

Foster Carers Support Policy

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1. Introduction

West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) and this school recognises and values the contribution that Foster Carers make to the lives of children and young people in care. As a Fostering Friendly organisation, we are committed to supporting staff so that they can better meet the needs of their fostered child or young person.

This policy sets out the additional time off that we will offer prospective and existing Foster Carers.

For the purposes of this policy the term Foster Carers refers to Foster Carers, Kinship Carers, Special Guardians, Supported Lodgings Carers, and those who are Foster Carers under a 'staying put' arrangement.

2. Scope

The policy currently applies to all employees employed in schools where the policy has been formally adopted by the school's governing body or board. The policy applies to employees who:

- Have begun the formal process of seeking approval and registration as a Foster Carer.
- Are an approved Foster Carer and have a child in placement (or have had a child in placement for 75% of the previous twelve months and are currently in a rest period).

The policy applies to all Foster Carers who work for the County Council irrespective of whether they are carers for West Sussex, another Local Authority, or an Independent Fostering Agency.

The policy does not apply to agency staff or casual workers.

3. Principles

WSCC recognises and values the contribution that Foster Carers make to society and especially to the lives of children in care.

WSCC is committed to the Children, Young People & Learning Directorate vision of putting 'Children First' and we take our corporate parenting responsibilities seriously.

We will provide paid time off work, as detailed in this policy, to support Foster Carers to provide the best possible care for a child or young person.

Headteachers/managers will consider requests for Foster Carer leave compassionately, balancing the needs and wellbeing of staff, the needs of the school, and the overall WSCC organisation's commitment to support fostering.

The entitlements within this policy are in addition to the provisions outlined within the County Council's Leave Policy, Flexible Working Policy, and Staff Special Circumstances Policy.

4. Key Provisions

WSCC will support Foster Carers by giving additional paid time off as applicable to the specific foster care arrangement in place, as follows:

- Up to 3 days paid leave for assessment and training prior to formal approval as a Foster Carer. This is a one-off entitlement.
- 1 days paid leave for attendance at panel for approval. This is a one-off entitlement.
- In addition, WSCC will support Foster Carers on an ongoing basis with up to 5 additional days paid leave per twelve-month annual leave period for reasons such as supervision meetings, child meetings/appointments, annual foster carer review meeting, training, settling in a new child, attending support groups.

The additional leave will be considered and approved on a pro-rata basis for part time staff.

The leave may be taken in whole or half working days or hours. Foster Carer Leave cannot be carried forward to the following twelve-month period.

Requesting leave and authorisation

Requests for Foster Carer leave should be made as soon as employees become aware that they require this by completing the Foster Carer Leave Application Form and sending it to their headteacher/manager. The request for leave should outline the reason, and the amount of leave required. Other than in exceptional circumstances, this form should be completed before the leave is required.

Headteachers/managers will consider the individual circumstances of each case and should consider requests as soon as possible. All requests must be approved by the headteacher/manager in advance. In requesting leave, employees are expected to give reasonable notice and take proper account of their workload

and that of the team. In authorising leave, headteachers/managers will consider the impact on the service and the cover within the rest of the team.

Employees may be asked to produce documentary evidence for their headteacher/manager showing that they are either an approved Foster Carer or actively applying to become a Foster Carer.

Advice on the different type of foster caring arrangements and eligibility for leave can be provided by contacting fosteringfriendly@westsussex.gov.uk

Any requests that are approved should be recorded on Bromcom using the appropriate 'Foster Carer Support Leave' absence type (i.e., either '3530 Foster Carer Leave WSCC', or '3531 Foster Carer Leave OTH LA', or '3532 Foster Carer Leave IFA'). Contact the WSCC Schools' Financial Services Team if these absence types are not available to the school in Bromcom so that they can be added.

5. Who Can Help?

Headteachers/managers can seek further advice from their named contact in the HR Business Partner Education Team or as follows:

- **Email:** HR.Professional.Support@westsussex.gov.uk
- **Telephone:** 033022 22422

Advice is available for headteachers/managers on the different types of foster care arrangements and eligibility for the different types of leave at fosteringfriendly@westsussex.gov.uk

If you require this document in an alternative format, then please contact the Specialist HR Services team at the following email address: HRPolicyQueries@westsussex.gov.uk

6. Document History

Date	Update Description	Author	Description Of Changes
11/10/2023	Original corporate document created	Specialist HR Services team (NP) and HRBP team (LS)	
20/03/2024	Schools document created	Specialist HR Services team (KMG)	Original corporate version of document updated for use in schools. Various minor, cosmetic, changes made including the following: changed 'managers' to 'headteachers/managers' throughout the document, the table of contents (general tidy up), the scope (updated to refer to schools), the introduction (added the words 'and this school'), the principles section (changed words 'the team and service' to 'school' and added words 'WSCC's overall'), the key provisions (removed erroneous '(a)' from sub-section title and added details of absence types to be used), removed full-stops after all email addresses, general change to 'house style' for school policies (changed colour of headings from black to blue, changed style of bullets), the 'who can help?' section (updated with details of HR BP Education Team), a new document history section added.

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