**Safer Caring Agreement Guidance**

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# Section 1 - Introduction

**What is Safer Caring?**

Safer caring is about protecting foster children and their foster families in all aspects of day-to-day life. Safer caring aims to ensure that each foster child is cared for in a way that makes them feel secure and safe whilst encouraging and allowing them to take appropriate risks as a normal part of growing up. It includes practical safeguards for everyone within each foster family and highlights the key areas where foster carers are expected to help the children within their care understand how to keep themselves safe, including when they are outside of the home or when they are using the internet or social media.

As an applicant to become a foster carer with Family Fostering you will have completed a “Skills to Foster” course which will have given you detailed information about Safer Caring, and, an opportunity to ask questions and discuss how Safer Caring is relevant to you. It is important you keep this information to refer to in the future.

Once you have been approved as a foster carer you will be provided with a copy of Family Fostering’s Fostering Handbook and our Policies and Procedures which will provide you with further information and guidance. The main policies you will need to refer to regarding Safer Caring are “Managing Behaviour”, “Safeguarding”, “Anti-Bullying” and “Smoking”. You will also be provided with a copy of the Fostering Network’s book “Safer Caring: A New Approach” written by Jacky Slade which will provide you with additional guidance. We will provide you with on-going training regarding Safer Caring which will also be available to all your household members and support network.

**What is a Safer Caring Agreement?**

A Safer Caring Agreement is a document specifically tailored to the child/ren in your care and your household. It provides clear strategies to minimise risk and make daily life as safe as possible by detailing the expectations, rules, routines and practices in your home and the safeguards surrounding these.

It also considers issues of diversity to make sure the child/ren in your care has their racial, religious, and cultural needs met as fully as possible. Alongside this, it details the individual issues and risks identified when a child is placed with you and identifies ways of positively promoting diversity and managing issues and risks. The Safer Caring Agreement is an important working tool in positively managing behaviour and focuses on prevention.

**When will a Safer Caring Agreement be completed?**

A Safer Caring Agreement will be completed with you as part of the Form F process once you have completed the “Skills to Foster” training.

**When will a Safer Caring Agreement be reviewed and updated?**

Your Safer Caring Agreement will be updated at various stages;

* Once you have been matched with a child/ren. This update will incorporate the child/ren’s details, the impact of them being placed in your household, any particular vulnerabilities or risks their placement may generate and the agreed safeguards for these.
* Every time there is a significant change in your household composition including foster children being placed or leaving your care, birth children leaving or returning home and other changing to household members.
* Whenever new issues arise such as a child in your care making a disclosure or when a child in your care progresses to the next stage of independence.
* At the statutory meetings of the child in your care if further risks are identified or there have been any significant changes. These meetings include CIC reviews, PEP meetings, Disruption Meetings, and Risk Management Meetings.
* Annually as part of your Annual Review of Approval.

Your Safer Caring Agreement will also be reviewed regularly during Supervision with your Supervising Social Worker to ensure it continually reflects your circumstances, safeguards everyone within your household and meets your needs.

**Who completes a Safer Caring Agreement?**

Your Safer Caring Agreement will be written by your Form F Assessor in partnership with you. To ensure this is comprehensive they will have an in-depth discussion with you to clarify ways you will create and maintain a safe environment for everyone within your household. This will include discussions with all other members of your household including any children in placement, any child coming into placement (if possible) and where applicable the child’s social worker.

Your Safer Caring Agreement will be updated by your Supervising Social Worker, again in partnership with you. Updates will also involve discussions with those listed above.

On completion your Safer Caring Agreement will be signed by you and your Form F Assessor/Supervising Social Worker. It will be sent to the child/ren in placement social worker/s.

**Child Friendly**

Your Safer Caring Agreement should be shared with each child in your care, ideally before they are placed with you (if this is not possible within the first few days of their placement with you). It is important that they are aware of the expectations upon them, the house rules and the routines you have in your household. This is key to helping them feel safe and settled. How you share this with them depends on the individual child and should take into account their individual age and level of understanding. Family Fostering have a Simplified House Rules template which can be used if this is more appropriate. It is important that children in placement are aware that this agreement is place for everyone within the household to ensure that everyone, including them, is kept safe and has a positive experience of family life.

**Which areas are covered in a Safer Caring Agreement?**

# Section 2 - Details of the home, household and family dynamics

This section provides a general profile of you, your household, your accommodation, your day to day family life. It details your family dynamics. Once you have a foster child/ren living with you it will also include them, giving details of any risks/safeguarding issues which are present along with the strategies in place to address these.

