



**FOSTERING
& KINSHIP**
WEST SUSSEX



Statement of Purpose

September 2024

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Introduction

It is a requirement of the Fostering Services England Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services that each fostering agency has a 'Statement of Purpose' which provides a clear description of how the welfare of the children in its care will be met and how good outcomes will be promoted and achieved. Integral to the statement of purpose are the agency's staffing, policy and performance structures as well as the systems in place to recruit, train, supervise and support its Foster Carers.

The Statement of Purpose sets out the Service's vision for its children, carers and staff and is clear in its aims and objectives as well as in the values and principles that underpin them. The document is therefore intended to provide information to a wide audience including:

- West Sussex County Council staff
- Our current Foster Carers and prospective Foster Carers
- Our Foster Carers' birth children
- Children and young people placed in the care of our Foster Carers
- Other Local Authorities / health and social care trusts which place, have previously placed or are considering placing children with West Sussex Foster Carers
- Our colleagues from other social care agencies
- The general public

National Legislative and Policy Framework

The work undertaken by the Fostering Service is done so within the prescribed parameters of legislation, policy and guidance – these are listed below.

- Children Act 1989
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2013 (Amendments to the Children Act 1989)
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (2011)
- Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011)
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- Care Planning and Fostering Regulations (Amendments) 2015
- The Disability and Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS).

Vision Statement

Our vision is that every child we care for is afforded the very highest standard of therapeutic care, delivered by highly trained and expertly supported Foster Carers. Our carers are respected and integral members of the professional network and by working in partnership with them as 'one team' we will ensure that each and every child's potential to thrive and achieve within their own community is valued and aspired to in all that we do.

Our children know that we are there for them, that we value their differences, that we listen and that at all times we act on their behalf.

Our revised strategy is succinct and simple. We will ensure that everyone involved in fostering for West Sussex feels and behaves as One Team with the child as their focus, by following our new Fostering Principles:



Aims

West Sussex Fostering Service's main aims are to ensure that each of our children looked after is kept safe in high-quality fostering households which provide them with the 'Secure Base' they need to be healthy, happy and fulfil their potential. We use the PACE model to connect and care for our children to enable them to build positive relationships and resilience. Our other key aims include:

- We will ensure that we put children and young people at the heart of everything we do.
- We will develop WSCC's in-house fostering offer, and service delivery model, to ensure we become the provider of choice for West Sussex Foster Carers.
- West Sussex Foster Carers are listened to and consistently treated as integral and valued members of the team around the child.
- Wherever possible, children and young people we care for will be placed within their local community and always with Foster Carers that are highly-trained and well-placed to meet their needs.
- We will improve sufficiency to ensure that wherever possible sibling groups are able to remain living together.
- The needs of disabled children, and those with complex and additional needs, will be fully accounted for in our sufficiency plan in order that they receive the highest standard of care at all times.

Fostering Service Structure

Each service area is led by a Service Manager who reports to the Head of Service.



Types of Fostering in West Sussex

Carers can be approved for a range of different tasks with the broader fostering role. The following categories incorporate the range of typical placement types:

- Short Term – time limited – may incorporate an assessment of need.
- Long Term – subject to permanency planning.
- Respite - child needs led support for substantive Foster Carers.
- Parent and Child – assessment undertaken of parent/s capacity to care for their child as part of an agreed plan.
- Kinship Care and Connected Persons – Providing placements for children and young people known to the carer/s.
- Children with Disabilities – Short term and long-term placements for disabled children.
- Mockingbird Family Model increasing support to carers and children through developing a community.
- REACH – intensive step-down from residential programme, where carers and the child are provided with wrap around practical and therapeutic support to enable a child to return to a foster family from residential care.

Kinship Care

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) is committed to supporting our Kinship Carers who are the largest proportion of carers taking care of children both nationally and locally. Our commitment to our carers has been reflected within the service name change to 'Fostering and Kinship Service'. We welcome the much-needed Kinship Strategy championing the role our Kinship Carers have for children and recognise a range of actions are required, both politically and locally, to better support Kinship Carers and children.

