

Family and Friends Care Policy

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Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARE POLICY

INDEX

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	3
Definitions	4
Context of Care by Family and Friends	6
Policy Statement; key value principles and objectives	7
Assessing Informal Arrangements	9
Legal Context	9
Family Support Services provided under s.17 Children Act 1989	9
The Provision of Accommodation under s.20 Children Act 1989	10
Leaving Care	12
Pre-proceedings	12
Private Fostering Arrangements	12
Special Guardianship, Residence Orders and Adoption	13
Financial Support	13
Accommodation	14
Supporting Contact	14
Support Groups	15
Family and Friends Foster Carers	15
Complaints Process	15
ANNEX	17

Policy: Family and Friends Care

1 Responsible Officer / Department

1.1 Head of Children & Young People's Operational Services.

2 Date

2.1 [The policy should be dated on the day on which the Board / Council approves the policy]

3 Review Date

3.1 August 2014; (three years from date of implementation).

4 Scope

4.1 This policy applies to all Children, Education & Social Care staff and is relevant to all staff in partner agencies who work with children and young people.

5 References

- Children Act 1989
- Child Support Act 1991
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Fostering Services Regulations 2002
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations, DfE, 2010
- Family and Friends Care : Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, DfE, 2010

6 Introduction

6.1 This policy sets out a framework for the provision of support to family and friends carers. In particular it provides a policy on the implementation of the duties of the Stockton on Tees Borough Council ("The Council") contained in the Children Act 1989 in respect of children and young people who, because they are unable to live with their parents, are being brought up by members of their extended families, friends or other people connected with them.

6.2 This policy applies to all Children, Education and Social Care Staff. It is also relevant to all staff in the Council's partner agencies who work with children and young people in the Stockton on Tees Borough Council area.

6.3 Children and young people who are unable to live with their parents should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and to promote their welfare, whether or not they are "looked after" by the Council

6.4 This policy aims to address when such children become "looked after" and sets out what the Council and its partner agencies will do to deliver effective services to children and young people who are living with family members or friends in the following circumstances:-

Policy: Family and Friends Care

- a. Informal arrangements with a relative;
 - b. In informal arrangements with friends or other family members which last for a period of less than 28 days;
 - c. As a private fostering arrangement;
 - d. As a “looked after” child placed with foster carers;
 - e. Under a residence order or a special guardianship order;
 - f. Or in arrangements which may lead to an adoption order.
- 6.5 This policy provides a framework for the provision of support to family and friends carers, whatever the legal status of the children for whom they are providing care. It requires the Council in collaboration with its local partner agencies to adhere to a consistent approach towards meeting the needs of children living with family and friends carers.
- 6.6 The policy is made in accordance with guidance issued by the Secretary of State under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 and section 10 of the Children Act 2004.
- 6.7 The policy shall be reviewed on a date three years after its implementation
- 6.8 The Head of Children and Young People’s Operational Services is responsible for ensuring compliance with the terms of the policy and will ensure that Council staff and partner agencies will have access to relevant information. All relevant staff shall be trained to understand the issues affecting family and friends care as well as understanding the policy and how it is to be implemented in a fair and consistent manner across the Council area.
- 6.9 This policy and other information available in respect of the policy will be publicised and made available to Family and Friends Carers.

7. Definitions

In this policy the following definitions apply:

- “the 1989 Act” means the Children Act 1989;
- “the 2008 Act” means the Children and Young Persons Act 2008;
- “the 2010 Regulations” means the Care Planning Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010;
- “the 2011 Regulations” means the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011;
- “care plan” means the plan for the future care of a looked after child prepared in accordance with Part 2 of the 2010 Regulations;

Policy: Family and Friends Care

- “a child in need” is defined in section 17(10) of the 1989 Act, which provides that a child shall be taken to be in need if (a) he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a local authority under this Part; (b) his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without provision for him of such services; or (c) he is disabled;
- “child” means a person under the age of 18. Where the context particularly refers to older children the term “young person” is used;
- “connected person” means a relative, friend, or other person connected with a looked after child. A person in the last category may be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as a childminder, a teacher or a youth worker although there are not exclusive categories;
- “family and friends carer” means a relative, friend, or other person with a prior connection with somebody else’s child who is caring for that child full time. An individual who is a “connected person” to a looked after child may also be a family and friends carer. A child who is cared for by a family and friends carer may or may not be a looked after by the local authority;
- “foster carer” means a person who is approved as a local authority foster parent (by a local authority or an independent fostering provider) in accordance with regulation 27 of the 2011 Regulations, or is temporarily approved under regulation 24 of the 2010 Regulations;
- “fostering service” means a local authority fostering service;
- “informal arrangement” means an arrangement where a child is living with a family and friends carer who does not have parental responsibility for the child. References in this policy to “informal arrangements” do not include arrangements where the child is looked after by the local authority or where the child is privately fostered, placed for adoption, or is subject to a residence order or a special guardianship order. The statutory provisions which govern each of these arrangements do not apply to an informal arrangement;
- “looked after child” means a person under 18 who is subject to a care order under section 31 of the 1989 Act, or an interim care order under section 38 of the 1989 Act or is accommodated by the local authority under section 20 of the 1989 Act;
- “parent” means a person who has parental responsibility for that child;
- “parental responsibility” has the meaning provided in section 3 of the 1989 Act being all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law that a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property;
- “private fostering arrangement” means an arrangement where a child who is under 16 (or 18 if disabled) and who has not been provided with accommodation by the local authority, is cared for and accommodated by

Policy: Family and Friends Care

someone who does not have parental responsibility for him and is not a relative, and the arrangement continues for a period of 28 days or more and is intended to do so;

- “relative” means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt,(whether full blood or half-blood or by marriage or by civil partnership) or step-parent as defined in section 105 of the 1989 Act; and
- “responsible authority” means, in relation to a looked after child, the local authority or voluntary organisation as the case may be, responsible for the child’s placement.

