Safer Caring in Foster Homes

https://handbook.co.uk/docs/safer-caring-in-foster-homes/

Safer Caring in Foster Homes – everyday habits that protect everyone

Safer Caring is the umbrella term for the routines, boundaries and recorded decisions that:

• keep children safe from harm and retraumatisation;

• protect you, your family and the child from misunderstandings or allegations;

• give professionals confidence that risk is constantly assessed and managed.

1 | Two layers of Safer Caring

Layer – Household Safer Caring Policy

Purpose – Sets the non-negotiable rules that apply to every child and adult in your home (e.g., bedroom privacy, DBS-checked supervision).

Owner – Written during assessment; reviewed annually or when household circumstances change.

Layer – Individual Child Safer Caring Policy

Purpose – Adds child-specific adjustments based on age, trauma history, behaviour or disability (e.g., safe-touch preferences, shared bedroom agreement, internet filters).

Owner – Drafted with SSW at Placement Planning Meeting; reviewed whenever new risks emerge.

Both documents are living—expect to tweak them as children settle, grow and reveal new sparks or triggers.

2 | Standard safer-caring rules that apply to every placement

- Supervision: Only adults with a satisfactory DBS may supervise foster children.
- Overnights: No overnight stays away from you without social-worker approval.
- Private spaces:
- o Knock and wait before entering any bedroom.

- o No child in a carer's bed and no carer in a child's bed.
- Dress code: Everyone—children and adults—stays clothed in communal areas.
- Bathrooms: Doors locked or shut unless a child's age or disability requires help (document any exception).
- Physical play: Avoid tickling, wrestling or lap-sitting that could be misread; choose high-five, fist-bump or side-hug instead.
- Recording: Log any incident or statement that might later form the basis of an allegation—facts, child's exact words, witnesses, your immediate actions.
- Visitors: Introduce regular visitors to children; supervise until trust is established;
- record any concerns.

3 | Reviewing risks when a new child arrives

Each placement triggers a mini-risk-audit:

1. Read the child's referral and history with your SSW.
2. List potential risks (example: fire-setting history, sexualised behaviour, allergy to pets).
3. Adjust household rules or environment (lock matches away, install extra baby-gate).
4. Record the discussion and circulate the updated plan to everyone involved, including age-appropriate versions for children.

4 | Involving children and birth children

- Share the household rules in language that fits each child's age and understanding.
- Invite children to suggest signals or strategies that help them feel safe.
- Revisit the rules in supervision: "Does this still work for you?"

5 | Link to safeguarding

Safer Caring sits inside the broader Safeguarding Policy. If an incident raises a safeguarding concern, follow reporting procedures immediately; afterwards, update the Safer Caring documents to prevent repeat risk.

Key message: Safer Caring is not a one-off form; it is a mindset of thinking ahead, writing it

down and reviewing often. Clear boundaries create the secure base children need to heal—

and protect the caring adults who light that spark of safety. For templates or examples, speak to your Supervising Social Worker or consult the Safeguarding Policy in your handbook