

Foster Carer - Safety Checklist

Personal Details

Foster Carer 1

Foster Carer 2

Address

Safety Checklist

About this checklist: Use this checklist to monitor the standards in your home. We suggest that you do this each year. If it is completed prior to home study assessment, your annual foster carer and/or adopters reviews, any action points can be discussed with your link worker at the review. However, if you are concerned about any health and safety issues draw them to the attention of your link workers as soon as possible so that the necessary action can be taken.

Other Health and Safety Issues for Carers: Confidential information about children should be kept securely. All carers will be offered the opportunity to attend a First Aid course - ideally updated every three years if they have not already had First Aid training. All accidents, illnesses, absconding and restraints need to be recorded in the carer s log book or diaries.

Date completed

General

- Is there sufficient space for proposed child(ren) including space to pursue their homework, engage in quiet activity & play?
- Are there suitable toys and facilities available for the child?
- Indoor and outdoor play equipment – safe, secure and well maintained.
- Non-toxic paint used on toys, equipment and for household purposes
- Are all rooms of house maintained at a reasonable temperature?
- Is there a designated eating area and is it comfortable & compatible?
- Is there adequate lighting through out house for daily living & safety?
- Are there any loose or uneven floor coverings? Check for tripping hazards (eg. trailing cables etc) Floors – safe, hygienic, carpets and rugs secure?
- Is all alcohol out of reach?
- Medicines, toxic substances, matches etc. are locked away, including glues and solvents?
- Do all hot surfaces appear to be adequately protected?
- Is the accommodation adequately clean, tidy and hygienic?
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- Do you possess a firearm/air rifle or other weapon, including ceremonial, antique or replica weapons?
If yes, please complete questions in Appendix 1
- Do you have household insurance ?
- Household insurance Certificate viewed?

- Household security – Are there appropriate locks to enable household to be secured?

Comments or
Actions Required on
any of the above

Windows and Glazing

- Are all large areas of glass and windows/glass doors fitted with safety glass?
- Do you consider there any to be significant hazards from glass/windows/doors?
- Indoor glazing cover non-safety glass with protective plastic film
- Windows above ground level – in relation to children under 10, windows should be locked or secured to open no more than four inches
- Any windows with Venetian or other blinds have cords securely tethered

Comments or
Actions Required on
the above

Electrical

Electrical appliances, sockets, plugs and wiring should be safe, well maintained and conform to British Standards

- No electrical appliances in bathrooms except shower points and approved heating and lighting operated by a pull cord
- Does visible electrical equipment & wiring appear in good condition?
- Are electrical sockets covered by safety plugs?
- Are adaptor sockets or excessive use of extension leads present?
- Do any sockets or extension leads appear to be overloaded?

Comments or
Actions Required on
any of the above

Equipment and Systems

- Are gas boilers/appliances regularly serviced?

Comments or
Actions Required on
any of the above

Fire Safety

- Fire-guards are used if recommended
- Electrical or battery operated fire/smoke detectors fitted at each level of the house?

- Have all detector batteries been changed within last year?
- Do you have any fire equipment and know how to use it correctly?
- Are all window and door keys accessible in the event of a fire?
- Does family have a fire drill or thought about how they would evacuate building in event of fire?
- Is your furniture fire resistant & does it conform British Standards?
- Do you or any members of your household smoke?
- Are you aware of the department's policy on smoking for adopters?
- Do you have a smoking policy for household members and visitors?
- Are cigarettes/lighter/matches safe?

Comments or action
required in relation
to the above

Pets

- Do you have any pets?

**If yes, for pets other than dogs, complete questionnaire (Appendix 2).
If dog owner, complete dog owner's questionnaire (Appendix 3).**

Pets – arrangements for control and hygiene practices in place. Assessment to be completed on dogs. Ensure pets are not registered under Dangerous Dogs Act 1976 – your link worker has details of these animals.