8. Context of Care by Family and Friends

- 8.1 Whilst most children are brought up by one or more of their parents, it is estimated that nationally over 300,000 children are cared for full time by a relative, friend or other person previously connected with the child. Of these, as of 31 March 2010 some 7,200 children were “looked after” children who were placed with family members and friends who had been approved as foster carers.
- 8.2 In this policy all such arrangements are referred to as “family and friends care” or sometimes as kinship care arrangements.
- 8.3 Family and friends carers play a unique role in enabling children and young people to remain with people they know and trust if they are unable, for whatever reason, to live with their parents. These children may or may not be looked after by the Council. They may not even be known to the Council.
- 8.4 The majority of relatives who provide such care are grandparents, aunts and uncles but may also include older siblings.
- 8.5 Many children who live in family and friends care do very well in life. Unfortunately some are vulnerable to failing to achieve good outcomes. Many family and friends carers both want and need support to enable them to meet the individual needs of the children in their care.
- 8.6 Family and friends carers commonly take on the care of children where the problems relate to parental factors such as domestic violence, alcohol or substance misuses, physical or mental illness or incapacity, separation or divorce, imprisonment or even the death of a parent.
- 8.7 There may be child-related factors such as disability or challenging behaviour.
- 8.8 Family and friends often start to care for other’s children in a crisis or an emergency situation. The care may begin as a short-term measure but become rather more open-ended or even permanent. There may, due to particular circumstances, have been afforded little time for any advanced planning. The sudden change in the structure and dynamics of a family may impose strain not just upon the child and the carers, but with other siblings, children of the family and between extended family members.

Policy: Family and Friends Care

- 8.9 The impact and effect of becoming a family and friends carer may be related to the characteristics and circumstances of the carer. If a grandparent there may be issues of age, health and financial if the income is derived from a pension. In other cases, carers may find that they have to reduce hours of work or cease employment to ensure the child receives suitable care. There may be issues relating to accommodation and space, as well as arrangements for education, child care and health to be addressed.
- 8.10 Each case will bring a unique challenge to the family and friends carers. The children and their carers should receive good quality services which meet the needs of every child. Partner agencies and specialists need to work together with the Council to ensure a comprehensive approach to early intervention to enable family and friends to offer appropriate care for children and young people who cannot live with their parents, access to a range of high quality support services at universal, targeted and specialist levels.
- 8.11 Family and friends carers must be made aware of the relevant support services and that these can be accessed by those caring for children irrespective of whether the children concerned have the legal structure of being “looked after” by the Council. Support services identified as necessary to meet the child’s needs must not be withheld merely because the child is living with a carer under an informal arrangement rather than in a placement with a foster carer or with a person with a residence order or a special guardianship order or even under an adoption order.

9. Policy statement; key value principles and objectives

- 9.1 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is committed to ensuring that children and young people are securely attached to carers, capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of their childhood, and as far as it is consistent with their welfare, to promote the upbringing of these children and young people by their families.
- 9.2 The responsibility for the upbringing of children and young people is inherent in the parental role and that of extended family members. The outcomes for children who live within family and friends care are positive when compared to similar children living with unrelated Foster Carers; so the local authority should only consider intervening when there is no other satisfactory way of promoting the welfare of children and young people, or of protecting them from harm.
- 9.3 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council may become involved in family and friends arrangements for a variety of reasons and has a duty under The Children Act 1989 to support children in these arrangements if they are assessed as children in need, or if the local authority have agreed to voluntarily accommodate them, or have assumed shared parental responsibility by virtue of a Care Order.
- 9.4 The policy applies to all children living in family and friends arrangements and the level of service provision will be dependant upon the assessed needs of the child and the involvement of the local authority in the making of the arrangement.
- 9.5 Access to a range of support services will be available, based on the needs of the child:
- universal services (available to all);
 - targeted services (via Common Assessment Framework); and

Policy: Family and Friends Care

- specialist services (via specialist assessments).
- 9.6 The local authority acknowledges the principle that access to services should not be solely dependant upon the legal status of the child or the involvement of the local authority in the family and friends arrangement.
- 9.7 The local authority acknowledges that caring for someone else's child does, at times, require greater expenditure and use of resources which may require the Family and Friends Carer to adjust their lifestyle and make sacrifices. Some Family and Friends Carers may not be aware of local services for children as they may have previously not had children themselves or may be from a different generation to other parents. The authority will therefore ensure that information on services and how they can be accessed will be available.
- 9.8 The local authority recognises that in some cases Family and Friends Carers may be struggling to cope financially even when in receipt of all appropriate benefits and they may need financial assistance for significant one off expenditure, or short term support to enable them to make adjustments, or to make it possible to continue to care for a child in the longer term.
- 9.9 The decision to look after a child or young person or to refuse a request for a child or young person to be looked after will be based on a full assessment of the child's needs and circumstances.
- 9.10 The local authority should only look after children when there is no other satisfactory way of promoting their welfare or protecting them from harm.
- 9.11 The financial circumstances of a Family and Friends Carer or prospective Family and Friends Carer or the cost of providing accommodation for a child will not be the sole factor in reaching a decision to look after or accommodate a child or not.
- 9.12 The local authority will, when intervening in a child's life and deciding that a child does need to be provided with care and accommodation, consider all options for a child to be safely cared for by a connected person, relatives or friend before placing them with unrelated foster carers or in residential provision.
- 9.13 The first regard is to assess and meet the needs of the individual child or young person, and to assist in setting up arrangements which are self-sustaining in the long run. Family and friends care will be actively considered at the earliest stage and be the first option pursued, where it is considered to be in the best interests of the child or young person.
- 9.14 Family and friends arrangements must be safe and practical and must be a better alternative for the child than living with an unrelated Foster Carer.
- 9.15 Where it is considered to be not possible to place a child immediately in an arrangement with a connected person then the local authority will be proactive and continue to explore the options of family and friends arrangements throughout their involvement.
- 9.16 Where the arrangement has been made independently of the local authority, between someone with parental responsibility and a close relative of the child either

Policy: Family and Friends Care

a sibling, grandparent aunt or uncle then the child must be assessed as a child in need to be able to access services other than universal services.

- 9.17 Where the arrangement is made in conjunction with the local authority whilst carrying out duties in relation to the Children Act 1989 and these children are placed either on a voluntary basis under Section 20 of the Act or by virtue of a Care Order, then these children will be accommodated or looked after children and as such, they and their carers, will be entitled to the range of services available for looked after children. If the child is subsequently discharged from local authority care and remains living with the Family and Friends Carer under a Special Guardianship Order or Residence Order then following an assessment of need the child and Family and Friends Carer may be entitled to similar services.
- 9.18 Where the arrangement has been made independently of the local authority and the local authority are involved whilst carrying out their duties in relation to Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, but the child is not subject of a Care Order and the local authority have decided that the child does not require to be looked after, then the service provision will be subject to an assessment of the child as a child in need.

