



Foster Care Accommodation Guidance

Policy Owner:	Yemi Ukwenu, Registered Manager
Version:	3
Date:	January 2024
Review Date:	January 2026

Policy Summary:

This document has been produced to outline SCF IFA's policy regarding foster care accommodation and is based on legislation and minimum standards for fostering households to provide adequate space for children looked after.

Contents

Contents	2
Foster Care Accommodation Guidance	3
Statutory Framework.....	3
Bedrooms.....	3
Bedroom Sharing	4
General Living Space	4
Bathrooms and Toilets.....	5
Bedroom Check Guidance	5

Foster Care Accommodation Guidance

Foster homes must provide adequate space to care for a child looked after, the space provided must be a key consideration prior to the decision to proceed with an assessment and then throughout the respective foster carer's fostering career.

Based on legislation and minimum standards the requirement is to provide foster homes that reflect the child's assessed need for privacy and space. It is recommended that only applicants with a bedroom available for fostering, and general living space large enough to accommodate all who live there, proceed to assessment. There are exceptional circumstances whereby an applicant or foster carer does not have a spare bedroom and can only care for a child under 2 years of age. Every child should be afforded space where homework and other activities can be undertaken. In respect of a child with special needs or disabilities suitable aid and adaptations should be provided and fitted by suitably trained staff. (For Parent and Child Placements - see separate tool kit)

All accommodation, furniture and furnishings must be of a good standard and hygienically clean. Children looked after's bedrooms should be furnished and decorated to the same standards of foster carers' own children and be age appropriate.

Statutory Framework

The statutory frameworks of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland requires the fostering provider to make available foster carers who provide a suitable physical environment for the child looked after.

For example, Standard 10.6 National Minimum Standards (NMS), published by DFE, states that each foster child, aged three years and over, should have his/her own bedroom.

"In the foster home, each child over the age of three should have their own bedroom. If this is not possible, the sharing of a bedroom is agreed by each child's responsible authority and each child has their own area within the bedroom. Before seeking agreement for the sharing of a bedroom, the fostering service provider takes into account any potential for bullying, any history of abuse or abusive behaviour, the wishes of the children concerned and all other pertinent facts. The decision-making process and outcome of the assessment are recorded in writing where bedroom sharing is agreed."

All accommodation and outdoor spaces should comply with Health and Safety Standards (see Health and Safety Policy and Profile which ensures an annual assessment is carried out).

Bedrooms

A clear consideration when assessing the appropriateness of accommodation is the proposed sleeping arrangements for children looked after.

- A child over the age of 3 years should not share a bedroom with a child of the opposite sex. An exception may be an emergency short duration placement and to keep a sibling group together this is in collaboration with the respective Local Authority. In this case, a bedroom sharing risk assessment will be completed by SCF IFA (please see separate policy).
- A child under the age of 2 years may be permitted to share the foster carer's bedroom (with prior agreement of the respective local authority).
- A child should not share a foster carer's bed in any circumstances.

All children must have their own bed and the accommodation must allow for any assessed need for privacy for individual children. Bedrooms should be large enough to accommodate the bed and sufficient storage for the child's personal possessions. Needs will be shaped by the child for example a teenager, or a child with a disability will have different needs to toddlers.

Bunk beds are not recommended for children under 5 years or over 14 Years. Foster carers should check and ensure that bunk beds are clear from hazards.

There are various styles of beds e.g. study beds; safety always remains the priority. The health and safety assessment should also assess the safety of a design of a bed; however, it is the foster carers' responsibility to keep the bed free from hazards.

Bedroom checks are carried out regularly by SCF IFA via the SSW supervision visits, health and safety assessments, unannounced visits and on the day of the foster carer review meeting wherever possible.

The foster home is inspected at least annually, without appointment, by Supervising Social Workers, to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of children looked after; the inspection includes a bedroom check.

Bedroom Sharing

Only applicants with a spare bedroom for fostering should proceed to assessment unless there are exceptional circumstances and should be considered for under 2's only to share their bedroom. In respect of placements that lead to children sharing a room, careful risk assessments must be carried out. The sharing of a bedroom must be agreed by each child's responsible local authority. Please refer to and use Bedroom Risk Assessment. If a child has the potential to display bullying behaviour or, is known to have been abused, or it is known that the child has abused another child, then the child's needs and the needs of all other children in the foster home are assessed before any decision is made to allow sharing of bedrooms. The decision-making process and the outcome of that risk assessment must be recorded in writing and shared with the children's social worker. Please see bedroom sharing guidance.

General Living Space

The general living space must be large enough to comfortably accommodate the needs of all who live there. Attention must be given to assessment of:

- Appropriate space for children and young people to complete homework, free from distractions.
- For younger children, sufficient play space and storage for toys.
- The bedroom of younger children should be on the same floor as the foster carer.
- The standard of the looked after child's accommodation must be comparable to the standard of the birth child's accommodation.

Bathrooms and Toilets

Bathrooms and toilets should be appropriately situated and accessible for ages and abilities of children to be fostered.

Bedroom Check Guidance

Where there are quality and safeguarding issues that need to be addressed following bedroom checks, the supervising social worker must raise the concerns with their line manager as soon as possible.

Examples of quality and safeguarding issues are:

- The child is not sleeping in the room the carer has stated during assessment and visits.
- Someone else is sleeping in the room.
- Health and safety matters in the home (e.g. unsuitable beds, not sleeping on beds, fire hazards, unsafe equipment etc).
- The bedroom does not have adequate space to accommodate beds, necessary furniture, and equipment. For example, toys for younger children, study facilities for older children. The space and design of the whole house and everyone's needs must be considered.

You must also refer to:

- Bedroom Sharing risk assessments
- Unannounced Visit Guidance
- Safer Care Policy
- Health and safety assessment on file

CHILD'S BEDROOM – Ask the child to show you their room.

The needs of children continually change and there will be ongoing assessment to ascertain any changes that need to be made to the child's bedroom. For example, bunk beds that may be suitable for children 8 or 9 years of age may no longer be suitable when the same child is a young person of 14 years of age.

FOSTER CARER'S BEDROOM – This should be checked as part of the health and safety assessment and unannounced visits. Furthermore, if a baby is sleeping in a foster carer's room, this will need to be checked on SSW announced visits as well to ensure the baby has a separate cot.