



2019

# Family and Friends Carers information



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# Family and friends carer information pack

## Foreword

This information pack aims to help you understand your rights and responsibilities and some of the many things that you will need to consider if you are caring for a child or making a decision about whether to put yourself forward to care for child who you are related to or have a connection with who for whatever reason is unable to live with their parents.

If you have been approached by the child's parents or a social worker from the Local Authority about the possibility of caring for the child then it is likely that the concerns about the care of the child are so serious that the local authority is considering making an application to the Family Court to remove the child from their parents' care. If there is a social worker involved with the child they will be able to advise you which sections of this information pack are most relevant to you and the child you are considering caring for or already looking after.

## What is family and friends (kinship) care?

Family and friends carers (also known as kinship carers or connected carers) are grandparents, other relatives family friends or people with a prior connection to the child, who step in to care for children who cannot safely live at home with their parents and who could otherwise be with foster carers in residential care or adopted. This may be a temporary or permanent arrangement.

Research indicates that family and friends care has good outcomes for children: the children feel loved and report high levels of satisfaction, can more easily maintain a sense of family and cultural identity, and are more likely to maintain contact with family members. The arrangements tend to be more stable than those with unrelated foster carers and the children's behavior is perceived to be less of a problem.

Kinship care can be arranged in a number of ways, some of which are informal and others that involve legal orders granted by the courts, therefore the circumstances of kinship carers can vary.

## I want to care for the child. What do I do?

The information contained in this guide is split into sections aimed at helping you gain a better understanding of the options that are available to you should you become a family and friends carer. It also sets out the assessment process and support you will receive, financially, practically and emotionally. It provides a good overview but does not replace the conversation you will have with the Social Worker and sometimes the child's parents and your legal advisor.

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## Who can become a family and friends carer?

Anyone who has a connection to the child such as: Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles,

Adult Brothers and Sisters, Other close family members, friends of the family or child/ young person and in some cases people who have a connection to the child through their work such as a learning support assistant for example.

## How is kinship care arranged?

If you wish to become a Family and friends carer, there may be several alternatives depending on the child's situation and some of these include applying for a legal order which would give you Parental Responsibility for the child. If the child is unable to return to their parents then the kinship carer may be encouraged to apply for a legal order such as a Child Arrangement Order (previously known as a Residence Order, Special Guardianship Order or Adoption Order, to secure the arrangement and provide them with permanency.

It is important that you understand the implications of the different orders so that you are able to choose the one you feel is most appropriate for your family and the child you propose to look after.

The local authority is not involved in all family and friends care arrangements but has a duty to protect all children. Therefore if there are concerns about the care a child is receiving and it is not appropriate for the child to remain being cared for by their current carers (normally their parents) we will ask the child's parents to identify a suitable relative or person connected to their family who may be willing to care for their child.

To help with this a Family Meeting will be arranged (where possible) to help the parents and family support the child and also identify if there is a relative, friend or connected person who could care for the child if it becomes necessary.

Wherever possible, arrangements for the

care of the child will be made in partnership with the parents, and the child's wishes will be taken into account (dependent upon their age and ability to express a view).

## Types of family and friends care

Family and friends care includes children who may be:

- Living in informal arrangements made by their parents with a close relative – or by default, for example because a parent has died or has abandoned the child.
- Living with 'private foster carers'.
- Looked after by the local authority (often known as 'in care') and placed with Family and Friends Foster Carers.
- On an order granted by the court such as a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship order
- In arrangements, which are planned to lead to Adoption by a relative, or friend.

These different arrangements are outlined in more detail below.

It should also be noted that the type of arrangement can sometimes change as circumstances change for example you could start off being an informal carer but then the child becomes looked after and you become a family and friends foster carer or you may decide to apply for a legal order and become the child's special guardian.

## Informal Family and Friends Care

Informal Family and Friends care is when parents make their own arrangements for a

close relative to care for their child, or when a close relative steps in without obtaining a legal order.

A 'close relative' mean the child's grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (including people who are such relatives by half blood, marriage or civil partnership), or a step parent.

When parents make similar arrangements with a more distant relative or a family friend this becomes Private Fostering unless the child is aged 16 or 17 and is not disabled (see page 5).

### How are the arrangements made?

The local authority is not involved in making these arrangements, they are made between the parents (or someone else who has parental responsibility) and the close relative. The child is not looked after by the local authority. Parents may ask a relative to care for their child due to difficult circumstances, or the relative offers to help because they feel that the parents are unable to cope, or the parents are dead or otherwise unable to provide care for example because they are in hospital or prison. In some situations a clear agreement has not been made such as those when children may have been staying with their grandparents and their parent has not returned to resume care of them.

### What are the rights and responsibilities of parents?

Parents maintain parental responsibility for their child and are responsible for their financial support. They also make the

decisions regarding their child. However if they wish to they can delegate day-to-day decision making to the kinship carer but they will have to consent to major decisions such as medical treatment (except in an emergency), schooling, and foreign travel. It is the parent's decision whether the informal kinship care arrangement continues and they can end it at any time.

### What are the rights and responsibilities of informal kinship carers?

Informal kinship carers are responsible for safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare. However they cannot override the wishes and rights of the child's parents.

### Is approval needed?

It is up to the parent to decide that the arrangements are suitable for their child and no approval is required to become an informal kinship carer. A social worker is not usually involved unless the local authority thinks that services may be necessary to safeguard or promote the child's welfare or an assessment has concluded that the child is a 'child in need'.

### How long does the arrangement last?

It should be noted that if the carer believes that there are strong reasons why it would be better for the child to stay with them rather than return to their parents, they could consider applying for a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order to formalise the arrangement.

## What are the arrangements for supervision and review of the arrangement?

There are no requirements to supervise and review the arrangement as these are made between the parents and the kinship carers.

