

What Makes The Difference? TOOLS and RESOURCES

Name of tool/resource: Equal Opportunities and Valuing Diversity.

Name and region of agency/organisation that developed this tool/resource:

West Sussex County Council.

Purpose and brief description of tool/resource:

This tool is West Sussex's County Council's homes procedure which includes a statement of the Council's commitment to equal opportunity in the delivery of its services and employment.

It also includes principles from the Children's Act which are translated into practice within the service and informs the reader of what children can expect in relation to rights; principles of good practice and West Sussex's commitment to consulting children on issues which affect their lives.

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Contact details for further information about this tool/resource

Not known.

Evidence for the effectiveness/ impact of this tool/resource

Positive impact of this tool/resource:

Not known.

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This section should be read in conjunction with the West Sussex County Council Equal Opportunities Policy (see [WSCC Staff Handbook](#))

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Equal Opportunities and Valuing Diversity

Equal Opportunities statement

West Sussex County Council is committed to a positive policy of equal opportunity in the delivery of its services and employment.

The Council will actively oppose all forms of discrimination carried out on the grounds of gender, colour, creed, ethnic or national origin, disability, social background, age, marital status, those with HIV status and discrimination against gay and lesbian people.

The Council is determined that the principles of equality of opportunity will underpin all service provision. Services will be accessible to those who need or want them. Within the framework of collective provision there will be a recognition of difference and individual choice.

In all aspects of employment, the Council will operate a positive equal opportunities framework from recruitment and selection through training and development, employment procedures, consultation and participation, appraisal and promotion to retirement. Direct and indirect discrimination will be eliminated and positive measures will be introduced to redress the imbalances, including the use of positive action provisions within the law.

Applications for jobs are considered on merit and equal opportunities will exist for all facing disadvantage and possible discrimination.

To achieve our aims we will:

- Promote equal opportunities and ensure that it is integrated throughout the organisation
- Design our services to meet the needs of our community
- Combat discrimination whenever it occurs and, in particular, discrimination against the groups within the scope of the statement
- Provide training and guidance to all employees to ensure the Council's commitment to equal opportunities is known and understood
- Review all systems and procedures in the provision of service to ensure equality of opportunity, responsiveness, sensitivity and accessibility
- Give active support to enable participation in service development and decision making
- Constantly monitor our performance, and evaluate our performance against equal opportunities objectives

Putting the principles of the Children Act into practice

The Children Act principles can be translated into a number of clear statements about good practice:

1. We need to acknowledge that all children have certain basic needs if they are to thrive and achieve their potential. They include the need for:
 - appropriate physical care and protection from harm
 - positive health care
 - affection and approval in order to develop self esteem
 - stimulation and opportunity to develop their skills
 - discipline and control - age appropriate
 - opportunities and encouragement to acquire skills and the means to prepare for adulthood.
2. We need to acknowledge that all children have individual wishes and feelings, gender, racial origin, religion, culture, background, and personal capacity, and these need to be given special consideration.
3. The aim of the Social and Caring Services is to promote responsible parenting and this includes foster care. Children then looked after become subject to the planning and review regulations. For children who cannot go home we have a responsibility to meet their needs for continuity and security through to adulthood.
4. We all need to demonstrate:
 - respect for children and their rights
 - respect for a child's parent(s) and their family
 - respect for a child's race, religion and cultural identity
 - a non judgmental service of quality care
 - a promise to listen to children
5. We need to be working in partnership with a variety of agencies that provide services to children. These include education, health authorities, police, probation and voluntary agencies.
6. Working in partnership means that a network of care and support is provided by all agencies as a response to identified need. This includes working with the family.

Children's Rights

Children can expect:

1. To be protected from harm.
2. To be able to express their wishes and feelings in the knowledge that my concerns will be taken into account.
3. Information about their family and other important people in their life and contact with them or a clear explanation of why this is not possible.
4. To be told clearly what they can do and what they are not allowed to do.
5. Not to be discriminated against for any reason
6. Education and health care that suit their needs
7. Opportunities to develop their skills and interests
8. Encouragement to participate in the making of decisions and plans for their future
9. To be prepared for life as an adult with the necessary help available while they do this.
10. To know how to complain if things go wrong and for their complaint to be dealt with properly.

Principles of Good Practice

At all times the young person’s physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social development will be promoted, and the young person’s welfare safeguarded.

Each young person should be treated with respect and with regard being given at all times to maintaining their privacy, dignity and self-esteem, with particular attention being paid to care aspects relating to race, religion, culture and language.

Each young person should experience a sense of continuity and security, with their past life valued.

Each young person should be recognised as unique and individual and should be accepted “as they are”, understanding that their past life experiences influence their present attitudes and behaviour.

Staff will be extremely sensitive to the feelings of insecurity and vulnerability, which a young person may have, and will try to build confidence and self-esteem.

Daily routines should allow for flexibility and be unobtrusive in order to meet the needs of young people as individuals and not those of the staff.

At all times, regard should be given to a young person’s wishes and feelings, and maximum opportunities made available for involvement in all decisions concerning their lives, with real choice being given to them.

Each young person should be encouraged to develop independence and explore their environment, even if this means taking reasonable risks.

Within the spirit of the Children Act 1989, staff will work in partnership with parents and others with concern for the young person.

Staff will encourage the celebration of the young person’s important events.

All matters of information about each young person, or shared by them, should remain confidential, unless they have given their permission for this to be used – or it is vital to their health and welfare and safety that it be passed to an appropriate person.

Consultation

In accordance with the Children Act 1989, all homes operated by West Sussex Social and Caring Services seek to work in partnership with the parents/carers of any young person accommodated. Such co-operation is especially important for ensuring that the young person’s religious, racial, cultural and linguistic background is known and considered in the placement planning.

Additionally, the views of any young person resident in a home are sought on all matters that affect them. This is important in assisting young people to become more independent, make choices and learn how to make their views known. In particular, their views are sought on:

- The operation of the home and the care given to them
- The adequacy of the staff looking after them
- The adequacy of space and furnishings in their bedrooms
- The privacy of washing facilities
- Facilities for contacting significant people in their lives
- Their sense of personal space
- Future plans including holiday/leisure activities

Such opinions are obtained principally through key worker sessions and regular residents meetings. It is the responsibility of the Registered Manager to ensure that such meetings are held on a regular basis, minutes recorded and made available to all residents and staff of the home.

Parents/carers and significant adults are invited to all reviews and any planning meeting regarding their child. As well as the opinion of the young person concerned, the views of the parents/carers/significant adults are also sought. These opinions are requested in written form prior to any meeting and an opportunity given for them to give their opinions verbally during the meeting.

The Registered Manager should ensure that they have a system of regular contact with the young person’s family, significant others and staff from the placing office.

Their views on the operation of the home and the care afforded to the young person should be sought on a regular basis. If any issues are raised during such consultation, appropriate feedback should be given and notes kept for future reference.

If such contact is considered inappropriate, then staff should ensure that the young person is able to consult with an independent visitor or advocate.

The Registered Manager must also ensure that any disability the young person may have is taken into account. Special attention needs to be taken to ensure that such young people are able to communicate their views.