

Smoking & E-Cigarette Policy

Soundly Fostering has a smoke-free policy and commits to children living in environments which promote their health and wellbeing.

Soundly Fostering carers and staff know that it is illegal to buy cigarettes or e-cigarettes for young people under the age of 18, and consequently, these will never be supplied by us.

Arrangements for smoking outside of the home can be made with the knowledge of the child or young person's social worker.

However, every effort will be made to support individuals in quitting smoking.

Carers and staff will not smoke in the presence of children, young people or adults living with them as part of the fostering household. This applies to all forms of smoking, including e-cigarettes/vapes.

Scope of This Chapter

To explain the legality of smoking and outline the requirements and expectations in instances when carers or young people are smokers.

Regulations and Standards

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

Regulation 15 - Health of children placed with foster parents

Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards

Standard 6 - Promoting good health and wellbeing

[Children and Young Persons \(Protection from Tobacco\) Act 1991](#)

Relevant Guidance

[NHS Choices – Stop Smoking](#)

[NHS Young People and Vaping](#)

[Electronic Cigarettes – Evidence and Advice on E-cigarettes \(GOV.UK\)](https://www.gov.uk/e-cigarettes-evidence-and-advice)

Introduction

The Government smoking ban, set out in the Health Act 2006, came into effect in England on 1 July 2007, and made it illegal to smoke in any public place, with exemptions for certain residences, including prisons, care homes and psychiatric units.

The agency wants all children to live in an environment that promotes their health and well-being. Foster carers play a key role in protecting and promoting children's health. Although foster carers' homes are not regarded as a workplace, the rights of carers to smoke must be balanced against the rights of looked-after children to be healthy.

The health risks from smoking and passive smoking are well known, with smoking being one of the greatest causes of preventable illness and premature death in the United Kingdom.

Most children will have experimented with tobacco by the age of 16, and this is a key age at which behaviour can be shaped and influenced. Research does suggest that smoke-free environments, promoting non-smoking as the cultural norm and providing children with information about the dangers of smoking do help to prevent young people from starting to smoke. Providing positive non-smoking role models and support to stop smoking can help them to quit.

It is important, therefore, that the fostering agency establish a smoke-free policy which includes foster carers and the children they look after.

Foster Carers

It is important that foster carers understand and are made aware of the detrimental effects of smoking and passive smoking on their health and that of other people in their household.

During the recruitment, assessment and preparation process, discussions will take place with applicants regarding our expectations and requirements.

The fostering agency will make every effort to support and encourage carers who wish to give up smoking.

The agency is clear that any carer who smokes/vapes or lives in a household where people smoke or vape cannot be approved to take a child under the age of five. In addition, any child with known middle ear or respiratory tract infections, or who is prone to asthma and bronchitis, may not be placed in a smoking household, although exceptions may be made where it is in the child's best interests. A carer will need to have given up smoking or vaping for at least a year before their approval of children under the age of 5 can be considered.

The issue will be raised regularly with all approved carers who smoke and reinforced through regular supervision. Support is crucial, particularly as smoking can be a stress response, and consideration needs to be given to ways of minimising the level of stress experienced.

The Supervising Social Worker will agree a smoke-free plan with the carers to include the following:

- Carers and other members of the household, including visitors, will not smoke or vape in the company of children of any age, in the home or in the car and will promote non-smoking as the norm;
- Smoking or vaping will take place outside the home;
- Tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, fluids, matches or lighters, will not be left lying around or accessible to children.

Children and Young People

It is illegal for retailers to sell any tobacco products to anyone below the age of 18. In the same way, foster carers will not be permitted to provide children with tobacco products.

Some children may start smoking or be smokers at the point of becoming looked after. You should support and encourage them to reduce or stop smoking. Support is available from the Looked After Children's Nurse or the young person's GP. This should be discussed with the child/young person's social worker and addressed as part of the young person's Health Plan.

In situations where a child already smokes, it is reasonable to expect the foster carer to have an agreed place to store any smoking products whilst the child is in the foster home and for the child to hand them over to the carer. This will be explained to the child and their social worker and recorded in the Placement Plan. The child will be expected to comply with the smoke-free plan for the foster home.

Electronic Cigarettes

“The use of e-cigarettes among young people is rare and is almost entirely confined to those young people who already smoke”.

[Public Health England – Independent Expert E-cigarettes Evidence Review](#) (2018)
[Creating a Smoke-Free Generation and Tackling Youth Vaping](#) (2022-2024)

It is an offence for shops to sell e-cigarettes to under 18s or for an adult to buy e-cigarettes for them.

The long-term effects of vaping on health are unknown, but current research indicates that their use is significantly less harmful than conventional smoking, and that the use of e-cigarettes is currently the most popular tool used by smokers who want to quit.

However, if a young person indicates that they would like to try e-cigarettes as a way of giving up smoking, they should be encouraged to contact the LAC Nurse, their GP or local stop smoking services, which are recommended by Public Health England as the most effective way to stop smoking.

The welfare of children is the agency’s primary concern, and the long-term impact of e-cigarettes is unknown. The fostering agency will continue to monitor any research regarding this subject and will review information as appropriate. While the effects of e-cigarettes or passive inhalation of the same are unknown, the agency will treat them the same as any form of smoking.

There is also a useful website which openly explains vapes to young people under 18:
[Talk To Frank](#)