## Private fostering

Where parents make an arrangement with someone who is not a close relative to care for their child for more than 28 days the arrangement is known as Private Fostering. The law describes a close relative as an aunt or uncle, grandparent, brother or sister.

## What are the rights and responsibilities of private foster carers?

Anyone who is going to care for a child as a private foster carer is legally required to notify the local authority where they live. There are regulations which list the information that must be provided, which includes information about the child and their parents, and the planned duration of the arrangement. The local authority also has to be informed of any changes of circumstances, and when the arrangement ends.

Private foster carers have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the child's welfare, but they cannot override the wishes and rights of the child's parents.

The parent is financially responsible for the care given to their child by the private foster carer.

## Is approval needed?

When the Local Authority is made aware that someone has become a private foster carer a social worker will undertake a private fostering assessment and a decision about the suitability of the arrangement will be made by a senior manager.

Private foster carers do not need to be formally approved, but the social worker will assess whether the arrangements appear satisfactory. This will include consideration of whether you have a relevant criminal record, the standard of accommodation, who else lives in the household, arrangements for contact with parents, education, and health. The social worker will also visit the child's parents as part of their assessment.

## How long does the arrangement last?

A Private fostering arrangements can last until the child becomes 16 years of age, or if the carer is no longer willing to continue, but can also be ended whenever the parent decides and without notice no matter how long the carer has been looking after the child.

## What are the arrangements for supervision and review?

The private foster carer will be supported by a social worker from the Fostering Service, and the child will have their own social worker.

The child's social worker is required to visit the child at least every six weeks during the first year, and then at least every 12 weeks after that. If they are concerned about the standard of care you are providing, the local

authority can take legal action to prevent you from continuing as a private foster carer.

### What support is available?

The child's parent should provide the carer with money to care for their child. However advice should also be sought about applying for Child Benefit, Child Tax Credits or other benefits.

## Family and Friends Foster Carers

### How are the arrangements made?

A child may become "looked after" if there is no person with parental responsibility to care for them; or they have been abandoned; or the person who has been caring for them is unable to provide them with suitable care.

When a child is 'looked after', the local authority is responsible for deciding what placement is the most appropriate to meet the child's needs, but the law requires that preference is given to a placement with a family member or friend who is approved as a foster carer.

Therefore if a relative, family friend or connected person wishes to care for a child who is looked after (in other words in the Care of the Local Authority) they must be approved as a family and friends (kinship) foster carer.

If a child needs to come into care due to a crisis and a relative or family friend is offering to care for them, in exceptional circumstances the local authority can, after some initial enquiries and completion of a viability assessment, grant a carer temporary approval as a foster carer for up to 16 weeks to allow time for a full foster carer assessment to be completed (see full assessment –page 12). This is often referred to as 'regulation 24 approval.' However, the local authority may decide that it is better to place the child short term with an already approved foster carer while the full assessment of the potential kinship carer is completed.

### What are the rights and responsibilities of parents?

In circumstances when a child is 'accommodated' under section 20 and placed with a family and friends foster carer, parental responsibility is retained by their parents. The local authority works in partnership with the child's parents but cannot override their wishes. However day-to day arrangements and decision making is often negotiated.

If a Child has been made the subject of a Care Order or an Interim Care Order, parents also retain parental responsibility in respect of their child, but they share this with the local authority. The local authority is able to make most decisions about the child even if the parent does not agree, although the parent's views must be taken into account.



## What are the rights and responsibilities of kinship foster carers?

Foster Carers including kinship foster carers never have parental responsibility for a child they are caring for. Even though foster carers are providing the day-to-day care of the child, the local authority is responsible for the care of a looked after child. All foster carers are required to sign a foster care agreement, which clarifies their roles and responsibilities as well as the support they will be given by the fostering service.

They are expected to care for a foster child as if they were a member of their own family, and promote the child's welfare. Foster carers are expected to work with others such as social workers, teachers, and health workers to provide the best possible care and support to the child.

## Is approval needed?

Kinship foster carers must be assessed and approved as foster carers before the child is placed with them. There are Fostering Regulations, which govern how this is done and it is a thorough process, which usually takes several months to complete.

The approved foster carer will be known as a Family and Friends Foster Carer and the child will be a Looked After Child.

All Kinship Foster Carers are allocated a supervising social worker whose role is to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the child and the required fostering standards.

## How long does the arrangement last?

The placement plan should set out how long the fostering arrangement is expected to last. It could be just for a few weeks or until the child turns 18. If the child is accommodated under section 20, the parent could ask for them to be returned home at any time, so the placement would end unless the local authority initiated court proceedings to prevent this. Otherwise the local authority can end the placement if they feel that it is no longer the most appropriate place for the child to live.

If a kinship foster placement is a long term one and there are no plans for the child to return to the care of their parents, the carers may wish to apply for a Special Guardianship Order (or a Child Arrangement Order or even in some circumstances an adoption order) so that they have parental responsibility. This may also be what you want. If one of these orders were granted this would mean that the child would no longer be looked after by the local authority, and any care order would automatically come to an end. Even if you agree that this is a positive step you should seek legal advice before making this decision.

## Are the arrangements supervised and reviewed?

Like other foster carers, the Family and Friends Foster Carer will be required to take part in training and will be subject to an annual review. A social worker from Bristol City Council's Fostering Service will be allocated to the carers.

Every looked after child has a care plan that brings together everything that the foster carers and different professionals need to do for the child. The child will have their

own social worker who oversees how the plan is carried out and must visit the child regularly (at least six weekly during the first year) to see that the placement is still meeting their needs. The planning arrangement will also include regular reviews by an Independent Reviewing Manager.

### What support is available?

Every foster carer is allocated a 'supervising social worker' whose job it is to provide support and supervision, and to make regular visits. Their role is to make sure that you have all the information you need to provide appropriate care which meets the child's needs, and provide advice and guidance about the fostering task. This could mean discussing different approaches to managing a child's challenging behavior. The fostering service also provides a range of training. A day's induction course is also available to all new family and friends carers as well as regular support groups and social events for carers and the children they look after to get together.

