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Leicestershire Policy on Bedroom Sharing within the Fostering Household

Applies to- Children in Care & Fostering

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 Leicestershire County Council is responsible for a Fostering Service. The Council has a Fostering Statement of Purpose. The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose are child focused and show how the service will meet outcomes for children. These can be found in the Foster carers' handbook.
- 1.2 Leicestershire's Fostering Service works in partnership with children and young people, their families and carers to provide safe, caring homes which value the differences in children and young people and help them to achieve their full potential.
- 1.3 This policy is to ensure that Leicestershire County Council complies with its statutory duty to ensure that looked after children are safeguarded and their welfare is promoted by ensuring the child's home environment is suitable to meet their needs and one in which all members of the household respect each other's privacy and dignity.
- 1.4 This policy is to be applied to Leicester County Council foster placements as well as Kinship foster placements.

2. Legal Framework Includes

- 2.1 The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (2010). Updated in 2015
- 2.2 The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services (2010)
- 2.3 Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (2011):
 - Standard 10: Providing a Suitable Physical Environment for the Foster Child. Children live in foster homes that provide adequate space, to a suitable standard.
 - Standard 10.1: The foster home can comfortably accommodate all who live there.
 - Standard 10.6: In the foster home, each child over the age of three should have her/his own bedroom. If this is not possible, the sharing of a bedroom is agreed by each child's responsible authority
- 2.4 Fostering Network Guide to Fostering Regulations, Guidance and NMS (2nd Edition).

3. Bedroom Sharing policy

The National Minimum Standard (NMS10) sets out expectations in relation to the physical environment of the foster home. This highlights that respecting everyone's privacy and space is an important aspect of the foster home, which is achieved primarily through the way in which foster carers model respect for the children they care for. It is supported by the physical environment of the home and the way in which children are given their own private space, and places to keep their own belongings, do homework, see friends and family, manage personal issues and feel safe.

- 3.1** It is expected that children aged 0 – 6 months will normally sleep in the same room as the foster carer in their own cot, and there may be circumstances where this arrangement may continue for longer periods of time if the needs of the child warrant this.
- 3.2** It is expected that each child over the age of three should have her/his own bedroom. If this is not possible, the sharing of a bedroom must be agreed by each child's responsible authority
- 3.3** It is acknowledged it may not always be possible for a child to have his/her own bedroom, for example if a sibling group needs to be placed and the care plan is for them to remain living together.
- 3.4** Where bedroom sharing is agreed it is important that the room is large enough to give each child her/his own space, to store clothes and possessions and to have some privacy. If the bedroom is not large enough to allow each child such space, then the space available in the whole household must be considered so that each child has space to do homework and pursue hobbies and interests.

4. Bedroom Sharing Risk Assessment

- 4.1** If it is proposed that older children share a bedroom then a 'bedroom sharing risk assessment' must be carried out to ensure that no child is put at risk and any issues can be identified and safely managed. See Appendix for the example of the Bedroom sharing risk assessment template.
- 4.2** The Bedroom sharing risk assessment must be carried out in partnership with the foster carer, supervising social worker and child's social worker, and should take

into account the wishes and feelings about sharing a bedroom of the children concerned.

- 4.3** The risk assessment must take into consideration the ages and gender of the children, any specific health or behavioural needs, any history of aggressive or abusive behaviour, any factor which may increase their vulnerability to abuse,
- 4.4** Any agreement to share bedrooms must be reviewed regularly as the needs of the children develop. The appropriateness of the current bedroom sharing risk assessment should be considered at carers' annual review and amended where appropriate.

5. Bunk Beds

- 5.1** It is preferable to have two single beds if possible, but it is acknowledged that there may not be enough space for this, and bunk beds may have to be used. Bunk beds must comply with safety regulations and have a CE or kitemark to confirm compliance with Regulations.
- 5.2** Children under the age of six should not sleep on the top bunk because of the risk of falls when sleeping and when climbing in and out of the bed. The top bunk may not be suitable for some older children if they have particular physical needs or difficulties with coordination.
- 5.3** The top bunk must always have guard rails on all sides and there should be a gap of at least 10 cm between the top of the mattress and the top of the guard rail. There must be enough space between the top bunk and the ceiling to allow the child to sit up in the bed.
- 5.4** It is advised that the floor should be carpeted and if not then a rug should be used next to the bunk bed to soften the impact if a fall should occur.

6. Kinship Carers

- 6.1** In exceptional circumstances it may be appropriate for a foster child to share a bedroom with the carer's own child if this is the best way to secure a placement which can meet the foster child's needs. In this case it is expected that the children will already have some established relationship, such as cousins who have known each other for some time. All relevant factors must be taken into consideration and weighed up as well as a 'bedroom sharing risk assessment' to ensure that neither child is put into a situation where they may be harmed.

7. Holidays

- 7.1** Holidays are important occasions in family life and especially for foster children who may not have had the opportunity of seeing different parts of the country or travelling abroad.
- 7.2** When camping, staying in caravans or in holiday accommodation it may not always be possible to ensure that each child has her/his own bedroom. When away from the normal routines and structures it is even more important that sleeping arrangements are carefully thought through, risk assessed and that sleeping arrangements are carefully supervised to ensure the comfort and safety of all members of the foster family. Any temporary change to the usual sleeping arrangements must be agreed by the Supervising Social Worker and Child's social worker and recorded on file.