# Section 3 - House Rules

House rules are the main rules and expectations in your household. They should promote principles of respect both for self and others. They should include, as a foundation, the following:

* Keep your own bedroom clean and tidy
* Respect other people’s property and personal space
* Respect other people’s privacy and confidentiality
* Consider other people’s feelings before and after acting
* Do not enter other people’s bedrooms without prior permission
* Keep the bathroom/toilet door closed when you are using it
* Do not enter the bathroom/toilet when someone else is using it
* Do not smoke anywhere in the house
* Be dressed appropriately at all times
* Return home at agreed upon time
* Always be where you say you will be
* Ask permission if you want to change your plans or home time
* Don’t bring any alcohol, cigarettes or any other dangerous items in to the household
* Don’t hurt any other household members or visitors
* Don’t hurt any animals I come into contact with
* How positive behaviour will be recognised and rewarded (see Managing Behaviour Section)
* What sanctions will be in place (see Managing Behaviour Section)

# Section 4 - Positively Managing Behaviour

This is how we will support everyone within the house to behave appropriately and what strategies will be used when negative behaviour arises:

This should include specific details including which reward systems you will use and which sanctions you will use. For full guidance regarding this please refer to the Managing Behaviour Policy. When you are considering sanctions please note the following:

**The following consequences may be imposed upon children/young people:**

* Confiscation or withdrawal of a telephone or mobile phone in order to protect a child/young person or another person from harm, injury or to protect property from being damaged.
* Restriction on sending or receiving letters or other correspondence (including the use of electronic or internet correspondence) in order to protect a child/young person or another person from harm, injury or to protect property from being damaged.
* Reparation, involving the child/young person doing something to put right the wrong they have done; e.g. repairing damage or returning stolen property.
* Restitution, involving the child/young person paying for all or part of damage caused or the replacement of misappropriated monies or goods. This must be with the agreement of the child's social worker.
* Curtailment of leisure activities, involving a child/young person being prevented from participating in such activities.
* Early bedtime, by up to half an hour or as agreed with the child/young person's social worker.
* Removal of equipment, for example the use of a TV or DVD player.
* Loss of privileges, for example the withdrawal of the privilege of staying up late.
* Suspension of pocket money for short periods.

# Section 5 - Affection, love and touch

It is so important for foster children to experience positive affection, love and touch but it is an area which raises many issues. This section looks at the ways you and your household demonstrate affection and love to each other and foster children in your care, whilst protecting everyone and reducing the risk of allegations.

**How we refer to each other (including names, nicknames and terms of endearment):**

It is important to check with each child how they like their name to be said, if they prefer a nickname, and, what terms of endearment they are happy with. This is an important way of conveying to them they are valued.

It is equally important to think about how each child refers to you. This will depend on issues such as whether their placement with you is an emergency, short term or long term placement, and, their relationship with their birth family. Some children will instinctively want to call you “mum” or “dad” however this is extremely emotive and can create numerous issues. Ideally foster children should be encouraged to call you by your first name or by less emotive terms such as “aunt”, “uncle” or “nan”. Please discuss this with your Form F Assessor or Supervising Social Worker for further guidance.

**The language we use:**

Although some expressions and phrases are common, it is worth remembering that a child coming into your care may have used different expressions and phrases and may have a different understanding to you for words you both use. Coming to live with a new family inevitably creates anxiety and one of the key ways to minimise this is spending time with the child establishing which words they use and agreeing which words you will all use in your home. In particular, words to describe parts of the body and bodily functions such as going to the toilet. This will enable the child to express their needs and reduce their embarrassment. Being able to speak openly will also enable you to begin informal conversations with your foster child/ren about sexual health matters, which is another key area.

**How we will show warmth and affection:**

We all have different ways of showing warmth and affection. Some of us are tactile, others prefer personal space. Physical affection means different things to each of us and for many children in care physical touch and/or affection may not have been a positive experience. It may have been abusive and may trigger traumatic memories for them, or it may be totally unfamiliar and frightening to them. Their previous experiences may cause them to misinterpret your actions and may trigger inappropriate responses. Some foster children, due to their previous experiences, may be overly affectionate, sexually provocative and indiscriminate in their affections to you, your household, family and friends. Foster children may not understand that when you try to show them physical affection this is not intended as a prelude to sexual activity.

For these reasons it is important to find out as much information as possible about a child’s history, their behaviour and their wishes and feelings before they come into your home. This will enable you to find ways of demonstrating warmth and affection whilst protecting and minimising risks and distress. It is also important to recognise that household members and friends and family may feel uncomfortable or threatened by some inappropriate behaviour displayed by foster children. Foster children may then pick up on this and this may heighten their anxiety and cause their behaviour to escalate. Everyone needs to feel confident in how these behaviours are safely managed and you should speak to your Supervising Social Worker if this is not the case. They will provide you with additional support, guidance and strategies.

