

**Isle of Wight Council Fostering Service**  
**Smoking Policy**

1. The Isle of Wight Fostering Service acknowledges the proven skills and abilities of many of its carers who smoke but children's health must be the primary consideration.
2. The Service believes that a smoking environment should be avoided in the best interest of children who are to be placed away from home.
3. The Service is working towards a position where no Looked After Child will be living in a smoking household.
4. The main purpose of this policy is to reduce children's exposure to passive smoking within their foster homes and discourage young people from taking up smoking.
5. As the effects of passive smoking are greater for younger children, a move to smoke-free home environments for these children is proposed.
6. Currently approved foster carers who smoke will be encouraged to create a smoke-free home. Foster carers will also be advised to restrict their smoking to areas outside of their home and to ensure that children play, eat and sleep in smoke-free rooms and are not exposed to excessive smoking when visiting friends and relatives of the foster carers, or when other smokers visit the foster home.
7. It is advisable that foster carers do not smoke in front of young children and young people. Carers will also be expected not to advocate smoking by Looked After Children, for example by ensuring that they do not provide cigarettes or tobacco and ensuring that any cigarettes/lighters in the home are kept securely.
8. Smoking habits to be considered at a carer's annual review of registration.
9. From April 2008 children under 5 years will not be placed with foster carers that smoke. Children with a known disability as detailed in Recommendation 2 will also not be placed with foster carers/adopters that smoke.
10. An audit is currently underway of all Isle of Wight foster carers in relation to smoking. This information is being collated by the Fostering Service Team Manager and information in relation to carers and smoking, will be placed on the front section of carer's files.
11. No current placement will be disrupted but all carers that smoke that are currently approved for children aged 0-5 years will be informed that their approval will have to be varied and they will not have future placements of children under 5 years of age.
12. All fostering recruitment literature is currently being changed to reflect this new guidance. Prospective foster carers will be informed of this at initial enquiry stage and again at open information events.
13. In relation to family and friends of carers, the issue of smoking has to be weighed up alongside other information and would not constitute in itself a reason not to recommend such placements. However, family and friends of carers that smoke should be given full information about the effects of passive smoking and information about support services available to help give up smoking.
14. When social workers are referring a child/young person for a fostering placement they will be given information about whether the placement identified is with foster carers that smoke. The social worker can then give this information to the young person as appropriate and this can be taken into account when making placement decisions.
15. Foster carers already have information in the Foster Carer's Handbook about the risks of smoking. However they will be given further advice about this and the importance of never using cigarettes as a reward. Carers will also be given information on stop smoking support services for young people.
16. All foster carers will be sent a letter detailing information about support services available on the Isle of Wight. Supervising social workers will follow this up in meetings with carers and the issue of smoking will be addressed at foster carers review meetings. Carers will also be given advice about the need to keep the house smoke free and not allowing others to smoke in their home. They will also be sent information about the increased fire risks in the home. There will be a new chapter on this in the Foster Carers Handbook 2007/2008 revision.
17. Prospective foster carers for children 5 and under, that are making initial enquiries from April 2008 will be given information about the fact that they should have given up smoking 12 months prior to a placement being made with them of a child under 5 or a child with a disability.

Following the audit of the Isle of Wight foster carers a draft strategy will be drawn up to move to a situation over the next few years where no more smoking carers will be recruited. The implications of such an approach will have to be considered alongside the current high level of need for carers for teenagers.