

THE SUPERVISION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

These guidelines should be used as a checklist for foster carers and Children and Young People's Service staff. The aim is to ensure that the view of what is appropriate supervision for a particular child is of the required standard and agreed by all concerned.

1. **Defining Standards of supervision**

The Standards are an interpretation of legislation according to the age and ability of children. They include an appreciation that children have differing needs and abilities that should be considered in conjunction with their chronological age.

2. **Supervision Guidelines**

- a) An adult must supervise children under the age of 8 years at all times. A child of this age should not be responsible for her own supervision or care or the supervision or care of others.
- b) Children aged 8 years to 12 years can take some agreed responsibility for themselves for time limited periods set by foster carers in respect of outside play. It is desirable that arrangements are approved and will depend on the level of the child's maturity. They should not look after another child of any age.
- c) Children and young people aged 12 years to 16 years can take agreed responsibility for themselves. They should not supervise another child of any age unless this is for very time limited periods and with agreement at a planning meeting. The decision will be based on the length of time the young person has lived in the foster family and on the maturity of the young person.
- d) Young adults aged 16 and over can be prosecuted if a child in their care is exposed to danger or neglected.

Any baby-sitting arrangement, whether this is by the foster child for the foster carer's own children or your own child for the foster children or by a foster child for other foster children should be agreed by the child's social worker. This is to protect both the young adult and the children in their care. In some sibling groups the eldest child may have been given a lot of inappropriate caring responsibilities. In these cases it is important that this eldest child is free to act as a child and to pass responsibility to you.

- e) Children under 16 cannot legally be responsible for a younger child, the responsibility remains with the adult. It is the adult who will be prosecuted if any harm comes to the younger child due to negligence or assault.

3. **The Application of Guidelines**

- a) Any issues around supervision such as a foster carer's working hours or social commitments should be addressed and their fostering category reflect any limitations
- b) Prospective carers need to appreciate, as in all aspects of fostering, that decisions about supervision are made in partnership with the child's own parents and Children and Young People's Service staff.
- c) Placement planning should include discussion about a child's particular supervision needs and the placement agreement should define this with approval by all parties.
- d) The review of arrangements should update supervision needs and action and assessment records should reflect changes and development in the child's own level of responsibility.
- e) The foster carer's annual review should further check the carer's view of supervision and any particular changes in the household that could impact on the quality of supervision.

4. **Baby Sitting and Child Minding Arrangements**

If you want to go out in an evening and leave your foster children with a baby sitter the sitter must be over 16 years of age. We do know that many people use younger babysitters who are very able but we are aware that foster children can present particular challenges that are likely to prove too difficult for a younger babysitter. Ideally it is best if you can identify just one or two regular baby sitters who can get to know the children.

Your baby sitter should have a standard disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau. Your fostering social worker will help you to obtain this. If your regular baby sitter is not available it is acceptable for a family member to baby-sit without a CRB check. If a family member is going to do any respite care for you especially over night care they should have a CRB check. This is unless they offer care to cover an emergency and the alternative would be that your foster children had to stay with foster carers whom they did not know. (Also see the sleep over policy).

If you are unable to identify a sitter for a particular event we may be able to identify another carer who can assist you.

If you regularly use a friend or a family member for day care of children under eight years old the person may be acting as a child minder even if there is no financial reward. The carer must be subject to an inspection by Ofsted to ensure that the person meets the child minding regulations.