Here are the key points to consider when deciding how to show warmth and affection:

* Each child’s wishes, feelings, background, age, level of emotional maturity, additional needs and any identified risks. This will provide you with insight into how to convey warmth and affection to them.
* How you show affection to your partner in front of your foster child. Be mindful that children in care may have been sexually abused or witnessed inappropriate behaviour from adults. In view of this you should exercise due discretion.
* How you will show affection to your birth children in front of your foster child.
* What rules around physical touch/contact will be in place for you, your partner and your birth children’s interactions with your foster child. A safe rule to follow is that no one touches another person’s body without that person’s permission. Foster children need to be taught by a caring adult to say ‘no’ if they do not want to be touched and this to be respected. For example, if a foster child was upset, checking if they would like a hug. If they would not, use other strategies for providing comfort i.e. give them their own soft blanket. If they would, giving them a sideways hug, hip to hip with your arm around their shoulder ideally where other people are within sight or with the door open.
* If you have more than one child in placement what rules around physical touch/contact you will put in place for them.
* What rules around physical touch/contact will be in place for your extended family and friends’ interactions with your foster child.
* How you will be vigilant for cues/behaviour from each foster child and tailor your approach accordingly.
* What additional safeguards you will put in place for a foster child who displays sexualised behaviour, acts provocatively and/or is overtly interested in physical contact. Additional safeguards will include stringent rules regarding which members of the household are not to be alone with the child, the level of supervision the child will have at all times and the areas where the foster child is not allowed. Foster children within this category should be told directly (in a sensitive manner at an appropriate time) that no-one in your family will want to touch them in ways that are inappropriate or will touch them without permission. If a foster child rubs their body against an adult or another child they should be told plainly, in a way appropriate to their age and level of understanding, that this is not allowed and the adult/child must alter their position so this does not continue. All such incidents should be recorded in your daily log so appropriate action can be taken. If a foster child displays other sexualised behaviour the same procedure should be followed.
* What additional safeguards you will put in place for a foster child who is indiscriminate in their affection.
* What additional safeguards will you have for managing sexually overt behaviour outside of the home.
* How you will role model appropriate ways of showing warmth and affection.

# Section 6 - Privacy and personal care

Privacy and personal care covers important day to day issues to ensure each person’s privacy will be respected and how personal care needs will be met.

**Details of CCTV inside and outside of our home**

Whilst having CCTV inside and/or outside of the home may be considered a way of protecting and safeguarding it can also be considered an invasion of privacy. Therefore whilst CCTV can be used outside of the home it is not permissible for CCTV to be used within the home.

**Our dress code in the house, to include rules for night time clothing:**

It is important to think about how everyone within your household dresses around the home. Your rules should include the following;

* No one walks around in only their underwear or inappropriate nightwear.
* Dressing gowns should always be worn over nightwear that is revealing.
* Everyone is appropriately dressed at all times. Where a child in your care has a history of sexual abuse or sexualised behaviour, you need to ensure no one within your household wears clothing which is revealing or provocative.

**Our rules for the bathroom:**

Your rules should encourage children to have privacy in the bathroom according to their age, understanding and stage of development. However, safeguards need to be in place for this. For example, you may be able to allow a child to shower/bath themselves but you should ensure, whilst they are unsupervised in the bathroom, they do not have access to products they could misuse. One way of achieving this is to provide each household member with their own basket of toiletries which they take into the bathroom when they are using the shower/bath.

Where foster children have additional needs they may require a higher level of assistance with their personal care. It is important that you spend time thinking through how you provide this assistance whilst respecting their privacy, their right to dignity, the impact of their childhood experiences, the importance of promoting their independence, and, protecting yourself and your household as much as possible from allegations. For example, if you are bathing a child, the bathroom door should never be locked and preferably left slightly open. They should wash their own private areas. For children who have been sexually abused it may be appropriate for them to wear swimwear while showering/bathing. Where you or your partner are providing assistance with personal care you should clearly record your routine for bath time/toileting in this section.

All household members should also ensure their own privacy when using the bathroom.

You should ensure the locks on all bathrooms/shower rooms and toilets in your home are suitable for the child/ren in your care according to their age and any individual risks there are. Ideally locks should be double sided so you can enter the bathroom/shower room/toilet in the event of an emergency.

**Our rules regarding bedrooms:**

Your rules should promote bedrooms being ‘safe’ places where each household member has their privacy respected. Many Looked After Children feel they have little control over their lives and providing them with their own bedroom where they have their own personal space is important. Each child should have their own hanging and drawer space for their clothing. They should have a place to store their own toys, equipment and personal possessions. They should also have access to a quiet place which they can use for quiet play, activities or homework.

It is also important to encourage foster children to respect each other’s private space. They should understand that it is not acceptable to wander into someone else’s bedroom.

Your rules should include the following:

* Clear rules around birth and foster children entering yours and each other’s bedrooms.
* Before entering a bedroom, each person must knock and gain permission unless there is a serious concern for someone’s safety.
* No foster child will share a bedroom, the only exception to this is if the children are related and permission has been given by the placing Social Worker.

See also **Section on Holidays and Days Out** for details on bedrooms.

