



**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council



# Kinship Care Guidance

Kinship-Care-2022



## Contents

- Introduction.....
- Temporary Approval.....
- Full Assessment .....
- Permanence Planning.....
- Child Arrangements Order .....
- Special Guardianship .....
- Summary of Kinship Care arrangements.....
- Sources of information and support .....
- What you can do if you disagree with a decision.....
- Feedback and contact details.....

## Introduction

### Glossary

***Kinship carer or connected foster carer:*** someone who is looking after a child of a family member, a friend or a person known to them; they could be their grandparent, aunt or uncle, brother or sister, or a wider family member or friend of the family.

***Looked after:*** means the child or children are being taken care of by Children's Services either via a care or emergency protection order, or with the agreement of the parent (s).

***Private family arrangement:*** this is where a parent arranges for another family member or friend to look after their child or children without the involvement of a social worker.

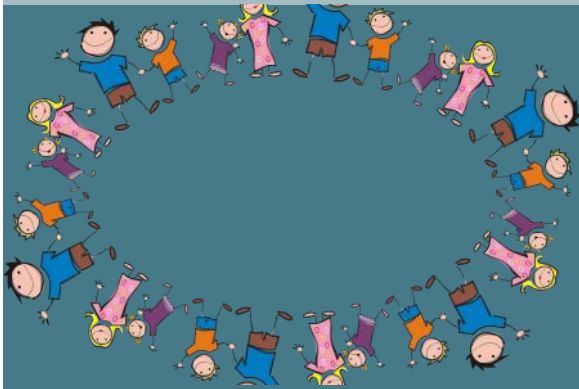
Most children live with one or more of their parents, unfortunately there are times when this isn't possible for many reasons, either in the short term or more permanently in a child's life. In many cases private arrangements are made for the child or children to live with wider family members but in some cases the child or children are 'looked after' by the Local Authority. Darlington Children's Services are involved with a child in this situation, who is known to you, either as a relative or friend.

We believe children should live with their parents and if that isn't possible, for whatever reason, every effort is made for them to live with a close relative or friend they already have an established relationship with; this familiarity and stability is a clear benefit at what is a very difficult time in the child's life. These arrangements are known as Kinship Care (or 'connected foster carer'); you have been approached by the child's social worker either because their parent(s) have suggested you may be able to offer their child or children a home or because we have identified you as a member of the family and friends network who may be able to help.

Caring for someone else's child is a huge commitment and, as you would expect, we are legally obliged to assess the suitability of any arrangements made for 'looked after' children, including whether identified family or friends are able to meet the child or children's specific needs.

This guidance booklet explains the stages of Kinship Care, the assessment process, support available and where to find more information. The direction for each looked after arrangement is based on the individual family circumstances, so not all stages will necessarily apply to you. Your social worker will support you throughout, explaining which stage you are at and the next steps relevant to you.





## Temporary approval

The assessment and approval process for Kinship Care is lengthy; however, we can make a temporary assessment so that the child or children can be placed with you quickly for a period of up to 16 weeks (or exceptionally 24 weeks) whilst the full assessment is carried out.

### Assessing suitability

We need to check the arrangement will be suitable for the child, that you can meet their needs and make sure you understand what is being asked of you. This may feel quite intrusive but it's important to get this right for everyone involved and in some circumstances, it could be a long-term commitment, particularly where very young children are involved. At this stage we assess:

- Any criminal convictions, cautions and reprimands you and all people aged 18 or over have who live in your household.
- Any previous involvement you or your children may have had with Children's Services.
- Your home environment, to make sure the accommodation is a satisfactory standard and that you have enough space for the child.
- Your lifestyle and living circumstances to make sure you will be able to care for the child or children. This includes exploring your relationship with your partner, your health, your employment status, an assessment of any pets you have and any other relevant information.
- Your relationship with the child or children; their views and feelings, your understanding of their circumstances and your ability to meet their specific needs.
- Your relationship with the child's parent(s), including whether you would be able to promote and supervise any contact arrangements agreed for the child and parent(s).
- Whether you can protect the child from harm.

