

Family and Friends Care Policy

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1. Introduction

It is Newcastle City Council's vision that our city is a great place for children and young people to grow up. This means we want every child in our city to be safe, happy, healthy and loved. We know that family and friends have a unique and often vital role in caring for many of our children and young people whose own parents are unable to care for them.¹

However taking on the care of a friend or relatives' child will often mean significant change for the carer and can impact upon the carers own family and financial circumstances. This policy sets out how the needs of children who are unable to live with their parents should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare, whether or not they are children in care.

The central principle of our policy is that, wherever it is safe, appropriate and in the child's best interests to do so, children should be enabled and supported to live with their families or with close friends. Ultimately the needs and welfare of the child are paramount to us when facilitating or supporting any caring arrangements.

We are guided in all of our decision making by our working principles:

- **Child Centred:** We are all about supporting children and young people. Children and young people are our priority.
- **Working Together:** We work with children, young people and their families to achieve positive change.
- **Family Solutions:** We value a family's ability to solve their own problems. We help families to do this and only intervene when needed.
- **Safely at Home:** Our aim is to keep children safely at home. Where this is not possible, we will find somewhere safe for them to live for as long as needed.
- **Balanced Response:** We manage risk by working together. We are evidence based and balanced.
- **Challenge and Support:** We challenge ourselves and support each other. We welcome challenge and support from others.

What is a 'family and friends carer'?

In short a 'family and friends carer' is a relative, friend or other person known to the child or young person who cares for that child full time.

You can find more information about the legal framework around family and friends carers in Section 2.1. A full glossary of terms used in this policy is also set out at Appendix A to assist with technical or legalistic words.

In preparing this policy we have had regard to relevant law and statutory guidance. Appendix C sets out all of the legislation and guidance that has been considered. While every effort has been made to ensure that all of this information is correct as at the date of publication, it shouldn't be used as a substitute for obtaining your own legal advice, as appropriate. It is intended that this policy will be reviewed and updated in

¹ The terms "we" and "our" are references to Newcastle City Council. The term 'children' used throughout the document refers to both children and young people.

April 2022 and every two years thereafter.

1.1 Values and Principles

We are committed to ensuring that the needs of children in family and friends care are fully understood and that effective strategies, policies and services are developed and implemented specifically with the needs of these children in mind.

The key principle of the Children Act 1989 is that children should be enabled to live within their families unless this is not consistent with their welfare.

With this principle in mind, as well as our guiding 'working principles' we are committed to:

- Promoting permanence for children, by seeking to enable those children who cannot live with their parents to remain with their extended family or friends, in conditions that provide for their emotional and physical needs and are legally secure.
- Providing a clear framework for family and friends care, which is supported by a robust needs analysis which will prioritise the needs of the child and not be driven by financial considerations.
- Working in collaboration with local partners to promote and support the needs of children living with family and friends carers, whether or not they are looked after.
- Providing regularly updated information that is made freely and widely available and appropriately publicised.
- Consulting with and listening to the views of children, family and friends carers and parents, as appropriate, when drawing up policies. Consultation to include children and adults with disabilities, using appropriate communication methods.

1.2 Evidence Base

Most children would prefer their parents to be supported to continue to care for them rather than becoming looked after by the local authority. If this is not possible children say they would prefer to live with members of their extended family.

Research has found that family and friends foster placements last longer than placements with unrelated carers. It also shows that many children who cannot live with their own parents can do well in friends and family arrangements, but some carers may want and need support to enable them to meet the needs of the child(ren) that they care for.

This policy has been based on evidence about what works in supporting family and friends' carers. This evidence includes findings from published research and lessons learned from best practice in other local authorities. A summary of this evidence can be found at Appendix B.

Our policy has also been informed by feedback from family and friends carers and young people about the support they have received and what support they would like available.

1.3 Management accountability

The Assistant Director Children's Social Care is accountable, on behalf of the Director of Children, Education and Skills, for monitoring the way in which we discharge our responsibilities in accordance with the Family and Friends Care Statutory Guidance and this policy.

The Assistant Director will ensure that there is a strong awareness of family and friends care amongst professionals who work with children and families, appropriate training and that they operate within the policy framework so that it is applied in a consistent and fair manner, ensuring that services are available regardless of where, within the authority, families live.

The Assistant Director Children's Social Care will ensure that the partner agencies in the Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership Board are aware of their responsibilities towards children living in family and friends care and are proactive in meeting those needs.

1.4 Scope of the Policy

The policy is divided into two sections:

- **Section A** -sets out the legal framework and the types of family and friends carers this policy relates to.
- **Section B** - sets out the support, financial and non-financial, available to family and friends carers.

2. Section A: Legal Framework and Types of Family and Friends Carers

2.1 Legal Framework

There are a number of ways in which children can live with people other than their birth parents - the legislative framework and statutory guidance which underpins this Policy is set out in Appendix C.

The majority of family and friends carers act informally, by agreement with those holding parental responsibility for the children they care for. Providing they are a relative of the child as defined by section 105 of the Children Act 1989 or have parental responsibility for the child, there is no requirement to notify the local authority of the arrangement. Most of these arrangements remain entirely private without the need for our involvement.

However, where a child is assessed as being "in need"; support may be provided under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. A child shall be taken to be in need if:

- (a) s/he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for her/him of services by a local authority
- (b) her/his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or
- (c) s/he is disabled.

'Family' in relation to such a child, includes any person who has parental responsibility for the child and any other person with whom, s/he has been living.

Additionally, consideration should be given to the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011. In performing their duty under paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 of the 1989 Act (1), a local authority must:

- (a) have regard to the needs of those carers who would be unable to continue to provide care unless breaks from caring were given to them; and
- (b) have regard to the needs of those carers who would be able to provide care for their disabled child more effectively if breaks from caring were given to them to allow them to:
 - (i) undertake education, training or any regular leisure activity
 - (ii) meet the needs of other children in the family more effectively, or
 - (iii) carry out day to day tasks which they must perform in order to run their household.

Other legal arrangements include children looked after by the Local Authority under Section 31 of Children Act 1989 (courts make these decisions about children being in care) or accommodated by the Local Authority under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. In both cases children may be cared for by family and friends only if the carers have been approved as Local Authority Foster Carers under the Care Planning Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, Fostering Regulations (England) 2011 and where they meet the requirements of the National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011.

Further legal arrangements for children to live with family and friends include Adoption or Placement Orders under the Adoption and Children Act 2002; Special Guardianship Orders under Section 14A of the Children Act 1989, Child Arrangement Orders/Residence Orders under the Children Act 1989 and Private Fostering under Section 66 of the Children Act 1989.

