

SMOKING POLICY



1. Introduction.

Smoking and passive smoking is regarded by the medical profession as a serious health risk and is a particular risk to children and young people. Foster Care Link is committed to ensuring the health and welfare of children placed with our foster carers. Smoking covers the use of all tobacco products, herbal cigarettes and shisha pipes. This policy also deals with the issue of electronic-cigarettes.

2. Policy.

1. Children of four years and under. Older children with heart or lung conditions and children who suffer from allergies will not be placed with foster carers who smoke.
2. Children under the age of ten will not be placed with carers who are considered by the agency medical adviser to be heavy smokers or where more than one member of the household are regular smokers.
3. Carers who do smoke should:
 - Not smoke in front of children in their care, even if it is known that the child/young person is a smoker;
 - Not encourage any child or young person to smoke and encourage young people in their care who do smoke, to give up smoking;
 - Never smoke in their car when transporting children/young people;
 - Never leave cigarettes where they can be accessed by children or young people;
 - Smoke outside of the home as much as is reasonably possible;
 - Recognise that smoking creates an increased risk of fire and should always ensure that cigarettes, cigars and pipes are fully and safely extinguished and any remains disposed of.
4. All foster carers are expected to ask visitors to their home, not to smoke in the home or in presence of any children in their care.
5. Whilst Foster Care Link accepts applications from foster carers who smoke, the age range for which carers can be approved will be determined by paragraphs 1 and 2 above.
6. Existing foster carers, approved before the introduction of this policy in July 2008 will be made aware of this policy. Existing carers who smoke will also need to be aware that their approval age range may change following their next foster carer review, if they continue to smoke.
7. Carers should be aware that the smoking of shisha/hookah pipes is included in this policy. Shisha is smoked using tobacco based products and studies have proved this to be as harmful as smoking cigarettes.

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3. Electronic cigarettes

There is limited research on the actual physical effects of electronic cigarettes, but the general view is that they are less harmful than normal cigarettes. This does not mean they are totally safe as there are indications that for some people they can cause increased health risks. Because of the current uncertainty of the long-term effects of electronic cigarettes, Foster Care Link is taking the view that they will be treated as cigarettes and that therefore all the issues stated in Part 2 of this policy will apply.

The possible exception to this is that there is some evidence that people using electronic cigarettes are more likely to reduce or give up smoking. It maybe that in some circumstances if foster carers have a child who is smoking, introducing the idea of switching to electronic cigarettes may help to reduce or stop the child's smoking habit. Foster carers should not however encourage young people to switch unless they have agreement of the child's social worker and have also sought advice from the child's G.P.

Foster carers should also be aware that if they or their foster child uses an electronic cigarette, **they must only be charged via the charger supplied with the cigarette.** There have been a number of incidents of electronic cigarettes exploding and/or catching fire as a result of using the wrong type of charger, usually people using their mobile phone charger.

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