



# Looked After Children's Community Family Worker (contact) Service

Offers countywide provision of supervised contact, life story book work (for infants) and reunification family support.

# What is Community Family Work in East Sussex

The Community Family Work Service works directly with children who are looked-after and their families, supervising contact

When children are returning home Community Family Workers (CFWs) provide support for the family's reunification

CFWs provide Life Story Books for under 2s

# Where we are based

Silverlands  
St Leonards



Hailsham Family  
Resource Centre



Meeching Centre  
Newhaven

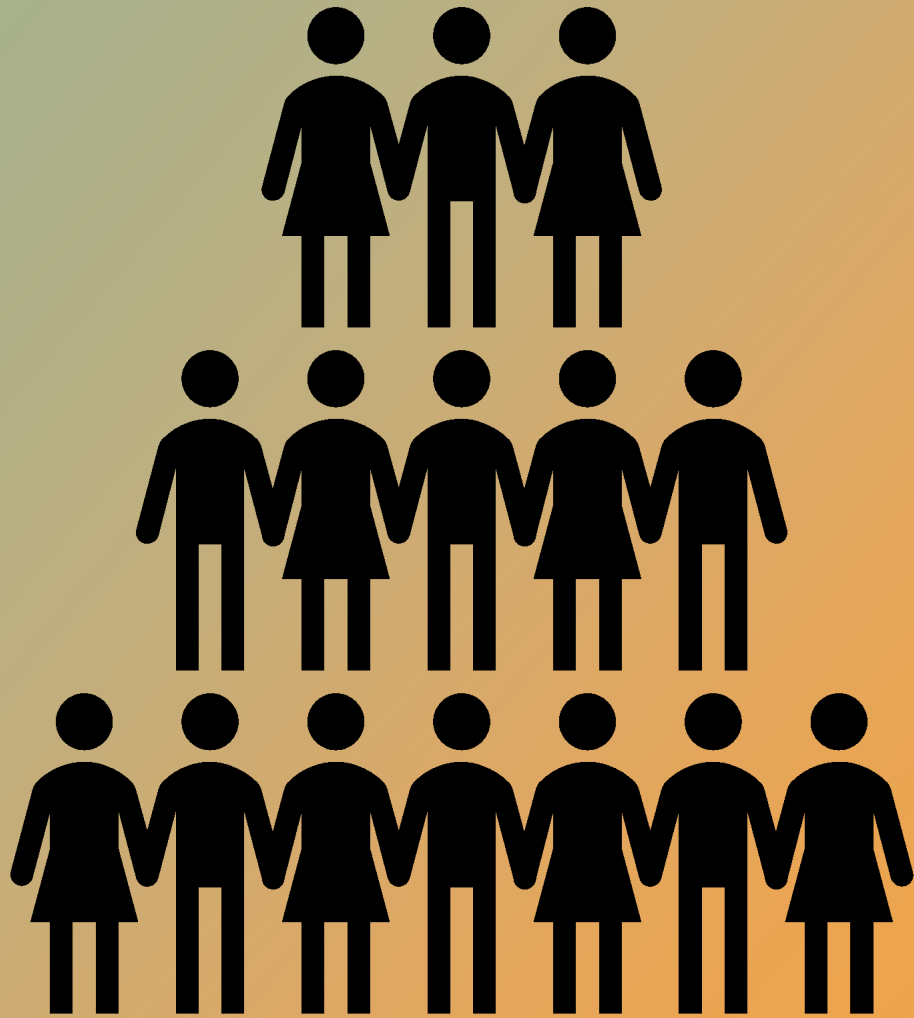




# Silverlands Centre

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## Staff and what we deliver



Along with a Practice Manager the LAC CFW service has **2** senior social workers, **23.3 full time equivalents (fte)** CFWs on full or part time contracts, **3 fte** Senior Business Administrators and a Business Support Officer and we are currently appointing 3.2 fte to the CFW role.

Currently, **24,949** contact hours are provided per rolling year, which **482** contact hours provided per week and we work with **309** looked-after children.

# Why contact family time is important

We believe supervised contact with their parents is crucially important to a looked-after child's wellbeing following the trauma, loss and separation from their parents.

- It is important for children's relationships to be maintained for the promotion or maintenance of **attachments**
- Children's **identity** and answers to 'who am I? why am I here? What's going to happen to me?'
- **Information** about their parents, family, home, pets and other important people in their lives

The Children Act 1989 requires the Local Authority to promote reasonable contact for looked-after children. The frequency and duration will be proposed in the Care Plan put in front of the court prior to an Order.

As the child moves through their care journey the frequency of contact will change commensurate with their care plan i.e. assessment, reunification, post-permanence

# Where we meet & what happens

Contact will be offered in the three centres and in the community; it will always take place closest to where the youngest child is living.

While we always work within a risk assessment, other agencies' information informs CFW planning including Police, Probation, Psychological and other SW assessment. We want to progress and avoid unnecessary institutionalisation while meeting our duty of care to staff, about which progress is recorded in reviews.

Children meeting with their parents is referred to as 'direct', while indirect contact can be cards or letters.

Contact taking place in the community may include a local park, leisure park or another outside activity e.g. crazy golf.

The children meet with their parents or other family members along with a CFW and spend time together, depending on the age of the child suitable activities will be planned e.g. playing a game, talking, arts and crafts or reading.

During supervised contact the role of the Community Family Worker is to observe the contact and keep the children safe and report safeguarding concerns.

During the Covid 19 pandemic, direct contact ceased from March to July 2020. Children met with their parents over a digital platform, Microsoft Teams. Digital contact continues to be part of the CFW offer to complement, direct contact.

# Reunification & CFW

The Local Authority's intention for every looked-after child is their earliest possible safe return to their parent's care. From the day we meet, we are working together to prevent further harm.

Time spent together is an opportunity for children to express their needs, wishes and feelings verbally and through their behaviour. We anticipate a period of turbulence in the early days, which will settle. Reviews identify parents' strengths and areas for development, with specific outcomes explained and reflected upon.

The re-unification process entails incremental, reviewed arrangements with decreased intervention; supervised contact may take place less often in contact centres and move to a community setting, developing to supported plans and unsupervised contact. We ultimately want the family's time together to be at home with increased time and overnight stays during the transition period.

Parents sometimes need additional support and CFWs adapt to meet their learning styles or additional needs. From the Agreement Meeting onwards, parents are encouraged to be reliable and consistent for their children in preparation for their child's potential return home.

The CFWs support, advise and guide parenting at home with tasks such as behaviour management, routine building, accessing services, praise and support.



# Life Story Work

CFWs research and prepare Life Story Book Work for infants and toddlers.

A Life Story Book provides an age-appropriate narrative for the child to look through with their family which includes detail gathered from the child's record. Parents, foster carers and other important people in a child's life provide photos and keepsakes.

Each book is unique and bespoke, providing a chronology of the child's life up to their permanence in their birth or adoptive family.

The purpose is to nurture understanding of what has happened to them, enrich their knowledge of their time looked-after and explain the decisions which have been made about their future.