



Kent County Council

Use of Closed Circuit Television Video (CCTV) in foster homes

Kent Fostering Service

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Introduction

There is an increasing number of people installing domestic CCTV cameras and smart doorbells to monitor and protect personal property, alongside smart speakers such as Alexa and Echo Show which also record video and/or sound, and pet cameras to monitor animal behaviour.

This policy is intended to help foster carers understand what they need to do if they have installed or are thinking of installing CCTV (or similar technology) in or outside of their home.

Guiding Principles

- Foster Carers must tell their Fostering Social Worker if they are going to install or change CCTV surveillance/similar technology and should expect to be asked about this at regular intervals.
- As a rule CCTV security surveillance cameras should **not** be used **inside** foster carers' homes and any cameras **inside** the home should be removed prior to approval as foster carers.
- Smart speakers (used to play music, set alarms etc) are usually permitted in both communal and sleeping areas, but where they are connected to the internet or upload data to the cloud or third-party site, there must be security measures in place (i.e., password / authentication) to prevent them from being hacked and children/young people accessing inappropriate material (i.e. explicit music) as far as is reasonably practicable.
- Pet cameras are usually permitted in communal areas with the express purpose of monitoring animal behaviour when no-one else is in the household or throughout the night where this is considered necessary by the carer/s.
- CCTV outside of the foster home to protect property (e.g., driveway and garden) is usually permitted.
- All use of CCTV/similar technology must be included in both the foster family and individual child/young person's safe care plan and make clear at a minimum where the technology is situated, how it is positioned, why it is in use and that all household members are aware of it.
- Foster Carers who have CCTV in place should follow guidance from the [Information Commissioners Office](#).

Exceptions to the use of CCTV inside the foster home

The use of CCTV inside the foster home will only be considered where it relates to the safety of household members and there are no equally effective alternatives. If

it is felt that there is a need to install a CCTV system inside the foster home, there must be a clear purpose for needing it, which is proportionate and balanced with the situation. Children and young people's bedrooms should always be a private area and the installation of CCTV will not be agreed, unless the child has a specific disability or health need that would warrant the use of this.

Where it has been identified that CCTV is necessary for the safety of household members and there is no effective alternative, the Fostering Social Worker must complete a short report requesting agreement to the use of CCTV inside the foster home. This must be signed by the foster carers, Fostering Social Worker, Team Manager and submitted to the Head of Fostering for agreement. This should be uploaded to the foster carers file and a copy provided to the foster carers to ensure any actions/comments are shared and agreed.

The areas to include in the report are:

- Identifying the reasons for installing the CCTV system. There are a range of measures by which the home can be safeguarded and these need to be explored first and reasons given as to why these will not be sufficient.
- It must be clear what is being recorded and viewed.
- It needs to be known if there are any other children in care within the home and how they might be affected by the CCTV system. This will be influenced by the proposed positioning of the cameras. If any system is going to be installed, then there needs to be reassurances that the privacy of others within the home and any child looked after is not compromised. The Local Authority will need to ensure that the camera is positioned appropriately.
- There will need to be an Agreement about who will have access to the images produced by the camera. It also needs to be clear as to who will take responsibility for the viewing and the disposing of any pictures or footage taken by the camera.
- It must be clear if the information is required to be used as evidence and why.
- Internet security is vital and therefore any system which has an internet connection must have the necessary up to date software to prevent this being breached.

Where it is agreed by the Head of Fostering that a CCTV system can be used inside the foster home the following principles should be always adhered to:

- All members of the household and any visitors must be aware that cameras are in place and why.
- The cameras can only be positioned in communal areas and not in bedrooms, bathrooms, or toilets.
- The Safer Care Plan must make it clear that cameras are in use within the foster home, where they are positioned and why they are being used.
- It must be made clear to all members of the household and professionals involved with the children placed, what happens to the information captured by the cameras. This should not be stored indefinitely and deleted as soon as it is no longer necessary. If there is no use for the footage, it should be deleted within 24 hours. Any information which is required to be kept must be stored

securely. Any information recorded by the system must only be used for the purpose for which it is intended.

- There needs to be clarity regarding who is responsible for the correct installation for the CCTV system and the accuracy and use of the information it gathers for example dates and time.
- The information must not be used for any purpose other than protecting the property or improving safeguarding and must not be used as a way of supervising children within the foster home.

Use of Baby Monitors within the foster home

Baby Monitors (with or without cameras) are an exception to the principles above when they are specifically used to help to keep a sleeping baby safe or it has been agreed with the childrens' social worker and fostering social worker that they can be used to monitor an older child who may have difficulties with sleep or has a health condition that needs monitoring. If the child is of an age and understanding where they can give consent to this, the foster carer/s should discuss with them.