

Family and Friends Care

Children's Services

Policy



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Feedback:

Our customers expect first class service and we aim to provide it. We therefore welcome feedback about our policies and procedures. If you have any comments about this document please e-mail: socialcare@westsussex.gov.uk

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1. Context

- 1.1 This policy sets out to help any member of the public who is caring for someone else's child to understand the legal basis for this care, and how West Sussex County Council may be able to support them. It is also intended to provide advice for professionals who are seeking to advise families or friends about the options available to them.
- 1.2 The policy applies to people living in West Sussex or who live elsewhere and are caring for a child who is placed by West Sussex County Council.
- 1.3 Information that is relevant nationally can be obtained from the Department for Education and from voluntary organisations.

Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities

(Reference: DFE-00025-2011)

Department for Education - <http://www.education.gov.uk/publications>

A list is given at the end.

- 1.4 It is strongly recommend that any member of the public using this policy as a basis for reaching a decision about their preferred legal route also read information given by voluntary organisations such as The Family Rights Group or Grandparents Association.
- 1.5 The principles underpinning this policy are that all children should feel secure and safe throughout their childhoods. They should be encouraged to achieve their full potential and to enjoy a wide variety of good experiences. For the vast majority of children, this will mean growing up with one or both parents in a wider family that might involve grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings, step parents, and family friends.
- 1.6 When children are unable to live with, or be kept safe with, their birth parents, the local authority has a duty to try and make sure that they grow up with a member of their family or a close friend. Often this is the next best option as it offers continuity, and meets cultural and religious needs as well as providing good care. Children need to know where they belong and the local authority will always promote legal solutions that give the child permanence; usually Special Guardianship. Permanence means that a child belongs in a family throughout his childhood and can feel confident that he will continue to have a place in the family as an adult, especially in the early adulthood stage.
- 1.7 The child's welfare is paramount so, if there is a conflict of interest between the needs of the child and the wishes of the family, any local authority involvement will plan to meet the needs of the child. Sometimes this will mean that a social worker will not recommend that a child live with a family member or friend.
- 1.8 Children do best when they feel listened to and have decisions explained to them. Where Children's Social Care is involved, children will always be asked their views and given the opportunity to talk to a professional alone unless they are too young.

- 1.9 The support given by the local authority will be based on an assessment of the needs of the family rather than a legal status. Wherever it is possible to keep children safe, and support family or friends in looking after them, without them becoming or staying looked after, the local authority will pursue this option "Looked after" in this context means that the child is looked after by the local authority (more usually known as being "in care").

2. Placement Options

2.1 Local Authority Care

Children become looked after either through section 20 or sections 31 and 38 of the Children Act 1989. Broadly speaking, section 20 covers situations where the parents are unable to look after the child through illness, absence or any other reason. Where the local authority applies for a Court Order, which may involve removing a child against the wishes of the parents, Section 31 and 38 are used. The local authority can only apply to Court if there is evidence that the child concerned is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and the care given to the child is inadequate; or he is beyond parental control.

3. Family and Friends Care

3.1 Informal Family Care

3.1.1 Children often live with grandparents, aunts or uncles, stepfathers or older siblings for periods within their childhood. The vast majority of such arrangements are made between the parent(s) and the carer(s) and the local authority is not involved.

3.1.2 However, the local authority can work with families to strengthen these arrangements by providing support in a variety of ways. The statutory Guidance on Family and Friends Care, published in April 2011 and available via the hyperlink on page 4 of this document, gives more detail about the local authority's responsibilities. They include:

- Giving advice, support and information around relevant issues to carers such as benefits, finances, housing, practical issues, contact and family mediation.
- An assessment of the family situation to ensure involvement is tailored to the individual needs of the family. When other professionals are involved this could contribute to a multi-agency plan called a CAF (Common Assessment Framework) agreed by the Team Around the Child (TAC). Families will always be involved.
- Groups specifically for Family Carers. Each group runs for an eight week period and these will take place at locations across West Sussex. Sessions will be tailored to the needs of the group with topics selected by the carers attending.

- Signposting to relevant national, county-wide and local services
- Assisting to identify universal or targeted services that could support you, the child or young person or the birth parent.
- Monthly Drop Ins across the county, providing opportunities to meet other Family Carers and talk through any concerns.

3.1.3 West Sussex has a support worker for informal family carers who can be contacted directly, details below. Please use this contact to obtain information about any of the services listed above.