Vehicles

- Is there sufficient space for family members including the number of foster children currently registered for (unless other transport arrangements agreed).
- Are all drivers covered by fully comprehensive insurance?
- Are you committed to ensure that children in your care wear seatbelts at all times when in the car?
- Do you use car seats and do these meet with British Standards?
Cars need to have sufficient seat belts and car seats (these can be provided by the Department)
- Are they correctly fitted and periodically inspected?
- Sight the vehicle's MOT, tax and insurance certificates. Are they up to date?
- Do you hold a current clean driving licence?
- Are you aware of law in respect of child restraints and seat belts?
- Do you have / use child proof door locks when transporting children?

Comments or action
required in relation
to the above

Medical

- Does any household member have a current first aid certificate?
- Are medicines kept in an appropriate & safe place?

Do you have suitable first aid provision/kit? Where is it kept?

- Is there a first aid kit in the car?
- Are you aware of the need for disposable gloves when dealing with body fluids?

Comments or action required in relation to the above

Kitchen

- Are kettle flexes short, out of reach of children & not trailing over the edge of the counter?
- Is a cooker guard used if recommended?
- Do you have a chest freezer? (If yes, what measures are taken to prevent access by small children?)
- Do you keep cleaning solutions secure & in the original containers?
- Is area for food preparation undamaged and kept clean?
- Are there facilities for food to be stored, prepared and served hygienically?
- Do you ensure that sharp utensils and knives are kept out of reach or stored safely?

Comments or action required in relation to the above

Bathroom

- Are toilet and washing facilities accessible and well maintained?
- Are lights or electric fires controlled by a pull cord switch and appropriate for bathroom use?
- Are razors and scissors locked away/out of reach?
- Are the bath, taps, toilet, shower & sink in reasonably good condition?
- Is there a thermostat on the hot water heater to prevent scalding?
- Is there a lock on the door and is it out of reach of small children?
- Can the bathroom lock be opened from the outside?
- Are cosmetics, perfumes, disinfectants and cleaning materials stores out of reach?

Comments or action
required in relation
to the above

Bedroom

- Would the child(ren) have his/her own room?
- Is the bed/cot safe and appropriate for the child/ren?
- Is new mattress fitted in cot?
- Are windows/door safe? Consider young children & fire exit issues – is furniture kept away from windows?
- Does visible electrical equipment in appear to be safe and in a reasonable condition?
- Is the heating safe? Beds and soft furnishings should be positioned away from radiant heat sources.
- Is there adequate storage for child's possessions?

Comments or action
required in relation
to the above

Garden

- Outbuildings and equipment – safety and security of garages, sheds, barns, DIY and farm equipment and chemicals is satisfactory
- Are garden equipment and chemicals locked away?
- Are garden fences and gates secure & in satisfactory condition? (All perimeters safe and secure)
- Are paths, driveways and steps in reasonable condition?
- Is outdoor play equipment securely fixed and in good condition?
- Impact absorbing materials (eg. Grass, carpet or safety surfaces) to be used under swing and climbing equipment
- Does the play equipment appear hazardous/need risk assessment?
- Is the sandpit hygienic and covered when not in use?
- Are the garage & shed kept locked?
- Do you have a greenhouse and if so, what safety measures do you take in and around it?
- Garden ponds, hot tubs and swimming / padding pools securely fenced off, covered or filled in. Use of swimming pools under supervision only.
- Are collapsible rotary dryers covered or removed when not in use?
- Are you aware of any poisonous plants in your garden and if so, what safety measures do you take?
- Is rubbish stored safely and garden free of rusty metal etc?
- Is garden free of dog/cat fouling?

Comments or action
required in relation
to the above

Disabilities, Special Needs and Children Under 8 Years

- Is there the need for a fireguard and does the carer use one?
- Are banisters filled in or do they have gap no wider than 100mm?
- Is a stair gate used if necessary?
- Does nursery equipment comply to British Standards of safety?
- Are accessible power points fitted with child resistant safety covers?
- Are glassware, china and other fragile objects kept out of reach?
- Are young children supervised when bathing?
- Are children kept out of the kitchen during cooking?
- Is a cooker guard fitted?
- Are children kept away from the iron whilst in use?
- Are polythene bags kept out of reach?