2.2 Types of Family and Friend Carers

In the great majority of cases families and friends will be able to make suitable arrangements without any intervention by the council.

Family and friends care can be defined in a number of ways. The types of family and friends care detailed in this policy are set out below. An explanation of the different legal frameworks which might apply when caring for somebody else's child is set out in Appendix C.

2.2.1 Informal Family Care (Private family arrangements)

Many families make informal care arrangements for children to live with close relatives, on a temporary or permanent basis, without the involvement of the local authority.

Usually formal parental responsibility will remain with the birth parents but with day to day parenting tasks and decisions delegated to the friends and family carers. The parent (or other holder of parental responsibility) is responsible for the financial support of the child. The carer can claim child benefit and other benefits if these are not being paid to the parent.

However, in some cases, the local authority will have a number of statutory powers and duties which family and friends carers should be aware of, specifically where the child is identified as a 'child in need'.

2.2.2 Private Fostering

In some cases where the children are cared for by someone other than a close relative these arrangements may fall under private fostering regulations and we may be involved with providing services to these children and families to support the arrangements, to promote and safeguard the child's welfare and prevent the children becoming "looked after".

A privately fostered child is a child under 16 (or 18 if disabled) who is cared for by an adult who is not a parent or close relative, where the child is to be cared for in that home for 28 days or more.

Close relative is defined as 'a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent'. It does not include a child who is in local authority care.

In a private fostering arrangement, the parent still holds parental responsibility and agrees the arrangement with the private foster carer and is responsible for any financial payments in respect of the child. Child benefit and child tax credits can be claimed by the private foster carer. You can read our [Private Fostering Procedure](#) here.

We have a duty to assess and monitor the welfare of all privately fostered children and the way in which they carry out these duties is set out in the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

The local authority may also become involved with a child in a private fostering arrangement where the child comes within the definition of a Child in Need.

2.2.3 Family and Friends Foster Carer "Connected Persons"

When a child becomes looked after, often the best plan is for them to live with a family member or someone else the child knows well. This person is often described as a 'connected person'. However, a looked after child can only be placed with a connected person if that person has been formally approved as a foster carer. This applies whether the child is accommodated voluntarily with the agreement of the parents (Section 20) or subject to a care order (Section 31) or interim care order (Section 38) Children Act 1989.

Following an initial assessment, a connected persons carer can be temporarily approved as a foster carer. This temporary approval is valid for a maximum of 16 weeks. The local authority must immediately refer the carer for a full fostering assessment. If this assessment cannot be concluded before the temporary approval expires, an extension of up to eight weeks can be given following agreement by the Fostering Panel and endorsed by the Agency Decision Maker. At any time during the 16 weeks (24 weeks if an extension is granted), the local authority can decide not to progress with the assessment and must remove the child from the placement.

Once approved, connected persons' foster carers will have a supervising social worker, whose job it is to support them and ensure they have access to ongoing training for foster carers.

Connected persons foster carers are paid the same fostering allowance (money given to foster carers to meet the costs of caring for the child) as any other foster carer. Whether they are also paid a fostering fee (a 'reward' paid to foster carers in recognition of their skills and experience) depends on whether they meet the criteria for these payments which includes a continuous training programme [see the Newcastle Fostering Handbook](#). In common with other foster carers, connected persons foster carers cannot claim child benefit or other benefits for the child (other than Disability Living Allowance, which can be claimed on behalf of the child and must be used to meet the child's needs).

2.2.4 Special Guardianship Order (SGO)

Special Guardianship offers a further option for children needing permanent care outside their birth family. It can offer greater security without absolute severance from the birth family as in adoption.

A special guardian formally takes on the legal powers and responsibility of parenting a child until their 18th birthday. This includes taking most decisions to do with the child's upbringing, including where the child lives and goes to school, and what medical treatment they receive.

Relatives, friends or foster carers may apply for an SGO after living with the child for one year, or sooner with the leave of the court. As Special Guardians, they will have parental responsibility for the child which, while it is still shared with the parents, can be exercised with greater autonomy on day-to-day matters than where there is a Residence Order/Child Arrangement Order.

SGOs may be made in private family proceedings and we may not be a party to any such arrangements. However, the local authority must be given three months' notice of intention to apply for a special guardianship order and we will be responsible for sending a report to the court regarding whether a Special Guardianship Order is in the child's best interest. A Special Guardianship Order can be made in favour of a relative or foster carer with whom a child is living and may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need or a 'Looked After' child. A Special Guardianship Order can also be granted as the outcome of care proceedings for a child.

A Special Guardian (or someone who has applied for a Special Guardianship Order) may ask us to assess their need for support including financial support and, if the child was looked after by us, or another local authority, immediately before the Special Guardianship Order was made, the appropriate local authority must carry out an assessment and give a copy of the report to the Special Guardian. When the local authority carries out an assessment it must decide what support, if any, it will offer.

Special Guardians can seek therapeutic financial support through the Adoption Support Fund (ASF). A Child and Family Assessment will be undertaken to assess and identify the child's therapeutic needs, and this will be set out in the SGO Support Plan. Applications to the ASF will be completed by the allocated social worker.

The majority of carers with an SGO will receive Child Benefits; carers are also expected to claim all other benefits and tax credits they may be entitled to when they assume parental responsibility for a child.

2.2.5 Child Arrangement Orders

Child Arrangement Orders were introduced in April 2014, by the Children and Families Act 2014. They replace Contact Orders and Residence Orders.

A Child Arrangement Order gives parental responsibility to the person named in the Order as the person with whom a child is to live, parental responsibility remains shared with the parents following the making of a Child Arrangement Order.

In the case of a child who was looked after by the same carer immediately prior to the making of a Child Arrangements Order, there is currently no specific statutory guidance regarding any assessment which should be undertaken by us for support services, which may include financial support.

2.2.6 Adoption

Adoption is the process by which all parental rights and responsibilities for a child are permanently transferred to an adoptive parent by a court. As a result, the child legally becomes part of the adoptive family.

An Adoption Order in favour of a relative or foster carer with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need or a Child in Care. Children who have been adopted and their families are eligible to receive adoption support services.

Adopt North East, is the Regional Adoption Agency that provides a range of adoption support services on behalf of five Local Authorities in the region; Newcastle, Gateshead, Northumberland, North Tyneside and South Tyneside.

Families who adopt children can request an assessment for adoption support services at any time. Adopt North East will carry out this assessment and will work with families to provide the adoption support that they need. If it is agreed that support is needed, an Adoption Support Plan will highlight what this support will be and how it will be delivered.

