



Expectations of Foster Parents' Behaviour

AFA recognises the rights of Foster Parents to express their individuality and have a private life. However, becoming an approved Foster Parent brings with it a responsibility to protect those they look after, being a role model for those who may have experienced chaotic and neglectful parenting. Therefore, Foster Parents are expected to act appropriately at all times and this includes:

Demonstrations of affection – It is important that those 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 their previous experience of relationships and the risk of any behaviour being negatively interpreted.

Physical intimacy – Children and young people may have been present or aware of domestic violence, potentially including sexual assault. Foster Parents must therefore ensure that physical intimacy is not witnessed by a child or young person. Foster Parents 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. They 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.

Changes to and new relationships – In order to safeguard the welfare of children and young people, AFA has a robust policy surrounding new relationships that a Foster Parent may enter into. There is a minimum requirement for a DBS check to be completed for any new partner before they meet a child or young person looked after, and a process of initial checks and assessment for relationships which progress. Foster Parents should refer to the "Changes in Fostering Households and Foster Parent Relationships" Policy for full details.

Use of alcohol – Excessive alcohol can lead to significant changes in behaviour and Foster Parents must be mindful as to the past experiences of those children and young people they care for, many of whom may have witnessed adults behaving in a violent or inappropriate way after consuming alcohol. It needs to be borne in mind therefore that they may become anxious or distressed when they see adults drinking. Foster Parents need to consider not only the amount they drink but also the likely consequences of such, including reduced availability of supervision and the risk of accidents. Where Foster Parents may be consuming alcohol, it is their responsibility to ensure that the other Foster Parent or another designated adult within the group does not partake so as to ensure that situations such as emergencies can be responded to.

Use of drugs – AFA strongly objects to Foster Parents using drugs or supplements which do not have Governmental approval or of misusing medications which they are prescribed or which they gain over the counter. We will always encourage all Foster Parents to follow medical advice and support given. Those who confide to AFA that they are using drugs must be aware that a

Standards of Care and/or a Strategy Meeting may be convened and the Local Authority for any child or young person in their care will be contacted.

Smoking – AFA supports BAAF guidance which recommends that children under the age of 5 should not be placed in a household where anyone smokes, including E-cigarettes. If Foster Parents do smoke, they must not do so inside the house. Legislation introduced in February 2015 made it an offence to smoke in a private vehicle if a child is present. Foster Parents who are looking after young people who smoke should actively support them to give up.

Driving – All Foster Parents are expected to follow legal requirements when driving, including:

- Driving a safe, road worthy, insured and taxed vehicle.
- Not drinking alcohol or using non-prescribed drugs when driving and adhering to medical guidance regarding driving while taking specific prescription medication.
- Not using mobile phones while driving.
- Wearing appropriate footwear whilst driving.
- Ensuring all children are safely secured in appropriate car seats or with full seat belts.
- Avoiding as far as possible distractions which may cause them to not drive with due care and attention.

Involvement of children in inappropriate activities – Children and young people must not be involved in or party to, any activity which is detrimental to their emotional or physical wellbeing or safety and which may be considered in any way as criminal behaviour. Any activities involving a level of risk, regardless of whether they wish to take part or observe, must be assessed as being appropriate for their age and level of understanding. For example, they should not be involved in any activity where guns or ammunition are used, other than in a regulated and 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 a pandemic, Foster Parents are expected to follow directions and support anyone living in their household, including those they care for to do the same. Modelling appropriate and ethical behaviour, whether or not it is determined by legislation, is a basic expectation of Foster Parents and those who work for and with AFA.

Criminal activity – If information relating to a Foster Parents' involvement in criminal activity comes to the attention of AFA, a Standards of Care and/or Strategy Meeting will be convened and the Local Authority responsible for any child or young person will be notified. If a Foster Parent or a member of their household, is convicted of a criminal offence which is considered to compromise the safety or welfare of those in their care, a review to consider their suitability to foster will be held and consideration given to moving those in their care to that of another Foster Parent.

AFA cannot condone any activity or behavior which may pose a risk to any child or young person, including the Foster Parents' 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 Parents 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 Parents or members of staff.

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Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Connected Policies or Guidance

Name of policy / Guidance	Relevant for
Record Keeping and Confidentiality Policy	All staff and Foster Parents
Smoking and E-cigarettes Policy	Foster Parents, Fostering Social Workers
Safeguarding Policy	All staff and Foster Parents
Alcohol, Drugs and Solvents Policy	Foster Parents, Fostering Social Workers
Foster Parents Handbook	Foster Parents, Fostering Social Workers
Changes in Fostering Households and Foster Parent Relationships	Foster Parents, Fostering Social Workers

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