### What financial support is available?

Foster carers cannot claim child benefit for the fostered child but there may be other benefits you can claim, usually depending on your income. Family and Friends Foster Carers receive a weekly allowance for the child they are caring for (this is the same allowance as unrelated foster carers). Travel costs and pocket money will be covered by the weekly allowance. Assistance may also be given towards the costs of furniture and equipment.

## Child Arrangement Order

A Child Arrangement Order determines who the child will live with and gives Parental Responsibility to the person named in the order.

### How are the arrangements made?

A family and friends carer can apply to the Family Court for a Child Arrangement Order if they are:

- The child's guardian or special guardian
- The child's grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother or sister (including by half blood, marriage or civil partnership) or step parent, and the child has lived with them for at least a year
- A local authority foster carer who has had the child placed with them for at least a year, or
- Anyone else with whom the child has been living for at least three years out of the last five.

You can also apply if you have the consent of:

- Anyone who already holds a Child Arrangement Order for the child
- The local authority, if the child is in their care, or
- Everyone else who holds parental responsibility.

Even if a carer is not covered by any of the above circumstances they can still make an application to the court for permission to apply for a Child Arrangement Order.

The order states that the child will live with the person who holds the Child Arrangement Order. If the child was in the care of the Local Authority when the order is

made the child ceases to be a Looked After Child and is no longer in care.

### What are the rights and responsibilities of parents?

Parents retain parental responsibility but share this with the holder(s) of the Child Arrangement Order. They remain responsible for supporting the child financially although in reality this may well not happen.

### What are the rights and responsibilities of carers with a Child Arrangement Order?

A Child Arrangement Order does not enable you to change the child's surname, to appoint a guardian to care for them when you die, or to agree to place them for adoption or to be adopted.

### Is approval needed?

No approval is needed, but before deciding whether or not to grant a Child Arrangement Order the court will usually ask for a welfare report to be prepared by someone from the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), or by children's services if they have been involved with the child.

### How long does the order last?

A Child Arrangement Order lasts until the child is 18. However, the court can vary or discharge an order before it is due to end. If a care order (or interim care order) is made in respect of the child, the Child

Arrangement Order will end. A parent can apply to court to end an order.

### Are the arrangements supervised and reviewed?

No, there is no supervision or review of a Child Arrangement Order.

### What support is available?

There is no additional entitlement to support arising from the Child Arrangement Order, although if the local authority assesses the child as being 'in need' they may provide family support services (also known as section 17 support).

### What financial support is available?

Legally only a parent has responsibility for financially supporting their child, although in practice kinship carers often find they have to take this on because parents are unable or unwilling to take responsibility.

Family and friends carers who look after children on Child Arrangement Orders can claim benefits in respect of the child and should seek advice from an advice center or Citizens Advice Bureau.

### Special Guardianship Order

Carers may decide to become Special Guardians because they wish to provide permanence for the child, and/or the child continues to need protection from their parents. A Special Guardianship Order provides the carers with Parental Responsibility to the exclusion of all others, and it removes the child from the care

system (if they were looked after).

Once it is granted the child ceases to be “Looked After” but support services are available to the child, carer and parent. If legal aid is not available and the Local Authority is in agreement with the application, a Special Guardian may receive financial help towards the legal costs of the application to a court. A Special Guardian may ask to be assessed to consider if they may be eligible for discretionary financial help. Special Guardians are able to claim Child Benefit from the time they start caring for the child and may also claim other state benefits.

## How are the arrangements made?

The circumstances in which you can apply for a special guardianship order is very similar to those for applying for a Child Arrangement Order. You can apply to the family court if:

- You already have a Child Arrangement Order for the child
- You are the child’s grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother or sister (including by half blood, marriage or civil partnership) or
- Step parent, and the child has lived with you for at least a year
- You are a local authority foster carer who has had the child placed with them for at least a year, or
- The child has been living with you for at least three years out of the last five.

You can also apply if you have the consent of:

- Anyone who already holds a Child

Arrangement Order for the child

- The local authority, if the child is in their care, or
- Everyone else who holds parental responsibility.
- If you’re not covered by any of the above circumstances you can still make an application to the court for permission to apply for a SGO.

In some cases carers who already have a Child Arrangement Order decide to apply for a special guardianship order instead if they feel that they need additional powers to make decisions about the child.

The carer is required to inform the Local Authority of their plan to apply for a Special Guardianship Order giving three months’ notice. A report is prepared for the court by a social worker, who will guide the carer through the legal process.

Before making a Special Guardianship Order the court has to be sure that this is in the child’s best interests. Therefore the local authority has to prepare a report for the court. The assessment process is very thorough and is similar to being assessed to become a family and friends foster carer (see section full assessment on page 12).

## How long does the arrangement last?

A special guardianship order lasts until the child is 18. You can apply to the court for the order to be ended before then, and in certain circumstances a person who has, or has previously had, parental responsibility can also apply to the court for this.

## Are the arrangements supervised and reviewed?

There is no supervision or review of a special guardianship order.

## What support is available?

If the child was looked after by a local authority when the special guardianship order was made then you, the child and the child's parents all have a right to require that local authority to make an assessment for providing support services. If the child was not looked after then the same people (and also your own children) can ask the local authority to assess for support services, but the authority is not obliged to do so.

In Bristol, support groups are arranged to enable special guardians to meet up with each other to provide mutual support.

A letterbox scheme is being established to enable the exchange of letters for children who are not having direct contact with their parents.

## What financial support is available?

In some circumstances the local authority may pay a means tested special guardianship allowance, if it is felt that you should become the child's special guardian but would not be able to do so without financial support. This is more likely if the child was previously a looked after child and placed with you as a family and friends foster carer. Also the local authority may help with the legal fees in obtaining a special guardianship order when the child was previously looked after. The social worker

should be able to advise you on the financial issues to help you decide if you wish to apply for a special guardianship order.