10 Assessing Informal Arrangements

- 10.1 The Council does not have a duty to assess informal and family care arrangements, unless it appears to the Council that services may be necessary to safeguard or to promote the welfare of a child in need in the area
- 10.2 In such circumstances the Council will use the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their families as published by the Department of Health in 2000. The Council will provide information for parents and carers as to the stages of the assessment process, together with timescales and contact points for enquiries.
- 10.3 No child or young person should have to become a “looked after” child whether by agreement with those who hold parental responsibility for the child or by Court order for the sole purpose of obtaining financial practical or other support to be provided to the child’s carer.

11 Legal Context

- 11.1 The majority of family and friends carers act informally by agreement with those holding parental responsibility for the children in their care. If the carer is a relative of the child as defined in section 105 of the 1989 Act or they have parental responsibility for the child, there is no requirement to notify the local authority of the arrangement. In most such cases, the arrangements remain entirely private without the need for the involvement of children’s social care services.
- 11.2 If the child is assessed as being in need of support this may be provided under section 17 of the 1989 Act.

12 Family Support Services provided under s.17 Children Act 1989

- 12.1 Under section 17 of the 1989 Act the Council is subject to a general duty to safeguard and to promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need and so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children

Policy: Family and Friends Care

by their families, in particular by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs ("family support services"). This applies not only to a person who holds parental responsibility for the relevant child but also any other person with whom the child has been living.

- 12.2 A child in need is a child whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a reasonable level of health, or development or their health or development would be significantly impaired, without the provision of services by the Council or they are disabled.
- 12.3 Under section 17 the Council will provide practical support as well as advice, guidance or counselling, about how to manage issues such as those arising from contact or from caring for children with emotional or behavioural difficulties due to their earlier experience. Such services are provided to support both formal and informal family and friends care arrangements. There is no limit as to the amount of support that may be provided.

13 The Provision of Accommodation under section 20 Children Act 1989

- 13.1 Section 20 of the 1989 Act imposes upon the Council the duty to provide accommodation for any child in need within the area who appears to the Council to require accommodation as a result of:
- a. There being no person with parental responsibility for the child
 - b. The child having been lost or abandoned; or
 - c. The person who has been caring for the child being prevented (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason) from providing the child with suitable accommodation or care.
- 13.2 When the Council is considering whether a child who is being cared for by family and friends "requires accommodation" the question at (c) will be particularly relevant; "does the child appear to the Council to require accommodation because the person who has been caring for the child is prevented from providing the child with suitable accommodation or care?"
- 13.3 If it appears to the Council that the child requires accommodation then the Council must provide it.
- 13.4 Additionally the Council may provide accommodation for any child in the area (even though a person who has parental responsibility for the child is able to provide accommodation) if the Council considers that to do so would safeguard or to promote the child's welfare. This also provides for short breaks for the child.
- 13.5 Before providing accommodation under section 20 the Council must, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child's welfare, ascertain and give due consideration to the child's wishes and feelings regarding the provision of accommodation. If a person with parental responsibility for the child, who is willing to provide accommodation or arrange accommodation to be provided for them, objects to the Council providing accommodation, the Council will consider whether the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm unless he or she becomes looked

Policy: Family and Friends Care

after by the Council, and if so to seek a care order or an interim care order under Part 4 1989 Act. Further information on this can be found in Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 1: Court Orders.

- 13.6 Where a child is provided with accommodation under section 20, or is subject to a care order, the child is “looked after” and the duties in Part 3 of the 1989 Act, sections 22 to 22D and the 2010 Regulations will apply.
- 13.7 Section 22C sets out the ways in which looked after children are to be accommodated and maintained. In section 22C (2) to (4) provides that the Council must make arrangements for a child who is looked after to live with their parents, a person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or, in a case where the child is in the care of the Council and there was a residence order in force with respect to the child immediately before the care order was made, the person in whose favour the residence order was made.
- 13.8 This duty imposed upon the Council to “rehabilitate” the child is subject to the proviso that the arrangements must be both consistent with the child’s welfare and reasonably practicable, and reflects the principle that state intervention in family life should be to keep children safe and ensure that families have the necessary support to bring up their children.
- 13.9 For children subject to a care order the placement back with their parents must be in accordance with the 2010 Regulations.
- 13.10 When the Council is unable to make arrangements under section 22C (2) to (4) then section 22C(5) requires the authority to place the child in the most appropriate placement available. The placement options are set out in section 22C (6) to (9). It directs how the Council must determine the most appropriate placement. The Council must “give preference” to a placement with a person who is a relative, friend or other person connected with the child and who is also a local authority foster parent. The approval must have been given in accordance with the 2011 Regulations or have been temporarily approved as a foster carer under the 2010 Regulations.
- 13.11 Not all placements will meet all of the placement criteria in section 22C (7) to (9). The Council may face difficult decisions. The placement criteria are important because many children and young people benefit by being placed with relatives or friends or others connected to them, near their homes, continuing to attend the same schools, living with their siblings and in accommodation that suits any special needs. But decisions must be specific to the particular factual situation of the family. The most important issue is likely to be how far a proposed placement will meet the associated needs of a particular child or young person given their previous history and their current circumstances.
- 13.12 Section 22C reflects the principle that all children, including looked after children, should wherever possible be cared for by their families and friends. It is also intended to ensure that children placed with relatives do not automatically lose their looked after status. Section 22 C of the 1989 Act also makes it clear that if a looked after child is placed with a family member, friend or any other person who is connected with the child, then the carer must be approved as a local authority foster parent.

Policy: Family and Friends Care

- 13.13 A child who is looked after and is placed with a relative, friend or other person connected with the child in accordance with section 22C(5) continues to be looked after. If a child is provided with accommodation under section 20, the child's looked after status will end when the local authority considers that the child no longer requires accommodation under section 20(1) of the 1989 Act. In the case of a child subject to a care order, the child will continue to be looked after until the order is discharged or the foster carer is granted an order which gives them parental responsibility for the child.
- 13.14 Section 22G imposes a duty upon the Council to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for looked after children which is within the Council area and meets the needs of children. However the placement proposed for a looked after child must always be the most appropriate available and that it will meet his or her needs identified in the care plan.

14 Leaving Care

- 14.1 Statute imposes a duty on the Council to provide care leaving support to young people who are ceasing to be looked after and making the transition to adulthood. This applies to children placed by the Council with family and friends foster carers in the same way as it does to all other care leavers. For those who are, or propose to be, in education or training there will be an entitlement to a personal adviser up to the age of 25 and a bursary towards higher education.

15 Pre-proceedings

- 15.1 If the Council is considering instituting care proceedings, the Public Law Outline requires the Council to demonstrate that it has considered family members and friends as potential carers at each stage of the decision making process. The Council will need to disclose information about discussions with relevant family and friends at the pre-proceedings stage. In relation to Court orders the Council must consider the potential of alternative carers provided that this does not jeopardise the child's safety and welfare.

