**Foster Carer**

Family and friends/connected persons foster care is a formal arrangement where the child is looked after by the Local Authority, and placed with a relative, friend - connected person.

‘Relative, friend or connected person’ is defined as: a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership), step-parent or friend of, 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 child minder, a teacher or a youth worker although these are not exclusive categories.

A Family and Friends/Connected Person placement can therefore be defined as being an arrangement where:

* A child cannot live with their parents and is living away from the parental home with a relative, friend or connected person;

and
* The placement has in some way been assisted or initiated and/or is supported by Children’s Social Care, often with a view to securing the placement via a Child Arrangements Order or a Special Guardianship Order;

and
* The child would otherwise be with foster carers, in residential care, independent living or adopted.

**Situations Where These Procedures do not apply:**

These procedures do not apply where a child (under 16 years) goes to live with a relative or friend and this is a private arrangement between the parent/person with parental responsibility and carer.

If this placement continues for 28 days or more, the child may come within the definition of a **Privately Fostered** child, in which case the local authority's duties in relation to the placement are set out in the **Private Fostering** procedures.

**Checks and initial viability assessment must be completed before agreeing placement with a potential connected carer.**

* **Initial Viability / Temporary Approval** – Completed for all placements (emergency and planned) by the child’s social worker and authorised by the Head of Service.
* **Azeus Form**: **Immediate Placement agreement –** signed by the Connected Carer and Child’s Social Worker.
* **Azeus Form: Continued Authorisation approval –Head of Service** to complete if required.

**Process**

* Where S20 or ICO has been agreed and a family or friend or other person connected with the child is available to care for the child, arrangements to assess the carer, planned and immediate requirements under Regulation 24 must be agreed by the **Head of Service** responsible for the child and IRO consulted.
* For planned placements complete the **Initial Viability** and email the signed form to the Carer Recruitment Team for a full connected persons assessment.
* For emergency placements complete the **Initial Viability /** **Temporary Approval** and if the placement is agreed as being viable the Head of Service completes the **Authorisation for Temporary Approval** section at the end of the form **prior** to the child being placed.
* The **Initial Viability /** **Temporary Approval** once signed by the **Head of Service** should be immediately emailed to the Carer Recruitment Team for a full connected persons assessment.
* If you wish to consult with **the Practice Lead for the Carer Recruitment Team please contact** the team on0203 373 8701.
* The **Immediate Placement Agreement (Appendix A)** must be **signed by the Connected Persons and Child’s SW** whenthe child is placed.
* Once temporary approval **for up to 16 weeks** has been authorised the **Practice Lead for the Carer Recruitment Team** will allocate for a full connected persons assessment to be completed by Carter Brown ( social work agency which completes Newham’s assessments) and book a Fostering Panel date.
* **Child’s SW** to inform IRO, update Care Plan / Pathway Plan, **Fostering Assessment Team** will initiate DBS checks, Adult Health reports and references.
* A **placement planning meeting** should be completed within the **statutory 5 days from** date of child being placed.
* If the assessment fails to meet the deadline for approval at foster panel within 16 weeks of placement or the decision is deferred pending further work **an extension period of up to 8 weeks can be granted.** The **Authorisation for Continued Approval (Appendix B**) should be presented to the fostering panel. The panel minutes and recommendation should be sent to the **Head of Service** for a decision.
* **Authorisation for Continued Approval (Appendix B**) **is only intended to be used in exceptional circumstances. Refusal of extension will lead to the child being moved from the placement immediately.**

**All children placed must have a care plan that makes clear what options to achieve permanence are being pursued. This may include action to progress an application for an SGO or Child Arrangements Order to secure the placement as the child’s long term home.**

**To support permanence planning further assessment of the child’s experience in placement and assessment of sibling relationships may be needed to inform matching to carers. Life story work should be completed.**