

Smoking Policy for Fostering and Adoption Services

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About This Document

Title	Smoking Policy for Fostering and Adoption
Purpose	Promoting positive good health for children, young people and their carers
Updated by	Corrie Castleman
Approved by	Children in Care Workstream
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Version Control

Date Issued	Version	Summary of Changes	Created by
March 2015	5.0	Separated BAAF Practice Note (2007) from the body of the policy and embedded it for reference purposes	Rosemarie Cronin
March 2015	5.1	Added Ash/Fostering Network joint briefing (July 2014) as an embedded document for reference purposes	Rosemarie Cronin
March 2015	5.2	Clarification regarding foster carers not smoking in the home or car for children aged 5 plus	Rosemarie Cronin
March 2015	5.3	Clarification that new assessments of foster carers and adopters may start a minimum of 6 months after ceasing smoking but no child will be placed before 12 months of cessation of smoking	Rosemarie Cronin
March 2015	5.4	A new section has been added to include e-cigarettes	Rosemarie Cronin
February 2018	6.0	Updated briefing from ASH and Fostering Network (embedded)	Rosemarie Cronin
June 2018	6.1	Updated briefing from Coram BAAF re Reducing the risks of environmental tobacco smoke for looked after children and their carers. (embedded)	Rosemarie Cronin
June 2018	6.2	Additional guidance regarding electronic cigarettes and vaping	Rosemarie Cronin
June 2018	6.3	Added information regarding consideration of views of children and families about being placed with fostering households who smoke	Rosemarie Cronin
October 2022	7.0	Reviewed the current Policy and cross referenced with BAAF Practise note 68 which is the most recent guidance. No changes needed to our Essex Policy.	Corrie Castleman

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Essex County Council has a duty to ensure the health of looked after children and their carers and in doing so must continue to keep the welfare of the child as paramount. We aim to provide a safe, loving and positive environment for all children and young people in fostering and adoption placements.
- 1.2 The health risks of smoking are well known and in more recent years we have become more aware of how second-hand smoke presents a serious risk to a child's health. It is therefore in the interest of children, and particularly vulnerable children who are in or have had previous experience of the care system, to be raised in a smoke free home, ideally by non-smoking carers.
- 1.3 This policy should be read alongside the BAAF Practice note 68; Reducing the risks of environmental tobacco smoke for looked after children and their carers (2018), and the joint briefing from [Fostering Network](#) and Ash; Foster care, adoption and smoking (2016).

2. Essex County Council smoking policy for foster carers and adopters

- 2.1 Children under 5 should not be placed with foster carers/adoptive parents where anyone who lives in the household smokes either indoors or outdoors.
- 2.2 Children with disabilities who have respiratory problems, eg asthma, heart problems or glue ear, should not be placed with foster carers/adoptive parents who smoke.
- 2.3 In all family, friends and connected persons placements, both long-term fostering and adoptive placements, the additional health risks to the child of being placed in a smoking household need to be carefully balanced against the benefits of the placement for the child. It is recognised that there are additional complex issues involved in family, friends and connected persons arrangements and assessments. As with any potential carers who smoke, every effort should be made to encourage family or friends to give up or to create a smoke-free home for the child. However, any risk to the health of a child resulting from such a placement will need to be weighed against the potential benefits to a child of being placed with people who are part of their family (or friends) and with whom they are likely to have a pre-existing bond. Children generally have better outcomes in such placements and an assessment will need to be made in each case as to whether the best interest of an individual child would be served by living with family and friends' carers,

even where they may be some doubt as to their ability to provide a smoke-free home for that child.

- 2.4** Foster carers/prospective adopters are advised not to smoke in front of young children and young people. Carers will be expected to discourage smoking by looked after children, and should not provide or use cigarettes or tobacco as a reward for good behaviour.
- 2.5** Foster carers must not purchase cigarettes or tobacco for children and young people under the age of 18 years. It is illegal for young people themselves to buy or be sold cigarettes or tobacco.
- 2.6** Carers/prospective adopters should proactively be encouraged and supported to stop smoking.
- 2.7** Foster carers should actively encourage children and young people who do smoke to seek advice and guidance to help them give up. [Some useful information and tools are available free on the Smokefree website](#); this includes kits and apps that may be useful to work with children and young people.
- 2.8** Foster carers who are unwilling or unable to cease smoking should be offered advice about minimising children's exposure to tobacco smoke. Carers who do smoke will be expected to create a smoke free home. Carers should also not smoke in the car if children are present. Carers should also ensure that children and young people are not exposed to excessive smoking when visiting friends and relatives of the foster carers or when other smokers visit the foster home.
- 2.9** Where carers/prospective adopters have given up smoking children in the high-risk group will not usually be placed with them until they have given up smoking successfully for 12 months:
 - For existing carers this will be discussed by the supervising social worker at home visits and during the household review;
 - For new carers/prospective adopters this will be covered at recruitment events, and in the recruitment information packs. Carers/prospective adopters who are smokers but indicate their wish to be considered for younger children will be expected to cease smoking permanently for at least 6 months before any assessment commences and to have given up smoking for twelve months before children are placed. If, after approval (and before adoptive placement) carers/prospective adopters recommence smoking, Essex will reconsider the range and ages of children who can then be placed with them.
 - Carers/prospective adopters are expected to be honest and if necessary, verification will be sought from their GP.
- 2.10** Carers/prospective adopters should be provided with or directed to additional information about the risks of smoking in the home.

- 2.11** The aim of the county council should be to work towards placing all children in non-smoking households.
- 2.12** All staff should be aware of the dangers of smoking and actively discourage children from smoking. Promoting a positive health message is crucial.
- 2.13** Staff should not smoke in the presence of children and young people who they are working with, including children who they are transporting.
- 2.14** Every effort will be made taking in consideration the views of children and families regarding potential foster placements where carers or family household member's smoke.

3. Electronic Cigarettes (Vaping)

- 3.1** E-cigarettes, also known as vaporisers, are not tobacco cigarettes. The use of them has become more widespread in recent years and can provide a route for smokers to help them reduce or give up smoking. Such products have been developed more recently and due to this the evidence about their use in terms of effects of health continues to evolve.
- 3.2** Public Health England reports published in 2015 and updated in 2018 concluded that e-cigarettes are significantly less harmful than tobacco, whilst acknowledging that they are not completely risk-free products (McNeill et al (2015, 2018) cited in Coram BAAF Practice note 68). This is also stated by NICE (National Institute for health and Care Excellence) in 2018 who add that the evidence in this area is still developing including evidence on the long-term health impact.
- 3.3** At this time Essex will not preclude foster carers or adopters due to their usage of e-cigarettes/vaporisers.
- 3.4** The following guidelines should be adhered to:
- E-cigarettes/vaporisers cannot be sold to children/young people under 18 years in the UK. Carers should not purchase such items for young people under 18.
 - Equipment used for e-cigarettes/vaporisers must be kept safely and out of reach of young children. There has been an increase of cases of poisoning of young children associated with ingesting the liquid used
 - If carers, or other members of the household, are using e-cigarettes/vaporisers, they should do so only when children (of all ages) are not present.

- Carers who do vape should not vape in the home or in the car.

3.5 In addition, there should be discussion with the carers about their use and consideration given to the risk of providing a model to the children or young people which may encourage smoking.