Adoption support can include a range of services such as advice and guidance, additional training, support groups, therapeutic support and financial support. If therapeutic support is needed, Adopt North East can make an application to the Adoption Support Fund on behalf of the family.

Once a child is adopted, adopters can also claim child benefit and child tax credit.

3. Section B: Support

Before considering taking on a commitment to a child, carers should access information about the level of support, including any financial assistance, that they may be offered. The types of support that are available to different Family and Friends carers is set out in this section.

3.1 General Support

Family and friends carers may be caring for a child for the first time, or it may be some time since they cared for their own children – in either case they may not be familiar with the services on offer locally.

When working with family and friends carers we will assist and signpost to appropriate services and organisations (see Appendix F for some helpful contacts) that may provide additional support, advice or guidance to family and friends carers. These

may include voluntary organisations, health and education services and welfare benefit services or other local authority services such as:

- **Newcastle's Family Support Directory** provides general information and advice about local services for children and their families. You can access the Newcastle Family Support Directory at:
<https://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk/kb5/newcastle/fsd/home.page>
- **Early Help** in Newcastle can be accessed by family and friends carers. Across three localities (East, West and Central) families can access a wide variety of services including; Sure Start, parenting support, financial advice and guidance and family support. Families can access Early Help via a universal service they are accessing such as Health Visiting or children's schools, they can contact the Early Help Access Point or access one of the Locality buildings.

Contact Details:

Early Help Access Point 0191 211 5805 earlyhelpplan@newcastle.gov.uk

East Locality: Byker Sands Family Centre, 19 Raby Cross, Byker NE6 2FF
0191 2759636

Central Locality: Families Matter, Lindfield Avenue, Blakelaw NE5 3PL
0191 2142460

West Locality: Health Resource Centre, Adelaide Terrace, NE4 8BE 0191
277 3742

For more information see <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/children/getting-help-children-and-families/community-family-hub>

- **Newcastle Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service** provides information, advice and support at any stage of a child or young person's education. This is a free, impartial and confidential service that provides information, advice and support parents and carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities and children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities up to the age of 25 years. They specialise in education matters but can support with social care and health issues that impact on the child or young person's ability to access education. The service can explain Special Educational Needs policies and procedures and offer practical support to help them in their discussions with schools, the Local Authority and other statutory agencies.

We are able, with our partners, to offer a range of support services to ensure that all caring arrangements are adequately supported regardless of whether they are classed as family and friend foster carers or the children are placed under a Residence Order/Child Arrangement Order, Special Guardianship Order or an Adoption Order. The need for support services from the Council may be identified during an assessment process.

Other community based services, including child and young people mental health services, can be accessed via other professionals such as a health visitor, GP or the child's school.

As required by the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005, Newcastle City Council provides support groups for adopters, adopted children and birth parents.

Family and friends carers can also access information, advice and support by contacting our dedicated Family and Friends Carers Team on 0191 277 2500 or by email CorporateParentingAdmin@newcastle.gov.uk. Our team of professionals will be able to offer advice and guidance to help family and friends carers in their caring role.

3.2 Accommodation support

Where there are physical limitations to the size of a property or its amenities, we will support family and friends carers in any discussions they may require with Your Homes Newcastle to ascertain the best way forward for supporting the care and accommodation of a child.

However, we will not consider financial support for extensions to properties or the purchase of larger properties except in the most exceptional circumstances. Your Homes Newcastle are able to provide advice and might be able to provide financial assistance in the form of grants for adaptations to properties.

3.3 Supporting Family Time

Even if they cannot live with their parents, children often benefit from regularly spending good quality time with them. Where there is a pre-existing close relationship between family and friends carers and the parents this can often be arranged between the carers and the parents with little difficulty.

However, this is not always the case. Even those parents who have asked family or friends to care for their child can find it difficult once a child is placed, as it can be very hard for parents to see their children being cared for by someone else. As well as this, any difficulties (for example mental health difficulties, or substance misuse) which led to the parents being unable to care for the children may not change just because the children are no longer with them. This can mean that family time sessions can be a tense time for carers, parents and, most importantly, children.

Family time should be a safe and natural part of children's lives. In most cases we would want family time to move to an arrangement that is not supervised or otherwise supported by people outside the family within a relatively short period of time. If the need for supervision/support continues for more than a few months, there should be a review which looks at the reasons for this and a decision made about whether family time should continue.

When children are in care, the local authority is responsible for making sure there are safe and suitable contact arrangements in place. These will be reviewed regularly as part of reviewing the child's care plan.

For children who are subject to special guardianship orders or adoption orders, the arrangements for family time – and any support that is needed with this – will be described in the support plan that is written and agreed before the order is made by the court and reviewed in the annual reviews of these support plans.

3.4 Financial Support

Financial support that may be available to Family and Friends Carers is subject to the different types of family and friends care as outlined in Section A.

Additional benefits and tax credits alongside any existing resources available to carers should be sufficient to sustain the vast majority of care arrangements. In exceptional circumstances, we may offer additional discretionary financial support

subject to our financial support principles.

3.4.1 Financial Support Principles

In order to inform decisions about the level of financial support that should be provided to family and friends carers, we will apply the following principles:

- a) Family and friends carers will be signposted to our policies on family and friends care at key points including (i) considering a family and friends arrangement (ii) applying for a Child Arrangement Order, Special Guardianship Order, or Adoption Order (iii) applying for financial support.
- b) We want to ensure the best permanent solution for each child can be found without there being any financial incentive or disincentive for a particular type of arrangement or order over another. Therefore, we base all allowances on the allowances paid to foster carers (including Adoption Orders, Special Guardianship and Child Arrangements Orders). This is the amount which the council agrees is the sum required to bring up a child and is regularly reviewed and revised and is based on national guidance.
- c) Parents will always be expected to make appropriate financial arrangements with the carer to enable the carer to care for the child.
- d) In all cases, the carers will be expected to access universal benefits in the first instance as the Local Authority cannot duplicate state benefits. It is an expectation that any family and friends carers will be claiming all benefits to which they are entitled before approaching us for financial assistance.
- e) Whenever financial support is being considered, a formal assessment of the child's needs must be carried out by a Social Worker, the assessment will look at the child's needs, will incorporate a detailed assessment of the resources available to the carers to meet those needs and will set-out what any funding will be used for.
- f) Decision making about financial support will be made based on a set of objective financial assessment criteria recommended by the Department for Education and will be means-tested.
- g) Decision making will be made consistently with regard to the principles set out in this policy document.
- h) In order to ensure offers of additional financial support complement support available via benefits and tax credits, any Child Tax Credits and Child Benefits carers receive will typically be taken into consideration when determining the level of support.
- i) Decisions about these discretionary payments, including the appropriate level of payment will be made by our Community Arrangements Panel based on the needs of the child set out in their assessment

3.4.2 Situations where discretionary financial support may be paid

Discretionary financial support may be paid in some circumstances for example:

- a) Cases where it is necessary to ensure special guardians have the means to look after the child.
- b) Cases where a child is assessed to have significant needs (physical, emotional,

health or educational), including cases resulting from past experience of abuse or trauma, where the child's needs cannot be addressed via funding and support available via universal services.

