

MEDWAY COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE PLACEMENT SMOKING POLICY

Statutory framework

Local authorities have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all looked after children. Children Act 1989 Section 22 (3)

'A responsible authority shall not place a child with a foster parent unless it is satisfied that :-

a placement with a particular foster parent is the most suitable placement having regard to all the circumstances.' Fostering Services Regulation 2002 33(b)

Fostering Service Policy

The review of the Placement Smoking Policy by the Medway Fostering Service is in response to updated guidance about the harmful affects of tobacco smoke on children and young people. It recognises that there is an increasing amount of scientific information available and governments, both nationally and internationally, are beginning to use legislation to ensure protection is put into place for members of the public. Children and young people are particularly vulnerable.

In order to reduce the harmful effects of tobacco smoke on children and young people, the Medway Council Fostering Team have introduced the following steps.

Children 0 to 5 years:

As from the 1st August, 2007, the Medway Fostering Team will not place any child aged 5 years or under, in a smoking household. (current placements will not be disrupted).

In those foster homes where the a foster carer (or a member of their household) smokes and the carers current approval age range includes under 5 year olds, the approval will be adjusted to reflect the new policy guidelines.

This action is taken because of the particularly high health risks for very young children and toddlers who spend most of their day physically close to their carers.

Where children are already in placement in a household where there is a smoker or smokers, the carers supervising social worker will discuss with the carers the arrangements that are in place to minimise the harmful effects of tobacco on the children in placement and amend their Safe Care Policy accordingly.

Children with a disability:

Whenever possible,

- children with a disability, which means they are often physically unable to play outside.
- children with respiratory problems such as asthma.
- children with heart disease or glue ear.

will not be placed with smoking foster families.

Long term placements:

In long-term fostering, kinship and adoptive placements, the additional health risks to the child of being placed in a smoking household will be carefully balanced against the available benefits of the placement for the child. This is because the significant risks of exposure to passive smoking increase with time.

General:

Whenever possible children from non-smoking birth families will not be placed with substitute carers who smoke.

The placement of older children and young people who are able to express a view about living in a smoking household.

or

If a parent(s) make a request not to have their child(ren) placed in a smoking household

the Medway Fostering Team, will seek to match the child or young person with a non-smoking foster family.

All carers should be aware of the risks of buying cigarettes for adolescents and cigarettes should never be used as a reward for good behaviour in adolescents.

Where a foster home remains a smoking household or smokers visit a foster home the Medway Fostering Team would expect carers to adhere to the following advice:-

- Carers should not smoke around children or permit others to do so.
- Carers should keep their home smoke free.
- Carers should only smoke outside their house.

- If carers must smoke inside, they should limit smoking to a room where windows can be opened for cross ventilation. The indoor area in which smoking takes place must have a working smoke detector.
- Carers should never smoke when they are washing, dressing or playing with a child.
- Carers should never smoke in a car with windows closed and never smoke in the car when children are present.

All applicants, each carer together with any person who lives or frequently reside or visit the family home will be subject to enquiries about any smoking habit. Foster carers where there is a smoker(s) in the household will be required to determine a home smoking policy that will be monitored regularly by their supervising social worker and formally addressed at their Foster Carer Annual Review.

It is Medway Council's preferred option that all carers to give up smoking both in terms of their own health and that of the children they are looking after. In this connection, addresses and contact phone numbers will be made available for people wishing to quit smoking.

The Fostering Team will raise awareness with all foster carers that smoking brings with it an increased risk of fires and burns and that fires and burns are the leading cause of death of children in the home in the UK.

All Medway Foster and Respite Carers will be provided with a copy of :
'Reducing the Risks of Environmental Tobacco Smoke for Looked After Children'
(BAAF practice note 51)