Lisa Carter
Informal Family Care
Durban House
Durban Road
Bognor Regis
PO22 9RE

Email: informalfamilycare@westsussex.gov.uk
Tel: **01243 642650**

3.1.4 Informal family carers can also ask for an assessment of the needs of the child if they believe that services may be necessary to promote the welfare of the child or safeguard him, under section 17 of The Children Act 1989. Carers should contact the Children's Access Point on 01403 229900 (office hours) or write to the Children's Access Point, County Hall North, Chart Way, Horsham, RH12 1XA.

3.1.5 It is not necessary for children to become looked after in order for their carers to receive financial support. If the child is assessed as needing financial support under section 17 of The Children Act this can be paid on a regular, occasional or one-off basis.

4. Formal Family Care

Informal family care may move to formal family and friends foster care if an assessment of the child concludes that his needs can only be met by him becoming 'looked after' by the local authority. The social worker will reach a decision based on section 20 of The Children Act 1989, in consultation with the child if he is old enough to understand.

5. Private Fostering

Further information about Private fostering - statement of purpose [PDF, 35 pages, 185KB] can be found on the county council's website (visit: westsussex.gov.uk and type in 'Private fostering 2010' in the search engine).

5.1 If you have made a private arrangement with the parent of a child, who is under 16 (under 18 if disabled) to care for the child for 28 days or more and you are not a grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling or step parent, you are known in law as a 'private foster carer'. This applies if your child's

boyfriend or girlfriend is living in your household and is under 16, if you take in the child of a family friend, or if you host a child from another country for 28 days or more.

- 5.2 You **must** inform the local authority at the Children's Access Point on 01403 229900 (office hours) or write to the Children's Access Point, County Hall North, Chart Way, Horsham, RH12 1XA.
- 5.3 By law (Children Act 1989 S66-70, Children Act Guidance on Private Fostering 2005), a specialist worker will need to assess the child's needs and your ability to care for the child. The local authority must be satisfied that the welfare of the child is being promoted. There will be statutory checks on all adult members of the household, and the local authority can prohibit a private fostering arrangement if it is not suitable.

Information can also be found, using this route, about a range of local and specific national organisations. Visit www.legislation.gov.uk and type in the search engine Children Act Guidance on Private Fostering 2005.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/1533/contents/made>

- 5.4 The local authority has a responsibility to visit the child and carer within 7 days of notification, undertake an initial assessment and complete a final assessment report within 42 days of receipt of notification.
- 5.5 Despite the name "private fostering", a child does not become looked after by the local authority because this is a private arrangement, sanctioned by the local authority.
- 5.6 Financial arrangements in private fostering are made between the parent and carer, but carers and children retain the right to be assessed under section 17 of The Children Act.
- 5.7 Private foster carers and parents of privately fostered children receive advice and support from a Private Fostering Social Worker to assist them to meet the needs of privately fostered children. Privately fostered children are able to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted.
- 5.8 The specialist worker has a legal duty to visit the child as frequently as necessary to safeguard and promote his/her welfare. The minimum frequency required by law is once during the first week and then not less than once every 6 weeks during the first year. After the first year visits must take place not less than 3 monthly.
- 5.9 The purpose of the visit is to ensure that arrangements continue to meet the child's needs, including his/her cultural, racial and religious needs and that all necessary advice is made available to the private foster carer and parents. It is essential that contact arrangements between the child and parents are satisfactory and suitably frequent and that the wishes and views of the child about the arrangements are heard.

- 5.10 Private foster carers can also join the groups run by the Informal Family Care worker, as set out above.

6. Family and Friends ("Kinship") Foster Carers

- 6.1 Sometimes children are removed from their parents by Order of the Court and become looked after by the local authority. Sometimes parents are unable to care for their child, and agree to him becoming looked after by the local authority. In both situations, the local authority will try to place the child with family or friends. If a child is looked after, he must be in a regulated placement and this means that family or friends will have to be assessed as foster carers under the 2011 Regulations or temporarily approved as foster carers under the 2010 Regulations.