## Support for temporary carers

*You will be supported by a social worker throughout this process and there are other organisations who provide independent advice and support to kinship carers listed at the end of this booklet.*

*You will receive an age-related weekly fostering allowance for each child you care for, payable via bank transfer, from the date the child is placed with you; up to date details are published on our website at [www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk)*

*The allowance will enable you to meet all the child's needs (food, clothing, school related costs, hobbies and leisure activities) so you are not entitled to claim Child Benefit. Claims for universal credit are not affected, however, it may affect other state benefits, so you are advised to seek advice from the Department of Work and Pensions, Citizen's Advice Bureau or the Fostering Network. Please note: Darlington Borough Council will share information, if re-requested by the Benefits Agency and entitlement to the fostering allowance ceases if the child leaves your care.*

## Temporary approval assessment outcomes

The social worker will consider the information and decide on the next steps. If they feel it is not appropriate for you to care for the child, they will discuss this decision with you, confirm it in writing and provide details of how to challenge it if that is something you wish to do.

If the social worker feels you could care for the child, they will submit their assessment to a senior manager who will usually either:

Approve you to care for the child under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010, which means you are temporarily approved as a connected foster carer for an initial period of 16 weeks with the potential to extend a further eight weeks (total 24 weeks), during which time a full fostering assessment will be undertaken. You will continue to receive home visits from your fostering supervising social worker and the child's social worker to support you during this time.

If the Family Court are involved with the child, you must agree to and sign the Temporary Approved Connected Foster Carer Agreement (this details the expectations of you as a connected foster carer) prior to or shortly after the temporary placement starts. Please note the Court may decide not to place the child or children in your care until a full connected fostering assessment is complete.

or

Decide not to approve you to care for the child or children; the reasons for this and the process for making representations will be discussed with you if this happens.

## Full assessment

### *Who's involved*

**Fostering Supervising Social Worker:** *their role is to support and supervise you, ensuring the care provided meets the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011.*

**Child Social Worker :** *supports the child and their progress with the care plan; they will continue to visit the child in your home to ensure their needs are being met and this informs part of the assessment.*

**Fostering Panel:** *comprising a range of people from different backgrounds, medical and legal advisors, an agency adviser, and an independent Chairperson.*

**Agency Decision Maker:** *a senior manager at Darlington Borough Council, independent of the assessment process.*

Your Fostering Supervising Social Worker will explain the assessment process and obtain your consent to the relevant checks and references required. These are in addition to those listed in the Temporary Approval section (which must also be completed) and include:

- A full Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check for all adult members of the household
- Full medical assessment by your GP
- Local Authority checks for all places you have lived whilst parenting children
- Checks with Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)
- Employment references
- Education references
- Child health representative (health visitor or school nurse)
- Landlord check
- Personal references
- Previous partner references
- The views of children in the household
- Adult children references and references from children living away from home
- Confirmation of valid vehicle insurance and MOT for any car you drive



## The assessment process

You will be asked to attend a three day “Skills to Foster” training course to help you prepare you for your role as a connected foster carer. And meet others in a similar situation to you.

The Fostering Supervising Social Worker and Child’s Social Worker will prepare a detailed assessment of your suitability to submit to the Fostering Panel for consideration. You will have the opportunity to read and comment on this assessment, which includes:

- A Connected Persons Fostering Assessment and the outcome of checks and references requested.
- A record and evaluation of character references.
- Summary of employment references, including a reference from all employers where you have previously worked with children or vulnerable adults, irrespective of when that was.
- Assessment of your ability to provide long term care for the child.
- A Safe Care Policy to ensure the children will be safe in your care.
- Your support networks, both practical and emotional.
- Chronologies of key life events.
- The Family Tree.
- A summary of pets in your home, if applicable and analysis of any risk they may pose to children.
- A Home Health and Safety Assessment, including a fire prevention policy and assurance occupants can safely exit the home in the event of a fire.
- A record of your Skills to Foster training, including feedback on your engagement in it and any future learning needs identified.

### *How long it takes*

*Assessment usually takes up to 16 weeks although an extension of up to 8 weeks may be granted (totaling 24 weeks) or in some cases the court may direct the assessment must be completed in a shorter timescale.*

## *Support provided*

*You will be supported by a social worker throughout this process and there are organisations who provide independent advice and support listed at the end of this booklet.*

## **Information sharing**

You will have the opportunity to read your assessment and provide your comments before the assessment is submitted to The Fostering Panel for consideration.