The WSCC Fostering and Kinship Service are highly skilled and experienced in assessing and supporting Kinship Carers with a wealth of expertise. Having a service designated solely to Kinship Care ensure the service delivered is not diluted and has its bespoke service. This is reflected in the completion of consistently robust Initial Viability Assessments (IVAs), Special Guardianship and Connected Persons Fostering assessments. We have a designated service to effectively support our kinships carers through assessment to support. This team offers expertise in kinship care and identifying support needs of our children and families.

We have strong links with partner agencies and our MASH and safeguarding teams, working together to support Kinship Carers early on in their journey. We are particularly proud of our bespoke 'Prepare to Care' preparatory course, offered to all Kinship Carers on a clear trajectory towards Special Guardianship.

We work closely with West Sussex County Council's Solutions Team to ensure robust intensive support around potential placement breakdown.

In addition to monthly coffee mornings and celebration events, we are currently developing a post-18 offer, and our Special Guardians are part of the Mockingbird project, offering a valuable support network of Foster Carers, SGs and Connected Persons.

We have highly trained staff in Therapeutic Parenting, Therapeutic Life Story Work, VIG and DDP and offer both courses, workshops and direct 1:1 support to Carers in these areas. We are leading on developing a

TLSW model across WSCC in conjunction and provide consultation to practitioners across the service on this. Our staff also deliver Secure Base training to Carers alongside the Fostering teams. We work closely with our ASF funded therapeutic Providers and regularly attend consultations and Reviews.

We hold a separate budget to offer support to Kinship families and meet monthly to consider applications. We involve Special Guardians in all aspects of our service development and collaborate with pan-Sussex kinship colleagues. We are currently developing two mentor projects – one an in-house Kinship Peer Mentor Project, offering formal and structured support from experienced to new Carers or those more in need. We are also working with Big Brother Big Sister to develop a Mentor project for Kinship children, to be matched with long term volunteer mentors (akin to Independent Visitors). We work closely with WSCC Voice and Participation Team, running engagement events for Kinship children and ensuring their voices are heard within the service.

Foster Carer Allowances

There are two elements of payment that a Foster Carer receives:

- All Inclusive Allowance (child maintenance allowance)
- Skills Fee

The All-Inclusive Allowance is designed to meet all of the normal expenses incurred in caring for a foster child. Also included are additional costs incurred by the foster family by having another child in the family home.

The Skills Fee is a reward fee payable in recognition of skills and knowledge demonstrated by the Foster Carer. There are three levels to the Skills Fee payment structure:

- **Entry** level for temporary approved connected person Foster Carers
- **Foundation** level for newly recruited Foster Carers who have completed a Skills to Foster course and have commenced Fostering Standards training and fully approved Connected Persons Foster Carers who have completed the Prepare to Care course and have commenced Fostering Standards training
- **Core** level of experienced Foster Carers who have completed the required additional training

Experienced core level Foster Carers who have undertaken specific training and have particular skills will receive an enhanced rate for taking on particular roles including:

- Children with Disabilities (CWD) Foster Carer (caring for children open to the CWD team)
- Mockingbird Hub Carer
- REACH Carer
- Parent and Child Carer

The current payment rates can be found here:

[Pay and allowances - Fostering West Sussex](#)

Recruitment and Assessment

The Service utilises data to inform its recruitment strategy in order that the changing needs of the service can be met. It is recognised that more places are needed for teenagers, sibling groups and asylum-seeking children. The Marketing Plan and Recruitment Strategy are reflective of this. It is recognised that more carers with terms of approval for each of those groups are especially needed in the north of the county.

Events co-led by existing West Sussex Foster Carers are held across the county, supported by regular online information sessions. Local radio and media are employed and a 'refer-a-friend' payment scheme is in place. Social media and digital marketing are integral to successful recruitment and are built into the authority's overall marketing plan.