## Adoption Order

In some situations the carer may wish to adopt the child. This will end the Parental Responsibility rights of the birth parent and the adoptive family assumes all responsibility for the child. An assessment of the carer is undertaken by a social worker and presented to the Adoption Panel. The final decision is made by the Decision Maker, who is a senior manager in the Local Authority. Once this decision is made the prospective adopter will make an application to the Court for an Adoption Order. Support and training is available to adopters.

Adoptive parents are responsible for the financial upkeep of the adopted child, but in some circumstances financial assistance may be available. All financial help will be subject to an assessment of need and will be means tested. Prospective adopters are able to claim Child Benefit from the date of the adoption and may also claim other state benefits.

## Types of Assessment

Ultimately the court may need to be asked to resolve the question of who should care for the child. Before the Local Authority can make any recommendations they need to complete a thorough assessment of your capacity to care for the child concerned.

The type of assessment needed will depend

on the child's circumstances.

A new six-month time limit has been introduced for care proceedings and this means it's even more important for kinship carers to be considered early on, before legal proceedings actually start.

## Viability Assessment

Before deciding whether to carry out a viability assessment we will consider any information already available to us about you and your family such as that held on children's services records. This is referred to as initial screening. If this screening process is satisfactory a joint visit will be arranged from both the child's social worker and a social worker from the fostering service who carries out these types of assessment. This assessment will normally be completed following one visit.

If you have a partner they should also be present for the viability visit (even if they don't live with you)

These are some of the things that will be covered during the visit/ discussion.

- How well you know the child?
- What is your understanding of the concerns about the child?
- Could you meet the child's needs?
- Are you able to promote safe and positive contact between the child and their parents/siblings? Are you able to supervise contact when appropriate?
- We would need to be confident that you would be able to appropriately safeguard the child from harm (including any threat posed by the parents).
- Ensure that you understand the concerns

of the Local Authority.

- That you fully understand the commitment that you would be taking on.
- Do you understand the invasiveness of the process of assessment and are you prepared/ able to co-operate with the process?
- Do you understand that we will be assessing for permanency for the child including legal permanency, and are you willing to make such a commitment?
- Are there any health concerns, which would prevent you from caring for the child long term?
- Is your accommodation safe and suitable for the child? Is there sufficient space and where will the child sleep?

You will also have the opportunity to ask any questions that you have. Sometimes it is a good idea to write these down before the visit.

Following the visit a report will be written and sent to you. If it concludes is that you have the potential to care safely for the child concerned and meet their needs, a full assessment will then be completed.

## Full Assessment

The Local Authority has a duty to make sure any child they are providing services for is safe and well cared for so the social worker will discuss with you how you are going to care for the child as well as explore what support you may need to do so.

A social worker will arrange to come and see you and during a series of visits they will gather information about you and your family circumstances to assess whether you

meet the requirements to become a family and friends carer.

The sort of things that will be discussed will be:

- How you will care for the child?
- How you will provide a safe and caring environment?
- Can you work with Children's Services to ensure the child is safe and their development promoted?
- If you will you are willing to undertake training and personal development?

All family members within the home as well as the child and their parents will be spoken to and their views taken into account.

Personal References: You will need to give the names of 3 people who can provide you with personal references. Only one of these can be 'related' to you in any way, but should not be one of your own children. The people you choose should know you well and be able to talk about what you are like as a parent or around children. If you choose someone who is not able to talk to us about how you might care for a child, we will have to take up further references, so please think about this carefully. You will need to give us their address and telephone number. If they have an email address, this would also be helpful.

References from your own children: If you have grown up children, or children living elsewhere we will need to speak to them. You will need to give us their names, addresses and telephone numbers, or the name and address of the people that care for them.

Ex- Partners: You will have to give us the details of any ex- partners, especially if you have had children together. We will contact them to ask them about what you were like as a parent to your joint children. We MUST do this, and will only exclude ex-partners if there is evidence to suggest that doing so would place you or others at risk.

Health: You will be asked for information about your health. With your consent your doctor will be asked to provide a medical report to ensure that there are no health issues that could impact on your capacity to care for the child.

Criminal Record checks: We must carry out a police check – this is called a DBS on all adults in the household. You will be provided with a form to complete. We will need to see 'proof' of who you are and that you have the right to live and work in the country. You will be advised of the documents you can use for this.

The regulations do not allow anyone to be approved as a foster carer if they have a conviction for child abuse or neglect, assault or violent offences involving children. However the Local Authority has the power to disregard some offences committed by those applying. Therefore it is important that you are honest about any convictions that you have.

Other Checks and References: We will also contact the Probation Service, Health Visitor and Education Department and anyone else that may be relevant to support our assessment.

Below is a list of some of the tasks and checks you would need to complete together with the social worker undertaking

the assessment:

If your children still live with you and are of school age, we will also include them in the fostering assessment as they will be affected by you becoming a family and friends carer.

Information gathering for the assessment:

We need to get to know you very well, particularly as we are going to ask you to look after someone else's child. This means that we will be meeting with you regularly (usually at your home) and each visit will last around 1 – 2 hours. However, the number and length of visits will vary depending on your personal circumstances. During these visits the assessing social worker will ask you to tell them about your experiences growing up and your relationships past and present. They will complete a number of tasks and leave you with tasks to complete by yourself, for example: complete a family tree and consider at your commitments and the people around you that might be able to help and support you.

They will look around your house and complete a Health and Safety Audit, they will complete observations of you with the child (if already in your care) or other children, talk to you about your personal history and things you like to do, as well as looking at what experience you have of looking after children.

Whilst every effort is made to keep the information confidential, it may well be necessary to share the information with the court and the other parties (i.e. the child's parents). Therefore if there is anything you specifically do not wish to be shared then it is important that this is identified with the assessing social worker so that this can be

managed appropriately.