## **At panel**

You will be invited to attend panel with the fostering supervising social worker and the child's social worker. During the meeting, the panel will review the assessment and may ask you some questions relating to it; you will be supported throughout the meeting.

The panel will consider whether you are suitable as a foster carer and make their recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker; you will be notified of the outcome approximately 12 days after the panel meeting.

## **The outcome**

If you are approved; the decision will be confirmed in writing and you will be sent a notice of approval naming the child or children you are approved to care for.

If you have not been approved the fostering supervising social worker will discuss the options available to you, including accepting the decision, requesting a Local Authority review of the decision or applying to the Independent Review Mechanism for an independent review. More information about this will be provided to you if you reach this stage.



## *Financial support*

*You will receive an age-related weekly fostering allowance for each child you care for, payable via bank transfer, from the date the child is placed with you; up to date details are published on our website at*

*[www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk)*

*The allowance will enable you to meet all the child's needs (food, clothing, school related costs, hobbies and leisure activities) so you are not entitled to claim Child Benefit. Claims for universal credit are not affected, however, it may affect other state benefits, so you are advised to seek advice from the Department of Work and Pensions, Citizen's Advice Bureau or the Fostering Network.*

*Darlington Borough Council will share information, if requested by the Benefits Agency and entitlement to the fostering allowance ceases if the child leaves your care, so you must inform us of this promptly.*

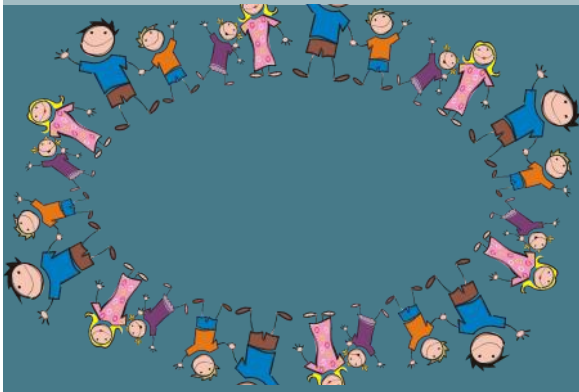
## **After approval**

You'll be allocated a fostering supervising social worker (who may not be the same social worker who completed your assessment) to provide you with ongoing support, guidance and formal monthly supervision. You must maintain a daily record about the child's progress and share it with your fostering supervising social worker and the child's social worker; regular home visits will be maintained by both of these people.

You'll need to attend and contribute to relevant meetings about the child (e.g. looked after reviews, Personal Education Plan meetings, planning meetings, medical appointments) and support agreed contact arrangements between the child and family members.

There will be regular training and development opportunities, some of which are mandatory, including first aid and safeguarding training and you must complete The National Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) within 18 months of your approval. Any additional training needs will be discussed and agreed with you by your fostering supervising social worker.

A formal connected foster carer performance review will be held within 10 months of approval, which is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer and gathers feedback from a range of people, including the child and their social worker. The review is presented to the Fostering Panel and you will be invited to attend.



## Permanence Planning

Permanence Planning is at the heart of everything we do; our aim from the beginning of becoming involved with children and families is to ensure that children have a safe, secure and loving environment in which to grow up.

Where it has been necessary for a child to live away from home, our priority is always that children should return to live with their parents if that can be achieved and the child's welfare and safety needs met.

If a child can't return home, plans need to be made for alternative permanent arrangements and in this instance, we always explore suitable options for the child to live permanently with someone in the family and friends network. Where a permanent arrangement can't be secured within the family network, alternative permanent options will usually be secured through long term professional foster care arrangements or adoption.

You may have had a child or children living with you on a temporary basis or you might know that a child is unlikely to return home to their parents, or you may have been identified by us as someone within the child's network who may be able to provide a permanent, stable home. Whatever the circumstances, we hope you'll agree that every child should have the security of a permanent home life and the opportunity to grow up without the involvement of social services.