Alongside standard recruitment activity the Recruitment Team supports mini campaigns including 'Foster Care Fortnight', 'Children of Foster Carers Month' and 'LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week'.

Timescales have been set for initial responses to enquiring prospective carers which has been made possible through the development of a dedicated duty line. Interest is actively encouraged through our marketing from all members of the community regardless of relationship status, employment status, class, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, or religion. Applicants who have been convicted of any serious crime against a child or an adult are immediately excluded.

All prospective carers are expected to attend The Skills to Foster course which is run by an Assessing Social Worker and has representation from experienced Foster Carers, a Supervising Social Worker and a care-experienced young person. Stage One and Stage Two of the fostering assessment can be run concurrently and usually is.

All assessments are undertaken in adherence with requirements laid down in the following:

- Schedule 3 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations (2011)
- The National Minimum Standards in Foster Care (2011)
- Assessment and approval of Foster Carers 2013 (amendments to Children Act 1989)
- Schedule 4 of the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010

West Sussex fostering assessments are completed on the CoramBAAF Form F template and are undertaken in prospective carers homes. The average assessment period is between 12 and 16 weeks. The assessment template is used to gather evidence and provide analysis on applicants' past significant experiences and relationships, their applicable skills and competencies, and their motivations to foster.

All prospective Foster Carers / household members are subject to the following checks and references:

- Disclosure and Barring Checks on all member of the household over the age of 18.
- Child Protection checks.
- Department of Health checks.
- Children and Young People's Social Care ESCR check.
- At least two personal references.
- A full medical examination with their GP.
- A work reference from their present employer.
- School references for birth children.
- References from significant others – including ex partners.

Panel

All new applicants are expected to attend a West Sussex Fostering Panel which are held on Thursdays several times a month, depending on service need. Currently our panels are operating virtually on Teams.

Panels are chaired by an independent Panel Chair or Vice Chair. The Panel itself is constituted to meet the requirements of the Fostering Service Regulations and is comprised of a central list of independent members with a range of personal or professional backgrounds relevant to the fostering role. Additionally, there is Fostering Service Team Manager sitting on all Panels, who provides the social worker representation requirement for the Foster Panel. There is also a County Councillor Representative sitting on most Foster Panels.

Both Fostering Assessments, using the CoramBAAF Form F and Connected Persons Assessments, using a dedicated Kinship Assessment proforma, are presented at Foster Panel for a recommendation from Panel regarding their approval as Foster / Connected Persons carers. First Annual Reviews are also presented at Foster Panel for all carers, for Panel to make a recommendation regarding their continued approval as Foster / Connected Persons carers. Where there have been concerns regarding Foster / Connected Persons carers ongoing suitability to be carers (often following Standards of Care investigations) or if there have been significant changes to a fostering household, these Reviews are also presented to Foster Panel for a recommendation regarding ongoing approval or termination of approval.

Following each Foster Panel minutes of the meeting and Panel's recommendation and advice are finalised by the Panel Chair/ Vice Chair and then sent to the Agency Decision Maker who, after consideration of Panel's recommendation, makes the final decision regarding carers suitability to become or continue to be Foster Carers / Connected Persons Carers. All applicants / carers are notified in writing of the Agency Decision Makers decision and are also made aware of their right to appeal this through the Independent Review Mechanism, within 28 days of the decision being made, if they so wish.

Part of Foster Panel's remit is to provide regular feedback to the Fostering Service in regard to cases presented to Panel in respect of quality assurance and good practice. This is undertaken through providing feedback on specific cases heard, which is disseminated through the Foster Panel Advisors after each panel, and through the Chair and Vice Chair providing more generalised feedback at the quarterly Foster Panel Business Meetings.

Support to Carers

West Sussex Fostering and Kinship Service works in partnership with its Foster Carers to meet the broad range of our children we care for needs. These needs can be complex often derive from abuse or neglect children have been subjected to before they entered care. Some of the children we care for have health conditions and require carers with specialist training to meet their needs. Foster Carers and their families need a range of support to enable them to meet our children's' needs.