- c) Cases where we have agreed that pre-school age children need child care or nursery provision and the costs of this provision cannot be funded from the resources available to the carer or other grants available.
- d) Carers who have had to temporarily cease employment (or cease seeking employment) or take unpaid leave from employment in order to care for a child or to settle into his/her new situation which presents an alternative to the child being looked after. In these cases, the Council may consider providing support for a temporary period.

3.4.3 Financial Support Arrangements

If it is assessed that there is a case that requires financial support completed assessments will be considered by the Community Arrangements Panel, who will determine what (if any) financial support is needed to meet the child's needs.

Any payments that are agreed will:

- a) Be clearly set-out in the child's support plan so that all parties are clear about what is being provided, why and the duration of the support.
- b) Unless the child has a significant long term condition, be for a transitional period of up to and no more than two years in order to meet any needs arising from the child's move into the household.
- c) Be reviewed on an annual basis (or sooner if the circumstances warrant) so that we can determine whether the payment remains necessary in order to support the child. We are typically unable to give any long term guarantee around payments.

3.5 Legal fees

We may provide funding for legal advice for family and friends carers who wish to apply for a Child Arrangements Order, Special Guardianship Order or an Adoption Order.

Where a family member is put forward as a carer in the course of care proceedings we will consider funding independent legal advice on the appropriate order to be sought. Funding will only be agreed for a solicitor on the Law Society Children Panel, at legal aid rates and up to an agreed limit.

Where a child is already living with a family and friends carer, or placement is planned with a family and friends carer, we may consider funding legal advice where the local authority supports the application, where the child would otherwise be looked after by the local authority or in other exceptional circumstances. We will not fund representation in court for a carer against an unrepresented parent unless there are exceptional circumstances which justify local authority involvement in that way.

Carers will be expected to apply for funding from the Legal Aid Agency if eligible, and for waiver of court fees if on a low income, before local authority funding support is considered.

Legal advice funding as part of an adoption support or special guardianship support package will not be subject to means testing.

Decisions on legal funding will be made by the Community Arrangements Panel after taking legal advice on appropriate levels and availability of alternative sources of legal support.

3.6 Advice and enquiries

We have tried to make this policy as clear as possible, but if you require further clarification then we are happy to respond to requests for further information, by email to:

CorporateParentingAdmin@newcastle.gov.uk

3.7 Appeals

Where family and friends carers are not satisfied with the level of financial or non-financial support provided, you are able to make an appeal through the Community Arrangements Appeal Panel. This will be chaired by a senior officer of the Directorate and decisions will be made by the panel within 28 days of the appeal being received. Appeals should be made by email to:

CorporateParentingAdmin@newcastle.gov.uk

3.8 Feedback and Complaints

In accordance with the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure Regulations 2006, we operate a Complaints procedure. Any email family and friends carer, or child or young person who feels they have grounds may make a complaint in accordance with this procedure.

Telephone: 0191 277 7427 (Weekdays 9am to 5pm)

Email: complaintspeople@newcastle.gov.uk

Address: Complaints and Customer Relations Team
Freepost RSXR-YGCJ-KKHK
Newcastle City Council
Civic Centre
NE1 8QH

More information on making a complaint is available at our website:

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/children/make-complaint-about-childrens-social-care>

We have made arrangements for an independent advocacy service called NYAS to provide support, advocacy and legal advice for children and young people who wish to make a complaint about the services they use. NYAS can be accessed as follows:

Free Helpline 08088081001

Email: main@nyas.net

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

“**care plan**” means the plan for the future care of a looked after child prepared in accordance with Part 2 of the 2010 Regulations;

“**a child in need**” is defined in section 17(10) of the 1989 Act, which provides that a child shall be taken to be in need if (a) he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a local authority under this Part; (b) his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or (c) he is disabled;

“**child**” means a person under the age of 18. Where the context particularly refers to older children the term “young person” is used;

“**connected person**” means a relative, friend, or other person connected with a looked after child. A person in the last category may be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as a childminder, a teacher or a youth worker although there are not exclusive categories.

“**family and friends carer**” mean a relative, friend or other person with a prior connection with somebody else’s child who is caring for that child full time. An individual who is a “connected person” to a looked after child may also be a family and friends carer. A child who is cared for by a family and friends carer may or may not be looked after by the local authority;

“**foster carer**” means a person who is approved as a local authority foster parent (by a local authority or an independent fostering provider) in accordance with regulation 27 of the Regulations 2011, or temporarily approved under regulation 24 of the 2010 Regulations;

“**informal arrangement**” means an arrangement where a child is living with a family and friends carer who does not have parental responsibility for the child. References to “informal arrangements” in this guidance do not include arrangements where the child is looked after by the local authority or where the child is privately fostered, placed for adoption, or subject to a residence or a special guardianship order. The legislation which governs these arrangements does not apply to an informal arrangement

“**looked after child**” means a person under 18 who is subject to a care order under section 31 of the 1989 Act (including an interim care order), or is accommodated under section 20 of that Act ;

“**parent**”, in relation to a child, includes any person who has parental responsibility for that child;

“**parental responsibility**” has the meaning given by section 3 of the 1989 Act, being all the rights, duties, powers responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property;

“private fostering arrangement” means an arrangement where a child who is under 16 (or 18 if disabled) and who has not been provided with accommodation by the local authority, is cared for and accommodated by someone who does not have parental responsibility for him and is not a relative, and the arrangement continues for a period of 28 days or more or is intended to do so;

“relative” means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent, as defined in section 105 of the 1989 Act;

“responsible authority” means, in relation to a looked after child, the local authority or voluntary organisation as the case may be, responsible for the child’s placement.

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH EVIDENCE

KEY FINDINGS

General

Grandparents and aunts and uncles (usually on the maternal side) are the principle providers of family and friends care in the UK (DfE, 2010).

Family / friends carers are more likely to persevere with a difficult placement than non related carers, even when under stress (Broad, 2007).

Children placed with grandparents are most likely to remain in the family (86%) with those placed with aunts and uncles next (65%) (Broad, 2007).

Family and friends care makes a positive and undervalued contribution to placement stability (Broad, 2007) and maintaining contact with birth parents and children's connections with siblings and wider family (Aldgate, 2006, Hunt et al 2008).

