



Smoking and E-cigarettes

Introduction

When the Government smoking ban came into effect in England in July 2007, it became illegal to smoke in a public place, although some places were excluded such as prisons, care homes and psychiatric units. Foster Parents 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 Parents 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.

In a publication from 2022, in association with ASH (Action on Smoking and Health), The Fostering Network recommend that all fostering services should move towards a situation whereby children and young people are only cared for in smokefree homes.

An 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 moved to 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 moved to live with Foster Parents who smoke. Our policy is consistent with advice from CoramBAAF and evidenced by current research.

Smoking in Fostering Households

If a home in a smoking household is seen as being in the child's interests, for example, if a child is returning to a known Foster Parent or being moved to live 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 Foster Parent and child's electronic file.
- The agreement must include the arrangements for 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 live with Foster Parents who are ex-smokers unless they have stopped smoking for at least 12 months.

This policy will be discussed in supervision with those Foster Parents who smoke. Should a Foster Parent 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 children who are looked after.

If a child already smokes, Foster Parents 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 home. The agreement should be recorded in the Care Arrangement Plan and regularly reviewed.

E-cigarettes

The use of e-cigarettes is considered slightly differently. We acknowledge the reduced risk of vaping compared to smoking and the fact that this can support adults who choose to use an e-cigarette to quit or abstain from smoking cigarettes. Research into this area is ongoing, but it seems that e-cigarettes release negligible amounts of nicotine into the atmosphere and the limited evidence available suggests that any risk from passive vaping to bystanders is small, relative to tobacco cigarettes. However, health professionals have recommended avoiding vaping around pregnant women, babies and children and as a result, AFA is clear of the expectation that all household members should not vape in their homes, cars, holiday homes or in front of children or young people. In addition, as The Fostering Network guidance from 2022 states:

“Where carers or other family members are using e-cigarettes to abstain from smoking, they should be advised to avoid vaping in front of children (of all ages) to avoid role modelling vaping behaviour.”

E-cigarettes and Young People

In July 2022 ASH (Action on Smoking and Health) launched their annual survey, looking at the evolving youth use of e-cigarettes in Britain. This involved a survey of 11-18 year olds, in the context of changes in tobacco use and the regulation of e-cigarettes.

- In 2022, 15.8% of 11-17 year olds had tried vaping, compared to 11.2% in 2021 and 13.9% in 2020.
- In 2022, 7.0% of 11-17 year olds were current users, compared to 3.3% in 2021 and 4.1% in 2020.
- Children under 16 are least likely to try e-cigarettes. 10.4% of 11-15 year olds have tried vaping, compared to 29.1% of 16-17 year olds.
- Among 18 year olds 40.8% report having tried an e-cigarette.
- Use among 11-17 year olds who have never smoked remains low and largely experimental, while 7.5% of never smokers have tried an e-cigarette in 2022 only 1.7% report at least monthly use.

- Reasons for using e-cigarettes differ between children who smoke and those who haven't. While children who haven't smoked are significantly more likely to report their main reason for using one was 'just to give it a try' (65.4%) among those who smoke they are significantly more likely to report that they 'enjoy the experience' (17.5%) are 'trying to quit smoking' (10.7%) or are 'addicted to them' (10.3%).
- The misperception that e-cigarettes are more than or equally harmful as tobacco cigarettes rose from 2013 onwards and in 2022 was 40.9%, the same as in 2020. Only 42.1% of 11-17 year olds in 2022 believed that e-cigarettes were less harmful than cigarettes.

In February 2023, ASH released a policy briefing setting recommendations for Government in the light of growing evidence of increases in underage vaping.

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://ash.org.uk/uploads/SecondhandSmoke.pdf?v=1650647816>
- <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>
- https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Foster%20care%20adoption%20smoking%20and%20vaping_Jun%202022.pdf
- <https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Use-of-e-cigarettes-vapes-among-adults-in-Great-Britain-2022.pdf?v=1661865959>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/e-cigarettes.html>

CoramBAAF Practice Note 68 - 'Reducing the risks of environmental tobacco smoke for looked after children and their Foster Parents' (Copies of this practice note are kept in the Norfolk office). Ask your Fostering Social Worker 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://ash.org.uk/resources/view/use-of-e-cigarettes-among-young-people-in-great-britain>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/smoking.html>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/e-cigarettes.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 Parents' | Foster Parents and Staff |
| Foster Parent's Handbook | Foster Parents and Fostering Social Workers |
| Staff Handbook | All Staff |

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