**Our bedtime routines:**

Foster children may have experienced abuse in the bedroom and you need to be extra sensitive to their fears. You also need to be mindful that simple bedtime activities such as story time could trigger memories which could be distressing for the foster child/ren and may lead to them making an allegation. Alongside gathering as much information about the foster child as possible, it is also vital to spend time talking to them to gain a clear understanding of what they like/dislike about bedtime. For example, do they feel safer with lights on, the door ajar etc. From this and in discussion with their Social Worker, you need to decide on an everyday bedtime routine which should be clearly recorded in this section. This should include details such as what time bedtime should start and finish, where stories will be read and by whom.

**Our rules about going in to a child’s room during the night:**

Some foster children often have disturbed nights. They may not find it easy to go to sleep; they may wake frequently and want to get up in the early hours of the morning. In this section you should record how you will manage this and what safeguards will be in place. For example, you may have a chair next to their bed which you can sit on if they are too anxious to settle to sleep without you there. You may have a rule they can get up when they are awake but they can only read or play with figures in their room quietly until a set time.

**Our rules about caring for a child when they are unwell:**

When children are unwell they can become distressed and this can be upsetting to see. Instinctively you may want to provide a high level of nurturing and this may be what they need. However, it is best to forward plan how you will do this safely. For example, comforting them on the sofa downstairs instead of in their bedroom, leaving lights on, doors ajar, having a special teddy, comfort blanket they can cuddle when they are ill, so you can still hug them but in a safer way.

# Section 7 - Day to day life

**Our rules and routines on weekdays:**

This should include routines such as showering/teeth cleaning, who goes in the bathroom first and what time you leave for the school run. It should also include your expectations such as sitting at the table for meal times and rules such as no watching television until homework is completed. Many foster children have great difficulty retaining information so it would be very helpful to have wall planners/picture timetables/reward charts that they can easily refer to.

**Our weekend rules and routines:**

This is to provide an overview so your foster child knows what to expect. For example, if household members like to lie in on Saturday mornings your foster child should be aware what time they are allowed to call them and what quiet activities they are allowed to do before everyone is up. If you always go to Church on a Sunday morning or have a long dog walk on Sunday afternoons thought needs to be given about how will incorporate your foster child into these activities and what alternative arrangements you will make if they are unable, or it is not appropriate for them, to accompany you.

**Our rules for playing:**

Play is a vital part of children’s development and should be part of everyday life. Many Looked After Children struggle to play appropriately because of their early childhood experiences and the impact of this on their development. They may not have developed the social skills to interact positively with their peers or they may prefer to play different activities and in different ways to their peers. They often play better with younger children and there are often additional risks when they play. Simple, everyday activities such as going to play areas and parks and having friends round to play can require additional planning and safeguards. These should be recorded in this section.

Your birth children and your foster child/ren need to be clear what the rules and expectations are when they are playing. These should be recorded in this section.

Here are some pointers to consider:

* Where birth children and foster children are allowed to play.
* How they will be supervised (the level of supervision and by whom).
* What they are allowed to play and when. Consider rules around boisterous play, play fighting and tickling. A safe rule is these are not allowed.
* Rules for friends coming to visit, visiting friends’ houses. You will need to keep your foster child’s information confidential whilst ensuring their friend’s parents adhere to the rules you have in place for everyone’s safety.
* Rules for overnight stays. Please refer to the guidance on Delegated Authority and DBS checks for guidance.
* Rules for going out with friends (including coming home times).
* Rules for outdoor play i.e. how many children can go on the trampoline at once.

**Our regular visitors:**

As part of your Form F process, your Form F Assessor will be talking to you about your extended family and friends and the role they will play in your fostering. It is important that everyone who will be a regular part of your day to day life has an awareness of the protective factors which need to be in place to ensure your foster child/ren has a positive experience of family life and know how to keep themselves safe. This section should include details of the people who will be regular visitors to your home; their names and relationships to you.

**Some of our routines when visitors come round:**

This is to provide an overview so your foster child knows what to expect when visitors come round and how they are expected to behave. This will reduce their anxiety and empower them to behave positively. It also encourages you to think through how you will facilitate successful visits from family and friends. For example, if you always have your extended family round for dinner on a Friday evening, how will you include your foster child and what alternative arrangements will you make if they are unable to manage this visit.

**The people who help us look after the children in our care when we need to go out:**

As part of your Form F process, your Form F Assessor will be talking to you about which members of your extended family and friends will play a key role in caring for your foster child/ren to provide you with regular breaks from the fostering task. These people will be called your ‘Support Network’. Their support, along with the additional support provided by Family Fostering will enable you to have regular breaks and spend quality time with your partner, birth children, friends and family. Regular breaks are an essential key to successful fostering and they can be in built into the routine of your foster children so they become a positive ‘norm’. There are a host of strategies which can be used to ensure these breaks are beneficial to both you and your foster child. Your Supervising Social Worker will discuss these with you and help you devise the most appropriate strategies for you. Family Fostering will also ensure your Support Network receive support, advice and guidance, and, are provided with training opportunities. Family Fostering will carry out DBS checks on the key members of your Support Network once you have been approved and will complete a ‘Back up Carers Assessment if it is identified that a member of your family or a close friend will look after a young person for longer than overnight. You can use, on a one off basis, a member of your Support Network who does not have a current DBS check, assuming you have full confidence in them and their ability to care for your foster child/ren but not for overnight care.) Your Supervising Social Worker should be informed of this arrangement.

