



Expectations of Foster Carers Behaviour

AFA recognises the rights of carers to express their individuality and have a private life. However, becoming an approved Foster Carer brings with it a responsibility to protect the children they look after from harm, and to be a role model for those children who may have experienced very chaotic or neglectful parenting. Therefore, Foster Carers are expected to act appropriately at all times. This includes:

Demonstrations of affection – It is important that children in foster care have the opportunity to witness affection and warmth between adults, as well as between adults and themselves, but this must take into account a child's previous experience of relationships and the risk of any behaviour being negatively interpreted.

Physical intimacy – Children may have been present or aware of domestic violence, which may have included sexual assault. Carers must ensure that physical intimacy cannot be witnessed by a child. Carers who share their bedroom with a child under the age of 2 should give consideration as to where a cot is positioned and if a screen or room divider is necessary. Carers also have a responsibility to ensure that any items used in their private lives, for example, adult DVDs, role playing clothes etc., are kept in a locked cupboard.

Use of alcohol – Excessive alcohol can lead to significant changes in people's behaviour, and children may have witnessed adults behaving in a violent or inappropriate way after they have been drinking. Carers must be mindful, not only of the amount they drink but also the likely consequences, which may include a reduced level of supervision and the risk of accidents. Carers also need to be aware that some children can become anxious or distressed when they see adults drinking.

Use of drugs – AFA strongly objects to carers using non-prescription drugs or supplements (including CPD oil) or misusing any prescribed or over the counter medication. Carers who confide to AFA that they are using drugs must be aware that a standard of care and/or a strategy meeting may be convened and the Local Authority for any child in their care will be contacted.

Smoking – BAAF guidelines recommend that children under the age of 5 should not be placed in a household where anyone smokes, including E-cigarettes. AFA supports this recommendation and advises carers that, if they do smoke, they must not do so inside the house. Since legislation was introduced in February 2015 it has become an offence to smoke in a private vehicle if a child is present. Carers who are looking after young people who smoke should actively support them to give up.

Involvement of children in inappropriate activities – Children must not be involved in or party to, any activity which is detrimental to their emotional or physical wellbeing or safety. Any activities involving a level of risk, regardless of whether the child wishes to take part or observe, must be assessed as being appropriate for their age and level of understanding. For example, a child or young person should not be involved in any activity where guns or ammunition are used, other than in an authorised setting such as Army Cadets.

Following Guidelines provided by the Government or other statutory bodies – If a situation arises where the public are given guidance on how to behave, for example during the Covid 19 outbreak, carers are expected to follow directions and support anyone living in their household, including children they care for. Modelling appropriate and ethical behaviour, whether or not it is determined by legislation, is a basic expectation of Foster Carers and those who work for and with AFA.

Criminal activity – If information relating to a carer's involvement in criminal activity comes to the attention of AFA, a standard of care and/or strategy meeting will be convened and the local authority responsible for any child will be notified. If a carer or a member of their household, is convicted of a criminal offence which is considered to compromise the safety or welfare of any child in foster care, a review to consider their suitability as approved Foster Carers will be held and consideration given to moving any child in their care to another carer.

AFA cannot condone any activity or behavior which may pose a risk to any child or young person, including the carer's own children. Unacceptable behaviour includes the use of social media to harass, bully or intimidate, to access inappropriate material or any sites that promote criminal behaviour, violence, prejudice or discrimination. The Agency's response to such behaviour is on a case-by-case basis but may result in termination of approval.

Foster Carers should contact Senior Managers, or external regulatory bodies such as Ofsted, to refer any serious concerns regarding the care and welfare of any child they look after or the behaviour or activities of Foster Carers or members of staff.

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Connected Policies or Guidance

| Name of policy / Guidance | Relevant for |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Record Keeping and Confidentiality policy | All staff and Foster Carers |
| Smoking and E-cigarettes policy | Foster Carers, Placement Managers |
| Safeguarding Policy | All staff and Foster Carers |
| Alcohol, Drugs and Solvents policy | Foster Carers, Placement Managers |
| Foster Carer Handbook | Foster Carers, Placement Managers |

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