16 Private Fostering Arrangements

- 16.1 If the carers of a child under 16 (or 18 if disabled) do not have parental responsibility for the child and are not the child's grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent and the placement continues for 28 days or more or is intended to do so, then the provisions in the 1989 Act and in the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 will apply, as the arrangement falls within the definition of a private fostering arrangement.
- 16.2 If the child is not disabled, the young person will cease to be privately fostered at the age of 16, but if the living arrangements continue then the statutory guidance will continue to apply as the arrangement will revert to that of informal family and friends care.
- 16.3 A child who is privately fostered may also be assessed as a child in need, and be provided with support under s.17 of the 1989 Act.

17 Special Guardianship, Residence Orders and Adoption

- 17.1 If a relative, friend or other connected person proposes to make a long term commitment to caring for a child, an application may be made for a residence order or a special guardianship order.
- 17.2 In either such case, the person in whose favour the order is made will have parental responsibility for the child.
- 17.3 A special guardian may exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of all others with parental responsibility (but they could not consent to adoption) and is responsible for all aspects of caring for the child or young person and for taking decisions to do with their upbringing.
- 17.4 To promote stability for the child relatives may now apply for a residence order or a special guardianship order without the permission from the Court if they have provided care for the child.
- 17.5 In the case of a child who was looked after immediately prior to the making of a special guardianship order, the child, the special guardian or parent has a right to receive an assessment by the Council for support services which may include financial support as provided in the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005.
- 17.6 However, children who were not looked after should not be unfairly disadvantaged as in many cases the only reason that the child was not looked after is that a relative stepped in quickly to assume responsibility when the parent was unable to provide the care.
- 17.7 People who hold residence orders have no right to an assessment for support, but the Council has the power to pay a residence order allowance where this is the most appropriate way to safeguard and to promote the child's welfare.
- 17.8 Where a child is already living with a family and friends carer it may be possible for them to apply for an adoption order. In law this will extinguish the parental responsibility of the birth parents. The Council has a range of adoption support services available in this area to meet the needs of people affected by adoption. Both adopters and adopted children have the right to be assessed for certain support services.
- 17.9 Children who were looked after by the Council before the making of a special guardianship order may qualify for a range of support under the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005.

18 Financial Support

- 18.1 Where children are placed with family and friends carers informally by parents, those carers may experience significant financial difficulties as a result of taking on the care of a child or children, especially if the placement was not planned. The parents retain their responsibilities for the maintenance of their children.

Policy: Family and Friends Care

- 18.2 Carers need to be aware of any entitlement to any state benefits and allowances, such as child benefit and tax credits. They must also be aware and be made aware of how to apply for any discretionary financial support which may be available.
- 18.3 Family and friends carers must be assisted by the Council to access the relevant information and advice such as via benefits advice services.
- 18.4 Even with the receipt of all relevant benefits, there may be a financial shortfall if unexpected items of capital expenditure have to be funded, such as bedroom furniture or school uniforms.
- 18.5 Similarly, there may be temporary or long-term changes to employment by the carers that may have significant financial implications and impact upon the stability of the child's placement.
- 18.6 The Council has power to make payments in respect of children in need under s.17(6) of the 1989 Act. The Council will inform the family and friends carers of the relevant eligibility criteria, when means testing applies, how to apply for any financial help and the manner and time at which the decisions will be made about eligibility. If financial support is offered, a written agreement will be produced indicating the level and duration of the support together with a mechanism for review to ensure that all concerned remain clear as to the arrangements.

19 Accommodation

- 19.1 The Council will engage with housing authorities and registered social landlords to ensure that the policies do recognise the important role played by family and friends carers and, where appropriate, priority is afforded to them to any move to different accommodation if that will serve to prevent a child becoming a looked after child.
- 19.2 The Council has power under section 17 of the 1989 Act to give financial support towards accommodation costs if it is assessed that that this is the most appropriate way to safeguard and to promote a child's welfare.

20 Supporting Contact

- 20.1 Contact with their immediate families is generally a positive experience for children who are not living with their parents, as it can help them to maintain a sense of belonging and identity.
- 20.2 Contact arrangements must always be determined by the extent to which they meet the needs of the child.
- 20.3 But management of contact may often produce emotional and practical strains on all the parties involved. The placement of the child will, by itself, have altered the dynamics of the family the child has left and the family with whom the child is placed. It can be confusing for the child.
- 20.4 The Council has a duty to promote contact for all children in need. If the child is not looked after by the Council there is a duty to promote contact where it is necessary to do so in order to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

Policy: Family and Friends Care

- 20.5 If the child is a looked after child, the Council is under a duty to promote contact unless it is not practicable or consistent with the child's welfare.
- 20.6 The Council will provide information to family and friends carers about local contact centres and family mediation services and how to make the best use of their services.
- 20.7 The Council may need to be more actively involved if there may be safeguarding concerns surrounding contact, with support provided for safe contact arrangements.

21 Support Groups

- 21.1 The Council recognises that support groups are a valuable way to help carers to access information about services which will help them to care for the children. Many groups are run by voluntary organisations, independent from the Council, but the Council will provide information to the family and friends carers.
- 21.2 Special Guardians and prospective special guardians benefit from support groups as part of the provision of support services provided by the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005.
- 21.3 Similarly the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 make provision for support groups for adopters, adopted children and birth parents.

22 Family and Friends Foster Carers

- 22.1 The Council's fostering service has a Statement of Purpose prepared in accordance with regulation 3 of the 2011 Regulations. For greater detail reference should be made to the 2011 Regulations.
- 22.2 The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services cover fostering services' responsibilities with respect to all foster carers including those who are family and friends. They must not be disadvantaged nor discriminated against as a result of their prior relationship with the child.
- 22.3 Fostering allowances paid by a fostering service must be calculated for family and friends foster carers on the same basis as for all other foster carers.

23 Complaints Process

- 23.1 Any Family and Friends Carer or a child or young person who feels that they have grounds to make a complaint or representation should use the Council's complaints procedure. This can be accessed by contacting Customer Services, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1LD or by telephone on 01642 393939 or via the following link:
<http://www.stockton.gov.uk/citizenservices/custerv/ccs/comproc/>

ANNEX

Practice Guidance

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Page</u>
Roles and Responsibilities	18
Family Care (Informal) arrangement	18
Private Fostering	18
Residence Orders	19
Special Guardianship Orders	21
Looked After Children	23
Financial support eligibility criteria	24
Deciding whether to accommodate a child	28
Issues to consider when deciding whether a child should be placed with a particular family and friend carer on a temporary approval as a foster carer	30

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

1. Roles and Responsibilities

- 1.1 There are a number of reasons why a child may live with someone other than a parent. In all cases there are legal processes and restrictions about how these

Policy: Family and Friends Care

arrangements are made and how much involvement and or responsibility the local authority has in the arrangement.