You will also be required to attend a one-day information/training event for family and friends carers. This will provide you with lots of information to help prepare you for becoming a family and friends carer. It will also give you the opportunity to speak to other family and friends carers who are in the same situation. Feedback we have had from other carers has suggested that they found the course helpful and informative. You will be given details of this at a later date.

### What happens when the assessment is completed?

When the social worker has enough information they will write a report, which you will see and be able to comment on.

If fostering is being considered the report is then presented to the Fostering Panel, which is made up of professionals involved in caring for children, experienced foster carers and adults who have been fostered themselves. The final approval decision will be made by the agency Decision Maker, who is a senior manager in the Local Authority.

If a court order is being considered the report will recommend what type of order is most appropriate for the child you are caring for and why.



## Is family and friends care right for you and your family?

Some of the many challenges you will need to consider are described below. Not all of them will apply to you, but these are the things that experienced family and friend's carers have said they have found difficult.

### Family relationships

Becoming a family and friends carer is not easy, particularly if you have little parenting experience or if your children have grown up and left home. When children need kinship care there has usually been a breakdown in the family, which affects everyone concerned; the child needing the placement, their parents and the potential carers.

Deciding to become a family and friends carer can often cause stress and will affect other people not just you. Therefore what other members of the family feel about the proposal and how it will affect relationships also need to be carefully considered.

You should think about how your new role will affect your own and the child's relationship with their parents, as well as with other family members. How will your own children feel about someone else joining the household? How will the child react to their grandparents taking on a parental role?

Looking after a child from within the family will affect your relationship with their parents and the fact that you have taken on the care of their children will evoke strong emotions for all of you.

In some cases it is possible for children to return to live with their parents, if the problems that caused the child to leave can be overcome. However it is sometimes necessary for the child to have the security and care of relatives/friends until they are grown up. Therefore you need to consider how long you may be required to look after the child concerned before putting yourself forward as a possible carer.

You may not know the child as well as you think. There might be things, which have been kept from you, such as domestic violence or child abuse, which have affected the child's behaviour and emotional wellbeing. Family and friends carers need to be aware of the complexities of caring for another family member's child and the impact that this may have on family relationships. The child's needs must always be put first, and it's not always easy to do this.

Although as outlined at the beginning there are lots of benefits of a child remaining within their family network, kinship care arrangements can also be a source of difficult family relationships. Parents may feel resentful of the kinship carers and/or not accept why they cannot care for their own children.

It can be a real challenge for kinship carers to manage the interrelationships and to make sure that everyone remains focused on what is best for the child. Sometimes grandparents have to accept that stepping in and do their best for their grandchildren can damage their relationship with their own adult children.

Understandably kinship carers can feel

disappointed and angry towards parents who they consider have let down their own children and this can make relationships harder to manage.

## Contact

Managing contact is problematic to some degree or other for most kinship carers. In one survey seven out of ten kinship carers said that helping children to cope with parental contact was one of the biggest challenges facing them. This can mean helping children to cope with disappointment and rejection, if their parents fail to turn up for contact. Adults need to make contact a positive experience for the child, but sometimes they also need to protect children from confused messages and potential harm by parents. The child may have suffered significant harm, so careful judgments have to be made, which parents may not always accept.

In the modern digital world, carers are finding that as well as face to face to face contact which has been formally agreed, children and their parents are contacting each other or communicating by letter or phone. Whatever formal contact arrangements are made children; mobile phones, social networking, instant messaging, the internet, Skype for example have opened up other forms of communication, which children often understand better than the adults who are looking after them!

## Age and health

It is important to consider how long the kinship care arrangement might last. Caring for a child is both physically and mentally

demanding. It is sensible to think about your age in relation to that of the child, and the long term plans. Think also about your health and how you would manage if it gets poorer. Will you be able to go on providing care for as long as it is needed, and are there others who will be able to help you or to take over if necessary?

## Finance and lifestyle

How will you manage financially? You will need to work out how you will be affected by any loss of income from employment and whether you will be eligible for any benefits or other financial support.

Children sometimes arrive in an emergency which can often have a major impact on the lifestyle of the family.

## Accommodation

Living in cramped conditions can add to the pressures of caring for a child. For those living in social housing, they may be given priority to move to more suitable accommodation. Consider if you are prepared to move and whether this is a realistic possibility as a lack of suitable accommodation is another challenge often faced by kinship carers.

## What is your motivation?

You might have thought very carefully about becoming a kinship carer, or everything may have happened very quickly. You may have lots of complicated emotions, such as feeling responsible, angry, or that you have no real choice but to help. None of these feelings are wrong, but if you are clear about why you are offering to help it will

enable you to make better informed decisions. You can still say no if you have weighed it all up and you feel this isn't the right choice. Only you know the right decision for you.

## Parental responsibility

Whatever the circumstances in which you are a kinship carer, you need to understand what decisions you are able to make and what rights the child's parent has. The law talks about 'parental responsibility' (or PR), which means all of the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which a parent has in relation to a child and his or her property. Parents only lose parental responsibility if their child is adopted. They share PR with the holder of a Child Arrangement Order, Special Guardianship Order or Care Order (as explained in the relevant sections of this guide) but in practice this is very limited and they would have to go to court to challenge decisions of a kinship carer. So even if you have agreed with a parent to care for their child you will not have parental responsibility unless you have a Child Arrangement Order or special guardianship order.

## Do I want social workers involved in my life?

Social workers are not involved in all kinship arrangements as outlined in the section above on types of kinship care arrangement

Children in Care have regular visits from their social worker. All family and friends foster carers have their own supervising social worker who will visit them regularly (a minimum of three monthly). All foster carers also have at least one unannounced visit per

year. You will therefore receive regular visits from social workers.

## Will I have to go to lots of meetings?

Children who are looked after have their care plans reviewed at least every six months and you will be invited and expected to participate in these meetings. At times you will also be invited to other meetings to do with the child you are caring for such as meetings to discuss their education.