This section should detail the names of each person in your Support Network along with their relationship with you. It should also detail the childcare arrangements in place for each foster child and the safeguards around these. What is written here should reflect what is written in your foster child’s placement plan and detail the decisions given in the Delegated Authority Decision Tool. Remember, childcare arrangements will change over time and sometimes you may need to access different members of your Support Network at different times due to the changing needs of your foster child/ren. Please keep your Supervising Social Worker updated and they will ensure your Safer Caring Agreement is up to date.

**The rules for young people who are allowed to stay in the house by themselves as part of developing their independence skills:**

Allowing young people to stay at home by themselves is an important part of helping them develop their independence. It is also a key way of demonstrating trust and value to them. As a rule it should be encouraged appropriate to each individual young person’s age, level of maturity and individual needs. There may be instances where this is not appropriate. For example if it would not be safe to leave a young person unsupervised if they had no awareness of risk i.e. they would cook something and forget to turn off the gas hob. If your young person is not allowed to stay in the house unsupervised, the reasons for this should be recorded here and regularly reviewed.

If they are allowed to stay in the house unsupervised details regarding this should be recorded here. These should include;

* When they are allowed to be alone in the house.
* How long they are allowed to be in the house for.
* If they are allowed friends round.
* How you will check they are ok.
* What they should do if there is a problem while they are at home on their own.

**These are some of the activities we enjoy as a family and how we keep safe when we do them:**

As stated previously, simple, everyday activities can require additional planning and safeguards with foster children. Therefore thought should be given to which activities you anticipate doing with your foster child/ren and how you will safeguard them and those around them. It is equally important to provide an overview so your foster child knows what to expect when you do various activities. This will reduce their anxiety and help them manage their behaviour. For example, if you enjoy going swimming as a family you need to be clear what the arrangements are for getting changed and who will go in the water with your foster child/ren. This should be clearly explained to them beforehand along with the reasons why. These should be also be recorded in this section.

If you will be arranging for your foster child to participate in a dangerous activity such as horse-riding, skiing or rock climbing or they will be taking part in a dangerous activity through their school or a club they attend you need to make sure you have completed an **Activity Risk assessment** and received permission from the person with Parental Responsibility. This permission should be recorded in their Delegated Authority Form at their Placement Planning Meeting.

**We do not tolerate bullying. These are the rules in our home about bullying:**

Bullying is widely recognised as hugely detrimental to children and young people. In view of this, Family Fostering has a comprehensive Anti-Bullying Policy which clearly details how foster carers support the children in their care such that bullying is prevented as far as is practicable and addressed fully where it arises. Please refer to this when considering your rules and household practices. House rules should include what is acceptable behaviour and what actions will be taken if bullying is suspected or occurs.

You should also make sure you record all incidents of bullying on foster carers’ daily logs including those where your foster child in placement is the alleged victim and those where they are the alleged bully.

**The pets we have in our home and the rules we have about pets:**

Having pets is something which most people consider an enjoyable part of everyday part of life and there is much evidence to suggest how beneficial pets can be to children. However, with the complex needs of many Looked After Children pets is another key area where safeguards are vital. For example, foster children may be too rough and may potentially behave inappropriately towards them. They may not understand when pets are getting agitated and/or distressed. Before bringing a new pet into your home this shoud be discussed with your Supervising Social Worker when considering all the implications of this and agreeing with household members what the rules around pets will be. A pet questionnaire will need to be completed for dogs and other pets where there are potential risks.

Consideration should also be given to the rules around pets entering bedrooms and sleeping on beds. As well as hygiene considerations, there is an additional risk of suffocation to small children, particularly by cats and small dogs. Strategies must be in place to prevent this. If an animal poses any risk, you should have a strategy to either reduce or remove the risk.

**Our rules about smoking:**

The serious health risks of both smoking and living in a smoke-filled environment are well documented. In view of this, Family Fostering has a comprehensive Smoking Policy which details our expectations on foster carers both in terms of their smoking practices and in how they address smoking with their foster children. Under no circumstances should smoking take place within the home or a vehicle used to transport foster children. This applies to both tobacco smoking and vaping. House rules should include;

* Where you or other household members will smoke (if applicable).
* Where your foster child/young person will be allowed to smoke (if applicable).
* How you will support your foster child/young person to give up smoking (if applicable).

