



TRAFFORD
COUNCIL

Services for Children, Young People and Families

Children in care

Children's homes

Rooms and possessions searches

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Introduction

The home and staff should respect a child's wish for privacy and confidentiality as is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect the child.

Children should be informed on admission of the procedures for room and possession searches.

There should be a clear distinction between the cleaning of a room and a search. It is the responsibility of the manager of the home to make this clear to all staff and children. Staff, including domestic staff, will be entering rooms on a daily basis to keep the home clean and tidy. This does not involve any searching of child's possessions.

Grounds to carry out a search

A child's room or possessions can only be searched when it might be necessary to safeguard the welfare of the child or others.

Such as:

1. If a child were missing from care, the staff would be expected to search the rooms to ensure the child was not hiding within the home. Depending upon the circumstances it may be necessary to look for names and addresses of friends the child was likely to visit to assist the police to locate the child as quickly as possible.
2. If there are reasonable grounds for any illicit substance.
3. If there is a suspicion of any form of weapons.
4. If there is a suspicion that there may be a risk of fire, e.g. matches, lighters, petrol being stored.
5. Any reason identified in a child's individual Care Plan or Risk Assessment where it has been identified and agreed that the room or possessions are to be searched e.g. a child who self harms and the room could be searched for harmful materials.

This is not intended as a definitive list. Staff should always consult with senior staff who will make the decision to search.

Completing a search

1. Prior to any search the staff must be certain that there are clear ground rules to do so.
2. Whenever possible the child should be present unless the reason to search is urgent or the child's presence would increase the risk.
3. There should always be two members of staff involved in the search, one being a witness to ensure the search is being performed with respect to the child's belongings.

4. If there are very serious grounds - which pose an imminent risk - to search, and a child prevents this, the child should be informed that the police will be contacted and the reasons given. This is not to be used as a form of threat to the child and needs to be explained in a sensitive manner.

Prohibited searches

All staff working in the home are prohibited from undertaking any form of body search.

Staff can request a child empties their pockets if there is a suspicion that the child is carrying an item which would put the child or others welfare at risk. If the child refuses to hand the staff an item in their possession; that would put the child or others at serious risk, consideration should be given to contact the police.

Recording

All searches must be clearly documented showing the time and date and the reason for the search. This information should be recorded on a Searches Recording Sheet (see attached). It must be recorded if anything was found and any action taken. The report must say who carried out the search and who was present at the time; if a child was not present the reason for this must be written. The report must be signed and dated by all those present. The manager should countersign the record.

Searches by others

The police are permitted to search any part of the home, providing they have either a warrant to do so, the Manager's agreement to do so using the criteria (Grounds to Carry Out a Search), or the staff have made such a request for them to do so.

Search recording sheet

Name of Children's Home
Date of Search
Time
Name of Child
Names of staff completing the search
Description of the reason for the search
Was the child present? Yes/ No If No please state reason
Details of any item found:

Action taken, including how item (s) found disposed of

Staff signature / designation

Staff signature / designation

Child's signature and comments