## The joys and stresses of caring for children

Everyone knows that caring for children can be very rewarding. However when deciding to become a friends and family carer you also need to consider some of the more challenging aspects.

The children can present major challenges resulting from unresolved attachment issues and early traumatic experiences. The impact of early trauma on children can affect their behavior, development and capacity to form relationships.

Research is increasingly showing that the way a child is treated in the early years of their life can influence the way they relate to other people. Children can have "attachment issues" a phrase used to describe a variety of behaviours, which may arise after a child has lost his/her 'primary carer', often the mother, and experienced emotional abandonment in their early years.

Children who have been abused or neglected and whose needs have not been fully met can become overly anxious to

please, desperate to do anything to avoid being abandoned again. Some express their chaotic feelings in chaotic behaviour. Others turn in on their own pain and withdraw, unable to relate to others. They may act in some of the following ways:

- Poor impulse control
- Indiscriminate affection
- Superficial charm
- Lack of ability to give and take
- Poorly developed conscience
- Clingy and demanding behaviour
- Developmental delays
- Extreme control issues
- Persistent chatter and questions
- Destructiveness
- Abnormal eating patterns
- Problems with wetting and soiling
- Ability to split partners
- Poor peer relationships
- Telling stories that are not true

### What does this mean for family and friends carers?

The family and friends carers that we work with and support have experienced many of the behaviors listed above.

You will need to be prepared to learn more to help you understand why the child you are caring for has difficulties, and be open to developing new parenting strategies to help the child learn new and healthier responses. Some children will benefit from therapy to address the cause and effects of early trauma and you will need to support them with this.

The purpose of including this information in the pack is to ensure that people who put themselves forward are realistic about the role they will be taking on and prepared to

accept help and advice if necessary. This will be explored further with you during the assessment process.

In 2012 the Family Rights Group published some research, which included an internet survey of 493 carers raising 762 kinship children.

The study found that although family and friends carers often described the love and satisfaction they derived from their role in the child's life, this was often at significant cost and 65% of interviewed carers were assessed as having raised stress levels.

The internet survey concluded that 38% of carers were raising a kin child with emotional and behavioral problems, 21% special educational needs, 12% a learning disability and 11% a physical disability or chronic health condition.

Grandparents or older relatives will have to consider if they are prepared for the realities of parenting again and if they have the health and stamina to cope. Family and friends care will not be right for all families. We understand that it is particularly hard for relatives to say 'no' but it is important that you do if you don't feel it is right for you and your family as feelings of obligation and duty can sometimes over ride all the practical issues.

### Support for carers and children

Contact between the child and their parents and other adults can often be difficult, and Bristol City Council may offer mediation and assistance in making contact arrangements

or supervising contact if this has been agreed as part of the plan for the child.

Children may need emotional support to come to terms with past difficulties. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) can provide a therapeutic service for children who live away from their birth families. To receive a CAMHS service the carer should speak to their social worker or the child's GP.

Family and Friends Foster Carers receive a wide range of training and support from the Fostering Service. Support includes a newsletter giving information and news about caring, which is produced for carers and sent out to their home or emailed.

Support groups and social events are provided for foster carers and special guardians. A child who is cared for in an informal arrangement or lives with foster carers will be supported by a social worker for as long as the Local Authority is involved with the child. Many family and friends carers find community support groups for families and carers helpful, some family centers now run support groups for family and friends carers.

## Where to get further help and advice

If you have further questions or you wish to be considered as a carer for a child that is known to you please contact the child's social worker without delay. If you do not know who the child's social worker please contact the Fostering Service (details below) and ask to speak to the duty social worker who will be able to advise you.

Bristol City Council  
Fostering Service  
B Bond Warehouse  
Smeaton Road  
Bristol  
Tel: 0117 3534196

There are a number of organisations both locally and nationally who can provide advice and support:

### Bristol organisations

#### Family support

##### One big database

General information in a directory including national and local organisations offering support, advice and guidance for children, young people, parents, carers and professionals on addictions, child protection, benefits, domestic abuse, mediation, grants, funding, legal issues, arts, leisure, youth clubs, children's centres, after school clubs.

Website: [www.1bigdatabase.org.uk](http://www.1bigdatabase.org.uk)

Tel: 01454 868008

Email: [cis@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:cis@southglos.gov.uk)

#### Parenting hub

This 'sign posting' web-site has useful information and on-line support for parents and carers in Bristol with links to the home pages of relevant web-sites.

Website: [www.bristolparentinghub.co.uk](http://www.bristolparentinghub.co.uk)

Tel: 0845 129 7217 (Family Information Service)

Email: [askcyps@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:askcyps@bristol.gov.uk)

#### Parenting support

Information about parenting support.

Website: [www.bristol.gov.uk/page/support-parents-and-carers](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/support-parents-and-carers)

Tel: 0117 914 3024

#### Single Parent Action Network

Parenting programmers, web-site with online support groups, information, interactive learning games, links to other organisations, news, research and money advice.

Web-site: [www.spanuk.org.uk](http://www.spanuk.org.uk)

Tel: 0117 9514231 **Study Centre:** 0117 952 2712

**Address:** SPAN, Millpond, Baptist Street, Easton, Bristol BS5 0YW

Email: [info@spanuk.org.uk](mailto:info@spanuk.org.uk)

### Contact between children and their families

**Action for Children runs a contact centre in Bristol.**

Website: [www.actionforchildren.org.uk/our-services/family-support](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/our-services/family-support)

Tel: 0117 0354440

### Early years child care (three year olds and under)

Some two year olds are entitled to free early learning and childcare available through a health visitor or children's centre. All

children aged three years and over can have free nursery education for 15 hours a week.

Website: [www.bristol.gov.uk/page/early-education-and-childcare](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/early-education-and-childcare)

Tel: 0845 129 7217 (Family Information Service)

## Family mediation services

These are listed on One Big Database.