Information can also be found, using this route, about a range of local and specific national organisations in this case the Department of Education to access information about foster carers under the 2010 Regulations.

http://www.minimumstandards.org/fost_thirty.html

- 6.2 Before a looked after child is placed with family or friends there must be a viability assessment which checks that the proposed carers are able to meet the child's needs. The plan to place must be agreed by a senior manager. Then the local authority has 16 weeks to assess the carers as foster carers, or 24 if there is a good reason for taking longer. The assessment must go to the foster panel and the recommendation of the panel be agreed by the agency decision maker.
- 6.3 All foster carers have to meet the National Minimum Standards for fostering and will be expected to complete training as advised by their fostering support worker.
- 6.4 The local authority has a duty to support all foster carers, including family and friends carers, and to make sure that any particular support needs of family and friends carers are met. All family and friends carers have an allocated fostering social worker and receive the all-inclusive allowance, which funds the care of the child.
- 6.5 The assessment of a foster carer is an intense process, which requires applicants to think through their motivation, the impact of their experiences in life and how they would meet the needs of the child in the future. References are taken up from a wide range of sources as well as Criminal Record Bureau checks and medical assessments.
- 6.6 Often children are cared for by family members during Care Proceedings and the same carers will be planning to apply for a Special Guardianship Order, with the support of the local authority, at the end of proceedings. In these circumstances, the carers must have temporary approval as foster carers and must be assessed within 16 weeks even though they are not planning to be foster carers in the long term.

7. Special Guardianship Orders

Information can also be found, using this route, about a range of local and specific national organisations. Visit www.legislation.gov.uk and type in the search engine Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs).

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/1109/contents/made>

- 7.1 West Sussex County Council promotes the use of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) to secure permanence for children within the wider family or circle of friends. A SGO gives the carers majority parental responsibility. This means that the Special Guardians can make most of the day to day decisions as a child grows up, such as where to go on holiday, which school is the best for the child and permission for medical treatment. The exceptions are that Special Guardians cannot take a child out of the UK for more than 3 months, or change his name, without permission from the birth parents.
- 7.2 The carer must apply for the SGO; the local authority cannot apply for an SGO on a carer's behalf. Some carers apply for an SGO without any previous involvement by the local authority and some apply for an SGO because a child or children in the family or social network is looked after. All applicants for a SGO will be assessed by the local authority at the request of the court, and the assessment will include consideration of support needed. This assessment is free of charge to the applicant.
- 7.3 Where carers apply for an SGO without any previous involvement by the local authority, legal costs are not payable by the local authority. If the SGO is the desired outcome at the end of Care Proceedings, the applicants will be expected to apply for Legal Aid and the local authority will consider paying some or all legal costs not covered by legal aid.
- 7.4 Carers who apply for an SGO and are already fostering a child will receive continuity of the financial package for the first two years and sometimes longer. Unlike foster carers, Special Guardians can apply for child benefit and child tax credit, and are expected to do so.

Further information about Special Guardianship Orders [PDF, 8 pages, 91KB] can be found on the county council's website (visit: westsussex.gov.uk and type 'Special Guardianship Financial Support 2010' in the search engine).

- 7.5 All foster carers (whether related to the child or not) have the legal right to apply for a SGO on a child they have been looking after for more than a year.
- 7.6 The birth parent of a child who is subject to a SGO does not have a right to apply for the Order to be revoked and can only do so with the leave of the Court. The Court requires substantial new information before leave will be granted. Holders of a SGO can appoint legal guardians in the event of their death and the birth parents would have to obtain the leave of the Court to oppose their choice.

- 7.7 West Sussex County Council provides a Special Guardianship Support Service, which is available to Special Guardians and their families, and the children who are the subject of the Order. The team provides support to families throughout the County once a Special Guardianship Order is in place. The aim of the service is to provide tailored support to meet the precise requirements of the child or children and the Special Guardians. To ensure continual care is provided where it matters, the specialist workers work closely with professionals in social care to identify and deliver appropriate support to Special Guardians and their families.
- 7.8 The Special Guardianship Support Team can be contacted either by email at special.guardianship.support@westsussex.gov.uk, or can be contacted by telephone on the duty line which runs Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10.00am – 1.00pm on 01243 753811.
- 7.9 As a Special Guardian, support will be identified and reviewed within a Special Guardianship Support Plan. The plan could include:
- 7.10 Individual Support
- Direct work with children
 - Emotional and practical support
 - Counselling and therapeutic services
 - Life story work with children
 - Assistance with managing contact arrangements
- 7.11 Group support
- Therapeutic & practical groups (including birth children of special guardians, and birth parents)
 - Informal support groups
(run throughout the county and provide the opportunity to meet and talk with other families and carers. Contact us to find out about support groups in your area and how you can get involved.)
- 7.12 West Sussex runs the KEEP programme for foster carers and SGO holders of children aged 5-12. KEEP is a 16 week programme of intensive support designed to increase the carer's understanding of the child's behaviour and equip them with techniques for managing behaviour with the aim of promoting resilience within the family. KEEP is a nationally recognised and evidence based programme promoted by the Department for Education. West Sussex County Council plan to start running the KEEP programme for carers of 3 – 6 year olds in 2012. KEEP programmes can be accessed through the Special Guardianship Support Team, contact details above.
- 7.13 The *Stay in Touch* service which offers bespoke care and support as and when needed is available to all Special Guardianship families. It can be accessed via the Special Guardianship Support Team, contact details above, and helps with:

