One Minute Guide

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Informal Family Care Service

 No 48, January 2019

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Children often live with grandparents, aunts or uncles or older siblings for periods within their childhood. This may be for a variety of reasons, including parental bereavement, imprisonment, drug or alcohol dependency and parental mental health. The vast majority of such arrangements are made between the parent(s) and the carer(s) and the local authority is not involved. 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 outlines the Local Authority response. Without timely support these children can be more vulnerable to coming in to and remaining in care, as family resources and placements have already been explored.

West Sussex Informal Care Service try and keep the support for kinship carers as flexible as possible, recognising that demands on carers can be vastly different. For example, kinship carers range from 18 years old to 92 years of age, so WSCC want to be relevant for their needs and led by the family where possible. From feedback, WSCC know that over 95% of the families felt that the input from the service strengthened their caring arrangement.

The team offers a provider service and do not casehold children. If there is a child in need or child protection plan in place, the team will work alongside the allocated social worker in providing the additional support to the kinship carers.

**Inf Informal Family Care Team provides:**

**An initial discussion** with the family to ensure involvement is tailored to the individual needs of the family. When other professionals are involved the team would also contact them to ensure their work will dovetail in to and contribute to existing plans. The team work alongside Children’s Services, Adult Services, CAMHS, Mental Health services, Children and Family Centres, Early Help, Drug and Alcohol services, Rehab Services, Police, Prison support, etc.

* **Giving advice, support and information** around relevant issues to carers

such as benefits, finances, housing, practical issues, education issues, contact issues and family mediation through the Solutions service.

* **Intensive Support around parenting** children with challenging behaviour, particularly when this is linked to trauma and attachment difficulties.
* **Support to complete an application for a Child Arrangement Order** where the carer needs shared Parental Responsibility with the parent in order to be a legal guardian who can make decisions around the child’s care. It also creates a sense of stability and security for the child.
* **Groups specifically for Kinship Carers**. Each group runs for a six to eight week period and these will take place at locations across West Sussex. At present there are three courses available, one is an Introduction to Attachment and Trauma (with a focus on parenting), the second is on the Teenage Brain and finally one around general kinship issues. In the last group the 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 community support for kinship carers.
* **Assisting to identify universal or targeted services** that could support you and the child or young person. Where necessary the team can make referrals to agencies or grant bodies or support the family to make self-referrals where possible.
* **Monthly Drop Ins** across the county, providing opportunities to meet other family carers, building a peer support network and talking through any concerns.
* **Offering a one off consultation** to Early Help and families not at Tier 4 support yet, but identified as vulnerable to escalating to Tier 4.
* **Offering training to teachers in schools around ‘Attachment in the classroom’** helping to give teachers an understanding of Attachment and a tool box for managing children in the classroom.
* **Help families identify therapeutic support for children and young people.** In some cases Informal Family Care are able to help fund sessions through our partnership providers.
* **Produce a newsletter** twice a year to keep families up to date with groups, drop in’s and events.
* **Unfortunately this service is not open to Special Guardianship families, who are able to access support through the SGO Support team and can be referred to via the MASH.**

**If you would like to make a referral,** please contact the team for a referral form at: Informalfamilycare@westsussex.gov.uk

**To discuss a family or to make further enquiries please contact the team:**

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