To ensure that Foster Carers are adequately supported in meeting these needs, each household is assigned a qualified social worker, known as a Supervising Social Worker (SSW). The frequency of visits from the SSW is determined based on the needs of the child and the carer, and the circumstances of the placement, with a minimum of four visits per year and the majority receiving visits every six weeks. Additionally, at least one unannounced visit is conducted annually to ensure the household's compliance with standards.

The Fostering and Kinship Service understands that carers need to be able to access support and guidance whenever they need it. A duty system is operated across the four fostering teams in the event that carers are unable to reach their allocated SSW on their landline or mobile phone. Additionally, all West Sussex Foster Carers have contact details for the teams Team Managers and Service Manager should they need to escalate any matter. All staff members in the Fostering Service have smartphones which enable them to access emails, texts and voice messages while they are on the move.

Outside core working hours, Foster Carers are asked to contact the dedicated Fostering and Kindship Out of Hours Support Line where advice and support can be provided, or the Children's Services' Emergency Duty Team where calls are logged and passed on to the relevant social worker and their respective manager.

We recognise the need for all carers to be highly trained and have the skills and confidence to provide care to our children and young people. To ensure our carers feel supported in this we provide a comprehensive training pathway which included both mandatory training, for all carers, and bespoke training based on cares specific needs and interests. We have a dedicated Training and Development Team Manager who leads on the delivery of this training, and ensures we are responding to feedback and need.

West Sussex Fostering and Kinship Service understands the need for our carer's voices to be heard and valued. We encourage participation across many aspects of the service such as the Practice Forum and development working groups. We have a dedicated Voice and Participation Officer who's role it is to actively seek our carers voices and feedback so that we can proactively address our carer's support needs and make changes when needed. We offer 'Listening Visits' where carers can share their experience and express and concerned or need for increased support if they do not feel this is being met.

West Sussex Fostering and Kinship Service also provides an Independent Support Service for each of it's fostering households through the 'Fostering Network' helpline should there be a need for mediation or advocacy. The helpline is part of a suite of benefits and services available to each carer as part of their annual membership.

We have a retention strategy which is focused on 5 elements:

- Caring for our Carers
- Hearing from our Carers
- Celebrating our Carers
- Investing in our Carers
- Creating Community

Participation and Groups

Support Groups: There are currently seven Support Groups available for our carers to attend across the county in Horsham, Crawley, Worthing, Bognor, Lancing and online. There are four groups which all carers can attend regardless of fostering type and three specific support Groups for 'Parent and Child Carers', 'Carers of Teenagers' as well as carers of 'unaccompanied asylum-seeking children'.

All support groups are held monthly on various days to enable carers to attend a group that suits them

best, most are in person apart from Carers of Teenagers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children which are held online and face-to-face, alternating monthly.

These groups provide a good opportunity for carers to broaden their support networks, receive peer support as well as contribute to their Personal Development Plans as key speakers regularly attend. All carers are actively encouraged to go along to these groups which are generally well attended. The groups are supported by Supervising Social Workers, Child and Family Workers and the Carer Voice and Participation Worker, who is there to listen to carers' views and feed these back to the service. Young children and babies are welcome to attend with activities set up for them to enjoy.

In addition to the groups, the fostering teams arrange carer walks throughout the year so carers can get together, share experiences, and support each other. Annual summer picnics take place in the North and South of the county each year and are very popular with children and carers.

Listening Visits are available for carers who would like an opportunity to share any struggles they may be experiencing with fostering or more generally with the Carer Voice and Participation Worker. Themes are collated from the Listening Visits, and support groups and other carer events with the Head of Service and other managers at monthly carer feedback meetings.

A Peer Support Scheme is being piloted from May 2024 where experienced carers will be matched with newly approved carers or carers who want to learn about a specific area of fostering or would benefit from a buddy.

