******Unannounced Visit to Foster Carers Homes Guidance**

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| --- | --- |
| **Contents** | **Page** |
| Unannounced Visits to Foster Homes Guidance | 1 |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
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**Kent County Council**

# **Unannounced Visits to Foster Homes Guidance**

**Kent Fostering Service**

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# **Introduction**

Kent County Council continually strives to ensure that children are safe in foster care. Unannounced visits to foster homes are amongst other mechanisms already in place to ensure that our children and young people in care live in healthy, safe, warm, nurturing family environments and the care provided to them is of the best possible standard.

The Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011 states that:

***‘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 (NMS 21.8)’***

and that:

***‘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 (NMS 10.5)’***

The Fostering Service want to maintain a consistent approach across the county to unannounced visits and recognise that at times foster carers may feel worried by the prospect of such a visit taking place, so the following guidance sets out how unannounced visits should be undertaken and recorded.

# **Guiding Principles**

* Every foster home must be visited unannounced a minimum of once per year by a qualified social worker, who is aware of the general standard of the home.
* Other unannounced visits if considered necessary and helpful can be undertaken by either a Social Worker or Social Work Assistant who is aware of the general standard of the home.
* Unannounced visits can take place at any time.
* The visit will be undertaken as quickly as possible to cause least disruption possible to family and home routines.
* Foster carers must allow the unannounced visit to take place and it is only in exceptional circumstances that the Social Worker/Social Work Assistant will accept a reason not to continue with a visit.
* If a nominated babysitter is looking after the child, the Fostering Social Worker / Social Work Assistant will seek to identify the person but will not continue the visit and come back another time.
* If the carer/family are not at home the Social Worker/Social Work Assistant will come back another time.
* The Fostering Social Worker / Social Work Assistant may request that the child or young person is seen and spoken to.
* The child/young person’s bedroom and all communal spaces available to them will be seen. Ordinarily, neither the foster carers childrens bedroom(s) nor the foster carers bedroom will be seen, unless a baby sleeps in the carers room.
* Storage of confidential information relating to the child/young person will be checked as part of the unannounced visit.
* The Fostering Social Worker / Social Work Assistant will observe and record issues in respect of general cleanliness and health and safety compliance.
* The Fostering Social Worker / Social Work Assistant will clarify, discuss and seek to resolve any issues with the Foster Carer at the time of the visit.
* Unannounced visits will be recorded by the Social Worker/Social Worker Assistant using the Unannounced Visit Template (see appendix)