It may also be helpful to have a discussion with your Supervising Social Worker if a child/young person in your care or about to be placed with you is already a smoker to discuss the best way of managing this.

**Our rules about alcohol:**

For many households socially drinking alcohol is a normal part of everyday life. However, many Looked After Children have had negative experiences associated with those around them misusing alcohol. In view of this, a foster child may feel threatened/unsafe if alcohol is on display in your home, and/or you or other household members are consuming alcohol. It is helpful to have a discussion with your Supervising Social Worker prior to a foster child being placed with you about this issue. You can find further guidance in the Family Fostering “Alcohol and Substance Misuse” Policy. For the purpose of this Agreement, you should briefly detail where alcohol will be kept and rules around alcohol usage.

**Our rules about illegal substances are:**

There is specific guidance in the Family Fostering “Alcohol and Substance Misuse” Policy about how to education your foster child about illegal substance use and the impact of this, and, strategies to put in place so they feel able to speak to you about any concerns they have and ways you can help them to keep themselves safe. The Policy also advises you what you can do if your foster child/young person is using illegal substances.

For the purpose of this Agreement, you should briefly detail your expectations on your birth and foster children regarding illegal substances.

# Section 8 - Fire Safety

Everyone within your household should have a good knowledge of fire safety. This section is designed to prompt discussions with all household members in order to raise their awareness of fire risks and how to reduce these and to increase their confidence in knowing what to do in the event of a fire.

The guidance in this section should be read alongside the Health and Safety Guidance which provides specific guidance regarding fire precautions you should take such as installing smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.

**We understand how dangerous fire can be. These are our rules to reduce the risk of a fire:**

This section is designed to provide prompts to everyone within the household about what they should do. For example, young people should understand the risks associated with hair straighteners and the rules around using these. They should also understand the risks associated with having numerous extensions leads in their bedroom for their electrical appliances and the rules around these.

**This is our fire escape plan:**

This section should clearly detail all the escape routes in the house and what each household member should do in the event of a fire. Please see the provided leaflet from the Fire Brigade for further guidance.

**Section 9 - Electronic Safeguarding**

**Internet Safety**

**Our rules for keeping everyone safe when they are accessing the Internet:**

Children are growing up with the internet as a normal part of life, using it at home, school and in the community. It is a vital tool for their communication, information and entertainment and it is critical to their development in today’s world. The issues around protecting children safe in this area are vast. For further details please refer to the Electronic Safeguarding section of the Safeguarding Policy.

The main safeguards you will use are detailed in this section which your Form F Assessor/Supervising Social Worker will help you complete. This will also be ‘living’ document which provides you with day to day guidance. Your foster child will be involved in this agreement as appropriate to their age and understanding and this will be an important way of raising their awareness of how they keep themselves safe online.

You can cross reference this section of the agreement with the Electronic Safeguarding Agreement as this details the rules in place to keep your foster child safe when they are accessing the internet.

**Photography and video recording**

**Our rules about photography and video recording:**

This continues to be a tricky and sensitive issue with the technology for recording and receiving images constantly becoming easier to access. The sensitivity around this issue is borne out of the knowledge that images of children are sometimes taken specifically to pass on to paedophiles/sex rings and some children have real and well founded fears that there is a permanent record of their abuse and they have no knowledge over who might see it. There are also cultural differences around the use of photographs which need to be considered. For example, taking photographs is an innocent part of the day to day life of many western families but is seen as offensive to many Muslims. Therefore it is important that great care and thought is taken before taking a photograph or video and the following rules should be followed as a minimum:

* Seek advice and information from the child’s social worker about whether photos, cameras or camcorders have been part of any past abuse;
* Seek agreement at the placement planning meeting or subsequent meetings in regards to taking photos or videos.
* Always ask the child’s permission before taking a photo or video.
* Respect everyone’s rights and wishes about having their photo taken/being filmed.
* Make sure your foster child gets copies of pictures or recordings taken and ensure they know who else will see them and why.
* Do not upload photos of anyone without their permission and the permission from the child’s Social Worker (where required).
* Do not take photos of your foster child/ren when unclothed, in their underwear or revealing nightwear/clothing.
* Educate your foster child/ren about the risks associated with sharing photos and video footage with others.

While it is important to consider all of the above prior to taking any photos or video footage, it is equally important to collate photographs as part of the memorabilia a foster child has of their time living with you and your family. Please refer to the ‘life work’ guidance in the Family Fostering Foster Carer’s Handbook.

# Section 10 - Sexual Health

**This is how we will inform children in our care about sexual health matters:**

It is helpful to be clear about who is the safest, most appropriate person to speak to your foster child about sexual health matters. It is important that this person feels comfortable talking informally about sexual health matters and has a good understanding of sexual health issues and how young people can access support such as the sexual health clinic.

It is also helpful to provide your foster child/ren with age appropriate literature which they can refer to in the privacy of their own bedroom and then ask questions as and when they need to.