7.13.1 Advice and Signposting:

- Specialist advice on issues you may be facing as a Special Guardian
- Email and telephone support
- Help with referrals to other services such as the Post Adoption Centre, Young Carers, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

7.13.2 Networking and Training:

- Newsletters
- Opportunities to meet with other Special Guardians and families
- Workshops and training for Special Guardians and professionals to meet the needs of the child

8. Residence Orders

8.1 A Residence Order is similar to a SGO in that it is the carer who applies for the Order and it gives the carer parental responsibility. However, it is more of a shared parental responsibility than conferred by a SGO and the parent retains the right to apply for the Order to be revoked.

8.2 West Sussex County Council holds the view that for most children and carers a SGO is a more secure option than a Residence Order, and therefore, Residence Orders are only promoted in exceptional circumstances.

8.3 Support to holders of Residence Orders through the Informal Family Care worker can be provided, based on assessed need. For contact details please see above.

9. Adoption

9.1 Adoption is the most secure form of permanence for a child and, because the birth parents lose all legal ties to the child, it tends to be seen by family and friends carers as a step too far, or simply unnecessary. West Sussex County Council neither promotes nor discourages adoption by family or friends, but takes a view based on the needs of the individual child and the wider context.

9.2 In order to adopt a child, carers must undergo an assessment similar to the assessment for fostering with the same requirements for references, including information from significant previous partners. The application is submitted to the West Sussex Adoption Panel and the recommendation is ratified by the agency decision maker for adoption.

9.3 All adoptive parents are entitled to an assessment of their support needs and West Sussex County Council has a well-established Adoption Support Team. A duty social worker is available to answer queries Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 1.00pm. The team can be contacted by email; adoption.support.service@westsussex.gov.uk

Please contact the Adoption Support Team via the main contact centre number (01243 777100).

10. Advice on universal services and support

10.1 All children are entitled to a range of universal services such as education and health, and any local provision such as leisure services and youth support. The West Sussex County Council website has a lot of information about the services outlined below which are run by or for the county council. The local district or borough council will be able to provide information about services they make available to all children and young people in the area. Libraries are also a good source of information and run story sessions for pre-school children.

11. Early Childhood Service

11.1 Information about Early Childhood Services in West Sussex can be obtained from the Family Information Service (FIS) (contact details below). They provide free, impartial information on the following:

- Finding and choosing childcare, including childminders, pre-schools, nurseries and out of school clubs
- Fee early education for all 3 and 4 year olds (and some 2 year olds)
- Help towards the costs of paying for childcare
- Local children and family centres
- Toy libraries
- Activities, such as toddler groups, baby massage, music and movement etc
- Support services for families with specific needs

You can contact the FIS on 01243 777807, email family.info.service@westsussex.gov.uk or go to www.westsussex.gov.uk/fis to access their searchable database.

12. West Sussex Youth Service

12.1 West Sussex Youth Services provide evening and daytime activities across West Sussex for Young People aged between 13-19, with some services for 7-19 year olds (Anti Bullying and Young Carers.) The Youth Service has a range of centres across the county that deliver Youth work sessions, which give young people something to do, but will also work with them to develop the skills they will need as they progress in life. The Service also has a network of Information shops and Connexions centres that provide information advice and guidance on careers, sexual health and a whole range of subject especially tailored for young people. Information on these centres, where they are and opening times are available on www.yourspacewestsussex.co.uk or by phone 01243 777100.

12.2 The service also provides free courses for young people who may be having difficulties and need some extra support. These courses focus on sexual health and wellbeing, youth crime diversion, self-esteem and anger management, risk taking behaviour and living independently. These courses run all year round across the County to find out more visit www.westsussex.gov.uk and type Targeted Youth Support in the search engine:

http://www.yourspacewestsussex.co.uk/advice_and_info/targeted_youth_support.aspx

- 12.3 There is a range of support for young people on offer through the Youth Service one of them being the Anti-Bullying Service and we currently run an anti bullying support line that parents can phone if they have concerns regarding a young person who is being bullied. The telephone number for this is 08450751010 where an advisor will suggest possible actions to resolve the issue or will make a referral to the anti bullying casework service.
- 12.4 If you have any questions regarding services for teenagers please do contact West Sussex County Council on 01243 777100 or check on our website www.yourspacewestsussex.co.uk