The Children Who Foster group is for Foster Carers children or grandchildren living in the fostering home, recognising the important contribution birth children play in being part of a fostering household. The group is split into two age groups (4yrs – 12yrs and 13yrs – 18yrs) and three events are held for each age group throughout the year hosted around the county. There is also an annual Butlins trip that all age groups can attend. All events are fully staffed and enjoyed by all.

Participation for Children we Care For

Voice and Participation is embedded in Childrens Services, making sure that children and young people's voices are at the heart of everything we do. It isn't the responsibility of just one person, or one team or one organisation. For participation to be fully embedded across the board, the support of all people whose work involves children and young people is required.

The purpose of the work with the Voice and Participation team with children and young people is to listen to what they say, ensure their views and ideas are shared and appropriate action is taken in response.

The work and groups align to Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, that states that children and young people should have the right to express their views and their views are given due weight. We are also informed by the Lundy model for participation which propose that children and young people are provided 'space' and given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views.

We provide children and young people with appropriate space to share their views and support the service with relevant powers and governance to action to the views given.

We have three formal participation groups for children we care for. Junior Children in Care Council for ages 7-11. Our Children in Care Council for ages 11-16 and our Care Leaver Advisory Board for young people aged 18-25. These groups meet on a regular basis to inform services and shape improvements through co-production. Young people facilitate their own campaigns with a 'young person-led approach' which also feeds into our Corporate Parenting Panel, ensuring our young people are heard at Director, Heads of Service and elected member level.

Across Children Services, codesigned with young people, we have created 'our aspirations' for our young people we care for and care leavers:

[Our aspirations \(Unsuitable for assistive technologies\) \(westsussex.gov.uk\)](#)

Therapeutic Support

The Fostering Service works closely with our internal Psychology service where carers can access consultation from our therapeutic team to assist them with making sense of what is going on for the child they care for or to consider the impact the caring role is having on them.

Additionally our REACH service has a psychologist linked who is able to support some of our most in crisis households through our 'tier 2' offer as well as intensive therapeutic support to our children stepping down from residential care into our REACH programme.

Education (Virtual School)

The Virtual School supports and champions the education of all children in the care of West Sussex. The team are available to provide advice and guidance to the professional network, including Foster Carers, to ensure that all children are given the best educational opportunities and can access the resources required to be successful. The Virtual School is not able to attend every PEP meeting but does read and quality assure them every term.

There is an expectation that Foster Carers will actively promote high attendance at school and support the children to engage in all opportunities offered within education. This involves advocating for children with teaching professionals, attending all update events and open evenings as well as providing support with homework. The Virtual School provides access to a range of resources to help develop safe and secure home learning.

In line with national attendance guidance and to support our aspirations for our children in care, we do not support children we care for being taken on holiday during term time. If this is unavoidable, permission must be sought from the Virtual School Head and Head of Service (Children we Care For) prior to any arrangements being made.

Professional Development – Training

Learning and development is a key part of the Foster Carer's role, and essential to meeting the therapeutic care needs of our children and young people. The National Minimum Standards clearly sets out

expectations for ongoing training for Foster Carers. In WSCC we offer face-to-face and online options covering a wide range of topics relating to the Foster Carer's role, children's safety, development and therapeutic care.

All Foster Carers are expected to undertake mandatory training related to children's safety. Different courses are recommended for Foundation, Core and Core Experienced Foster Carer levels but our courses are open to all of our carers, including Special Guardians, Connected Persons Foster Carers and Supported Lodgings Hosts. We very much welcome feedback and new ideas. In addition, we have a monthly Practice Forum covering up-to-date research, speakers and a variety of relevant practice issues. Each Foster Carer has their own Personal Development Plan, allowing them to reflect and build upon learning opportunities with support from their Supervising Social Worker. This PDP will be reviewed each year.

We are in the process of updating our therapeutic training offer to carers, and our own carers have been involved in the delivery of this exciting new programme of Therapeutic Parenting with PACE, based on the work of international psychotherapist Dan Hughes.