2 Family Care (informal) arrangement

2.1 A parent may arrange for a child to live with a close relative:

- a step parent;
- a grandparent;
- brother;
- sister; or
- aunt and uncle (whether of the full blood or half blood or by affinity).

2.2 Who makes the arrangement – this arrangement is made between the parent and the close relative and does not necessarily involve the local authority.

2.3 Who has parental responsibility – the parent maintains parental responsibility and will delegate certain day to day aspects to the family or friend carer

2.4 Responsibility for financial support – the parent retains responsibility for financial support. The carer may apply for child benefit and child tax credits and will need to seek advice from the welfare rights service or benefits agency in respect of any entitlement to benefits.

2.5 If the child has been assessed as a child in need the local authority may provide financial support under section 17 (6) of the children act 1989.

2.6 Local authority responsibilities – the local authority do not make the arrangement and social care services need not be involved.

2.7 Social Care may be involved if the child has been assessed as a child in need and a child in need plan is made.

2.8 Support services available –universal services or identified services if child has been assessed as a child in need

3. Private Fostering

3.1 A Private Fostering Arrangement is made privately between the parent (or person with parental responsibility) and the carer. It can be defined as –

3.2 Any voluntary placement of a child under the age of 16 (or under 18 if disabled) with someone who is not a close relative for longer than 27 days will be subject to the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

3.3 A close relative is defined as:

- a step parent;
- a grandparent
- brother
- sister; or
- aunt and uncle (whether of the full blood or half blood or by affinity)

Policy: Family and Friends Care

- 3.4 Who makes the arrangement-this arrangement is made between the parent and the private Foster Carer.
- 3.5 Who has parental responsibility –the parent maintains parental responsibility and will delegate certain day to day aspects to the private Foster Carer.
- 3.6 Responsibility for financial support – the parent retains responsibility for financial support arrangements. The private Foster Carer may claim child benefit, child tax credit and working tax credit and the child may count as a member of the household for housing benefit and council tax purposes. The private Foster Carer should seek advice from the welfare rights service or benefits agency as any regular payment made by the child's parent may count as income in claims for any means tested benefits.
- 3.7 If the child has been assessed as a child in need the local authority may provide financial support under section 17 (6) of the children act 1989.
- 3.8 Local authority responsibilities – the local authority does not make this arrangement and their role is to receive notification from the parent and private Foster Carer, to undertake an assessment of the private Foster Carer and ensure that the arrangement is suitable and safe and meets the needs to the child and to monitor the arrangement. The child will have a social worker. The private Foster Carer will not be given a social worker.
- 3.9 Support services available – Universal services, and identified services if child has been assessed as a child in need and has a child in need plan.

4. Residence Orders

- 4.1 A Residence Order gives the person with the Order parental responsibility for a child under 16 years (or 18 years if the child has disabilities) and parental responsibility / decision making is then shared between the person holding the Order and the birth parents.
- 4.2 The following are able to apply to the court for a Residence Order under section 8 of the Children act 1989:
- a parent;
 - a guardian;
 - a step- parent;
 - any other person who has obtained the consent of all those with parental responsibility;
 - any person who, if the child is in care, has the consent of the local authority;
 - any person who has obtained the permission of those who already have a residence order for the child;
 - anyone who the child has lived with for at least 3 years;
 - a local authority foster parent if the child has lived with them for at least 1 year immediately preceding the application to court;
 - the child themselves if of an age and understanding; or
 - any other person who has a genuine interest in the child's welfare.

Policy: Family and Friends Care

- 4.3 Who makes this arrangement – the above people are able to apply to a court for a Residence Order in respect of a specific child.
- 4.4
In the majority of cases the local authority will not have had any involvement with the child or the family or may have only had some low level involvement in offering advice and information.
- 4.4 The local authority may become involved at the request of the court however the local authority will not have made the arrangement.
- 4.5 The local authority cannot apply for a Residence Order nor can they apply on someone else's behalf however; a Residence Order is one of a range of Orders that a court can make, to a relevant person, in Family Proceedings.
- 4.6 The local authority may have in this situation, placed the child under fostering regulations or be involved and aware of the arrangement due to involvement if the child has been assessed as being a child in need. In this situation the local authority will be asked for a view in respect of the suitability of the arrangement.
- 4.7 For a child who is looked after by the local authority under a Care Order, the Care Order is extinguished when a Residence Order is granted.
- 4.8 Who has parental responsibility – the holder of the Residence Order shares parental responsibility with the parent, the local authority does not share parental responsibility.
- 4.9 Responsibility for financial support – The parent is responsible for financial support arrangements. The holder of the Residence Order will be entitled to claim child benefit and child tax credit and the child will count as a member of the household for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. The holder of the Residence Order will need to seek advice from the welfare rights service or the benefits agency in respect of benefit entitlement in their own particular circumstances.
- 4.10 Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities have a discretionary power to make payments towards the cost of maintenance and accommodation of a child who is subject of a Residence Order.
- 4.11 If the child is a child in need the local authority may provide financial support under section 17 (6) of the children act 1989.
- 4.12 Local authority responsibilities – the local authority don't have any care or decision making responsibilities in respect of the child nor is there any duty to oversee the arrangements.
- 4.13 The local authority is not involved in decision making in respect of the child but can offer advice guidance and support.
- 4.14 The local authority will not make welfare visits or carry out reviews in respect of the child unless required to do so under the terms of a Supervision Order or a Family Assistance Order if one is in force or if the child has been assessed as a child in need and a child in need plan has been formulated.

Policy: Family and Friends Care

4.15 Support services available – Universal services and identified services if child has been assessed as a child in need and has a child in need plan.

5 Special Guardianship Orders

5.1 Those that can apply for a Special Guardianship Order include:

- Child's guardian
- Holders of a Residence Order in respect of a child
- Those with whom the child has lived with for 3 yrs of the preceding 5 yrs.
- Those with consent of parents and others with parental responsibility including a local authority where there is a Care Order in force.
- Local authority Foster Carers can apply within one year of placement with the permission of the LA and after one year in placement without permission.
- Those that have the leave of the court to apply.