### *Who's involved*

*You and your family*

*A social worker allocated to support you through the process*

*The child's social worker*

**Permanence Planning Panel:** *the Local Authority decision making group*

**Solicitors:** *who legally represent the people involved*

**CAFCASS worker:** *Children & Family Court Advisory Support Service advisor*

**Family Court Judge:** *who listens to everyone's views and decides what is best for the child*

## Glossary

**Parental Responsibility;** *the adult or adults responsible for day to day decisions about a child's care and well-being (e.g. where they live, how they are educated, what they eat and what medical treatment they receive).*

**Looked After Child:** *a child being taken care of by Children's Services either via a care or emergency protection order, or with parental agreement.*

**Child Arrangement Order:** *a court order detailing the arrangements for a child; including where they will live and how they will spend time with each parent or parents.*

**Special Guardianship Order:** *a court order giving enhanced parental responsibility to a person or persons other than the parents of a child or children.*

**Adoption Order:** *takes parental responsibility away from the child's parents or anyone else with parental responsibility and gives it to the person or people adopting the child; they become the child's legal parents.*

## Legal arrangements for permanent kinship care

There are two types of legal arrangement for a child or children to live permanently away from their parents, both are legally binding on the parent or parents and the child will stop being a 'looked after' child once the order is made:

**Child Arrangement Order:** parental responsibility is shared between the parents and the child's carer so more decisions can be made about day to day life but some decisions can't be made without agreement of everyone who has parental responsibility or agreement from the Court (e.g. the child's name can't be changed, nor can they emigrate or be out of the country for more than a month)

**Special Guardianship Order:** enhanced parental responsibility is granted to the carer(s) and day to day decisions for the child can be made without agreement of anyone else and under this arrangement, the child can be taken outside the UK for up to three months without the consent of others (including the court) or the court can give permission for the child to be taken abroad for longer than three months. The court may also agree that the child can be known by a new surname when the order is made.

You should seek independent legal advice to help you understand these arrangements; we will help you find an appropriate solicitor and fund costs up to £300 (or more where appropriate based on individual circumstances)

The process for permanency varies slightly depending on the type of order and whether care proceedings are ongoing at the time it is being sought; your social worker will confirm which scenario applies to you if you're unsure.

## Child Arrangements Order

**Where care proceedings are ongoing, and the child is placed with you via an interim care order:**

The child will already have a CAFCASS worker supporting them and we will have been discussing permanence planning for the child with you throughout the care proceedings. We will prepare and submit any information and assessments required by the court and your solicitor will represent your views throughout the process.

**Where care proceedings have concluded, and the child is placed with you via a care order:**

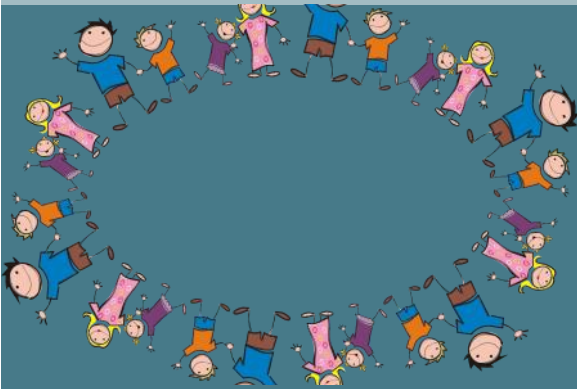
Single Assessment, prepared by the child's social worker, including:

- A summary of the child's wishes and how they feel about living with you permanently
- A report about how well the child is doing in your care
- The views of both parents
- Your views and those of your wider family
- An assessment of your support needs

The child's social worker will make a recommendation based on the assessment, which will be reviewed at a Permanence Planning Panel and a decision made whether to proceed to the Family Court.

If there is a decision not to proceed to a Child Arrangements Order at this stage, the reasons for this and next steps will be fully discussed with you.

If the decision is made to proceed to Family Court, the child's social worker will prepare the necessary reports, request up to date Medical Reports for you and any other named carer, obtain Disclosure and Barring Service checks for you and anyone aged 18 or over in your household and submit these to the Family Court who will allocate a CAFCASS worker to support the child.



