SSW Availability to Foster Carers Procedure

Social Work Procedures · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/ssw-availability-to-foster-carers-procedure/

Positive Aspirations Foster Carers have access to supportive and responsive emergency assistance 24/7 to ensure they can protect and keep children safe at all times while feeling supported and confident in their role.

Supervising Social Workers (SSWs) must ensure that each foster carer is given their direct work telephone number and understands the best way to contact them during working hours. This communication should be explained clearly during supervision and placement discussions to reduce uncertainty and promote trust.

Supervising Social Workers should make themselves as available and approachable as possible to foster carers. Foster carers must never be made to feel that their concerns are insignificant or that they are a burden for seeking support. Every concern, whether it appears minor or complex, should be treated respectfully and acknowledged as part of creating a safe, learning-focused environment.

When issues arise regarding the timing or frequency of calls from foster carers, this should be explored with empathy and curiosity rather than criticism. The SSW should discuss the matter with their Manager to agree on a trauma-informed strategy, such as offering proactive and scheduled check-ins, particularly during periods of stress, placement change, or increased need. The goal is to balance responsiveness with mutual well-being while maintaining consistent communication and reassurance.

All Supervising Social Workers must have an up-to-date answerphone message on their work phone, inviting callers to leave a message or to contact the office in the event of an emergency. This message should be calm and reassuring in tone, making clear that their concerns will be responded to as soon as possible.

Social Workers must carry their mobile phone during working hours to remain contactable, unless in supervision, meetings, or training sessions where confidentiality or focus must be maintained. In these cases, an alternative contact route (such as the office or duty worker) must be available and

communicated to foster carers.

Work phones can be diverted, with prior agreement, to a colleague or the main switchboard. This diversion should always occur whenever the social worker is on annual leave, unwell, or otherwise unavailable for more than half a day. This ensures continuity of care and helps foster carers feel secure in knowing that someone is always available to support them.

Foster carers must be clearly informed of the **tiered support system** in place for emergencies. This should be explained both in writing and verbally during induction and supervisions:

- **Tier 1:** Contact the Supervising Social Worker directly.
- **Tier 2:** If the Supervising Social Worker is unavailable, contact the Manager.
- **Tier 3:** If the Manager is unavailable, contact the main switchboard for immediate assistance.

Each level of this system is designed to ensure carers receive timely, consistent, and compassionate support, reducing stress and promoting emotional safety for both the carers and the children they care for.