Website: [www.1bigdatabase.org.uk](http://www.1bigdatabase.org.uk)

Tel: 01454 868008

Email: [cis@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:cis@southglos.gov.uk)

## Financial support

### **Welfare Rights and Money Advice Service, Bristol City Council.**

Address: Welfare Rights and Money Advice Service, PO Box 595, Bristol BS99 2AW

Website:

[www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/advice-and-benefits/welfare-rights-and-money-advice-service](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/advice-and-benefits/welfare-rights-and-money-advice-service)

Helpline: 0117 3772877

Minicom: 0117 3772878

Email: [welfarerights@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:welfarerights@bristol.gov.uk)

### **Advice West**

Information and list of local advice centres run by voluntary organisations within the former county of Avon and surrounding areas

Website: [www.advicewest.org.uk](http://www.advicewest.org.uk)

Email: [admin@advicewest.org.uk](mailto:admin@advicewest.org.uk)

### **Bristol Debt Advice Centre**

Website: [www.bdac.org.uk](http://www.bdac.org.uk)

Tel: 0117 954 3990

Information, advice and guidance about back to work financial calculations, tax credits etc are available from Family Information Service on 0845 129 7217.

**Job Centres Plus** have specialist parent advisors.

### **Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)**

Bristol Branch

Telephone 0844 499 4718

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

## Health

Contact a GP about any health issues and they will give you information or put you in touch with specialist health services or organisations.

To find a GP, hospital, pharmacy, dentist or walk-in centre, look at the Bristol Primary Care Trust web site:

Website: [www.bristol.nhs.uk/your-services--nhs-bristol/service-finder.aspx](http://www.bristol.nhs.uk/your-services--nhs-bristol/service-finder.aspx)

There are targeted and specialist services such as Child and Family Consultation Services (CAMHS) at:

[www.nbt.nhs.uk/our\\_services/a\\_z\\_of\\_services/c/child\\_family\\_consultation.aspx](http://www.nbt.nhs.uk/our_services/a_z_of_services/c/child_family_consultation.aspx)

Ask a health visitor for advice about pre-school children: contact one through your GP.

Discuss issues with the school nurse for older children.

## Housing

Information about housing from Bristol City Council.

Website:

[www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/housing/housing-advice](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/housing/housing-advice)

Tel: 0117 922 2400

## Schools

Information about schools in Bristol, including joining a school.

Website:

[www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges)

Address: School Admissions, Bristol City Council, PO Box 57, Bristol, BS99 7EB

Tel: 0117 903 7694

Fax: 0117 903 7710

Email: [school.admissions@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:school.admissions@bristol.gov.uk)

## National organisations

### Action for Prisoners' Families

Works to reduce the negative impact of imprisonment on prisoners' families.

Produces publications and resources, and provides advice, information, training and networking.

Website: [www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk](http://www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk)

Address: Unit 21, Carlson Court, 116 Putney Bridge Road, London SW15 2NQ

Tel: 020 8812 3600 Advice line: 0808 808 2003

E-mail: [info@actionpf.org.uk](mailto:info@actionpf.org.uk)

E-mail:

[info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk](mailto:info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk)

### Addaction

Offers a range of support for families and carers affected by substance misuse.

Website: [www.addaction.org.uk](http://www.addaction.org.uk)

Address: 67-69 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6PU

Tel: 020 7251 5860

Email: [info@addaction.org.uk](mailto:info@addaction.org.uk)

### Adfam

Works with families affected by drugs and alcohol, and supports carers of children

whose parents have drug and alcohol problems.

Website: [www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk)

Address: 25 Corsham Street, London N1 6DR

Tel: 020 7553 7640

Email: [admin@adfam.org.uk](mailto:admin@adfam.org.uk)

### Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)

Independent advice and information for parents/carers on state education and schooling including admissions, exclusion, attendance, special educational needs and bullying.

Web-site: [www.ace-ed.org.uk](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk)

Address: 1c Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2DQ

Tel: 0808 800 5793 (General advice line)

0808 800 0327 (Exclusion advice line)

020 7704 9822 (Exclusion information line, 24hr answer phone)

### BeGrand.net

Website offering information and advice to grandparents and online and telephone advice.

Website: [www.begrand.net](http://www.begrand.net)

Helpline: 0845 434 6835

### British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)

Provides information and advice about adoption and fostering and publishes resources.

Website: [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk)

Address: Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS

Tel: 020 7421 2600

Email: [mail@baaf.org.uk](mailto:mail@baaf.org.uk)

### Children's Legal Centre

Free independent legal advice and factsheets for children, parents, carers, professionals.



Website: [www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)

Address: University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex CO4 3SQ

Tel: 01206 877 910 0808 802 0008 (Child Law Advice Line)

0845 345 4345 (Community Legal Advice - Education)

E-mail: [clc@essex.ac.uk](mailto:clc@essex.ac.uk)

### **Citizens Advice Bureaux**

Helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice through local bureaux and website.

Website: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

### **Department for Education**

Details of telephone help lines and online services for information, advice and support on issues that parents and families may face in bringing up children and young people.

Website:

[www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families](http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families)

### **Direct Government - information about public services in one place**

Information about money, tax and benefits

Website:

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/index.htm)

### **Family Fund Trust**

Helps families with severely disabled or seriously ill children to have choices and enjoy ordinary life. Gives grants to make life easier and more enjoyable.

Website: [www.familyfund.org.uk](http://www.familyfund.org.uk)

Address: 4 Alpha Court, Monks Cross Drive, York YO32 9WN

Tel: 0845 130 4542

Email: [info@familyfund.org.uk](mailto:info@familyfund.org.uk)

### **Family Rights Group (FRG)**

Confidential advice to parents and family whose children require children's social care services because of welfare needs or concerns. Publishes resources, helps to develop support groups for family and friends carers and runs a discussion board.