Foster Carer Levels

As stated previously we have 3 basic levels **Entry**, **Foundation** and **Core**, alongside a Core Experienced level for carers who have undertaken specific training for particular roles such as Children with Disabilities (CWD) Foster Carer (caring for children open to the CWD team), Mockingbird Hub Carer, REACH Carer and Parent and Child Carer.

Accreditation

All carers move from Entry Level to Foundation Level on completion of Skills to Foster training (for some Connected Person's Carers this may be a Prepare to Care course), and successful approval at Fostering Panel.

In order to move up from Foundation Level, Foster Carers must complete the following:

- All training and support expectations for Foundation Level
- (Note: Expectations for second carers are less than for main carers)
- An UpToDate PDP, including a reflective account of their learning and the impact for children they care for
- An application form to move to Core Level.

Included below are tables of expectations for Foundation level.

This will usually take 24 months but may be completed earlier. There will be an accreditation meeting, usually as part of the annual review process. This will be chaired by a Fostering Reviewing Officer who will make a recommendation; the final accreditation decision is made by the Fostering Support Service Manager.

FOUNDATION LEVEL LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS Mandatory (Minimum requirements) for mainstream foster carers and Connected Persons foster carers	
To be completed within 12 months	<p>Training Support and Development (TSD) Standards Completed within 12 months (or up to 18 months for Connected Persons)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Paediatric First Aid*, Safer Care*, Fire Safety*, Child Protection Awareness Online (P1 & P2)*, Record Keeping (Main carer) PREVENT 1 & 2 (Main carer) PREVENT 1 (2nd carer) * <small>*refreshed every 3 years with 18 months to complete</small> • Personal Development Plan including Reflective Practice Record • Peer Support – Attendance at 3 events (minimum) encouraged per year • Ongoing training – Minimum 3 training events per year
To be completed within 24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therapeutic Practice Development (to be defined) • Introduction to Secure Base, Recognising Racism, Total Respect, Health Care, (under development), Medication Administration (under development) • Plus (where applicable) additional UASC training for Foundation Level : Introduction to Caring for Unaccompanied Migrant Children

Second Carer Learning & Development Requirements

- Training Support and Development (TSD) Standards 12 months (or up to 18 months for Connected Persons Carers)
- Mandatory training (18 months to complete) : Emergency Paediatric First Aid*, Safer Care*, Fire Safety*, Child Protection Awareness Online (P1&2)*, PREVENT 1 *
- Personal Development Plan including Reflective Practice Record each year
- Peer Support – Attendance at 1 event (minimum) per year
- Ongoing training – Minimum 3 training events per year (including mandatory training)

*Refresher training as required every 3 years (with 18 months to complete)

TSD Standards and Expectations for First Year Post Approval

It is a national requirement that all Foster Carers meet the Training Support and Development (TSD) standards within their first 12 months of approval (or 18 months for Connected Person Foster Carers).

The standards are:

Standard 1: Understand the principles and values

Essential for fostering children and young people.

Standard 2: Understand your role as a Foster Carer. **Standard 3:** Understand health and safety, and healthy care. **Standard 4:** Know how to communicate effectively

Standard 5: Understand the development of children and young people.

Standard 6: Keep children and young people safe from harm

Standard 7: Develop yourself

Carers' Supervising Social Workers will provide support and information in relation to these expectations. Further details about the TSD Standards can also be found via the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/guidance-for-foster-carers>

Review of Foster Carers

Our Foster Carers are reviewed on an annual basis and presented to panel after one year of practice and thereafter every 3 years. Reviews are brought forward if there has been a significant change in circumstances or if there is a request to alter the carers terms of approval. When a carer has been subject to a Standards of Care report the department may wish for the next annual review to be taken back to Panel to provide an overview of practice. The Foster Carer Annual Review Document incorporates and Secure Base and Signs of Safety models and is used to assess the carers practice over the course of the year and review by extrapolating details of care afforded to children placed. Request for feedback will be obtained from the following parties wherever possible and appropriate to do so:

- Each child looked after that has been placed over the course of the review year.
- The Foster Carers.
- Each member of the Fostering Household including birth children.
- The Child's Parents.
- The Child's Social Worker.
- The Independent Reviewing Officer
- Health Professionals
- Education Professionals.