5.2 Who makes the arrangement –the above people can make an application to the court in relation to a specific child.

5.3 The local authority cannot apply for a Special Guardianship Order nor can they apply on an individual's behalf.

5.4 A court may make a Special Guardianship Order even when it has not been applied for, if any question arises about the welfare of a child within any family proceedings. The local authority may have in this situation, placed the child under fostering regulations or may be aware of the arrangement due to involvement with the child as a child in need. In this situation the local authority will be asked for a view in respect of the suitability of the arrangement for a child who is looked after by the local authority under a Care Order, the Care Order is extinguished when a Special Guardianship Order is made.

5.5 Who has parental responsibility – A Special Guardianship Order gives the Special Guardians parental responsibility, shared with the birth parents but allows the guardians to exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of birth parents on most issues.

5.6 The local authority does not have parental responsibility.

5.7 Responsibility for financial support – the holder of the Order is responsible for financial arrangements. The special guardian can apply to the court for an Order which directs the parent to make financial contributions towards the care of the child.

5.8 A Special guardian can ask for an assessment of their special guardianship support needs including financial support. The Local authority must undertake this assessment if the child had been 'looked after' immediately before the making of the special guardianship order.

5.9 If the child is a child in need the local authority may also provide financial support under section 17 (6) of the children act 1989.

Policy: Family and Friends Care

- 5.10 Local authority responsibilities - the local authority has responsibility for investigating and preparing a report on the applicant's suitability to be a Special Guardian and report to the court on this matter.
- 5.11 Once a Special Guardianship Order is made the local authority will not make welfare visits or carry out reviews in respect of the child unless required to do so under the terms of a Supervision Order or a Family Assistance Order if one is in force or if the child has been assessed as a child in need and a child in need plan has been formulated or if an assessment of special guardian support needs has indicated that a support plan needs to be in place.
- 5.12 The local authority is not involved in decision making in respect of the child but can offer advice guidance and support.
- 5.13 Support services available - the local authority is required by legislation to make arrangements for the provision of Special Guardianship support services.
- 5.14 The following are services prescribed by legislation as Special Guardianship support services:
- counselling, advice and information;
 - financial support;
 - services to enable groups of relevant children, Special Guardians, prospective Special Guardians, and parents of relevant children to discuss matters relating to Special Guardianship;
 - assistance including mediation services, in relation to arrangements for contacts between the children his parent or relative or any other person significant to the child;
 - services in relation to therapeutic needs; and
 - assistance in relation to ensuring the continuance of the relationship between child and Special Guardian including training, respite care, mediation in relation to matters associated with Special Guardianship Orders.
- 5.15 In order to receive these services (other than counselling advice and information) the local authority **must** undertake an assessment of need at the request of:
- a relevant child (who is looked after or had been looked after immediately before the making of the Special Guardianship Order);
 - a Special Guardian or prospective Special Guardian of this child; and / or
 - a parent of such child.
- 5.16 The following people **may** be offered an assessment of their need for support services:
- a child (where not previously looked after);
 - the Special Guardian or prospective Special Guardian of a child (not previously looked after);
 - a child of the Special Guardian (regardless whether the child subject to the Order was a looked after child or not);
 - a parent (where child is not or was not looked after); and / or
 - any person who has significant relationship with the child.

Policy: Family and Friends Care

5.17 The guidance advises that it is important that children who are not or were not looked after are not unfairly disadvantaged by the local authority approach to delivering services. It further advises that support service delivery should be incorporated into mainstream services however there will be some areas that need to be discrete services for this group of people.

6. Looked After Children

6.1 Children looked after are children where the local authority have an Interim Care Order or a Care Order. Accommodated children are children where there is a voluntary agreement with the parent commonly referred to as Section 20 (CA 1989) accommodated.

6.2 These children may be placed with family and friends under fostering regulations. The child may be placed in a planned manner with the family and friends member. In these situations the family and friends member will have been assessed and approved as suitable to foster.

6.3 The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 allows for a child to be placed with a 'connected person' who is not an approved foster carer (Regulation 24) as long as the Local authority are satisfied that it is the most appropriate placement for the child and it is appropriate to place the child prior to the person being assessed as suitable to foster under the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011.

6.4 The connected person will be given this temporary approval status for a period not exceeding 16 weeks.

6.5 Who makes the arrangement? The local authority is responsible for making the placement. The procedures in relation to family and friends as Foster Carers and looked after children should be followed.

6.6 Who has parental responsibility? If the child is looked after by virtue of the local authority having gained an Interim Care Order or a Care Order then the local authority shares parental responsibility with the parent. If the child is accommodated under section 20 by agreement with the parent then the parent is the only one who has parental responsibility.

6.7 The family and friend carer does not have parental responsibility. Day to day care and decision making responsibilities may be delegated and the detail of these agreements should be recorded appropriately following the looked after children procedures.

6.8 Responsibility for financial support – the local authority is responsible for the care and accommodation of the child and as such the family and friend member is entitled to the level 1 fostering allowances from the start of the placement.

6.9 The family and friend carer is not allowed to claim any benefits in respect of the child unless the child is entitled to disability living allowance.

6.10

Policy: Family and Friends Care

Local authority responsibilities – the local authority have responsibilities to the child as a looked after / accommodated child and they also have responsibilities to prepare assess approve train and supervise and support the Family and Friends Foster Carer.

7. Financial support eligibility criteria

7.1 Section 17 payments

7.1.1 The following criteria will be applied when considering whether to provide financial assistance or not.

7.1.2 Section 17(6) provides that the family support services provided by the local authority may include giving financial assistance to the family, (amendments made to Section 17(6) by the Children and Young People's Act 2008 removes the words 'in exceptional circumstances' this clearly gives the local authority the authority to provide financial support under Section 17 in a range of circumstances).

7.1.3 The following criteria apply where a child has been assessed as being a child in need and an informal arrangement has been agreed by the parent and the Family and Friends Carer and the department has decided that the child does not require to be accommodated or looked after.

