

Wirral Fostering Service

Safety in the Home for Foster Carers

IT TAKES A BIG **HEART** TO FOSTER



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1. Introduction

This Policy concerns the assessment of the suitability of Foster Carers to be able to secure the safety in the home and in vehicles used to transport a child or young person that would be fostered. This is in accordance with **National Minimum Standard 10**.

2. Policy

The service recognises that accidents involving children and young people can happen in the home and surrounding environment despite the best intentions of carers; but there is a lot that can be done to reduce potential risks. Therefore minimising risk is an essential component of the assessment undertaken by Wirral Fostering Service in making a decision about the suitability of Foster Carers.

In order to minimise any risk a Health and Safety Checklist will be completed during the assessment process of potential Foster Carers and at each annual review for approved Foster Carers and the Supervising Social Worker will discuss with carers any identified hazards.

Further information about safety in the home will be provided to prospective Foster Carers during the preparatory training and to all Foster Carers through newsletters and post approval support.

3. Principles

Wirral Fostering Service will ensure that:

- Staff are kept up to date with current guidance regarding safety issues in the home though seeking advice from the council health and safety team, health visitors and other partners through the Local Safeguarding Children's Board;
- Prospective Foster Carers are encouraged to provide a non-smoking environment in the home and information is provided on the dangers of passive smoking;
- Where prospective carers have pets in the home, a risk assessment will be undertaken as part of the assessment of suitability to ensure the pets are managed appropriately and do not present a risk to children. BAAF guidelines "Placing Children with Dog Owning Families" will be issued to carers as necessary.

4. Potential Hazards

The Health and Safety Checklist will cover the following areas:

- Electrical appliances;
- Trips, slips and falls;
- Safety in cooking and food storage;
- Fire hazards;
- Safe storage of chemicals;
- Dangerous machinery or equipment;
- Safer storage of sharp objects;
- Glass hazards;
- Stairs and landing, including stair gates and bannisters;
- Childproof locks;
- Security of Information (TV/Video);

- Garden safety (outdoor play, ponds, poisonous plants);
- General security for the house and garden;
- Car tax, insurance and MOT;
- Safe carrying of children in vehicles;
- Sleeping arrangements;
- Management of pets.

The list is not exhaustive and will depend on the circumstances of individual Foster Carers. Further information is contained in the Health and Safety Checklist, and the Pet Ownership Questionnaire.

5. Useful Information

Further guidance about safety in the home can be found on the [ROSPA website](#) and at the end of this Policy Poisonous Plants.

BAAF Practice Note 68: [Reducing the Risks of Environmental Tobacco Smoke for Looked After Children and their Carers.](#)

Appendix 1: Health and Safety Checklist

Appendix 2: Pet Ownership Questionnaire

Appendix 3: Poisonous Plants

Foster Carers should be advised that many common plants in the garden and countryside can be poisonous. They can cause discomfort and illness, rashes and scratches and some can be highly dangerous.

Children should be taught about the beauty of plants but be aware of their dangers.

Foster Carers should be advised to consider avoiding having the more dangerous plants in parts of a garden that young children can easily access and always to check the dangers when buying new plants.

List of poisonous plants that should be avoided:

- Cherry Laurel;
- Deadly Nightshade;
- Death Cap Mushroom;
- Fly Agaric Mushroom;
- Foxgloves;
- Hemlock;
- Lords and Ladies;
- Prickly bushes such as Yaccas;
- Woody Nightshade;
- Yew Trees;

These plants will cause illness if eaten:

- Bluebells;
- Cotoneaster Berries;
- Delphinium;
- Fuchsia
- Holly – berries and leaves;
- Honeysuckle;
- Laburnum;
- Lily of the Valley;
- Lupin
- Mistletoe;
- Potato plant;
- Privet;
- Pyracantha Berries;
- Rhododendron;
- Rhubarb leaves;
- Snowdrop;
- Wisteria.

The above list is not exhaustive and more detailed information can be found on the [Kew Royal Botanical Society Website](#) and also information about a book published by Kew, Poisonous Plants - a guide for parents and childcare providers.

The [HTA list of potentially harmful plants](#) (pdf).is also available to be downloaded.

A useful leaflet is produced by Which and can be accessed on the [Which website](#).

Appendix 4: Reducing the Risks of Environmental Tobacco Smoke for Looked After Children and their Carers

[Click here to view Appendix 4: Reducing the Risks of Environmental Tobacco Smoke for Looked After Children and their Carers](#)