### Outcomes

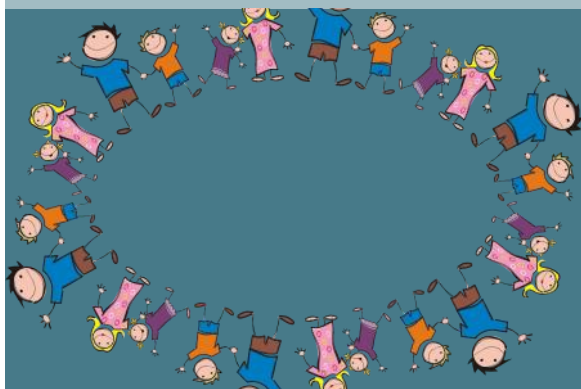
*If a Child Arrangement Order is granted, you'll share parental responsibility with the child's parent or parents (and anyone else who has been granted parental responsibility) and the child will cease to be looked after by the Local Authority.*

*If the Child Arrangement Order is not granted, the child remains looked after by the Local Authority and the social worker will discuss details of this and next steps with you.*

*Local Authorities do not usually financially support those with a Care Arrangements Order as the household will either be self-sufficient or entitled to support from universal benefits.*

*There are some exceptional circumstances where we may be able to help, and your social worker will discuss this with you if applicable. Any financial help we do give is subject to a strict criteria, financial assessment and limited to a maximum payment equivalent to the age-related fostering allowance.*

## Special Guardianship



There are two processes for becoming a Special Guardian, the one that will apply to you will depend on whether care proceedings have concluded or are ongoing.

Your solicitor will represent your views throughout the process, however, you should understand that we can propose a Special Guardianship Order even if you would prefer the child to remain living with you as a 'looked after child' via a care order. Your solicitor will advise you more about this and ultimately it is for the Family Court Judge to decide the final care plan for the child.

If a Special Guardianship Order is granted, you will have parental responsibility for the child, and they will stop being looked after by the Local Authority.

If the order is refused, the social worker will discuss this and next steps in detail with you.

### **(1) Where care proceedings are ongoing, and the child is placed with you via an interim care order:**

The child will already have a CAFCASS worker supporting them; we will have been permanence planning for the child throughout this period and discussing this with you.

We will prepare and submit the following reports and mandatory checks for the court:

- A Special Guardians Report prepared by the child's social worker
- An individual Special Guardianship Support Plan agreed with you
- Up to date Medical / DBS for you and anyone 18 or over in your household

### *How long it takes*

*Timescales vary depending on individual circumstances and court availability, however, care proceedings can take up to 26 weeks .*

## Glossary

**Care proceedings:** legal proceedings in the Family Court.

**Care Order:** court order enabling the Local Authority to take a child into care.

**Single Assessment:** a detailed assessment determining the child's needs.

**Permanence Planning Panel:** A group of professionals who approve the Permanency Plan for each 'looked after' child ensuring appropriate decisions are made in their best interests.

**Family Court:** deals with all legal disputes to do with children and the breakdown of relationships.

**Disclosure and Barring Service:** help to safeguard and protect society by providing relevant information and, where necessary, make barring decisions to protect vulnerable people.

### How long it takes

Timescales vary depending on individual circumstances and court availability; The Single Assessment process where a care order is already in place usually takes around 45 working days.

### (2) Where care proceedings have concluded, and the child is placed with you via a care order:

A Single Assessment, prepared by the child's social worker, which includes:

- A summary of the child's wishes, including how they feel about living with you permanently.
- A report of how well the child is currently doing in your care.
- The views of both parents about the permanence order.
- Your views about a permanent arrangement and those of your wider family.
- An assessment of your support needs.

The child's social worker will make a recommendation based on the overall assessment, this will be reviewed at a Permanence Planning Panel and a decision made whether to proceed to the Family Court.

If there is a decision not to proceed at this stage, the reasons for this and next steps will be fully discussed with you.

If the decision is made to proceed to Family Court, the child's social worker will:

- Prepare a Special Guardians Report
- Request up to date Medical Reports for you and any other named carer.
- Obtain Disclosure and Barring Service checks for you and anybody aged 18 or over living in your household.
- A Special Guardianship Support Plan agreed with you.

We will submit this information to the Family Court who will allocate a CAFCASS worker to support the child through the process until the court has made a decision.