Children in family / friends care living arrangements had far less contact with birth fathers than mothers (Aldgate, 2006, Hunt et al 2008).

Grandparents are especially committed carers, but this can impact on their health, well-being and financial situation (Broad, 2007).

Where the local authority does need to become involved, robust assessments focusing on risk and resilience, and the provision of appropriate support are vital for family / friend care living arrangements to succeed (Broad, 2007).

Two studies suggest that between 66% and 85% of family and friend care arrangements are initiated by local authorities (Farmer and Moyers 2006, Hunt et al, 2008).

Family and friends carers can make a strong contribution to sustaining children's identity, positive self-image and Cultural continuity (Broad, 2007).

Family Group Conferences have an important role in helping families to clarify plans, roles and responsibilities for children living with a family and friends carer (Aldgate, 2006, Hunt et al, 2008).

Unlike looked after children in non-related placements, social workers were more peripheral in the lives of children living with a family / friend carer (Aldgate, 2006, Hunt et al, 2008).

One study suggests that children in family and friends care appear to maintain a wider set of relationships and connections to their family and community than those

in non-related foster care (Nixon, 2007). A different study suggests that this network is smaller than those children living with a parent (especially if the family / friend care is a sole grandparent) (Hunt et al 2008).

Children in a family and friend living arrangement are more likely to report that they are satisfied with their care than those in non-related care– including reporting feeling safe and trusting their carers (Hunt et al 2008).

Farmer and Moyers found that family and friends foster placements lasted on average 4 years 9 months compared to 3 years 11 months for placements with unrelated foster carers. They judged that family and friends carers sometimes persisted with children beyond the point at which unrelated carers gave up and showed higher levels of commitment to the children.

Farmer and Moyers reported that significantly more family and friends carers had little, or no social work support compared with unrelated foster carers, and that placements were significantly more likely to survive if the child had an allocated social worker. Hunt et al reported gaps in provision of support services even when the local authority was still involved, and that better provision could have prevented some placements from ending prematurely.

Hunt J and Waterhouse S (2012) Understanding family and friends care: the relationship between need, support and legal status – Carers' experiences (FRG/Oxford University Centre for Family Law and Policy)
In depth interviews with 95 households.

Aziz R and Roth D (2012) Understanding family and friends care: analysis of the social and economic circumstances of family and friends carers (FRG)
Analysis of Government's "Understanding Society" carers survey of 77 kinship care children living in 68 households, contrasting them with other families from the same study.

Ashley C Ed. Authors Aziz R, Roth D and Lindley B (2012) Understanding family and friends care: The largest UK survey (FRG)
Survey of 493 carers raising 762 kinship children.

Despite their early traumatic experiences, research shows that most children in kinship care have good outcomes (Selwyn, J. & Farmer, E. et al 2013)

Research shows outcomes are positive for most children living in family and friends care, and often better than for children in unrelated foster care. A major study published, by Buttle UK and the University of Bristol in 2013 (The Poor Relations: Children and Informal Kinship Carers Speak Out), shows that kinship arrangements provide stability for the children and the children have strong attachments to their carers and have good levels of academic attainment, particularly when compared to children in the formal care system.

Maximising the Appropriate Use of Family and Friends Care

The research evidence, although not conclusive, is broadly supportive of family and

friends care as a viable option and suggests scope for greater use. Farmer and Moyers found that 86% of the placements made with family and friends foster carers came about because relatives or friends offered to care for the children or were already doing so, whilst only 4% were initiated by the social worker. The Campbell Collaborative concluded that family and friend's care can enhance the behavioural development, mental health functioning, and placement stability of children, but attention must be paid to increasing levels of support.

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APPENDIX C: THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

This policy should be considered in the context of the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Family and Friends Care-Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, published March 2011
- The Children Act 1989 Regulations and associated statutory guidance
- The Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (England) and statutory guidance 2010
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011
- The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and associated guidance
- Adoption and Children Act 2002 and associated guidance
- The Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 and associated guidance
- Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 and Special Guardianship (Amendment) Regulations 2016

The following section provides further information about different caring arrangements including (i) children in need, and (ii) Looked After Children

CHILDREN IN NEED Definition of Children in Need

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 sets out the definition for ‘children in need’ as: “... children and young people who need local authority services to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development; or children and young people who need local authority services to prevent significant or further harm to their health or development; or children and young people who are disabled”.

Functions of the Local Authority in Respect of Children in Need

Under Section 17 of the Children’s Act 1989, the local authority has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in the city, and to promote wherever possible the upbringing of these children by their families by providing an appropriate range of services. This means that Newcastle City Council has a legal duty to assist families who need help in bringing up their children, and to provide family support services to reduce the need for children to be looked after.

'Family' in relation to such a child includes not only a person who has parental responsibility for the child but also any other person with whom the child has been living with. Parental responsibility refers to all the rights, duties and responsibilities which by law a parent has in relation to a child.

Where it appears that a child or young person and their family are in need of local authority support, Children's Social Care Service is responsible for carrying out a Child in Need Assessment. A range of targeted and specialist support services may be provided by the local authority under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 if it is appropriate. Family and friends carers who are caring for a 'child in need' may also be eligible for these services, which can include:

- specialist advice, guidance and counselling
- parenting support and training programmes
- child and adolescent mental health services
- assistance to organise family holidays and days out
- domiciliary care
- respite care
- overnight short breaks for young disabled people aged 8 to 18
- accommodation services
- referral to other agencies where appropriate

Financial Assistance

There is no obligation on the Council to provide financial support to a specific child or family under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, however, Newcastle City Council has the discretion to provide financial assistance where this is assessed to be the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. This can take the form of a loan, regular or one-off cash payment, or payment in kind (e.g. vouchers), as well as financial support towards accommodation costs.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN Meaning of 'Looked After'

A child is 'looked after' when he/she is in the care of the local authority under a care order or emergency protection order, or when he/she is provided with accommodation by the local authority. In Newcastle we refer to children who are looked after as "children in care".

Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (Accommodation)

When a child is accommodated under Section 20, no court proceedings are involved, and the parents retain parental responsibility. This means that no action can be taken in relation to the child without the consent of the parents, and the parents may remove their children from such accommodation at any time, without notice.

Section 20(1) of the 1989 Act provides that every local authority must provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who appears to them to require accommodation as a result of:

- a) there being no person with parental responsibility for the child;
- b) their being lost or having been abandoned; or

- c) the person who has been caring for him being prevented (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason) from providing them with suitable accommodation or care.