13. Youth Offending

- 13.1 You will only need to use the Youth Offending Service (YOS) if your child has been in trouble with the police.
- 13.2 If your child has been arrested and you are unable to attend the police station the YOS will send an Appropriate Adult to the police station to ensure that your child is dealt with properly and fairly according to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. The YOS will then write to you to let you know they have acted as an appropriate adult in your place.
- 13.3 If your child is then taken to Court and needs reports in order to progress their case to be sentenced they will be allocated a YOS officer who will write their report. Once they are sentenced they will be allocated a YOT officer who will then manage their case for the length of their sentence. You and your child will be asked to be involved throughout the sentence and you will be kept informed of your child's progress through regular review meetings. There are a variety of court orders your child could be sentenced to and your allocated YOS officer will talk those through with you.
- 13.4 If your child has not committed an offence, but you are worried that they might be involved in some criminal behaviour you can contact the YOS prevention team manager for support and advice - Michelle Gardner 01903 718739
- 13.5 If your child has a YOS officer you will be given their contact details, and the office in which they are based. However, if you just need some advice and support there is a duty manager on every day who can be contacted on 01903 718 739.

14. Admission to school

- 14.1 If a child comes to live with you, you may consider changing their school place. In general, when thinking about applying for a new school you should consider the disruption that may be caused to the child. Wherever possible, children should be kept at the same school, especially during Years 10 and 11 when studying for GCSEs as there may be problems with matching the

curriculum. Transport to school may be available during Year 11 to provide the continuity needed.

- 14.2 However, if the current school is too far away or the child is due to transfer to junior/middle or secondary/intermediate school, there is important information you need to know.
- 14.3 All applications for school places must be made to the Pupil Admissions Team, including applications for voluntary aided (faith schools) and foundation schools and academies. Application forms and more information about how to apply can be found at www.westsussex.gov.uk/admissions.
- 14.4 Looked after children (i.e. children in the care of the Local Authority children not of their faith ahead of other children not of their faith. Looked after children can) must have top priority in the admission arrangements of all schools, including voluntary aided and foundation schools after be admitted above the admission number at all age levels, including to infant schools.
- 14.5 The application must be completed by someone with parental responsibility for the child. The Pupil Admissions Team is unable to consider applications made by anyone without Parental Responsibility. Where a child is looked after by the Local Authority, the social worker would usually complete the application, confirm that the child is formally looked after and state which school is considered the best school for the child.
- 14.6 This does not apply to children in private fostering arrangements.
- 14.7 If a child is in an informal caring arrangement and not looked after by the Local Authority, their admission will be considered under the remaining admission arrangements for the school. They are unlikely to be admitted above the admission number if a school is full in their year group, unless they have demonstrated challenging behaviour or been out of school for a significant period. In these cases, admission will be considered under the Local Authority's Fair Access arrangements.
- 14.8 Again, the application must be completed by someone with parental responsibility for the child. The Pupil Admissions Team is unable to consider applications made by anyone without parental responsibility, so it will be necessary for the parents to sign the form if the arrangements have not been formalised.
- 14.9 If you have any questions regarding the admission of the child to a school, please do not hesitate to contact the Pupil Admissions Team on 0845 075 1007.and academies. Faith schools may give higher priority to non looked after children of their faith, but must still place looked

15. Special Educational Needs

- 15.1 Children with Special Educational Needs describes a very wide range of needs, from children who may get a little extra informal help at school (sometimes called 'AEN' or Additional Educational Needs) to children with profound disabilities or conditions that require specialist support in

mainstream schools, special support centres (found in some mainstream schools) or special schools.

