

## **Procedure for Prospective and Approved Adoptive Parents And Foster Carers in relation to the Bridgend County Borough Council Smoking Policy.**

### **Introduction**

This Procedure should be read in conjunction with BCBC's Smoke-Free Policy in relation to the workplace (June 2007) and the BAAF Practice Note 51 "Reducing the risks of environmental tobacco smoke for looked after children and their carers".

### **1. Information Giving**

- 1.1. Details of the policy will be incorporated into the written information supplied to prospective adopters and foster carers and posted on the BCBC website.
- 1.2. The policy will be incorporated into all publicity material, including recruitment and eligibility criteria and Statements of Purpose.
- 1.3. From initial contact with their local adoption agency/foster care agency, prospective adopters and foster carers should be made aware of the BCBC Smoking Policy so that, if they are smokers, they can decide whether they wish to proceed with their application and take the necessary action to stop smoking.
- 1.4. The requirements of the policy will be revisited at information evenings (if held), at the initial counselling stage, during the adoption preparation course and formal assessment, during reviews of the assessment's progress and at the adoption and foster care panels which are considering the prospective adopter's/foster carers application.

### **2. Advice, Guidance and Monitoring**

- 2.1. The approach to be taken is to educate, inform and support adopters and foster carers to secure compliance wherever possible.
- 2.2. The effectiveness of both the policy and procedure relies heavily on good communication, openness and honesty and on reliable self-reporting by the prospective and approved adopters and foster carers.
- 2.3. Social workers should offer every encouragement to prospective adopters and foster carers to stop smoking. The full range of smoking cessation techniques should be signposted to prospective adopters and recorded on their file.

- 2.4. It is important that prospective adopters and foster carers establish a date from when they stopped smoking so that “the clock can start ticking” towards their attaining a year’s smoke-free status, to comply with the policy.
- 2.5. The assessing social worker may need to make enquiries of referees in certain situations e.g. if an applicant has recently given up smoking.

### **3. Timescales, the Assessment Process and Placement Considerations**

- 3.1. During the first 6 months’ smoke-free status, preliminary work can be undertaken by the Adoption or Fostering Agency – to include initial counselling, attendance on a preparation course, the undertaking of all necessary statutory and medical checks etc – **but the formal assessment of prospective adopters or foster carers will not begin until they have successfully completed at least 6 months’ smoke-free status. There may be exceptions to this if foster carers are applying to foster only children over the age of 5 years. The fostering team manager will decide if an exception is to be made and record the reasons for this.**
- 3.2. Their progress in stopping smoking should be discussed and monitored during the assessment and incorporated into the conclusions and recommendations section – to be signed / countersigned by the assessing social worker, the prospective adopters or foster carers and the Team Manager.
- 3.3. In certain specific circumstances, consideration can be given to placing a child under five years of age in an adoptive or fostering household where a smoker resides and, in these situations, **“the reasons for this decision and who was party to the decision must be recorded on the child’s file and agreed by the Team manager”**.
- 3.4. The circumstances in 3.3 above could apply to relative adopters or foster carers, the placement of a child for adoption with older siblings where a parent smokes, foster carers becoming adoptive parents etc., but is generally to be discouraged in accordance with the health needs of the child and the requirements of the policy. This approach maintains a level of flexibility and discretion and avoids the imposition of “blanket bans”, in line with BAAF Practice Note 51.

### **4. Post Placement Considerations**

- 4.1. Responsibility for upholding the policy does not end when the child is placed for adoption as he/she remains a “looked after” child until the Adoption Order is granted. The policy remains in place for the duration of all foster placements.
- 4.2. Accordingly, it may be appropriate to revisit the issue of smoking if the status of the adoptive parents or foster carers is unclear and/or in situations where a relapse has occurred. This could take place during ongoing support for the adoptive family or foster family and, more formally, at adoption and fostering reviews.

- 4.3. The requirement for the adoptive parent or foster parent to stop smoking could be assessed as an “adoption support need” or a “fostering support need” and incorporated into the Adoption or Fostering Support Plan.
- 4.4. In situations where a child has been placed for adoption or but where compliance with the requirements of the policy and procedure has been problematic, the requirements of the policy and an update of the adopter’s smoking status could be considered for inclusion by the adoption agency in the Suitability Report (Annex A) prepared when the application to adopt has been lodged with the Court.

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