster Carers' and 'Whistleblowing' Policies

All concerns or allegations relating to a child placed with an AFA foster carer must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or, if outside of office hours, the On Call Manager at the earliest opportunity. This includes concerns or allegations about another child, a visitor to the foster home, the child's family, a teacher, social worker or any other person. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is the manager available at that time to support staff. This may be the staff member's line manager or another manager within the agency.

Where the concern or allegation relates to historical abuse a referral should still be made. It cannot be assumed that the allegation has been previously shared or addressed.

Recording

Recording relating to any concerns or allegations and actions that have been taken by the agency must be completed on the agency database Charms within a 12 hour period by the Placement Manager. If there is a reason that this will not be possible, the Placement Manager must report this to their manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead with clear reasoning. Recording should then be completed as soon as is practical.

Foster carers also need to complete any recordings relating to any concerns or allegations within the above time periods. If they are unable to do so, this should be highlighted to their Placement Manager as soon as possible.

Please refer to the Record Keeping and confidentiality policy and procedures for further information and guidance.

Immediate Risk

If a child is in need of urgent medical attention or protection the foster carer must act immediately, which may include calling the emergency services and informing them that a child has experienced, or is at risk of experiencing, significant harm.

The foster carer should contact their Placement Manager, or whoever is on duty, as soon as they become aware of the need to take emergency action. This should not take precedent over responding to the child's safety and welfare, but contact with the Placement Manager should be made as soon as practical. The Designated Safeguarding Lead, or in their absence another manager in the agency, must then be contacted by the Placement Manager to whom the foster carer has spoken.

Once the immediate risk to the child is addressed the following procedures must be followed:

Referring Concerns to Children's Social Care and others

When contacted by a Foster Carer or Placement Manager regarding a concern or allegation, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or on-call manager must make a decision as to whether a referral should be made to Children's Social Care. The referral must be made to the Local Authority where the child is placed, in line with Local Safeguarding Children Board's Inter Agency Child Protection Procedures.

Any verbal referral to Children's Social Care must subsequently be made in writing, and feedback given on any action taken within 48 hours of the Local Authority being contacted. If no feedback is received within this timescale, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should contact Children's Social Care in order to establish what action has or will be taken.

If there are concerns about the response to the referral made to Children's Social Care, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should contact the relevant manager of the Children's Social Care team who is dealing with the referral. Contact between everyone involved in making the referral, including those who initially expressed concern, for example the foster carer, must be comprehensively recorded.

The following should also be notified when a referral has been made:

- The child(ren)'s social worker, who has the responsibility to notify the child's parents and carry out any actions required to protect the child(ren) e.g. considering if it is

- necessary for the child to change placements;
- The Regulatory Authority, if a Section 47 Enquiry is initiated;
- AFA Decision Maker

Under no circumstances should information about the concerns or allegations be shared with anyone to whom the referral relates. As and when this is felt to be necessary it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to liaise with relevant agencies and make a decision as to what information will be shared.

Information about any action taken should be shared with the child's carers and other relevant members of staff within AFA on a need to know the basis. All those who are aware of the allegations or concerns should be reminded of the AFA policy relating to Confidentiality.

Where there are concerns about significant harm to a child and this leads to an Initial or Core Assessment by Children's Social Care, full information held by AFA about the child should be shared with Children's Social Care to enable a thorough assessment to be carried out.

Section 47 Enquiries

AFA will cooperate fully with Children's Social Care should a decision be made to undertake a Section 47 Enquiry (Children Act 1989). This will include attending Strategy Meetings as required and sharing information from case records to assist the local authority to compile a report.

AFA and the relevant Local Authority must discuss who will be responsible for updating the Regulatory Authority.

For further information see:

- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Children Act 1989: Guidance and Regulations Volume 4
- Children Act 2004
- National Minimum Standards 2011
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Working together to safeguard children (2015). A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- NSPCC Core-Info leaflets - Evidence Based Resource relating to abuse and neglect.
- www.thinkuknow.co.uk for information on internet safety

Connected Policies or guidance

Name of policy / Guidance	Relevant for
Record Keeping and Confidentiality Policy	All staff and Foster Carers
Safeguarding Policy	All staff and Foster Carers
Foster Carer Handbook	Foster Carers, Placement Managers
Placement Managers Guidance	Placement Managers, Senior Managers
Whistleblowing Policy	All staff and Foster Carers
Equal Opportunities Policy	All staff and Foster Carers
Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers	All staff and Foster Carers
Changes in Fostering Households and Policy on Changes in Relationships	Foster Carers, Placement Managers and Senior Managers

Expectations of Foster Carer's Behavior	All staff and Foster Carers
Participation Policy	Children and young people, Foster Carers and all staff
Behaviour Management Policy	All staff and Foster Carers
Safeguarding Children Against Bullying	All staff and Foster Carers
Safeguarding Children Against Radicalisation	All staff and Foster Carers
Safeguarding Children against Trafficking	All staff and Foster Carers
Safeguarding Children against Child Sexual Exploitation	All staff and Foster Carers
Safeguarding Children Against Female Genital Mutilation	All staff and Foster Carers
Safeguarding children against gang activity	All staff and Foster Carers
Children Missing from Care	All staff and Foster Carers
Managing Allegations Against Staff and Foster Carers	All staff and Foster Carers
Notification of Significant Events	Placement Managers and Senior Managers
Placement with Foster Carers Policy	Foster Carers, Placement Managers
Delegated Authority Policy	Foster Carers, Placement Manager

This policy was reviewed in February 2017, and will be reviewed again in February 2018 or amended as necessary in line with changes to current legislation and guidance.