

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH COMMITTEE – 28 SEPTEMBER 2015

REPORT ON: FAMILY PLACEMENT POLICY AMENDMENTS

REPORT BY: HEAD OF SERVICE STRATEGY, INTEGRATION, PERFORMANCE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

REPORT NO: 335-2015

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek agreement of the Committee to a proposed amendment to the Family Placement smoking policy, a proposed amendment to the bedroom sharing policy for looked after children and the introduction of a policy in respect of the minimum size of bedrooms for looked after children.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- Notes the content of this report and approves the amendments to the family placement smoking policy and the policy on looked after children sharing bedrooms (as detailed in appendix 1 and 2).
- Approves the introduction of a policy in relation to bedroom sizes for looked after children (appendix 3).

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 The following report details a number of policy proposals that take account of good practice guidance and research evidence. Dundee City Council Family Placement service considers these proposals evidence a commitment to continuous service improvement and promote positive experiences for children and young people even within a context of pressurized resources. Reference is made to Article III of the minute of meeting of the Social Work and Health Committee held on 19 December 2005 where report 726-2005 was submitted in relation to Family Placement smoking Policy and article IV of the minute of meeting of the Social Work and Health Committee held on 25 June 2007 where report 324-2007 was submitted in relation to bedroom sharing for Looked After Children.

4.2 **Family Placement Smoking Policy**

- 4.2.1 The current policy states that all children under 5 years, or a child of any age with a known respiratory condition, should have a smoke free environment. Carers should not smoke in front of foster children. Children and young people should not be allowed to smoke within the foster home and should be actively discouraged from smoking elsewhere by their carers.
- 4.2.2 The proposed policy extends the restrictions on smoking to include the use of E-cigarettes, smoking in cars and prohibits the placement of any child under 5 years of age in a fostering household where there are smokers.
- 4.2.3 These proposals take account of research into the negative impact on children of secondhand smoke, good practice guidance on safeguarding the health of vulnerable children and young people and the imminent ban on smoking in cars that carry children.
- 4.2.4 Three carer households will be directly affected by the revised smoking policy and in these cases they will be able to continue fostering by amending their lower age range up to 5 years of age.
- 4.2.5 Foster carers have been consulted in respect of the proposed new policy and no objections have been received.

4.3 **Policy on Bedroom Sharing for Looked After Children**

- 4.3.1 The current policy states that all looked after children in foster placements aged 10 years and over should have a bedroom of their own. Siblings of the same gender who have expressed a wish to share may do so but should still have a room of their own available to them.
- 4.3.2 The proposed policy reduces the age whereby unrelated children of different genders can share a bedroom to 8 years. Siblings of the same gender can continue to share a bedroom up to the age of 10 years if they wish.
- 4.3.3 The proposed policy also introduces a restriction on babies and young children sharing a bedroom with adult members of the fostering household; babies under 12 months may share a bedroom with the approved foster carer but not beyond this unless under exceptional circumstances as detailed in Appendix 2.
- 4.3.4 These proposals are based on the recognised needs of children in relation to privacy and personal space particularly as they become more aware of their own bodies and gender differences. They also take account of the developmental needs of young children as well as the foster carers' needs for privacy.
- 4.3.5 Approximately fifteen carer households will be directly affected by the revised room sharing policy; these include a number of carers who only offer baby placements or who offer occasional respite placements for babies. It is anticipated that many of the households affected will continue to offer fostering placements by amending their approval ranges.
- 4.3.6 Foster carers have been consulted about the proposals and only one objection has been received.

4.4 Policy in Respect of the Minimum Size of Bedrooms for Looked After Children

4.4.1 Currently decisions in relation to the appropriateness of bedrooms are taken by resource workers in consultation with their line managers. The proposed policy seeks to clarify the basis on which such decisions are made. Bedrooms should be large enough to accommodate not only a bed but also sufficient storage for the child's personal possessions. It should also be large enough for the child to retreat to for some private time should they so wish.

