

## **Swindon Borough Council**

### **Fostering Service**

### **Smoking Policy**

#### **Introduction**

Swindon Borough Council (SBC) have a duty to ensure the health of all children in care and their carers is prioritised, the welfare of the child remains paramount within the care provided by our foster carers.

It is well known that smoking results in many health risks, for not only the person who smokes but also those around them who may inhale second-hand smoke. SBC recognises the risk to the health of children living in smoking households. The risk is greatly increased for children under 5, children with a disability, or those already registered with established medical conditions, especially heart and respiratory disease or glue ear. Therefore, it is in the interest for all children to be supported to live in smoke-free homes.

This policy should be read alongside the BAAF Practice note 68; *Reducing the risks of environmental tobacco smoke for looked after children and their carers* (2018), and the joint briefing from Fostering Network and Ash; *Foster care, adoption and smoking* (2016). Whilst there are no national regulations in relation to foster carers smoking, each fostering service should have clear written guidance on smoking in foster homes and this should be discussed with all prospective and approved carers. Foster carers need to be aware of the guidance and need to be mindful that they are acting as role models for the children and young people in their care.

#### **1. SBC Smoking Policy (including tobacco and electronic cigarettes/vaping)**

- 1.1. Children under 5 years old should not live in the care of foster carers who smoke and/or vape.
- 1.2. Children with disabilities, of any age, who have respiratory problems (such as asthma, heart problems or glue ear) should not live with foster carers who smoke and/or vape.
- 1.3. When considering this information, SBC will not assess prospective foster carers who smoke and/or vape for: children under five, children with disabilities or those with established medical conditions especially heart and respiratory disease or glue ear.
- 1.4. It is expected that all foster carers will provide a smoke free home environment for all children and young people; this means no person should smoke or vape inside the home.
- 1.5. Any person who smokes and/or vapes (including other members of the household and visitors) are expected to smoke and/or vape outside of the house, away from all children and young people.

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1.6. If a young person living with foster carers smokes and/or vapes, then the expectation is that they will be not permitted to smoke and/or vape in the home and will be encouraged to follow the fostering household smoking risk assessment. The young person must be made aware of the house rules on smoking and vaping as soon as they move to live in the home. It is never acceptable for young people to smoke or vape in their bedrooms.

1.7. Foster carers should actively encourage children and young people who do smoke and/or vape to seek advice and guidance to help them give up. It is expected that all foster carers will educate children and young people in relation to the effects of smoking and vaping.

1.8. Foster carers must not buy or provide cigarettes, vapes or tobacco for young people. Foster carers must not use cigarettes/tobacco/vapes as a reward. In the UK the legal minimum age that an individual can buy cigarettes, tobacco and cigarette papers is 18 years old.

It is expected that all foster carers will not smoke and/or vape in any vehicle used to transport children, nor will they allow a child to be carried in a car where someone is or has been smoking/vaping.

1.9. It is recognised that there are additional complexities involved when considering the SBC smoking policy where children are placed in the care of family and friends carers who smoke and/or vape.

1.9.1. Only under such exceptional circumstances should consideration be given to the benefits of the child living with people who they are likely to have a pre-existing relationship with, alongside any additional health risks they may experience within the living arrangement. An assessment of the family and friends carers will need to outline how this has been considered to provide a recommendation about the best interest for individual children. Where it is deemed in the child's best interest to live with family and friends carers who smoke and/or vape, an exemption to their approval may be required if agreed by the Fostering Service Manager. The Fostering Service Manager will be required to provide a view and make a final decision about the child's living arrangements and lived experiences with the family and friends carers.

1.10. All potential or approved foster carers who smoke and/or vape (including family and friends connected carers) will be encouraged to stop smoking/vaping and/or to create a smoke-free home for the child. SBC will signpost and encourage prospective and approved SBC foster carers who smoke to access further support, such as by contacting their GP or accessing further information such as: [Quit smoking - Better Health - NHS](#)

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[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

- 1.11. All toxic household items, including: tobacco products, lighters/matches, e-cigarettes and refill liquids, must be kept out of the reach of children and young people at all times.
- 1.12. If any applicant/carer has given up smoking, SBC will only agree for children under-five years old to live in their care once they have not smoked for at least six months.
2. **Electronic Cigarettes (also known as e-cigarettes/vapes) (Vaping)**
  - 2.1. The use of e-cigarettes/vapes has increased over recent years and become more widespread. The long term affects to users and those around them are still yet to be fully researched and understood. Public Health England reports published in 2015 and updated in 2018 concluded that e-cigarettes are significantly less harmful than tobacco, whilst acknowledging that they are not completely risk-free products (McNeill et al (2015, 2018) cited in Coram BAAF Practice note 68).
  - 2.2. There have been reported incidents of fires caused by e-cigarette chargers. It is recommended that e-cigarette chargers are not left plugged in overnight or while there is no one in the home.
  - 2.3. SBC will not preclude foster carers due to their use of electronic cigarettes, however we consider that good practice should be applied and therefore the same guidelines should be adhered to by all foster carers, as outlined above within the smoking policy.
3. **Rules about tobacco and E-cigarettes**
  - 3.1. It is illegal:
    - for adults to buy (or try to buy) tobacco products or e-cigarettes for someone under 18.
    - to smoke in private vehicles that are carrying someone under 18.
    - for retailers to sell tobacco products, electronic cigarettes or e-liquids to someone under 18.