**This is how we will support children/young people in our care to protect them as much as possible from abuse:**

This section is for you to identify ways you will support your foster child/ren to stay safe in their relationships/interactions with others. It is also about how you will teach them boundaries around personal space, physical touch and clothing. For example, you should explain that it is fine for them to touch intimate parts of their own body but you should go on to discuss boundaries, i.e. that this should be done in private.

Section 11 – Support

Ensuring everyone within your household including your foster child/ren receives quality support increases the likelihood that everyone has a positive experience of family life.

**This is the support in place for our birth children:**

The most important support your birth children can receive is from spending quality one to one time with you yet this can be hard to organise with the demands of fostering. This section is designed to ensure you in build this into your weekly routine and you should record what you have arranged here.

Issues which need to be considered in this section are:

* How do your birth children perceive their treatment compared to your foster child/ren.
* How they will be supported in processing their feelings arising from living with a foster child/ren.
* How they have been prepared for information that they may hear from a foster child and behaviour they may see.

**This is the support in place for foster children in our home:**

There are many day to day ways you can support your foster child/ren. For detailed guidance regarding this please read the Managing Behaviour Policy. This section is for you to record the ways you will do this. Your foster child/ren may also require additional therapeutic support from a therapist/counsellor. This section is for you to record how you will support your foster child/ren with these.

Your foster child/ren may also have specific religious, cultural or individual needs/requirements. Please record in this section how you will meet these.

**This is the support in place for other household members including foster carer(s):**

Support for you and your partner in terms of having childcare to provide you with regular breaks from fostering has already been covered. This section is designed to identify any additional support needs you may have and how this will be met. For example, if caring for a particular foster child triggers painful memories for you, Family Fostering will support you in accessing therapeutic support.

# Section 12 - Other commitments of foster carer(s) and the impact of these on the household

It is important to recognise that no one is solely a foster carer, we all have other roles to play in life; employee, wife, husband, mother, father, nan, grandad, aunt, uncle, friend to name a few. With these roles often come other responsibilities and commitments. This section gives you the opportunity to think about these, reflect on their impact on your role as a foster carer, and, identify how you will manage this impact. For example, if you care for your grandchild/ren one day a week or visit an elderly relative several afternoons a week, this should be recorded here along with the arrangements you have made for your foster child/ren.

# Section 13 - Travelling by car

To keep everyone safe while travelling by car it is important to consider the following issues:

* Any underlying anxiety your foster child/ren may have about being alone with an adult in a car, or, about being moved to another foster carer/residential home/back to their birth family.
* Where is the safest place for each individual to sit considering their vulnerability and the level of risk in terms of allegations. A safer rule is if the foster carer has to travel alone with a child then the child should sit in the back of the car, diagonal to the foster carer.
* Where is the safest place for foster child/ren to sit in relation to each other and your birth children? For example, if there is a likelihood that there may be fighting or sexualised behaviour between any of the children they will need to be seated separately.

Whilst it is important to be mindful of the potential concerns around transporting foster children, it is equally important to be mindful that travelling in a car often provides foster children with a valuable opportunity to talk about any concerns they may have because it is often easier for them to talk when they do not need to make eye contact.

**This is how we keep everyone safe while we are travelling:**

This section includes basic rules such as:

* Everyone wears seatbelts when travelling.
* Children/young people having the appropriate car seat.
* Where everyone sits.

In keeping your birth and foster children safe, Government legislation and guidance should be adhered to regarding the use of car seats. This is as follows;

It is always safer for babies and children to travel in the rear of the car. Children are required by law to use a child car seat/booster seat until they are 135 centimetres tall or 12 years old (whichever they reach first). At each stage of a child’s development a different types of car seat is appropriate. Please see the following guidance:

Only EU-approved child car seats can be used in the UK. These have a label showing a capital ‘E’ in a circle. For more guidance regarding this please refer to [www.gov.uk/child-car-seats-the-rules](http://www.gov.uk/child-car-seats-the-rules)

Child’s Weight and Approximate Age:

**Up to 13kgs (approximately birth to 9 to 12 months)**

* A rear facing baby seat ideally should be fitted in the rear of the car.
* It is ILLEGAL and DANGEROUS to place a rear facing car seat in the front of a car that has an ACTIVE airbag on the passenger side. In some vehicles, it may be possible to switch off/de-activate the airbag but this will mean that any adult passenger sitting in the front will no longer have the extra protection offered by the airbag. Check with the car manufacturer and follow their advice. You should also consult your insurance company before deactivating an airbag.
* Keep babies in rear facing baby seat as long as possible. Move the child up to the next car seat when they have reached the weight limit of their baby seat or when the child’s head can no longer be contained fully within the baby seat.