When a local authority is considering whether a child cared for by family and friends “requires accommodation”, the question at (c) will be particularly relevant: does the child appear to the authority to require accommodation because the person who has been caring for the child is prevented from providing the child with suitable accommodation or care? If it appears to the authority that the child does require accommodation, then it must provide that accommodation. Under section 20(4) the local authority may also provide accommodation for any child in their area (even though a person who has parental responsibility for the child is able to provide them with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child's welfare. Short breaks are frequently provided under this provision.

Before providing accommodation under section 20, the local authority must, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child's welfare, ascertain and give due consideration to the child's wishes and feelings regarding the provision of accommodation. If a person with parental responsibility for the child, who is willing and able to provide accommodation or arrange for accommodation to be provided to them, objects to the local authority providing accommodation, the authority should consider whether the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm unless he or she becomes looked after by the authority, and if so seek a care order under Part 4 of the 1989 Act (section 20 (7)). Further information on this can be found in Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 1: Court Orders.⁵ and in Appendix E : The legislative Framework

Where a child is provided with accommodation under section 20, or is subject to a care order, the child is looked after and the duties in Part 3 of the 1989 Act, particularly sections 22 to 22D, and the 2010 Regulations will apply.

Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (Care Order)

The local authority may decide to seek a court order if it considers that a child is not receiving or is not likely to receive the sort of care that is reasonable to expect from a parent, and this lack of care is causing the child significant harm. A care order is a court order made under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 which places a child in the care of the local authority. Only a local authority or the NSPCC can apply for care orders.

The court may only make a care order if it is certain that:

- the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and
- the harm would be caused because of insufficient care being given to the child by the parents/carers in the future, or
- the child is likely to suffer harm because he/she is beyond parental control.

When a child is subject to a care order, the parent still retains parental responsibility, but the local authority shares parental responsibility and is entitled to override the wishes of the parents if it believes this would be in the child's best interest.

Functions of the Local Authority in Respect of Children in Care

The local authority has a duty to consider placing a child with an appropriate relative, friend or other person connected with the child (i.e. someone who would not fit the term 'relative or friend' but who has a pre-existing relationship with the child) before considering a placement with unrelated foster carers. If a relative, friend or other connected person is able and willing to care for the child, that person must then be approved as a local authority foster carer (see page 18).

The local authority also has a number of responsibilities towards children in care (either by care order or voluntarily accommodation). The local authority must ensure that:

- the child or young person is allocated a social worker;
- the child or young person is provided with accommodation which meets his/her needs;
- the child or young person receives the best possible education – this includes making sure that young children access high quality nursery provision and that children and young people are supported to do as well as they possibly can in education;
- when making any decision about the child, the local authority consults the child, the parents or others with parental responsibility, and anyone else whose wishes and feelings are considered to be relevant, unless declared otherwise by the court;
- a care plan is drawn up for the child which sets out the placement plan, how the child's health, education and welfare will be supported, how contact with family and friends will be maintained, and the long term 'permanent' plan for the child (which might be returning to the family home, being looked after by foster carers or adoption). Wherever possible, plans must be drawn up in agreement with the child and key family members.
- the care plan is reviewed every six months by an Independent Reviewing Officer;
- a personal education plan in place if the child is of school age;
- the child receives regular medical assessments;
- contact is promoted between the child, parents, relatives, friends and any other person connected with the child unless such contact is not reasonably practicable or consistent with the child's welfare;
- the local authority assesses and meets the needs of children and young people aged 16 and 17 who are in care or care leavers and keeps in touch with care leavers until they are at least 21 years of age.

Placement under fostering services regulations and accommodation and maintenance of children in care under new sections 22A to 22F

Sections 22 A to 22F of the 1989 Act were inserted by section 8 of the 2008 Act and make provision in relation to the accommodation and maintenance of children who are looked after. The new section 22C is the key provision and replaces the provisions set out in section 23 of the 1989 Act. Section 22C sets out the ways in which children in

care are to be accommodated and maintained. Section 22C (2) to (4) provides that a local authority must make arrangements for a child who is looked after to live with their parents, a person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or, in a case where the child is in the care of the local authority and there was a residence order in force with respect to the child immediately before the care order was made, the person in whose favour the residence order was made. This “rehabilitative” duty is subject to the proviso that the arrangements must be both consistent with the child’s welfare and reasonably practicable and reflects the principle that state intervention in family life should be to keep children safe and ensure that families have the necessary support to bring up their children. For children subject to a care order the placement back with their parents must be in accordance with the 2010 Regulations.

Where a local authority is unable to make arrangements under section 22C(2) to (4) then section 22C(5) requires the authority to place the child in the most appropriate placement available. Section 22C(6) to (9) sets out what those placement options are and how the local authority must determine the most appropriate placement. In so doing the authority must “give preference to” a placement with a person who is a relative, friend or other person connected with the child and who is also a local authority foster parent. They must have been approved as a local authority foster carer in accordance with the 2011 Regulations or have been temporarily approved as a foster carer under the 2010 Regulations. These Regulations, together with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, set out requirements in relation to support and supervision of all foster carers including those who are family members, friends or other connected persons.

Ideally all placements will meet all of the placement criteria in section 22C(7) to (9). However, this is unlikely to be the reality and social workers, supervising social workers and other decision makers may find themselves faced with difficult choices. The placement criteria are important because many children and young people benefit by being placed with relatives or friends or others connected to them, near their own homes, continuing to attend the same school, living with their siblings and in accommodation that suits any special needs. However not all these factors are always beneficial for all children, and some will have greater priority than others at different times in children’s lives. In weighing up the different options a number of issues need to be considered, the most important of which is how far a placement will meet the assessed needs of a particular child or young person given their previous history and their current circumstances

APPENDIX D: SUPPORT for FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARERS UNDER CHILDREN ACT 1989 SECTION 17 AND SECTION 20

Child in need supported under section 17 (in an informal arrangement)

- the child is not looked after by the local authority
- the child will not have a care plan but there will be a child in need plan or child protection plan
- if there is a child in need plan or a child protection plan a social worker will visit the child and carers
- the child will be offered access to an advocacy service when they make or intend to make representations under section 26 of the 1989 Act
- the carers will not usually have a separate social worker
- the local authority has discretion to give financial assistance but there is no entitlement and family income may be taken into account since the local authority must have regard to the means of the child and parents under section 17 (8) the 1989 Act)
- Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit may be payable
- support may be offered to the carers and/or child but is discretionary
- there is no entitlement to leaving care support
- any support offered will cease when the young person becomes 18, unless criteria are met for support from adult services

Child accommodated under section 20

- the child is looked after by the local authority
- the child will have a care plan (including health plan and personal education plan) which will be reviewed by an independent reviewing officer
- a social worker will visit the child and carers and oversee the child's welfare
- the child will be offered access to an advocacy service where they make or intend to make representations under section 26 of the 1989 Act
- a supervising social worker will be appointed for the foster carers
- there is no entitlement to Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit
- training and support must be offered to the foster carers
- on leaving care the young person may be eligible for ongoing support under the 1989 Act (as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000)

APPENDIX E: SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS – FAMILY & FRIENDS FOSTER CARE

Family and Friends Foster Carers are eligible for the range of non-financial support available to non-related foster carers. This includes the following:

Children’s Workforce Development Training Standards Induction: The National Minimum Standards require that all foster carers complete mandatory training on approval with the support and guidance of their fostering social worker. There is a specially adapted set of induction standards for family and friends carers. Newcastle City Council will support family and friends carers to achieve these standards.