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

Address: Second Floor, The Print House, 18 Ashwin Street, London E8 3DL

Tel: 020 7923 2628 0800 801 0366 (Advice line)

Email: [advice@frg.org.uk](mailto:advice@frg.org.uk)

### **Fostering Network**

Fosterline - provides independent advice about fostering issues.

Tel. - 0800 040 7675

Supports foster carers and anyone interested in fostering to improve the lives of children in care. Publishes resources and runs Fosterline, a confidential advice line for foster carers including concerns about a child's future, allegations, complaints, legislation, finances.

Website: [www.fostering.net](http://www.fostering.net)

Address: 87 Blackfriars Road, London SE18HA

Tel: 020 7620 6400 0800 040 7675 (Fosterline)

Email: [info@fostering.net](mailto:info@fostering.net)  
[fosterline@fostering.net](mailto:fosterline@fostering.net)

### **The Grandparents' Association**

Support for grandparents and families, especially those who have lost /are losing contact because of problems, caring for grandchildren full-time, and with childcare responsibilities.

Website: [www.grandparents-association.org.uk](http://www.grandparents-association.org.uk)

Address: Moot House, The Stow, Harlow, Essex CM20 3AG

Tel: 01279 428040

Tel: 0845 4349585 (Helpline)  
 Tel: 0844 357 1033 (Welfare benefits advice and information)  
 Email: [info@grandparents-association.org.uk](mailto:info@grandparents-association.org.uk)

### **Grandparents Plus**

Champions the role of grandparents and the wider family in children's lives, especially when they take on the caring role in difficult family circumstances.

Address: Grandparents Plus, 18 Victoria Park Square, Bethnal Green, London E2 9PF  
 Tel: 020 8981 8001  
 Email: [info@grandparentsplus.org.uk](mailto:info@grandparentsplus.org.uk)

### **HM Revenue and Customs**

Information about child benefit and guardian's allowance.

Website: [www.hmrc.gov.uk/childbenefit/index.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/childbenefit/index.htm)

Address: Child benefit office, PO Box 1, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE88 1AA  
 Tel: 0845 302 1444 (Helpline)  
 0845 302 1474 (Textphone)

### **Mentor UK**

Promotes health and wellbeing of young people to reduce the damage that drugs can do.

Website: [www.mentoruk.org.uk](http://www.mentoruk.org.uk)  
 Address: Fourth Floor, 74 Great Eastern Street, London EC2A 3JG  
 Tel: 020 7739 8494  
 Email: [admin@mentoruk.org](mailto:admin@mentoruk.org)

### **Family Mediation Helpline**

Information and advice about family mediation services and eligibility for public funding.

Website: [www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk](http://www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk)  
 Tel: 08456 026627

### **National Family Mediation (NFM)**

Provides mediation services to support couples who are separated, and their children and others affected by this.

Website: [www.nfm.org.uk](http://www.nfm.org.uk)  
 Address: 4 Barnfield Hill, Exeter EX1 1SR  
 Tel: 0300 4000 636  
 Email: [general@nfm.org.uk](mailto:general@nfm.org.uk)

### **Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group**

Operates helpline and services to support to anyone with a link to someone in prison, prisoners and other agencies.

Website: [www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk](http://www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk)  
 Address: Valentine House, 1079 Rochdale Road, Blackley, Manchester M9 8AJ  
 Tel: 0161 702 1000  
 0808 808 2003 (Offenders' families helpline)  
 Email: [info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.co.uk](mailto:info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.co.uk)

### **Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)**

Practical and emotional support to prisoners and their families. The Kinship Care Support Service provides support and advice to carers of children with parents in HMP Holloway.

Website: [www.prisonadvice.org.uk](http://www.prisonadvice.org.uk)  
 Address: Park Place, 12 Lawn Lane, Vauxhall, London SW8 1UD  
 Tel: 0207 7359535

### **Parents Against Drug Abuse (PADA)**

Delivers support and services to the families of substance users and a national helpline.

Website: [www.pada.org.uk](http://www.pada.org.uk)  
 Address: The Foundry, Marcus Street, Birkenhead CH41 1EU  
 Tel: 0151 649 1580  
 08457 023867 (National Families Helpline)

### **Parentline Plus**

Help and support for family life, information,

an online chat facility and a 24 hour helpline.

Website: [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

Address: CAN Mezzanine, 49-51 East Road, London N1 6AH

Tel: 020 7553 3080 /

0808 800 2222 (24hr Advice line)

Email: [parentsupport@familylives.org.uk](mailto:parentsupport@familylives.org.uk)

### **TalktoFrank**

The government's national drugs helpline which offers free confidential drugs information and advice 24 hours a day. Information and advice is also available via the website.

Website: [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

Tel 0800 77 66 00 (24 hour advice line)

82111 (Text)

Email: [frank@talktofrank.com](mailto:frank@talktofrank.com)

### **Voice**

Advocacy organisation for children living away from home or in need.

Website: [www.voiceyp.org](http://www.voiceyp.org)

Address: 320 City Road, London EC1V 2NZ

Tel: 020 7833 5792

0808 800 5792 (Young person's advice line)

Email: [info@voiceyp.org](mailto:info@voiceyp.org)

### **Winston's Wish**

Childhood bereavement charity. Practical support and guidance to bereaved children, young people, families, professionals and anyone concerned about a grieving child.

Website: [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

Address: 4th Floor, St James's House, St James Square, Cheltenham, Glos GL50 3PR

Tel: 01242 515157 (General Enquiries)

08452 030405 (Helpline)

Email: [info@winstonswish.org.uk](mailto:info@winstonswish.org.uk)

### **Young Minds**

Works to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young

people and empowering their parents and carers.

Website: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Address: 48-50 St John Street, London EC1M 4DG

Tel: 020 7336 8445

Tel: 0808 802 5544 (Parents helpline)