Comments or action
required in relation
to the above

Summary and Signatures

Assessment
Summary and
Actions(Summary of
outstanding issues,
defects or other
findings)

Signature (Foster
Carer 1)

Date

Signature (Foster
Carer 2)

Date

Social worker's
signature

Date

Unit Manager's
Signature

Date

APPENDIX 1: POSSESSION, USE AND STORAGE OF FIREARMS, AIR RIFLES AND OTHER WEAPONS

Applications may be received from foster carers or adopters who own legal weapons for legal purposes (eg. farmers). However, we must be sure that in any event they satisfy the necessary safety requirements.

Please read the guidance and complete the questions below.

Firearms you should enquire about include:
Shotguns Rifles, Hand guns, Air rifles/pistols

The above weapons are controlled by the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 : Firearms

Section 37 : Possession of air weapon or imitation firearms in public place.

Came into force on the 20 January 2004. Adds unloaded air weapons and imitation firearms (Section 54(4)) to the list of loaded shotguns, loaded airguns or any other firearm (loaded or not) together with its ammunition.

Section 38: Air weapons – age limits.

Came into force on the 20 January 2004. Illegal for a child under the age of 17 to have with him an air weapon or ammunition for an air weapon. Any child under 17 must be supervised by someone who is at least 21 years of age or part of an approved target shooting club or similar.

It is also an offence for anyone to make a gift of an air weapon or ammunition for an air weapon to anyone under the age of 17 to part with possession of an air weapon or ammunition to a person under 17.

Section 39: Prohibition of certain air weapons.

There is a ban on any air weapon that uses a self contained gas cartridge system (SCGC), often referred to a 'Brococks'. Weapons that use CO2 bulb system are not affected. SCGC are now a prohibited weapon and can not be possessed, purchased, acquired, manufactured, sold or transferred without the authority of the Secretary of State. Anyone who owned a SCGC prior to the 20 January 2004 can continue to do so but they must have them entered on a firearm certificate.

For further guidance on firearms see: Chapter 19 of Firearms Law: guidance to the Police or the following website: www.circulars.homeoffice.gov.uk

Under normal circumstances you would want assurances that a child would not be involved with weapons in way (unless he/she was legally of age and parental permission was given). In any case, the use of any weapons would have to be appropriately supervised at all times.

The police should be asked to supply examples of firearm certificates so that a proper comparison can be made.

Other weapons that should be enquired about include:

Crossbows, Catapults, Hunting knives, Ceremonial swords, Decorative/souvenir or replica weapons, Antique guns, Martial arts equipment

Please confirm the following:

- A firearm certificate has been seen
- Firearms are kept in a locked metal storage cabinet with the keys under control at all times
- Ammunition and cartridges are kept separately and equally securely
- Careful consideration is given to the reasons for keeping such weapons, the way in which they are used, how they are cleaned and the number/variety of weapons kept. For instance, if the foster carer a member of a registered gun club, do they take part in shooting as a sport or participate in vermin control.

Please state any other weapons held:
Eg Crossbows,
Catapults, Hunting knives, Ceremonial swords,
Decorative/souvenir or replica weapons,
Antique guns, Martial arts equipment)

Assessing Social Worker Comments

APPENDIX 2: ANIMAL OWNER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Total number and type of pets in the house	
How long have you had the pets?	
Where in the house are the pets kept?	
Do the pets have access to any rooms of the house? If yes, which ones?	
Where do the pets sleep?	
Do the pets use a litter tray, if so where is it kept?	
How often are the pets cleaned out and by whom?	
Where is the pets' food and any medication kept?	
If appropriate, are the pets kept up-to-date with vaccinations? Verification by regularly used vet?	
Have any of the pets ever bitten/scratched anyone?	
Are the pets nervous of other people/children visiting the house?	
Are there any pets you would be willing to accept in your home?	
If you keep potentially dangerous animals eg. Snakes or spiders – are they kept in a locked cage? Where are the keys kept?	

