

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Social Work Committee - 19 December 2005

REPORT ON: DUNDEE FAMILY PLACEMENT SERVICE REVISED SMOKING POLICY

REPORT BY: Director of Social Work

REPORT NO: 726 - 2005

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform members of the development of the Dundee Family Placement Service Revised Smoking Policy which is designed to minimise the exposure to tobacco smoke of children and young people placed with carers in order to help protect their health and safety.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Social Work Committee:

2.1 Approve the contents of this policy and the proposed implementation date of 1st January 2006

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Financial implications will be absorbed within existing budgets.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Health is protected by creating safe, clean, pleasant environments and services which emphasise prevention of illness as well as care for the sick.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Delivering services which meet needs

Family Placements are provided for children and young people in need, who are some of the most vulnerable young people in the city in terms of poor health.

6.0 MAIN TEXT

6.1 Passive smoking - breathing other people's tobacco smoke - has been accepted by scientific bodies worldwide as a cause of lung cancer in non-smokers, as well as aggravating many other illnesses such as asthma. Some research also suggests a possible connection to heart disease.

- 6.2 The outcomes of recent research on the effects of smoking on the health of children would suggest passive smoking can be harmful in terms of children's health, particularly the risks of developing respiratory problems. In addition there is some evidence to suggest children living in smoking households are more likely to become smokers themselves. While Dundee Family Placement Service acknowledges the proven skills and abilities of many of our carers who smoke, it is our view that children's health must be our primary consideration. The main purpose of the revised Family Placement Smoking Policy is to reduce children's exposure to passive smoking within our foster and adoptive homes, and discourage young people from taking up smoking. As the effects of passive smoking are greater for younger children, a move to smoke-free home environments for these children is proposed.
- 6.2.1 The previous policy operating in Dundee Family Placement Service was that no child under the age of 2 years or a child of any age with a known respiratory condition would be placed in a household where carer(s) smoke.
- 6.3 In addition to the above the revised Family Placement Smoking Policy stipulates that carers should not smoke in front of foster children, and that all children under 5 years, or a child of any age with a known respiratory condition, should have a smoke-free environment. This would generally mean placing under 5s with non-smokers, unless the carer guaranteed only to smoke outwith the home.
- 6.4 The new policy also states that children and young people should not be allowed to smoke within the foster home and be actively discouraged from smoking by their carer(s). Carers will have a responsibility to encourage young people to seek help in stopping smoking.
- 6.5 Current carers who smoke will be asked to conform to the new policy. Almost half have stated their intention to do so. It is acknowledged that we cannot achieve an immediate policy implementation in the households where the carers are unwilling to conform but will work toward this. Carers who continue to breach the policy will receive training and information regarding the harmful effects for children. All Dundee carers wishing to stop smoking will be offered advice and assistance with this. In the longer term those still unwilling to adhere to the policy will be the subject of a fostering review to discuss the implications of this in terms of their continued fostering.
- 6.6 As stated in the National Care Standards for Foster Care and Foster Placement Services carers are assessed on 'their ability to promote the health, education and personal and social development' of children in their care. All new fostering and adoptive applicants who smoke will be advised from an early stage in the process that their smoking habits will be considered during assessment along with other health issues and their approval will be on condition of a written undertaking to adhere to the Family Placement Smoking Policy.
- 6.7 Information on the harmful effects of passive smoking will be included in preparation and training programmes for prospective and already approved foster carers and adopters. Discussion on the choices carers are likely to face regarding baby-sitters or day carers who smoke, visitors to the home, and so on will also be included.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) have been consulted in the preparation of this report. Children's Services also undertook a review of the smoking policy for family placements, including consultation with carers and discussions within Children's Services Management Group (See Appendix 1)

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Alan G Baird
Director of Social Work

Date: 9 December 2005

SMOKING POLICY CONSULTATION

Dundee Family Placement Service has recently undertaken a review of its smoking policy in relation to fostering and adoption. There has been an extensive consultation exercise undertaken with carers as part of this review.

1. All carers were invited to attend a meeting with the Service Manager of Family Placement to discuss changes to policy.
2. All carers were given the opportunity to write to the Service Manager of Family Placement with their views on what the smoking policy should be.
3. All carers were given a copy of the draft policy and had a one-to-one discussion with their Resource Worker on the implications of the proposed policy for them.

Currently we have 49 children (out of 132) placed in households where carer(s) smoke.

While the majority of foster carers support the proposed amended policy, there are a number of foster carers who have said they will refuse to adhere to this.

Specifically, out of 27 smoking households, 13 have said they would agree to try and work within the parameters of the new policy and 14 have indicated they will not, and will continue to smoke in front of children. It is proposed that the Family Placement Service will continue to work with these 14 carer households to try and reduce the effect of their smoking on the children in their care. It is acknowledged that we cannot achieve an immediate policy implementation in these households but will work toward this. Carers who continue to breach the policy, after further information and discussion, will be the subject of a fostering review to discuss the implications of this in terms of their continued fostering.

All new foster and adoptive carers will be approved on the basis of their written agreement to the new policy.

The Social Work Directorate agreed the revised policy on 17th November 2005.