7.1.4 Financial support may be given for:

- a crisis (one off payment):
 - this payment is used in exceptional circumstances and will only be made to overcome a crisis and where it has not been possible to secure other sources of financial support available, for example from the benefits agency or a charity;
 - the limit on this expenditure is up to a maximum of £50 per child;
 - the team manager authorises the payment up to the agreed limit; and
 - there may be exceptional circumstances which require a payment greater than this limit, in these circumstances the Service Manager can authorise the payment providing this is within agreed delegated spending limits;
- equipment and clothing:
 - this payment may be made when items of clothing, furniture (limited to bed and, or bedroom storage), bedding and safety equipment are needed to ensure that the child can live safely at home; this payment can be made after confirmation by the social worker that there are no other sources of financial support available, for example from the benefits agency or a charity;
 - equipment will be ordered via the department using the providers registered with the council. The only times that a cash payment will be made for equipment is when then equipment can be sourced at a cheaper price from another shop;
 - the limit on this expenditure is up to a maximum of £100 per child;
 - the Team Manager authorises the payment up to the agreed limit; and
 - there may be exceptional circumstances which require a payment greater than this limit, in these circumstances the Service Manager

Policy: Family and Friends Care

can authorise the payment providing this is within agreed delegated spending limits;

- short term support:
 - via regular payment of an allowance;
 - after an assessment of the 'informal' carers circumstances which takes into account their financial resources, any financial contributions from parents and entitlement to benefits; and it is evidenced that the carer needs to:
 - take unpaid leave from employment in order to care for the child;
 - take unpaid leave from employment to settle the child into his/her new situation; and
 - to take time and support to make adjustments to their own lifestyle;
 - a weekly allowance up to a maximum payment that is equivalent to the dependent child rate for a couple; as defined by the Benefits and Pensions Rates;
 - the team manager can authorise payments for up to 4 weeks;
 - in order to ensure consistency in approach all applications for longer term financial support will be referred to the Fostering Service and Placement Scrutiny Panel for a decision;
 - the panel will consider the information provided to it and will decide upon the duration of the financial support;
 - the payment will be made for a time limited period only and normally would not exceed 1 year.

7.1.5 Any need to deviate from the above criteria must also be referred to the panel and the panel will be responsible for agreeing or not the deviation from the policy and the terms of the financial support.

7.1.6 When financial support is offered in order to ensure that all parties are clear about the arrangement a written agreement must be made detailing the level of support and the duration of the support provided.

7.2 Private Fostering arrangement – where department had not been involved prior to the arrangement commencing

7.2.1 In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need to offer financial support in arrangements where the department's only involvement has been in respect of their responsibilities under Private Fostering Regulations. In these circumstances the criteria and procedure for usual Section 17 financial support applies.

7.3 Residence Order allowance scheme

7.3.1 The Children Act 1989 gives the local authority a discretionary power to make payments towards the cost of maintenance and accommodation of a child who is subject of a Residence Order.

7.3.2 Paragraph 15 of schedule 1 to the Act provides;

Policy: Family and Friends Care

“where a child lives or is living with a person as the result of a Residence Order, the local authority may make contributions to that person towards the cost of the accommodation and maintenance of the child...this does not apply where the person with whom the child lives or is to live with is the parent of the child or husband or wife or civil partner of a parent of the child”.

- 7.3.3 In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need to offer financial support in arrangements where the department had not been involved at the time the arrangement was made or only became involved by instruction of the court, in these circumstances the criteria and procedure for usual Section 17 support applies.
- 7.3.4 The Residence Order allowance scheme applies to a child who has previously been looked after by this local authority immediately prior to the making of the Residence Order and the Residence Order is made to the person who was the foster carer (either under regulation 28 or regulation 24). The allowance will be the age related fostering allowance less the child benefit rate and less any child tax credits or working tax credit or any other benefit claimed for the child. There is an expectation that the holder of the Residence Order claims for all relevant benefits.
- 7.3.5 For children under the age of 8 years old; the allowance will normally be paid for a maximum of two years.
- 7.3.6 For children aged 9 years and over; the allowance may be paid up to the child's 16th birthday.

An allowance will only be agreed following an assessment of the carers circumstances including the reason why there is a need for financial support and the financial circumstances of the holder of the Residence Order, which also takes into account financial contributions from parents and entitlement to benefits; and it is evidenced that the carer would not be able to sustain the care of the child without financial support as they either:

- need to take unpaid leave from employment in order to care for the child;
- need to take unpaid leave from employment to settle the child into his/her new situation;
- need to cease employment in order to care for the child;
- need to cease seeking employment in order to care for the child; and
- will need time to make adjustments to their own lifestyle.

Or:

- the care of the child costs more than would be normally expected of a child of a similar age due to the emotional affects upon the child of his/her past experience of abuse or trauma.

- 7.3.8 All applications for financial support will be made to the Fostering Service and Placement Scrutiny Panel.
- 7.3.9 The panel will consider the information provided to it and will decide upon the level and duration of the financial support.

Policy: Family and Friends Care

- 7.3.10 Any need to deviate from the above criteria must also be referred to the panel and the panel will be responsible for agreeing or not the deviation from the policy and the terms of the financial support.
- 7.3.11 When financial support is offered in order to ensure that all parties are clear about the arrangement a written agreement must be made detailing the level of support and the duration of the support provided.
- 7.3.12 There is no legal requirement to provide leaving care services for a child who was looked after immediately before the making of a Residence Order however Stockton will provide similar services to young people where the Residence Order was made after their 13th birthday. These services are provided at the discretion of the local authority and subject to the availability of resources.

7.4 Children Looked After placed with Family and Friends Foster Carers

- 7.4.1 Children can be placed with Family and Friends Carers once the department has made a decision that a child should be accommodated by agreement with the parent (Section 20) or by application and granting of an Interim Care Order or a Care Order (Section 31).
- 7.4.2 Children can be placed with the family and friend member who has been formally approved to care for the specific child under the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 or they can be placed with a connected person under regulation 24 of the Care Planning and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. In both cases the carers are entitled to level 1 fostering payments.

Level 1 fostering payments include:

- a weekly age related allowance paid at the fostering networks recommended rates;
 - a birthday allowance which is paid at the equivalent of one week's age related fostering allowance;
 - one religious festival allowance per year paid at the equivalent of one week's age related fostering allowance;
 - one payment in May each year for children who are to be in placement during the school summer holiday break. This payment is paid at the equivalent of two weeks age related fostering allowance;
 - a clothing allowance paid at the carers request every 6 months. Paid at the discretion of the team manager of the child placement service and with a limit of £100; and
 - mileage paid at 20 pence per mile for certain journeys as per foster care handbook.
- 7.4.4 Payments will be paid from the start of the placement once a decision to accommodate has been agreed following the usual departmental procedures.
- 7.4.5 The Child Placement Team Manager is responsible for authorising payments to set the Family and Friends Carer up as being entitled to receive the fostering allowances.

