

**Kent County Council**

**Fostering Service**

**Policy and Procedure**

**Unannounced Visits Guidance and Protocol**

**Unannounced Visits - Guidance and Protocol**

The UK National Minimum Standards for Foster Care and Fostering Services Regulations recommends that Foster Carers have a minimum of one unannounced visit conducted per year.

**Each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker who has meetings with the foster carer, including at least one unannounced visit a year – (Standard 21.8) – The Fostering National Standards 2011.**

The allocated Fostering Social Worker must undertake at least one unannounced visit a year as part of their monitoring and quality assurance function and use this opportunity to check the accommodation. Fostering Social Work Assistants may carry out additional unannounced visit.

**The foster home is inspected annually, without appointment, by the fostering service to make sure that it continues to meet the needs of foster children - (Standard 10.5) - The Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011.**

We are aware that some Foster Carers have anxieties about the nature of the visits. The Guidance sets out the expectations about how these visits should be conducted and recorded.

**Guidance**

**Why ‘Unannounced Visit’?**

Kent County Council is continually striving to improve the fostering service to ensure that children are safe in foster care. Unannounced visits are intended to be amongst other mechanisms already in place to ensure that the foster care being provided for looked after children in Kent is of a good standard.

The purpose of the meeting is NOT to check on how tidy the foster carers home is. The visits are to be conducted by a Fostering Social Worker / Social Work Assistant, who is aware of the general standard of the foster carers home.

**What we will want to know?**

Who is looking after the child or young person?

Who is in the home?

If the carer is not at home, what arrangements have been made for the care of the child or young person?

**What is to be seen?**

We will want to look around the home environment including the foster child or young person’s bedroom and any communal spaces available to the child such as bathroom, kitchen, living rooms and outside play area. We will generally not want to see the foster carer’s bedroom (unless they share with a fostering child, i.e. baby under 2 years) or their birth children’s bedroom.

The Fostering Social Worker / Social Work Assistant will observe and record issues in respect general cleanliness and assure health and safety compliance.

The Fostering Social Worker / Social Work Assistant will want to see where the diary records are stored and date an entry noting that an unannounced visit was made.

**Our undertaking**

Kent County Council Fostering Social Worker / Social Work Assistant will complete the visit as quickly as possible.

The Fostering Social Worker / Social Work Assistant will clarify, discuss and seek to resolve any issues with the Foster Carer there and then.

Kent County Council have a standard format for unannounced visits so that all visits are the same.

**Protocol**

All unannounced visits will take place between the hours of 8am and 8pm any day of the week (however it is anticipated that most visits will take place during Monday to Friday).

All foster carers will have an unannounced visit at least once a year (can be more, at the discretion of the Fostering Social Worker and the Fostering Team Manager)

If a baby sitter or back up carer is looking after the child, the Fostering Social Worker / Assistant will seek to identify the person looking after the child / young person but will not continue the visit.

The Fostering Social Worker / Social Work Assistant may request that the child or young person is seen and spoken to.

Foster carers are not able to refuse an unannounced visit. This would be appropriate in only exceptional circumstances.

Unannounced visits will be recorded using the standard pro-forma.

*Appendix 1 - Unannounced Visit Form*