



Smoking and E-cigarettes

Introduction

The Government smoking ban came into effect in England in July 2007 and made it illegal to smoke in a public place, although some places were excluded such as prisons, care homes and psychiatric units. Foster Carers provide care in their own home which is not regarded as a workplace, however, this ruling must be considered alongside every child's right to live in a smoke free environment. Coram/BAAF Practice Sheet 68 states:

'The effects of passive smoking are cumulative over time and low levels of exposure are still harmful...More than 80% of second-hand smoke is invisible and odourless.'

While many children and young people will experiment with smoking by the age of 16, this can be reduced or avoided if they:

- Have information on the dangers of smoking
- View 'not smoking' as the cultural norm
- Have positive role models who don't smoke
- Can access emotional and practical support when they want to stop smoking

Those living with care givers who smoke are more likely to take up smoking themselves and it is important that Foster Carers have access to information on the dangers of smoking and passive smoking, as well as the impact on the health of everyone living in the household.

Applicant's attitude to smoking will be discussed during the recruitment and assessment process. However, the Agency's policy is that no child under the age of 5 years will be placed in a foster home where a member of the household smokes. Neither will a child of any age, who has a history or identified risk of middle ear or respiratory infections, asthma or bronchitis be placed with carers who smoke. Our policy is consistent with advice from CoramBAAF and evidenced by current research.

Smoking in Fostering Households

If a placement in a smoking household is seen as being in the child's interests, for example, if a child is returning to a known Foster Carer or being placed with a relative, the following process will be followed:

- There should be a written agreement signed by all those involved in the decision and this should be recorded on the carer and child's electronic file.
- The agreement must include the arrangements about where smoking will take place, for example, outside and away from the home.
- Members of the household who smoke will be required to give an undertaking not to smoke in any room where the child is cared for.
- Members of the household, visitors or support carers who smoke, must comply with the above and any other relevant legislation (e.g. ban on smoking in cars if accompanied by 'anyone under the age of 18').

- No child under the age of 5 will be placed with carers who are ex-smokers unless they have stopped smoking for at least 12 months.

AFA's no smoking policy will be discussed in supervision with those carers who smoke. Should a carer wish to stop smoking, they will be offered practical and emotional support, which will include information on the resources available from statutory agencies.

Children who Smoke

It is illegal for retailers to sell tobacco to anyone under the age of 18, and no adult should buy or give children or young people cigarettes. While some may start smoking or be smokers at the point of becoming looked after, they should be actively discouraged from smoking and given information on the impact on their health in the short and longer term. Advice on stopping smoking is available from a number of sources, such as the Designated Nurse for Looked after Children.

If a child already smokes, carers should identify a secure place to store tobacco, e-cigarettes, matches or lighters. Children should be encouraged to reach an arrangement about where they smoke and how often, particularly if there are other young people in the placement. The agreement should be recorded in the Placement Plan and regularly reviewed.

E-cigarettes

In 2018 ASH (Action on Smoking and Health) launched their annual online youth survey (11-18 years) which covered both tobacco and electronic cigarettes:

- E-cigarettes/vaping is less harmful, although 28% of young people believe they have 'the same level of harm' as tobacco cigarettes, E-cigarettes do not contain the same toxins.
- E-cigarette use is low among young people, just 2% use them once a month or less.
- An increasing number of young people are trying E-cigarettes but not tobacco cigarettes.
- There are more ex-smokers than smokers and the number of those who have never smoked has risen from 37% in 1974 to 59% in 2014. This is felt to be directly linked to educational campaigns and changes to legislation.
- Little is known about the safety or otherwise of using e-cigarettes, but research is currently being carried out on the 'flavours' that can be added to e-cigarettes given concerns that flavoured chemicals certified as safe for ingesting may not be safe for use in e-cigarettes.
- See 'E-cigarettes, a safer alternative for teenagers?' British Medical Journal, Volume 6, Issue 11 (<https://bmjopen.bmj.com>).

Relevant legislation:

- Standard 6 - Promoting Good Health and Wellbeing
National Minimum Standards for Foster Care 2011
- Reg. 15 – Health of children placed with foster parents
Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

For further information see:

<https://ash.org.uk/home/>
<https://www.nhs.uk/search/results?q=smoking&page=1>
<https://www.gov.uk/search/all?keywords=smoking&order=relevance>
<https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/causes-of-cancer/smoking-and-cancer>
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph14/chapter/2-Public-health-need-and-practice>

CoramBAAF Practice Note 68 - 'Reducing the risks of environmental tobacco smoke for looked after children and their carers' (Copies of this practice note are kept in the Norfolk office). Ask your Placement Manager for a copy if you would like further information.

Information for young people

<https://ash.org.uk/information-and-resources/fact-sheets/young-people-and-smoking/>
https://www.who.int/tobacco/control/populations/youth_health_effects/en/
<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/smoking.html>
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/quitting-smoking-under-18s-guide/>

Connected Policies or Guidance:

Name of Policy / Guidance	Relevant for
Expectations of Foster Carers'	Foster Carers and Staff
Foster Carer's Handbook	Foster Carers and Placement Managers
Staff Handbook	All Staff

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