Training: Further training provision is planned for family and friends carers according to their needs and the profile of the children they care for.

Personal Development Plan: As part of the National Minimum Standards each family and friends carer has a personal development plan to guide their training and development.

Allocated Supervising Social Worker: to provide support and supervision (via regular visits and telephone contact) for carers of children who are ‘looked after’.

Support worker: These support the Allocated Social Worker, undertaking specific tasks to support family and friends foster carers. Examples of such tasks include transporting children and assisting with the development plan.

Foster Carer handbook: This handbook outlines all key guidance and information required by foster carers, including family and friends foster carers, to function effectively.

Fostering Network or Foster Talk membership: Newcastle City Council funds every foster carer to be a member of The Fostering Network or Foster Talk, national advisory bodies for foster carers. This allows them to be registered as a foster carer and receive information and support as part of the children’s workforce. Family and friends carers are eligible to join The Fostering Network or Foster Talk and Newcastle City Council will fund them to do so. It is the local Foster Carer Association that chooses which body to join as membership is submitted via locality group.

Out of hours support: This service allows family and friends carers to access support via telephone or, if necessary, through an in-person out of hours visit.

Invitation to support groups and social events: Foster carers benefit from sharing social events with others undertaking the same role, and family and friends carers are welcome to participate in these events.

Children and Young People’s Service consultation: This is available when it has been agreed that the child or young person’s psychological needs or behaviour indicate specialist input is required.

Newsletter: This helps family and friends foster carers feel part of a group of

committed volunteers and connect them to Newcastle City Council.

Access to foster carer library: Family and friends foster carers are able to access books and publications via their Social Worker to help them learn and explore topics that support them in developing positive parenting and addressing any areas of difficulty.

Consultation events: Family and friends foster carers are invited to relevant key consultation events about how to develop the fostering service as appropriate.

Reviews of children's placement: These meetings review how well the child's placement is developing and makes further plans for the care of the child.

Visits from child's social worker: Children who are cared for formally by family and friends foster carers will receive visits from the child's social worker. This will provide an opportunity for the foster carer to report any concerns, take advice and plan around the needs of the child. It also ensures the child's views are shared with someone outside the foster placement

Input from Education Children in Care Team Personal Educational Plan (PEP) and health plan: The Team holds an overview of the child's PEP. The child's Health Plan lays out clearly any actions required to ensure their health needs are met involving key people from the health service.

Respite care (if required): If required to meet the needs of the child periods of respite foster care may be arranged. This assistance can be very supportive in assisting the foster carer to maintain a particularly demanding placement

APPENDIX F: USEFUL CONTACTS

1. Local Contacts

Children's Social Care

For more information about Children's Social Care, including contact information visit:

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/childrens-social-care-and-early-help>

The **Family and Friends Carers Team** within Children's Social Care can be contacted by telephone on 0191 277 2500 (Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm) or by email CorporateParentingAdmin@newcastle.gov.uk.

Newcastle Family Support Directory

Newcastle's Family Support Directory contains a wealth of information about local services, including information about childcare providers and things for families to do. The website can be accessed at the following address:

<https://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk/kb5/newcastle/fsd/home.page>

The Local Offer

Newcastle's Local Offer is all of the information, advice and support that children and young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) and their families might need to use. You can find school holiday activities, short breaks, and clubs and groups to join in with. There's advice and guidance on education, health and care and a range of young people's issues.

<https://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk/kb5/newcastle/fsd/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=0>

Community Family Hub

Across three sites (Byker, Blakelaw and Benwell) the **Community Family Hub** provides access to a variety of services to families including Sure Start and Early Help. For more information visit

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/children/getting-help-children-and-families/community-family-hub>

Schools

For more information about schools, learning and childcare in Newcastle you can visit:

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/schools-learning-and-childcare>

Newcastle SEND Information, Advice and Support Service

The Newcastle SEND Information, Advice and Support Service offers an impartial confidential service at any stage of a child or young person's education. They can also provide an independent supporter for families during the education health and care plan (EHCP) process.

For more information visit:

https://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk/kb5/newcastle/fsd/service.page?id=I2_g69fp8-8

Or telephone **0191 284 0480** from **9am – 5pm** or leave a message on 0191 284 6943 out of hours. Or you can email SENDIASSadmin@newcastle.gov.uk

Newcastle (East) Kinship Carers Support Group

A friendly support group for kinship carers, meets weekly from 10am to 12pm on Tuesdays, with alternate coffee mornings and group sessions. Meets at Heaton Community Centre, Trewhitt Road, Heaton, Newcastle, NE6 5DY.

For more information see <https://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/support-group/newcastle-east-kinship-carers-support-group/> or telephone 07944 162871

Newcastle (West) Kinship Carers Support Group

A friendly support group for kinship carers, meets every four weeks on a Monday from 10am to 12pm. Meets at the Blakelaw Centre, Blakelaw Avenue, Newcastle, NE5 3PN.

For more information see <https://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/support-group/newcastle-west-kinship-carers-support-group/> or telephone 07944 162871.

2. National Contacts

Action for Prisoners' Families (Merged with Family Lives in 2014)

Works for the benefit of prisoners' and offenders' families by supporting families who are affected by imprisonment. They are also part of the Health and Care Voluntary Sector Strategic Partner Programme which brings the power of voluntary sector together with the health system, to improve services and promote well-being for all.

Address: 15-17 The Broadway, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL9 5HZ Tel: 020 7553 3080

E-mail: Various (depending on location) hadleigh@familylives.org.uk, hantsinfo@familylives.org.uk, parentssupportherts@familylives.org.uk, katied@familylives.org.uk, fatimaa@familylives.org.uk

Advice line: 0808 800 2222

Website: <https://www.familylives.org.uk/>

Addaction

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

Address: 67-69 Cowcross Street London EC1M 6PU Tel: 020 7251 5860

Email: info@addaction.org.uk

Website: www.addaction.org.uk

Adfam

Works with families affected by drugs and alcohol and supports carers of children whose parents have drug and alcohol problems.