## Financial Support for Special Guardians

### Financial help we can give

Help towards independent legal advice up to £300 if the child is 'Looked After' by Darlington Borough Council and we support the Special Guardianship Order

A Special Guardianship Payment (either a one-off sum or a series of payments) subject to financial assessment

Help towards costs of maintaining agreed contact arrangements

A Darlington Live Card (for use by the child or young person the Special Guardianship Order covers and any other child living in the household) giving free access to swimming, the 'Under The Sea' soft play area, Move More sport / activity sessions and the Gym (age and time restrictions apply) at the Dolphin Centre

### Benefits and other financial help

You may be eligible to apply for one or more of the benefits below:

Child Benefit (subject to income threshold / benefits cap)

15 hrs free childcare (in some cases up to 30) for children aged 2+

Universal Credit, if you are working age and on a low income

A 'child addition' amount for people of pension credit age

Free school meals for the child if either you receive Universal Credit / the guaranteed element of Pension Credit or if the child is already entitled to free school meals

An interest free Budgeting Loan or Advance to help with one off cost such as household equipment, furniture and clothing

A Guardian's Allowance if the child's parents have died or one has died and either; the other's whereabouts is unknown, they're divorced (and maintenance isn't paid) or the surviving parent is in prison / hospital.

### Sources of information

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

[www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)

# Summary of kinship care arrangements

	Temporary Connected Carer	Approved Connected Carer	Carer with Child Arrangements Order	Special Guardians
<b>Approval</b>	Temporary approval granted by Local Authority if viability assessment is positive and approved	Approved by Local Authority after assessment evidences the carer has met Fostering National Minimum Standards.	Granted by the Court following successful application .	
<b>Parental Responsibility</b>	Local Authority has parental responsibility if the child is subject to an Interim Care Order or a Care Order.		Carer shares parental responsibility with parent(s) .	Enhanced Parental Responsibility—significant decisions can be made without the agreement of others with parental responsibility (e.g. the child’s parents).
<b>Duration</b>	16-24 weeks.	Determined by the Local Authority and the child’s care plan.	Until the child reaches 18 years of age.	Until the child reaches 18 years of age or the Order is discharged by the Court.
<b>Supervision and Review</b>	Statutory requirement - the child will be visited by their social worker. Separate, regular visits will be maintained by the Fostering Supervising Social Worker to supervise and assess the carer .		Once the order is granted, there is no further involvement from the Local Authority unless financial support is agreed, in which case this is reviewed annually	Support provided in accordance with SGO support plan. If financial support is being provided, this will be reviewed annually
<b>Financial Support</b>	The child’s placement will be regularly reviewed to ensure their needs are being appropriately met. An age related fostering allowance will be paid by the Local Authority to meet the child's needs once the viability assessment is approved and the child is placed with the carer.	Entitlement to age related fostering allowance paid by the Local Authority to meet the child's needs. May be entitled to professional carer fee if the associated mainstream fostering skills requirements and commitments are met.	May be able to claim Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit / Pension Credit subject to meeting the criteria and as long as this are not being paid to the child’s parent(s). The child is included in your household for any Housing Benefit claim. Discretionary means tested financial support via the Local Authority.	
<b>Carer Support</b>	Ongoing support provided to meet the child's needs identified in the Care Plan. The temporary approved connected carer will receive support from the Fostering Supervising Social Worker.	Ongoing support provided to meet the child's needs identified in the Care Plan. Training and support provided to the carer to meet the Fostering National Fostering Standards. The child may receive leaving care support if they were a looked after child and meet the criteria.	No specific support provided but carer can access universal and voluntary support services. The child may receive leaving care support if they were a looked after child and meet the criteria.	A support plan is agreed if the child was looked after immediately before the Special Guardianship Order was granted. The child may receive leaving care support if they were a looked after child and meet the criteria.