- 15.2 The essential thing for carers of all types is to maintain contact and involvement with the child's school or out-of-school provision. This is much more important for children who are not with their birth parents to prevent them 'slipping through the system'. Every school should have ways of identifying children who are not with their birth parents and most will have a dedicated teacher for Looked After Children. Even if your child is not formally 'Looked After' by the Local Authority, do insist on getting your child noted by this teacher if they are not living with their birth parents. Sometimes the school nurse fulfils this function. Knowing this person will help even in quite simple ways, for instance in getting letters from school sent to you and/or parents or others depending on circumstances.
- 15.3 Schools need to understand what the specific circumstances of your child are, and having a central person who knows what the story is for your child is vital. Once this is achieved, school staff should be happy to work with you as though you were the child's parent, at least on a day-to-day, informal basis. There will be occasions however when the signature of a person with Parental Responsibility is required. This is another reason why it is important to have the way in which this is achieved agreed with the school early on, to avoid your child having to explain why they are different and perhaps being embarrassed by this.
- 15.4 Once your position is understood by the school, and if you believe your child has some form of Special Educational Needs, the best approach is to ask for copies of your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) and to monitor your child's progress through his or her IEP. This plan details the areas where teachers think your child might need additional help, what the school is going to do to meet needs, what it is they hope to achieve, and when outcomes will be achieved. All parents and carers have a right to see their child's IEP, it should be considered a shared document, and parents and carers should actively contribute to it. Over the school year, you should be able to see progress being made by your child and have that progress documented in their IEP. Do however remember that all children progress at different speeds and in different ways, dependent on age and circumstance.
- 15.5 If your child is not making the progress expected of them, you can ask that your child be considered at the school PARM. This is a Planning and Review Meeting when the Education Psychologist attached to the school will look at any situation where someone has raised a query about a child's progress. The Education Psychologist will definitely want to see the child's IEP and may also make some assessment, either formal or informal, and suggest ways in which the school might address particular issues.
- 15.6 Since 2005, power and funding have been devolved from the council to schools for them to put in additional support to help particular children. Sometimes this is suggested by PARMs, but it can be arranged directly with parents and carers. If required, schools can now put in up to 20 hours per week additional support to a child; this usually comes from a Teaching Assistant, but support can come in many forms. However, the same process

applies. As a carer, you should be able to see the additional support and what it is supposed to achieve, through your child's IEP.

- 15.7 If, over time, you feel that your child is still not making the progress they are capable of, despite close monitoring and PARMS, you can ask your child's school to request Statutory Assessment. This is a more formal method of assessment involving Health, Social Care and other agencies and can lead to what is known as a Statement of SEN, although arrangements are due to change due to the government Green Paper produced in 2010 on Special Needs.
- 15.8 Parents and carers can also request a statutory assessment, although the school will usually lead this.
- 15.9 Details of the above can be found on the West Sussex website www.westsussex.gov.uk; please go to Learning and then Special Educational Needs.

16. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

- 16.1 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in West Sussex can offer support when a child has a clear mental health need, and responses at a Primary Care level have been unsuccessful. Typically there may be an escalation of depression, anxiety, self-harm/self destructive behaviour, eating disorders, conduct disorders, somatic (sleeping) disorders and psychotic disorders.
- 16.2 It is also likely in complex cases that other health, social and educational difficulties will exist, for example, misuse of substances.
- 16.3 The CAMHS teams are multi-disciplinary, comprising psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, and community psychiatric nurses. Professionals work with children and families providing a number of psycho-social interventions and therapies to meet the mental health needs of the child and support and work with their families. Each team also has a qualified Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) should a child need to be assessed under the Mental Health Act.
- 16.4 Referral to CAMHS is via Primary Care (usually the GP) or other professional groups e.g. a worker in Children's Services.
- 16.5 In addition to universal and targeted services, all family and friends carers in West Sussex can request support from either:
- The support worker for informal family and friends carers
 - The Special Guardianship Support Team
 - The allocated fostering worker or
 - The Adoption Support Team

Contact numbers have been given in the sections above. The support offered will be tailored to the needs of the child and/or carers.

17. Financial Support

- 17.1 Financial Support for carers may be needed either in the short or longer term.
- 17.2 Carers should not be in a position where they cannot afford to care for someone else's child, and no child should become looked after simply to secure payment for carers.
- 17.3 However, all family and friends carers should understand that the local authority cannot make up financially for perceived inadequacies in the benefit system. Neither will the local authority contribute to funding a chosen lifestyle, such as maintaining a second home or keeping horses.
- 17.4 The local authority expects the parents of children being looked after by family or friends to contribute to the cost of their care if they are earning themselves. This may be on an informal basis if the care is informal or via a financial assessment if an Order is in place.
- 17.5 West Sussex County Council advises all family and friends carers who are seeking advice about welfare benefits and/or tax to make an appointment with the local Citizens Advice Bureau. Local authority workers are not able to give detailed advice about benefits or tax but they will give generalised information and signpost to specialist advice.

18. Accommodation

- 18.1 Where family and friends carers are living in social housing, which is recognised as inadequate, the local authority can negotiate with the local housing authority on behalf of the family carers should be aware that West Sussex County Council is not a housing authority; housing is the responsibility of the District or Borough Council, and there is a duty to work in partnership with the local authority
- 18.2 Carers should be aware that recent changes in eligibility for Housing Benefit (HB) or Local Housing Allowance (LHA) mean that householders cannot claim for children who are placed as foster children and looked after by the local authority even if the placement is intended to be permanent. Special Guardianship holders are able to claim HB or LHA for children on a SGO.
- 18.3 In exceptional circumstances the local authority may advance a loan in the form of a recharge on the property to homeowners who need to extend their house, in order to care for related children. Such arrangements must always be negotiated in advance of any work being done. The expectation is that carers will re-mortgage the property where possible.