4.4.2 The range and diversity of children needing placement makes it unsuitable to set rigid space requirements based on the number of square metres available but factors such as the age, gender and specific needs of individual children should be taken into account.

4.4.3 No fostering households are believed to be affected by this policy.

4.4.4 Foster carers have been consulted in respect of the proposed new policy and no objections have been received.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

An Equality Impact Assessment is attached to this report.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

The Chief Executive, Executive Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal Services and Foster Carers were consulted in the preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

LAURA BANNERMAN
HEAD OF SERVICE
STRATEGY, INTEGRATION, PERFORMANCE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

DATE: 9 SEPTEMBER 2015

Family Placement Smoking Policy

No children under 5 years of age will be placed in a household where a carer or other members of the household smoke. Children of any age who have a chronic health condition or disability will not be placed in a household where there are smokers.

All children and young people should have a smoke free environment. There will be no smoking anywhere in the house or in the car.

Carers, other members of the carer's household or visitors to the home should not smoke in front of the child or young person.

The policy in relation to smoking applies equally to the use of E-cigarettes.

Children and young people will not be allowed to smoke within the foster home or foster carer's car and should be actively discouraged from smoking elsewhere by their carers.

Applicants to foster (or adopt) a child of under 5 years must have stopped smoking at the point of application.

The new policy will apply to new carers immediately it is adopted. There will be transitional arrangements for existing carers; children should not be moved from existing placements solely on the basis of this new policy being adopted.

Policy on Looked After Children sharing bedrooms

No looked after child will share a bedroom with anyone aged 8 years or older.

An exception can be made where birth siblings of the same gender (or half-siblings) choose to share a bedroom.

Birth sibling (or half-siblings) of different genders cannot share a bedroom once they reach 10 years.

Unrelated looked after children of different genders cannot share a bedroom once they reach 8 years.

No child will share a bedroom with an adult, unless this is a baby under 12 months and the adult is the approved foster carer.

No child of 12 months+ will share a bedroom with carers.

Exceptions may need to be made for children who remain in placement post 12 months if an active care plan is in place and they are likely to be returning home or moving on to an alternative permanent placement within a short period of time.

The new policy will apply to new carers immediately it is adopted. There will be transitional arrangements for existing carers; children will not be moved from existing placements solely on the basis of this new policy being adopted.

Policy on bedroom size for Looked After children

All bedrooms must have a window.

A single bedroom must have enough floor space for a bed, free standing wardrobe (unless there is built in wardrobe) and a chest of drawers. A single bedroom cannot be used for bunk beds unless there is sufficient room for two single wardrobes (or one double) and large chest of drawers.

A double bedroom requires enough floor space for two beds (or bunk beds), two single wardrobes or one double (unless there is built in wardrobe) and large chest of drawers.

The range and diversity of children needing placement and the different profiles of potential carers for these children makes it unsuitable to set rigid space requirements based on the number of square metres available. Assessing social workers should satisfy themselves that each individual applicant's accommodation is suitable to enable the applicant to provide safe and stimulating care. In reaching such a decision, a number of factors will need to be taken into account, not least the age, gender and numbers of children proposed to be fostered.

Bedrooms should be large enough to accommodate not only a bed but also sufficient storage for the child's personal possessions. It should also be large enough for the child to retreat to for some private time should they so wish.

The new policy will apply to new carers immediately it is adopted. There will be transitional arrangements for existing carers; children will not be moved from existing placements solely on the basis of this new policy being adopted.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Part 1: Description/Consultation