Each annual review should consider the Foster Carers ongoing approval in the context of, among other things:

- The quality of care and emotional warmth afforded to each child placed.
- The impact of the fostering role on each member of the fostering household.
- Commitment to training and development and future training needs.
- Safeguarding.
- Any significant events or changes to the fostering household.
- Any change to the carers' financial circumstances and analysis on any subsequent impact on children looked after.
- Adherence to Health and Safety document.
- Adherence to Safe Care Plan/s.
- The Foster Carers current terms of approval.
- Completion of statutory checks.
- Completion of at least one unannounced visit.

Allegations and Standards of Care

It is the expectation that all West Sussex County Council Foster Carers will provide children placed with them the best possible care to ensure that their welfare needs are met. The Fostering Service may have concerns about a Foster Carer, which may not warrant investigation under Child Protection Procedures,

but which raise significant concerns about standards of care being provided. Concerns expressed in direct relation to the conduct, attitude and practices of a carer are investigated under this procedure. Complaints and concerns expressed against Foster Carers are an inevitable result of the increasingly complex and sensitive work carers are required to undertake. When concerns are expressed there is an obligation to investigate but it is recognised that this process can be extremely challenging for carers and their families. Staff will therefore aim to carry out investigations sensitively, openly, and honestly. See below the following documents relating to Allegations and Standards of Care Guidance for Foster Carers.

The Fostering Service wishes to “know itself”, to understand what it does well and what aspects of service delivery need to be improved. It actively seeks the views of its Foster Carers in a variety of ways. For example, via assessment and annual review processes, with surveys, and direct feedback at supervision visits.

[Allegations and Standards of Care Guidance for Foster Carers](#)

Complaints

When things go wrong it is really important to us that we respond quickly and fairly to put them right. We will always try to resolve any areas of disagreement or concerns informally in the first instance and respond promptly to formal complaints about the fostering service through WSCC Complaints Procedure.

This can be found at: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/have-your-say/make-a-complaint/childrens-social-care-complaints/>

Or contact us using the details below:

Tel: 01243 777100
West Sussex County Council
Comments, compliments, and complaints
County Hall
West Street
Chichester
PO19 1RQ

Additional information

Text phone for people with hearing impairments: 18001 01243 777100. Freephone: 0800 137126
SMS texts: 07545 200547

Our offices are open 8.30am-4.30pm, Monday-Friday. If you phone out of office hours you can leave a message on our answerphone.

Our complaints procedure plays an important role in improving our Service and WSCC Complaints Policy commits us to:

- Giving a full and clear response to a complaint within 20 working days. If this is not possible, we advise complainants when an answer will be given.
- Assessing each complaint thoroughly and fairly.
- Being honest and polite, and keeping information confidential.

- Apologising if we have made a mistake.
- Telling complainants about what we are doing to put things right.

Concerns, complaints, and allegations about registered services including fostering agencies can be directed to Ofsted particularly where it is not possible for them to be resolved directly with the agency.

Our Children's Safeguarding Service deals with complaints that involve concerns for the safety or welfare of children in foster care. Information on this service can be found at

- The WSCC Children's Safeguarding Board website: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/keeping-children-safe/west-sussex-safeguarding-children-board/>
- By phone: 0330 222 7799
- By email: lscb@westsussex.gov.uk

OFSTED

For advice and information on how Ofsted can help, they can be contacted at:

National Business Unit
Royal Exchange Buildings
St. Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

- Tel: 08456 404040
- Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- Or via the website at www.ofsted.gov.uk

Details of the Children's Commissioner for England are:

Ann Longfield
Children's Commissioner for England
The Office of the Children's Commission
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

- Tel: 0207 783 8330
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