



Guidance for Foster Carers

Initially aimed at parents and carers of five to 11 year olds, the Underwear Rule was first developed by the Council of Europe and teaches children that their private parts are private, their body belongs to them, and that they should always tell an adult if they're upset or worried.

Building on this, the NSPCC launched its Underwear Rule campaign in 2013 to encourage parents to have simple conversations with their children which can help to keep them safe from abuse.

Because the rule enables you to have simple conversations at appropriate opportunities and without mentioning abuse or even sex, many foster carers have commented on the usefulness of the rule when having conversations with children that they care for.

However, we understand that this is a sensitive subject matter to approach with children that you care for. This guidance, developed in consultation with carers and staff from the fostering sector, aims to support foster carers and fostering professionals who would like to introduce the Underwear Rule with children in foster care.

Delivering the Underwear Rule messages to children who are in foster care or living away from home

Using the Underwear Rule materials

- Although carers are referred to in the main Underwear Rule booklet, more often the information mentions parents. While the guidance remains the same, it may be useful to explain to the children in your care that they can come to you if they have any concerns, as their carer. This is particularly important if they still have contact with their parents or you are a kinship foster carer. If you have any concerns regarding parental responsibility or delegated authority with regards to having these conversations with children in your care, talk to your supervising social worker or the child's social worker for guidance.
- Don't view conversations about staying safe as a one-off. It's much better to have conversations little and often. Weave the simple messages into the daily routine. You can find lots of information about the Underwear Rule, as well as talking and listening tips at nspcc.org.uk/underwear.
- There are a number of different versions of the booklet that can be used with children with autism, learning disabilities, younger children and in a range of languages.



The following Underwear Rule guides are available to download at nspcc.org.uk:

- For [parents](#)
- For [children](#) (including additional guides for children with [autism](#) or [learning difficulties](#).)
- Guides in [Welsh](#), [Latvian](#), [Lithuanian](#), [Polish](#) and [Russian](#)

You can also request hard copies by calling 0808 800 5000.

What to do if a child says something that worries you

The Underwear Rule materials are designed for use with children as a preventative measure and as such will not be appropriate for children who have already disclosed abuse of this nature.

Before using the materials with other children in your care if you have concerns what to do if a disclosure is made, it may be useful to discuss this with your supervising social worker to ensure you understand the appropriate way to manage any disclosures. It is likely you will have discussed these issues as part of your “safer caring” training but check with your social worker if you are at all unsure.

Further information to help conversations with children in your care

- Since the Underwear Rule was launched, parents and carers have also told us that they find it challenging to know how to help keep children safe online. You may wish to extend the messages that children should keep their private parts private online as well. You can use the [NSPCC Share Aware campaign materials](#) to support you with this.
- There is also age appropriate information on the NSPCC website about having conversations with children about sex you might wish to look at [this information](#) in case other questions arise as you use the Underwear Rule materials.

If you have any concerns about using the Underwear Rule with a child you care for, or would like further advice or support, call the NSPCC Helpline FREE on 0808 800 5000 or send one of our counsellors a message at nspcc.org.uk/help



This guidance has been developed in partnership with the Fostering Network, who undertook consultation with Foster and Kinship Foster carers and whose experience helped to help inform this guidance.

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity. By working with foster families, and the services that support them, they help everyone who is fostered to achieve the very best they can. Contact them at www.fostering.net