Address: Adfam, 2nd Floor, 120 Cromer Street, London, WC1H 8BS Tel: 020 3817 9410

Email: admin@adfam.org.uk

Website: www.adfam.org.uk

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)

Offers free independent advice and information for parents and carers on a range of state education and schooling issues, including admissions, exclusion, attendance, special educational needs and bullying.

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) Website: www.ace-ed.org.uk

Address: ACE Education Advice & Training, 72 Durnsford Road, London, N11 2EJ

Tel: 0300 0115 142

Website: www.ace-ed.org.uk

Child Benefit Helpline

HM Revenue and Customs offers general help and advice with Child Benefits

Tel: 0300 200 3100 (Child Benefit Helpline), 0300 200 3103 (Child Benefit Minicom), 0300 200 3101 (Guardian's Allowance Line) (8am - 8pm, Monday to Friday; 8am - 4 pm Saturday)

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/child-benefit>

Children's Legal Centre

Provides free independent legal advice and factsheets to children, parents, carers and professionals.

Address: Coram Children's Legal Centre, Riverside Office Centre, Century House North, North Station Road, Colchester C01 1RE

Tel: 01206 714 650 (General enquires only)

0300 330 5480 (Child Law Advice Line)

0300 300 5485 (Community Legal Advice – Education)

E-mail: info@coramclc.org.uk

Website: www.childrenslegalcentre.com

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

Civil Legal Advice

If you are on a low income or benefits, Civil Legal Advice can give you free legal advice on benefit appeals, debt, if your home is at risk, special educational needs, housing, discrimination issues, domestic violence, issues around children being taken into care. They mainly offer advice online, but you can also contact them by phone

Tel: 0845 345 4345 (Mon-Thurs, 9am-8pm; Sat, 9am-12.30pm) Website:
<https://www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice>

CoramBAAF

CoramBAAF is an independent membership organisation for professionals, foster carers and adopters, and anyone else working with or looking after children in or from care, or adults who have been affected by adoption.

Address: CoramBAAF, Coram Campus, 41 Brunswick Square, London, WC1N 1AZ

Tel: 020 7520 0300

Email: advice@corambaaf.org.uk Website: <https://corambaaf.org.uk/>

Coram Voice

Coram Voice enables and equips children and young people to hold to account the services that are responsible for their care. They uphold the rights of children and young people to actively participate in shaping their own lives.

Address: Coram Voice, Gregory House, Coram Campus, 49 Mecklenburgh Square, London, WC1N 2QA

Tel: 0808 800 5792 Monday to Friday 9.30am–6pm and Saturday 10am– 4pm

Email: info@coramvoice.org.uk Website: <http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/>

Department for Education

The Department for Education is responsible for children's services and education, including higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England. We work to provide children's services and education that ensure opportunity is equal for all, no matter what their background or family circumstances.

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

Family Fund

Helps families with severely disabled or seriously ill children to have choices and the opportunity to enjoy ordinary life. Gives grants for things that make life easier and more enjoyable for the disabled child and their family.

Address: 4 Alpha Court Monks Cross Drive York YO32 9WN Tel: 01904 550055

Email: info@familyfund.org.uk Website: www.familyfund.org.uk

Family Mediation Council

Provides information and advice about family mediation services and eligibility for public funding.

Tel: 01920 443 834

Website: <https://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk/>

Family Rights Group (FRG)

Provides advice to parents and other family members whose children are involved with or 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.

Address: Second Floor The Print House 18 Ashwin Street London E8 3DL Tel: 020 7923 2628

Advice line: 0808 801 0366 Email: office@frg.org.uk

Website: www.frg.org.uk

Fosterline

Confidential advice line for foster carers run by The Fostering Network, which provides independent, impartial advice about fostering issues, including concerns about a child's future, allegations and complaints, changes in legislation and financial matters.

Phone 0800 040 7675 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday, except Wednesday when the line is open to 8pm

Email: enquires@fosterline.info Website: <https://www.fosterline.info/>

Grandparents Plus (National Information)

Grandparents Plus is the only national charity (England and Wales) dedicated to grandparents and their role in the care and development of their grandchildren

Address: 1 Addington Square, London, SE5 0HF Tel: 020 8981 8001

Email: Advice: advice@grandparentsplus.org.uk

Website: <https://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/>

Mentor UK

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

Address: Mentor UK, 49-51 East Road, London N1 6AH Tel: 020 7553 9920

Email: admin@mentoruk.org Website: www.mentoruk.org.uk

National Family Mediation (NFM)

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

Address: Civic Centre, Paris St, Exeter, EX1 1JN Tel: 0300 4000 636

Email: general@nfm.org.uk

Website: www.nfm.org.uk

Parents Against Drug Abuse (PADA)

PADA give support to any family member, partner or friend of substance misuser. Offer respite to grandparents who are primary carers of their grandchildren due to their son or daughters misuse of drugs.

Address: Ellergreen Road, Ellergreen Community Centre, Liverpool Area, Liverpool L11 2XY

Tel: 0151 270 2108

08457 023867 (National Families Helpline) Website:

<http://www.pada.merseyside.org/>

Parentline Plus (Merged with Family Lives)

Provides help and support in all aspects of family life, including information, an online chat facility and a 24 hour helpline.

Address: 15-17 The Broadway, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL9 5HZ Tel: 0808 800 2222 (24hr Advice line)
Email: info@familylives.org.uk Website: www.familylives.org.uk

Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group

Operates helpline and provides a variety of services to support anyone who has a link with someone in prison, prisoners and other agencies.

Address: POPS 1079 Rochdale Road, Blackley, Manchester, M9 8AJ Tel: 0161 702 1000
0808 808 2003 (Offenders' Families Helpline)
Email: mail@partnerofprisoners.co.uk Website: www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk

Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)

The Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact) is a national charity that provides support to prisoners, people with convictions, and their families. We support people to make a fresh start, and minimise the harm that can be caused by imprisonment on people who have committed offences, on families and on communities

Address: 29 Peckham Road, Camberwell, London, SE5 8UA Telephone: 020 77359535
Website: www.prisonadvice.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
Tel: 0300 123 6600 (24 hour advice line)
Text: 82111
Email: frank@talktofrank.com

Young Minds

Works to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people and empowering their parents and carers.

Address: Baden Place, London, SE1 1YW Tel: 020 7089 5050
0808 802 5544 (Parents helpline) Website: www.youngminds.org.uk