

Fostering: our policy on smoking

Introduction

Thank you for the interest you've shown in fostering and for choosing to enquire with us at Torfaen Council.

We hope this factsheet will provide the information you need to help you decide whether or not fostering is for you.

Torfaen Council is committed to promoting the health and well-being of all looked-after children in its care.

This means that when we place children and young people with foster carers, we must be certain that they will remain safe and healthy in that home environment.

The harmful long-term effects of smoking – and passive smoking – on an individual's health have been well-documented and are medically proven.

Smoking also poses more immediate risks to a child, for example, the increased risk of fire and poisoning.

The only way to reduce a child's exposure to these risks and the risk of passive smoking is by ensuring that they live in smoke-free environments.

Torfaen council wishes to move to a position where looked-after children and young people are placed only in smoke-free homes.

Our Policy on Cigarette smokers: if one or both foster carers smoke, or there is another adult in the home who smokes, we will NOT place the following:

- children under the age of five
- disabled children who are physically unable to play outside
- children with respiratory problems, for example, asthma
- children with heart disease
- children with glue ear.

We would need to be satisfied that any former smoker has not smoked for at least 12 months prior to any of the above being placed.

Our policy: the wishes of children and their parents will be sought and adhered to, however in some situations the health needs of the child will override the wishes of the children/parents.

Our policy: in all planned long-term placements, and in short-term placements which become long term, we will carefully consider the additional risks to a child of being exposed to smoke when we make the placement.

Smoking will, therefore, act as a limiting factor on the carer's availability to accept fostering placements.

Foster carers and smoking

As a foster carer, you have a responsibility to look after your own health and the health of the children and young people in your care. It's important to remember that they are also likely to see you as a role model.

If you do smoke, it is advisable that you do not smoke in front of children and young people in your care.

Neither should you advocate smoking by the young people in your care, buy them cigarettes or use cigarettes as a reward for good behaviour.

We ask foster carers to address any smoking issues in their homes, for example, please do not allow friends and family to smoke in any part of the house or in front of the children in your care.

Giving up smoking

If you are a smoker and would like support to give up, please contact Stop Smoking Wales

www.helpmequit.wales

If you are caring for a young person who is a smoker, we will expect you to actively encourage that young person to give up smoking. Again, support is available.

Electronic cigarettes

All references and policies relating to smoking also apply to the use of electronic cigarettes.

Electronic cigarettes are not cigarettes in any meaningful sense. They are nicotine delivery systems that do not contain tobacco. The nicotine is delivered orally to the user in the form of vapour, rather than in the form of smoke. Therefore, they are much closer to other non-tobacco licensed nicotine products, such as sprays, patches and gum, than they are to cigarettes.

Nicotine is an addictive drug that can be toxic in relatively low doses. However, by far the greatest harm caused by cigarettes is from other toxic ingredients of cigarette smoke¹.

Electronic cigarettes do not produce smoke (because they do not contain tobacco) but produce a vapour. Whilst the impact of second hand smoke from conventional cigarettes is well documented (BMA 2007, RCP 2010, ASH 2014), the impact of the vapour produced by electronic cigarettes has yet to be fully assessed. To date, several studies have been undertaken and found no evidence to suggest that second hand vapour is harmful to human health (Borland 2011, Wagner et al 2012).

However, smoking an e-cigarette still models smoking and is therefore not an appropriate behaviour to role model to children and young people.

We strongly encourage foster carers not to use e-cigarettes in front of children and young people until more evidence is gained about the role modelling effect of this on the smoking behaviour of children more generally.

Further information

In determining this policy, Torfaen Council has made full reference to the British Association for Adoption and Fostering Practice

- Reducing the Risks of Environmental Tobacco Smoke for Looked-After Children and Their Carers.
- ASH | The Fostering Network joint briefing on foster care, adoption and electronic cigarettes, June 2015

Our contact details

If you need more help, please contact us.

Telephone: 01495 766303

E-mail: familyplacementteam@torfaen.gov.uk

Our Address: The Family Placement Team
Torfaen Social Care and Housing Services
Civic Centre
Pontypool
Torfaen
NP4 6YB