19. Supporting Contact

- 19.1 Carers generally support contact between the child and other family members, including parents, and in most families this work well. If the parents pose a risk to the child or carers, there may be a need for additional support for contact. Where carers are being assessed as Special Guardians,

they should make sure that support for contact, if it is needed, is written into the support plan that will be agreed by the Court.

- 19.2 Carers who are anxious about the safety of the child or themselves during contact should consider using a Child Contact Centre. This is a safe, friendly and neutral place where children of separated families can spend time with one or both parents, and sometimes other family members. It is a child-centred environment that puts the needs of the children first.
- 19.3 Information about Child Contact Centres in West Sussex can be obtained from the West Sussex website or the National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC). NACCC has a website and a telephone help service open Monday – Friday 0845 4500 280.
- 19.4 A supervised Child Contact Centre should be used when it has been determined that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering harm during contact. Referrals will usually be made by: the Court, the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) officer, local authority or another Child Contact Centre. In exceptional circumstances a Child Contact Centre may accept a self referral.
- 19.5 The local authority will not usually provide financial support for contact unless a child is looked after and expenses are particularly high.

20. Complaints about Children's Social Care

- 20.1 If you are unhappy with any part of our service, in the first instance you should go back to the team concerned and ask to speak to the team manager or write to them with the details. They will try to settle the matter straight away but if you remain dissatisfied you can contact the Customer Relations Team for advice on 01243 753880.

http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/your_council/get_in_touch/comments_compliments_and/our_complaints_procedure-1/complaints_about_childrens_so.aspx

21. Useful Contacts and Organisations

The organisations listed are national but may have a more local base or contact. They are grouped thematically but in no particular order. Most, if not all, have useful websites and publications.

National Association of Kinship Carers (NAKC) is an independent association that has a specific purpose of campaigning for better rights and entitlements for kinship carers and children in our care. NAKC is unique because it is led by and for kin-carers and, though setting our own agenda, we aim to work alongside other kinship carers and grandparents organisations in the furtherance of our mutual campaigns. Contact the NAKC at nakinshipcarers@gmail.com

National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC). NACCC has a website and a telephone help service open Monday – Friday 0845 4500 280.

The Grandparents' Association Supports grandparents and their families, especially those who have lost or are losing contact with their grandchildren because of divorce, separation or other family problems, those caring for their grandchildren on a full-time basis, and those with childcare responsibilities for their grandchildren. Website address is: www.grandparents-association.org.uk Address: Moot House The Stow Harlow Essex CM20 3AG Tel: 01279 428040 Helpline: 0845 434 9585 Welfare benefits advice and information: 0844 357 1033 Email: info@grandparents-association.org.uk

Grandparents Plus Champions the role of grandparents and the wider family in children's lives, especially when they take on the caring role in difficult family circumstances. Address: Grandparents Plus 18 Victoria Park Square Bethnal Green London E2 9PF Tel: 020 8981 8001 Email: info@grandparentsplus.org.uk

BeGrand.net Website offering information to grandparents, plus online and telephone advice. www.begrand.net Helpline: 0845 434 6835

Parentline Plus Provides help and support in all aspects of family life, including information, an online chat facility and a 24 hour helpline. www.familylives.org.uk Address: CAN Mezzanine 49-51 East Road London N1 6AH Tel: 020 7553 3080 24hr Advice line: 0808 800 2222 Email: parentsupport@familylives.org.uk

Voice Advocacy organisation for children living away from home or in need. www.voiceyp.org Address: 320 City Road London EC1V 2NZ Tel: 020 7833 5792 Young person's advice line: 0808 800 5792 Email: info@voiceyp.org 56 57

Young Minds Works to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people and empowering their parents and carers. www.youngminds.org.uk Address: 48-50 St John Street London EC1M 4DG Tel: 020 7336 8445 Parents helpline: 0808 802 5544

Family Mediation Helpline Provides information and advice about family mediation services and eligibility for public funding. 08456 026627 www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk

National Family Mediation (NFM) Provides mediation services to support couples who are separated, and their children and others affected by this. www.nfm.org.uk 4 Barnfield Hill, Exeter EX1 1SR. 0300 4000 636 general@nfm.org.uk

