One Minute Guide

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 Delegated Authority

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**What is Delegated Authority?**

Delegated Authority is all about giving children in care as normal a life as possible, with the same opportunities as other children.

Delegated Authority is the process that enables foster carers to make common sense, everyday decisions about the children and young people they care for,, such as allowing them to go to friends’ houses for sleepovers, signing consent forms for school trips and even arranging haircuts.

Holders of parental responsibility can Delegated Authority to foster carers to undertake such tasks and decisions. Foster carers never have parental responsibility for a foster child, so they can only take decisions about the foster child where the authority has been delegated to them by the local authority/ or the parents.

Clarifying who is best placed to take everyday decisions on many factors: the young person’s age, views, legal status and care plan, the parents’ views and the experience and views of the foster carers. Collaboration and consultation are essential for successful working partnerships.

**West Sussex has a clear policy concerning delegation of authority which is available to read within West Sussex’s Practice Guidance section on Tri-X.**

<http://www.proceduresonline.com/westsussex/cs/p_del_auth_fc_resid.html>

Things to consider when considering the delegation of authority to foster carers:

**1. Listen to what children want:** The people who look after children on a daily basis are usually the ones who make day-to-day decisions such as whether to agree sleepovers and school trips. This should be no different for foster carers. Children do not want social workers making these decisions – it makes them feel different to their peers, can result in missed opportunities and gets in the way of them enjoying a full childhood and family life.

**2. Involve birth families in care planning:** Children’s relationships with their birth families vary. Some birth families will be very involved in making decisions about their child’s care, particularly where the child is likely to return home. It is essential wherever possible, and always where children are voluntarily accommodated, to involve birth families in discussions about delegating decision making to foster carers, helping them understand how beneficial this can be to the life of their child.

**3. Set out clearly what decision making is delegated:** Authority for day-to-day decision making should be delegated to foster carers unless there is a good reason not to. Every fostered child must have a placement plan which sets out the plan for their day-to-day care and how decisions about them will be made. This plan should include what decisions can be made by their foster carer and where decision making is not delegated to the foster carer the reasons should be clearly explained in the child’s placement plan.

**4. Help promote placement stability and good outcomes for children:** Ensuring that foster carers are supported to make day-to-day decisions helps the children in their care to have confidence in these relationships and supports the development of trusting and secure attachments to their foster carers.

**5. Work together in the best interests of the child:** Effective partnership working is core to good quality foster care. Where the foster carer, supervising social worker and child’s social worker are clear about how day-to-day decisions are to be made, decisions are more likely to be on time with everyone working in the best interests of the child.

**6. Support foster carers to develop the skills and confidence they need:** Through appropriate training and supervision, fostering services should support their foster carers to develop the skills and confidence to take day-to-day decisions, empowering them to make these decisions within a strong framework of support.

**Further Information:**

Delegated Authority – Fostering Network <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/looking-after-fostered-child/delegated-authority>

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/274220/Children_Act_1989_fostering_services.pdf>