# Support for Kinship Carers

## Local Support Group

*Darlington Kinship Care Supporters Group are a local support group for kinship carers who meet regularly – for further details contact [darren.mcglan@kinship.org.uk](mailto:darren.mcglan@kinship.org.uk).*

## Support Organisations



*[www.kinship.org.uk](http://www.kinship.org.uk) is full of news, information, and advice, access to peer support services and links to friendly support groups across the country. You can get involved as much or as little as you want and it's a really good source of support from people who understand kinship care.*



*Family Rights Group work with families involved with social services and kinship carers raising children who are unable to stay at home.*

*[www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)*

## Support from Darlington Children's Services

You'll receive advice and support from us throughout the process and immediately after the Order is granted, including:

A social worker who will work with you to agree a Special Guardianship Support Plan tailored to your needs and circumstances.

Support from our Early Help Team, Family Group Conferencing and the Emergency Duty Team as required.

Where children were looked after immediately before the Special Guardianship Order; advice and guidance from the Leaving Care Team to help them transition into adult life subject to age and circumstances.

## Specialist support subject to eligibility (your social worker will discuss these with you if they apply)

Therapeutic support services via The Adoption Support Fund, if the child or young person was 'Looked After' immediately before the Special Guardianship Order was granted. See [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk) for more information and advice

Befriending support from Safe Families; a charity that works with local authorities to help children, families and care leavers

## Support and information sources

### Support Organisations



*CoramBAAF : an independent organisation for people working with or looking after children in or from care*  
[www.corambaaf.org.uk](http://www.corambaaf.org.uk)



*Family Action supports families facing difficulties, including financial hardship, mental health problems, social isolation, learning disabilities, domestic abuse, or substance misuse and alcohol problems.*  
[www.family-action.org.uk](http://www.family-action.org.uk)



*The Fostering Network is a national charity who support everyone involved in fostering children, providing advice and guidance to achieve the best for the children involved.*

### Education and Learning

Always contact the child's school if you have any queries or concerns about their education, attendance, behaviour or experiences at school

**Support available from us at [www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk)**

Darlington Virtual School for children who were previously looked after by Darlington Borough Council

SEND Information Advice and Support service (IASS) offer advice and guidance to parents/carers of children with Special Educational Needs

#### Other learning support

[www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk) for information about learning disabilities

Educational videos from TedTalks [www.ed.ted.com](http://www.ed.ted.com)

Bitesize from the BBC covers online education for primary through secondary age groups [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

Book Trust is a national charity providing reading tips and advice  
[www.booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk)

### General

[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com) for information and advice about drugs

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) for online safety

[www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk) for advice about sexual abuse

## Support and information sources

### Emotional Support and Mental Health

Darlington CAMHS team is an NHS service for children and young people up to the age of 18 who may be experiencing a mental health problem; support for family members and promote positive mental health [www.tewv.nhs.uk](http://www.tewv.nhs.uk)

Young Minds; leading mental health charity for children and young people [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Anna Freud National Centre for Children & Families: a charity committed to transforming the experience of children, young people and their families with mental health, they have lots of resources available on their website, including Special Guardianship support before and after the Order is made [www.annafreud.org](http://www.annafreud.org)

## What you can do if you're not happy with a decision we've made

Our priority is to do the best we can for the children and families we support and we very much hope your experience of us is a positive one, however, we recognize that we don't always get things right and that people may be unhappy with the decisions we make.

Please be assured any decisions we make about Kinship Care arrangements are with the best interests of the child in mind, if, however, you feel this has not been the case in our interaction with you, the table below shows what action you can take:

Decision type	Action you can take
If we do not approve you as a Temporary Carer or you're not approved as a Connected Carer at Stage 1	<a href="#">Darlington Borough Council Complaints</a>
If you are not approved as a connected carer after presentation of assessment to the Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker.	You can make written representation to the Local Authority and request a review of the decision, or you can contact the Independent Review Mechanism and request an independent review of the Local Authority Decision.
If you disagree with the outcome of a financial assessment and / or request for financial support	You should discuss the outcome with a manager from The Financial Assessment Team. If you are still unhappy with the outcome, you can discuss it with the Head of Service, Children's Placement Services or raise a complaint <a href="#">Darlington Borough Council Complaints</a>

## Contact us

Get in touch if you have any queries or if you would like to give feedback about the information in this guide:

Team contact: Fostering and Supported Lodgings Team

☎ 01325 406222 option 5

✉ [Fostering.SupportedLodgingsTeam@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:Fostering.SupportedLodgingsTeam@darlington.gov.uk)

Visit [www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk)