Department for Education Lists details of telephone help lines and online services to provide information, advice and support on a range of issues that parents and families may face in bringing up children and young people. www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) Offers free independent advice and information for parents and carers on a range of state education and schooling issues, including admissions, exclusion, attendance, special educational needs and bullying. www.ace-ed.org.uk Address: 1c Aberdeen

Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2DQ General advice line: 0808 800 5793 Exclusion advice line: 0808 800 0327 Exclusion information line: 020 7704 9822 (24hr answer phone)

British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Provides information and advice about adoption and fostering and publishes resources. www.baaf.org.uk Address: Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS Tel: 020 7421 2600 Email: mail@baaf.org.uk 51

The Fostering Network Supports foster carers and anyone with an interest in fostering to improve the lives of children in care. Publishes resources and runs Fosterline, a confidential advice line for foster carers including concerns about a child's future, allegations and complaints, legislation and financial matters. www.fostering.net Address: 87 Blackfriars Road London SE1 8HA Email: info@fostering.net Tel: 020 7620 6400 Fosterline: 0800 040 7675 Email: fosterline@fostering.net 53

Children's Legal Centre Provides free independent legal advice and factsheets to children, parents, carers and professionals. www.childrenslegalcentre.com Address: University of Essex Wivenhoe Park Colchester Essex CO4 3SQ Tel: 01206 877 910 E-mail: clc@essex.ac.uk Child Law Advice Line: 0808 802 0008 Community Legal Advice - Education: 0845 345 4345

Citizens Advice Bureaux Helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice through local bureaux and website. www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Family Fund Trust Helps families with severely disabled or seriously ill children to have choices and the opportunity to enjoy ordinary life. Gives grants for things that make life easier and more enjoyable for the disabled child and their family. Address: 4 Alpha Court Monks Cross Drive York YO32 9WN www.familyfund.org.uk Tel: 0845 130 4542 Email: info@familyfund.org.uk 52

Family Rights Group (FRG) Provides advice to parents and other family members whose children are involved with or require children's social care services because of welfare needs or concerns. Publishes resources, helps to develop support groups for family and friends carers, and runs a discussion board. www.frg.org.uk Address: Second Floor The Print House 18 Ashwin Street London E8 3DL Tel: 020 7923 2628 Advice line: 0800 801 0366 Email: advice@frg.org.uk

Action for Prisoners' Families Works to reduce the negative impact of imprisonment on prisoners' families. Produces publications and resources, and provides advice, information and training as well as networking opportunities. www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk Address: Unit 21, Carlson Court 116 Putney Bridge Road London, SW15 2NQ Tel: 020 8812 3600 E-mail: info@actionpf.org.uk Advice line: 0808 808 2003 info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk

Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group Operates helpline and provides a variety of services to support anyone who has a link with

someone in prison, prisoners and other agencies.

www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk Address: Valentine House 1079 Rochdale Road Blackley Manchester M9 8AJ Tel: 0161 702 1000 Offenders' Families Helpline Tel: 0808 808 2003 Email: info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.co.uk

Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) Provides practical and emotional support to prisoners and to their children and families. The Kinship Care Support Service provides support and advice to family members and friends who care for children whose parents are in HMP Holloway.

www.prisonadvice.org.uk Address: Park Place 12 Lawn Lane Vauxhall London SW8 1UD Telephone: 020 77359535 55

Parents Against Drug Abuse (PADA) Delivers support and services to the families of substance users, including a national helpline.

www.pada.org.uk Address: The Foundry Marcus Street Birkenhead CH41 1EU Phone: 0151 649 1580 National Families Helpline: 08457 023867

TalktoFrank The government's national drugs helpline which offers free confidential drugs information and advice 24 hours a day. Information and advice is also available via the website. www.talktofrank.com 24 hour advice line: 0800 77 66 00 Text: 82111 Email: frank@talktofrank.com

Mentor UK Promotes the health and wellbeing of children and young people to reduce the damage that drugs can do to lives. www.mentoruk.org.uk Address: Fourth Floor 74 Great Eastern Street London EC2A 3JG Tel: 020 7739 8494 Email: admin@mentoruk.org 54

Adfam Works with families affected by drugs and alcohol, and supports carers of children whose parents have drug and alcohol problems.

www.adfam.org.uk Address: 25 Corsham Street, London N1 6DR Tel: 020 7553 7640 Email: admin@adfam.org.uk 50

Addaction Offers a range of support developed for families and carers affected by substance misuse. www.addaction.org.uk Address: 67-69 Cowcross Street London EC1M 6PU Tel: 020 7251 5860 Email: info@addaction.org.uk