8. Deciding whether to accommodate a child

- 8.1 The decision to look after a child or to refuse a request to look after a child will only be made after a full assessment of the child's needs and circumstances has been taken into account.
- 8.2 The decision should be made on a planned basis and emergency decisions to accommodate should not be the norm.
- 8.3 Unless the child needs to be admitted in an emergency the recommendation that a child should be looked after should be taken after:
- A family meeting has been held (where possible.) The aim of the family meeting is to draw upon the resources of the family and plan what intervention is needed from the family and social care services to avoid or reduce the need for ongoing Social care involvement.
 - Multi-agency planning and review meetings have been held, where it can be clearly evidenced that all efforts have been taken to maintain the child at home.
- 8.4 A referral will then need to be made to the Accommodation and Resource Panel where a decision will be made in respect of whether the child should be accommodated / looked after or not.
- 8.5 If a child requires immediate accommodation then an emergency decision to accommodate should be made by a service manager and then the case should still be presented to the panel.
- 8.6 The first consideration must be for the welfare of the child and as such the local authority social worker is responsible for ensuring that an assessment of need is undertaken.
- 8.7 Dependent upon the circumstances this could be an 'Initial' assessment or a more comprehensive 'Core' assessment. This assessment will identify the services required to support the child and the family.
- 8.8 In circumstances where it is not deemed safe or appropriate for a child to remain in the care of the birth parent in the short or long term the possibility of them moving to live with a Family and Friends Carer must be considered.
- 8.9 The decision to accommodate or look after child and place with a Family and Friends Carer is a serious decision and must not be made solely for the purpose of financially supporting the carer.
- 8.10 The decision not to look after or accommodate a child is equally as serious a decision to make and must not be made to 'side step' any local authority duties and responsibilities.
- 8.11 The local authority should only look after children when there is no other equally satisfactory way of promoting their welfare or protecting them from harm and children should not become looked after if this is not warranted to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Policy: Family and Friends Care

8.12 It is important at all times that the nature of the departmental involvement with the family is clear.

8.12 In considering this the Social worker will need to take the following into account:

- What are the child's needs?
- What are the child's views?
- To what extent are the child's needs not being met by the parent
- Is this causing the child to suffer immediate harm?
- Is this causing the child too likely to suffer harm in the near future?
- Is this causing the child's welfare to be immediately compromised or impaired?
- Is the child's welfare likely to be compromised or impaired in the future?
- Could the provision of section 17 services enable a child to safely remain in the care of a parent for the short term and in the longer term?
- Has support been offered-what work has been done previously?
- What are the implications for the child's welfare of not providing an immediate placement?
- What are the implications for the child's welfare if they were removed suddenly from the family home?
- Have the parents considered alternative arrangements that could be made with family members?
- Does this arrangement offer safety and continuity of care?
- Do you feel that you don't have enough evidence yet still have a high level of concern?
- Has the parent refused to agree to section 20 accommodation?
- If so do you have enough evidence to warrant application for an EPO / Care Order?
- Is the local authority taking a major role in the making of a placement?
- Where the local authority have played a major role in the making of the placement with a family and friends carer the child should be treated as being provided with accommodation unless there has been a different agreement made with the parent.

8.14 The arrangement may be an informal arrangement instigated by the parent and may be with family members such as a grandparent or with someone who is not a close relative. If this is the case then the child is not a looked after child however may, dependent upon the legal relationship with the child, be a 'privately fostered' arrangement.

8.15 It is only once a decision has been made that the child should be accommodated / looked after that any family and friend's member will be classed as a Family and Friends Foster Carer.

9. Issues to consider when deciding whether a child should be placed with a particular family and friend carer on a temporary approval as a foster carer

9.1 Family and friend care may not be appropriate for every child for many reasons however it must be acknowledged that these arrangements may be made in 'emergency ' situations and professional skill and judgement is needed in reaching a decision on whether the child should be placed immediately and temporary foster care approval be given to the family and friend member or whether it is best to place

Policy: Family and Friends Care

the child with an unrelated foster carer initially to allow a more measured assessment take place.

9.2 The following issues must be considered before the child is placed as they are key issues that inform whether or not placing the child with a family and friend carer is in the child's best interest.

9.3 Motivation:

- what is the motivation of the prospective family and friend carer in coming forward to care for the child?
- is everyone in that household equally as motivated and committed to entering into the arrangement and if they are not is there likely to be an impact upon the child?
- have they considered how long they can commit to the child? Is it time limited or is it open ended?

9.4 Criminal convictions:

- have the adult members of the household declared any criminal convictions and if so how will these affect the safe placement of a child
- a request for police information must be made and the information received before the child is placed and if the arrangement is to continue then an enhanced criminal records bureau disclosure must be instigated

9.5 Accommodation:

- is there sufficient space in the home taking into account the child's needs for example is there space for a child to play, to study to have a level of privacy if required? Is there enough room for a child to sit with the family, eat with the family and if not what arrangements will be made to ensure the child doesn't feel separate from what goes on in the Family and Friends Carers home?
- will the placement of the child restrict the level of space and privacy within the house? If so have all household members been consulted about the impact upon them of the placement?
- what are the proposed sleeping arrangements and are they suitable to this particular child in light of their age, experiences and behaviour?
- if there are to be shared sleeping arrangements with another child –what will be the impact upon the other child?
- what is the level of safety and cleanliness within the home and what is the carer's attitude to this?
- is the child already living in the carer's home and if so are they content with the arrangement?
- does the location of the home meet the child's needs in terms of school and remaining connected to family and friends if not what proposals are being put forward to manage this?

9.6 Availability to the child

Policy: Family and Friends Care

- does the prospective Family and Friends Carer work - if so what are the arrangements for the care of the child if child is pre-school age /or for responding to days off school due to illness, holidays or other reasons for school closure?
- will the carer be able to respond in emergency situations if the child is sent home from school for whatever reason?
- if other child care arrangements are proposed for example child minding, day care, other members of the family and friends network etc –are these arrangement's satisfactory and do they meet the child's specific needs.

9.7 Impact of placing the child

- what is the proposed family and friend carer's relationship with the child?
- what is there relationship with the parents?
- wishes and feelings of child;
- wishes and feelings of parent;
- wishes and feelings of the prospective carer;
- does the family and friend carer know the circumstances of the child and do they understand any safeguarding issues in respect of the care given by the parent and their role in safeguarding the child?
- does the family and friend carer appear to be fit and well enough to care for the child?
- explore with them their health history and ask if they consider that caring for a child will impact upon their own health and wellbeing.

9.8 Formalities of the placement

- does the family and friend carer understand the legal status of the placement?
- do they understand that they will be required to undergo a fuller assessment of their suitability to foster and what this assessment process entails?
- do they understand the support services available to them and the child placed?
