



Support for Family and Friends Carers in East Sussex

Values and policy statement

Children have a right to be brought up by their families and everyone has a right for their private and family life to be respected. In line with wider prevailing social and cultural norms, East Sussex Children's Services believes that parents have the primary responsibility for bringing up their children and ensuring they are well cared for and this commitment to their children often continues into the child's adulthood as the parents become grandparents.

Children frequently have significant relationships with wider family members. Often, throughout a child's life, relatives and close friends will play a very significant role in children's lives especially at a time when things at home are not going well. Most parents frequently draw on extended family support practically, emotionally and financially to enable children and young people to remain in the care of their family. Often families manage these arrangements with little support except through universal services such as health and education, but for a minority it will be a very difficult time. Sometimes parents find it hard to acknowledge that they are struggling to

care for their children on their own and East Sussex Children's Services will help them to draw on support from the wider family and normalise family life for children wherever it is safe and possible to do so.

Our aim is to work with families at an early stage when difficulties may be emerging and to enable families to find their own solution. We will take a 'least interventionist' approach to minimise statutory intervention, evaluate the risks and choose the level of support and intervention that is most proportionate to those risks.

We recognise that sometimes it is not safe for a child to live with their birth parents, either on a short term basis or longer term, even with support and every reasonable and practicable effort must be made by all concerned, including by the family network, to enable the child to live within their wider network of family or friends. In order to do this we work with families to help them to come to a family agreement about how they can safely care for their children within the wider family network, without the need for the

children to be looked after by the Local Authority. This means that we are upfront about our worries and concerns about the risks to children and what we think needs to change and be put in place by the family to ensure the children are protected and their needs are met. We will also discuss with families ideas as to how they can work together as a family to make arrangements for the care of their children during short term difficulties and in the longer term throughout childhood.

Where the parents and extended family are able to agree their own arrangements to provide an alternative primary carer for a child who would otherwise need to be looked after by the Local Authority, the carers can be supported to do so,

as made possible under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. However financial support is not automatically available and should not be assumed.

Good social work practice includes keeping the family at the centre of what is happening and at the centre of decision making for the children. It also includes ensuring children and families receive help that is proportionate to risk and complexity of need, and that they are not routinely subjected to formal legal intervention if this is not necessary within the context of the least interventionist principle. Levels of complexity and need are kept under constant review to ensure the level of intervention and support remains proportionate.