

## **Safer Caring: A New Approach supplementary resources (2017)**

### **Chapter 8: Your family safer caring plan**

#### **The child's safer caring plan**

Chapter 8 of Safer Caring: A New Approach introduces the need for fostering families to have a document to ensure that everyone in the fostering household understands the principles and rules for living safely together – a family safer caring plan. This means 'safe' for any fostered child, for carers' own children, for foster carers themselves, other members of their family network and other people who share the foster carers' lives. There are suggestions in Safer Caring: A New Approach for how people can be actively involved in this process and for areas that fostering families should consider and include in their family safer caring plan.

In addition to this family safer caring plan, practice has developed in England to also have a child-specific safer caring plan for each fostered child in the family. While there have been no changes in legislation, regulations, guidance or standards to enforce this additional plan, this practice reflects better awareness of and management of risks that face fostered children and those that look after them.

A risk assessment is often completed by the child's social worker before the child is placed and the foster carers should be provided with a copy of this to inform the development of the child's safer caring plan. The child's safer caring plan should outline the approach the carer and others will need to take in light of the child's needs, and how any identified risks can best be managed in the context of the needs and circumstances of everyone in the fostering household.

The child's safer caring plan is in addition to the family safer caring plan; both complement each other. The family safer caring plan should be reviewed on an annual basis or whenever deemed necessary due to changes in the composition or nature of the fostering household. The child's safer caring plan should be reviewed regularly in response to any developments taking place within the placement. It will need to take account of changes in, or understanding of, the needs of the child, the length and nature of their relationship with the carers and/or other household and family members (including other fostered children), and the risks that they may face from the actions of others or themselves, as well as any risk they pose to others. Such risks include those discussed in the additional resources to Chapter 1: Where is the harm?.

Inspections of services across the UK to looked after children and of fostering services expect to see evidence of the identification, management and review of risks to children in placement. A child-specific safer caring plan which is regularly reviewed in response to events or issues arising in placement is seen as a positive tool in the support of children and foster carers in promoting stability of placement, and in maintaining the safety of everyone in the fostering household.