

Firearms, Shotguns, Weapons, Knives and Ammunition

STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- [Standard 10 - Providing a suitable physical environment for the foster child.](#)

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- [Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.](#)
- [Standard 3 - Understand health and safety, and healthy care.](#)

Children's social care prioritises the safety of children in foster care, adoption, and special guardianship arrangements. While acknowledging the rights of individuals to own licensed firearms, it is important to consider the potential risks associated with their presence.

Research demonstrates that the presence of guns increases the likelihood of accidents, suicides, assaults, and crime-related fatalities. However, it is recognised that firearms are legally owned for legitimate purposes such as target shooting, game shooting, and recreational activities. Firearm possession in the UK requires individuals to obtain a certificate from the Police, which involves demonstrating their suitability, providing a valid reason, and ensuring public safety. Secure storage of firearms and ammunition is a requirement for obtaining these certificates.

It is essential to assess and mitigate all potential risks, including those posed by other recreational activities or ownership of certain weapons, when determining the safety of children in foster care settings.

It is recognised that licensed firearms, shotguns, unlicensed weapons, replica guns and knives can potentially endanger children in their care. Therefore, a thorough risk assessment is conducted when assessing the suitability of foster carers and other household members who possess firearm certificates or have unlicensed weapons, knives and replica guns on the premises.

When placing children with foster carers, the presence of firearms on the premises is taken into consideration during the matching and risk assessment process. For children with a history of exposure to violence, it may be deemed unsuitable to place them in a home with firearms. Prior to placement, age-appropriate discussions are conducted with the child to address any concerns and ensure they understand the safety measures in place for gun storage, as well as the purpose of the firearms.

BFFC's IFA recommends that the safest approach is to store firearms, shotguns, weapons and ammunition away from the family home. If storage at the family home is necessary, including knives, strict guidelines must be followed, as discussed in the Home Safety check. This might include the use of locked cabinets and commercially manufactured gun cabinets that meet recommended security standards. Removal of firearms from the cabinets should

only occur when transporting them to approved activities and they must be lawfully secured during transit.

Justifiable reasons for storing weapons at the family home may include living and working on a farm or belonging to a shooting club without suitable storage facilities. Children Looked After must not be involved in any activities involving weapons unless this has been agreed in writing by their social worker and/or a person with parental responsibility. If permission has been given, children must be appropriately supervised and attendance at such activities should form part of organised shooting or sporting events.

If foster carers confirm ownership of firearms, shotguns, or air rifles exceeding 12ft per pound of kinetic energy, their current certificates must be verified, and copies retained in their files. The social worker must inspect the storage arrangements for guns, weapons, and ammunition, ensuring they are securely stored to prevent access by children or young people. The social worker will also assess the applicants' understanding of the risks associated with firearms and their responsible usage. Record-keeping is crucial, and the possession of firearms or weapons must be documented in the fostering assessment report and reported to the relevant panel or BFFC's IFA's Registered Manager.

Foster Carers who plan to purchase further weapons and/or a new weapon must notify their social worker prior to purchase and where applicable also the social worker of the placing authority.

During the annual review of foster carers, the security of firearms, weapons, and ammunition, as well as the possession of a valid firearms/shotgun certificate (valid for 5 years), must be verified. Any concerns regarding storage, usage, or the absence of a certificate should be promptly reported to the relevant managers overseeing the care of children-looked-after. Additionally, the social workers responsible for the children in placement must be notified. If applicants are found to possess firearms or shotguns without a certificate, the appropriate authorities will be notified. Failure to comply may result in recommendations for removing children from placement and terminating the foster carers approval.