Is this a Rapid Equality Impact Assessment (RIAT)?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is this a Full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Date of Assessment:	21/07/15	Committee Report Number: 335-2015
Title of document being assessed:	Family Placement Policy Amendments	
1. This is a new policy, procedure, strategy or practice being assessed (If yes please check box) <input type="checkbox"/>	This is an existing policy, procedure, strategy or practice being assessed? (If yes please check box) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
2. Please give a brief description of the policy, procedure, strategy or practice being assessed.	(1) Family Placement Smoking Policy (2) Policy on Looked After children sharing bedrooms (3) Policy on minimum size of bedrooms for Looked After children	
3. What is the intended outcome of this policy, procedure, strategy or practice?	(1) To safeguard the health of Looked After children in foster care (2) To promote a safe and nurturing physical environment for children in foster care (3) To promote a nurturing physical environment for children in foster care	
4. Please list any existing documents which have been used to inform this Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment.	Committee report 726 – 2005 Committee report 324-2007 Tobacco Control Strategy – DCC	
5. Has any consultation, involvement or research with protected characteristic communities informed this assessment? If yes please give details.	No	
6. Please give details of council officer involvement in this assessment. (e.g. names of officers consulted, dates of meetings etc)	Gail Aboim	
7. Is there a need to collect further evidence or to involve or consult protected characteristics communities on the impact of the proposed policy? (Example: if the impact on a community is not known what will you do to gather the information needed and when will you do this?)	No. Consultation has been undertaken with foster carers and the impact of the policies will continue to be monitored via foster carer reviews and carer consultative groups.	

Part 2: Protected Characteristics

Which protected characteristics communities will be positively or negatively affected by this policy, procedure or strategy?

NB Please place an X in the box which best describes the "overall" impact. It is possible for an assessment to identify that a positive policy can have some negative impacts and visa versa. When this is the case please identify both positive and negative impacts in Part 3 of this form.

If the impact on a protected characteristic communities are not known please state how you will gather evidence of any potential negative impacts in box Part 1 section 7 above.

	Positively	Negatively	No Impact	Not Known
Ethnic Minority Communities including Gypsies and Travellers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People with a disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socio-economic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part 3: Impacts/Monitoring


<p>1. Have any positive impacts been identified?</p> <p>(We must ensure at this stage that we are not achieving equality for one strand of equality at the expense of another)</p>	<p>The health and well-being of all children and young people in foster care will be improved.</p>
<p>2. Have any negative impacts been identified?</p> <p>(Based on direct knowledge, published research, community involvement, customer feedback etc. If unsure seek advice from your departmental Equality Champion.)</p>	<p>The policy in respect of room sharing may result in a small number of foster carers with limited bedroom accommodation reducing the age range or number of children they can care for or even stopping fostering.</p>
<p>3. What action is proposed to overcome any negative impacts?</p> <p>(E.g. involving community groups in the development or delivery of the policy or practice, providing information in community languages etc. See Good Practice on DCC equalities web page)</p>	<p>The service will seek to minimise the loss of fostering beds through negotiation with foster carers about adjusting their fostering approval categories i.e. offering placements to sibling groups, making better use of available accommodation. The service will also continue to actively recruit new foster carers to increase the numbers and range of placements available.</p>
<p>4. Is there a justification for continuing with this policy even if it cannot be amended or changed to end or reduce inequality without compromising its intended outcome?</p> <p>(If the policy that shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination you must stop and seek legal advice)</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>5. Has a 'Full' Equality Impact Assessment been recommended?</p> <p>(If the policy is a major one or is likely to have a major impact on protected characteristics communities a Full Equality Impact Assessment may be required. Seek advice from your departmental Equality lead.)</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>6. How will the policy be monitored?</p> <p>(How will you know it is doing what it is intended to do? e.g. data collection, customer survey etc.)</p>	<p>Via annual reviews of the fostering and adoption service.</p>

Part 4: Contact Information

Name of Department or Partnership	Social Work
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Type of Document	
Human Resource Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
General Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Strategy/Service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Change Papers/Local Procedure	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidelines and Protocols	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Manager Responsible	Author Responsible
Name: Margo Dymock	Name: Gail Aboim
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Signature of author of the policy:		Date: 21/07/15
Signature of Director/Head of Service:	Laura Bannerman	Date: 25/08/2015
Name of Director/Head of Service:	Laura Bannerman	
Date of Next Policy Review:	Annual	