**9-18kgs (approximately 9 months to 4 years)**

* A forward facing child car seat with integral harness that can be used in the front or rear of the car.
* It is better not to place a forward-facing restraint in a seat with an airbag; try to avoid this if possible. If it is not possible, then check the advice of the vehicle manufacturer.
* It is safer to put a forward-facing seat in the rear of the car.
* If you have to place the seat in the front passenger seat and there is an active airbag present, make sure that the car seat is as far back as possible and the child seat is securely held that the child seat is very securely fitted and the child is securely held by the harness or seat belt to maximise the distance between the child and the airbag.
* You should find out how far the airbag extends when deployed and ensure that your child is well outside the expansion area.

**15-25kgs (approximately 4 to 6 years)**

A forward facing, booster seat which can be used in the front or rear of the car and which is designed to raise the child so they can use an adult seat belt safely across both their chest and pelvis. New regulations are expected to come into effect in December 2016. This legislation has taken into account studies that clearly highlight that a good quality high-backed booster seat provides better protection in both front and side –impact crashes. Therefore we expect foster carers to provide a high backed booster for children in this category.

**22-36kgs (approximately 6 to 11 years inclusive – up to 135cms)**

A forward facing booster seat which can be used in the front or the rear of the car and which is designed to raise the child so they can use an adult seat belt safely across both their chest and pelvis. In many cases booster seats can be converted to booster cushions as the child develops.

As stated above it is always safer for children to be seated in the rear of the car. If you have to place a seat in the front passenger seat and there is an active airbag present, make sure that the car seat is as far back as possible and the child seat is securely held that the child seat is very securely fitted and the child is securely held by the harness or seat belt to maximise the distance between the child and the airbag.

You should find out how far the airbag extends when deployed and ensure that your child is well outside the expansion area.

# Section 14 - Holidays and Days Out

To ensure all the safeguards and necessary permissions are in place it is vital that you inform your Supervising Social Worker about forthcoming holidays giving them all the details in sufficient time to ensure these safeguards and permissions are in place. You will also need to complete with your Supervising Social Worker a Holiday Risk Assessment. Any changes to a foster child’s routine can potentially cause them a great deal of anxiety and cause their behaviour to deteriorate. To support your foster child so they can benefit from the holiday it is a good idea to provide them with as much detail as possible beforehand such as where you are going, what you will be staying in, what activities you will be doing with them, what they might eat and where they will sleep. Showing them on a map and giving them leaflets is really helpful. Also, cooking meals at home for them similar to the meals they will have on holiday can help. Another key way of helping them is providing them with a very clear itinerary and details of the routines they will follow on holiday. Whilst this appears to negate the spontaneity and freedom usually associated with holidays it will significantly reduce your foster child stress.

One of the main considerations prior to confirming a holiday booking is that the proposed sleeping arrangements will keep everyone safe and have been authorised by your foster child/ren’s Social Worker.

You also need to be aware that gaining passports for Looked After Children is often a long process and to avoid any disappointments holidays/day trips abroad should not be booked until you have received your foster child/ren’s passport.

**Our rules for holidays and days out:**

This section enables you to provide an overview so your foster child/ren knows what to expect when you go on holiday or have days out.

**The arrangements for living/sleeping while we are away on holiday will be:**

This section is for you to record the details of the accommodation you will stay in where you are away and the safeguards you will have in place for this.

# Section 15 - Confidentiality

Here you need to record how you keep your foster child/ren’s confidential information stored. You should also record how you protect your foster child/ren’s right to privacy and confidentiality. For example, your commitment to only sharing information about the foster child/ren on a “need to know” basis, ensuring information is not overheard and confidential information is not left where it can been seen by other household members/visitors.

# Section 16 - Issues particular to our family

This section is for you to detail any information relevant to Safer Caring which has not already been covered in the Safer Caring Agreement.

# Section 17 - Signatures

Each Safer Caring Agreement should be signed by you, your partner and your Assessing or Supervising Social Worker. A copy of this agreement will be sent to the child/ren’s Social Worker.

Making sure your Safer Caring Agreement is signed by all relevant parties is an important safeguard for you as a foster carer. It demonstrates that there has been a discussion and agreement over how you will carry out the day to day care of the foster child/ren within your household and the safeguards in place.

It also ensures there is a signed document regarding Safer Caring on each foster child’s file so that if their Social Worker leaves their Local Authority has the details to refer to.

# Section 18 - Supporting documents

Alongside your Safer Caring Agreement you will also have a Placement Plan, an Individual Risk Assessment and a Delegated Authority Form for each child in your care. These will be completed by your Supervising Social Worker in conjunction with you and the child’s Social Worker. These are working documents that should be reviewed regularly and whenever there are additional risks identified.

You will also have a Health and Safety Risk Assessment completed by your Form F Assessor which will be regularly updated by your Supervising Social Worker. This is to ensure your home environment is a safe environment for your foster child/ren.

Other documents which you may also use include the Activity Risk Assessment and a Holiday Risk Assessment.