What steps would you take if your pet injured a foster child?

Foster Carer's Name

Foster Carer's Signature

Date

Assessing officer's/social worker's comments on animal and the attitude of their owner(s):

APPENDIX 3: DOG OWNER QUESTIONNAIRE

Please see guidance on assessment of dogs in the next section

How many dogs do you have? (If more than one complete a separate form for each dog)

Dog - 1

Name of Dog

What breed is your dog?

What gender is your dog?

Is your dog considered small, medium or large?

How old is your dog?

How long have you had your dog?

Has the dog ever been trained? (Give details)

Are there any rooms in the house where the dog is not allowed to go?

Is the dog allowed on the furniture?

Is there anywhere that is exclusive to the dog?

Where does the dog sleep at night/during day?

Where is the dog normally fed?

Where is the dog normally exercised by whom?

What temperament would you describe your dog as having? (boisterous; usually placid; playful; possessive; nervous; docile; submissive; obedient; disobedient; protective of people; protective of property)

Where does the dog go to the toilet?

How is the waste disposed of?

Does the dog fight with other dogs?

Does the dog worry people in public or when they visit the home?

Has your dog ever snarled; snapped or bitten anyone? (Please give details if yes)

Has your dog had any contact with children, including children having overnight stays at home?

Do you breed this dog? (If yes, state where this takes place and what happens to the puppies)

Assessing officer's/social worker's comments on animal and the attitude of their owner(s)

Foster Carer's Name

Foster Carer's Signature

Date

Please also complete the Foster Carer - Dog Agreement form

Guidance for Assessment of Dogs and their Suitability

Initial Assessment

The following breeds of dog, are prohibited as pets by The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, - Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Towser, Dogo Argentine and Fila Brazilliero. Special caution should be exercised when assessing households containing an Alsatian (German Shepherd), Rotweiler, Doberman or Bulldog or a "pack" of dogs – that is two or more dogs.

The safety of the child should be paramount. It is the responsibility of the dog owner to demonstrate the dog's ability to cope with children and that he/she (the owner) has a responsible attitude and a good understanding of the issues involved. Responsible dog owners should not mind a check being made of the dog as well as a check on their suitability to be carers.

It is important to know whether the dog has lived with children, still lives with children or has any experience of children. Was this experience positive?

Size of dog is important especially where vulnerable children are involved. Large dogs can harm a child unintentionally in play. However, small dogs can be snappy and the suitability depends on the particular dogs' temperament.

If there is any doubt about the suitability of the dog, the opinion of the local dog warden or a vet who knows the animal should be sought, or by the RSPCA.

The dog assessment questionnaire should be completed for each dog in the household.

It is acknowledged that all dogs have the potential to be dangerous and that children can provoke attacks. Foster carers must supervise the dogs and children at all times to ensure the safety of the child.

Other animals may be kept by foster carers and these will be considered on an individual basis during the assessment process. Animals which have to be registered under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 will rule out the use of an applicant's home for foster care.

During Matching

A great deal can be learned by observing the dog when in the presence of the child newly introduced to the family. As a general guide:

If the dog likes the child or children he/she will have a soft, open expression, pant gently, wag his/her tail, sit quietly, lean into people and look at his owner. Watch his/her ears, they will alter from "laid back" to "forward" as his/her interest is aroused.

If the dog does not like the child he/she will not approach the child. He/she will drop his tail or even put it down between his/her legs. He/she will lean away when sitting still, arching his/her body to avoid contact. His "worried" expression will include laying back his/her eyes so that the whites of the eyes can be seen. He/she will avoid eye contact with the child. The dog may also whine and keep looking at the owner for reassurance. If he/she remains still and stares hard at the child he/she may be thinking of snapping. Remove him/her from the child at once.

Ensure that the carer has read and agreed to follow the above guidance.