

# Connected Persons (Family and Friends) Carers Policy

The Trust Board has granted the Chief Executive of the Sandwell Children's Trust the authority to approve this document.



# Contents

Introduction	3
Assessment and Approval Process	3
Support and Supervision	4
Connected Carer Wishing to be Considered as a Mainstream Foster Carer	5
Resources	5

# Introduction

Sandwell Children's Trust – Fostering Connected Persons Policy primarily aims to provide an outline of the assessment process and share information about the support available to Connected Persons carers within Sandwell Children's Trust.

If a child is no longer able to live with their birth family and becomes a looked after child, Sandwell Children's Trust have a duty to give preference to a placement with a relative, friend or other person connected with the child, as long as this promotes the child's welfare.

These relatives or friends must undertake to be assessed and approved as foster carers and to meet the required standards and responsibilities of foster carers.

## Assessment and Approval Process

There will be circumstances when the most appropriate placement for a looked after child is with a connected person and the need for such a placement is urgent. Therefore, temporary approval can be granted by Sandwell Children's Trust following a viability/schedule 4 assessment and the completion of the necessary statutory checks (police national computer and the Trust LCS check). Temporary approval can then be granted by the Fostering Agency Decision Maker for a period of 16 weeks to enable the placement to take place immediately pending a full assessment (see Guide to Foster Carer Payments).

Where the approval process takes longer than anticipated, the temporary approval may be extended once for a further period of 8 weeks. Where a connected person has not been approved after a full assessment and seeks a review through the Independent review Mechanism (in this instance temporary approval will continue pending the outcome of the review and decision).

Before deciding whether to extend the temporary approval, Sandwell Children's Trust will first:

- consider whether placement with the connected persons is still the most appropriate placement available
- seek the views of the fostering panel
- inform the IRO

The Decision to extend temporary approval will then be made by the Agency Decision Maker, following recommendation by the Fostering Panel.

If the temporary approval and of any extension expires and the connected person has not been approved as a Connected Persons Foster Carer, the service will terminate the placement after making suitable arrangements for the child's accommodation.

Temporary approved foster carers will receive the training and support they require to provide an appropriate level of care to the child.

Family and Friends Statutory Guidance 5.19; states “A different approach may be needed to assessing family and friends foster carers compared to other foster carer applications. The format used by local authorities for presenting assessment reports to the fostering panel may not be appropriate for family and friends assessments if it does not allow for a focus on how the needs of a specific child will be met.” Sandwell Children’s Trust use the CoramBAAF Connected Persons Form C Assessment template.

All applicants are required to complete a consent to statutory check form allowing the service to undertake the necessary statutory checks in line with the fostering regulations. Statutory checks which are completed include Disclosure and Barring Checks (DBS); medicals, local authority checks and references which include personal and employment reference. The assessment will cover a range of issues including the suitability of the home environment, the capacity of the potential carers to meet the child’s specific need.

The assessing social worker will do a number of visits to the applicants and will cover the applicant’s background and childhood, motivation, previous and current relationships, support network, education and employment history, verify their finances, safe care practices and the role and expectations of connected persons carers, which include completing the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) within 18 months of approval.

Once the assessment and all statutory checks are completed the assessing social worker will make a recommendation and the assessment is presented to the Fostering panel. Prospective applicants are invited to attend panel. The Fostering Panel will make a recommendation on suitability and the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) will make a decision following sight of the panel minutes regarding approval.

## Support and Supervision

The Trust progression policy/fee scheme is structured around the skills and availability of carers to meet the needs of a wide range of children of different ages and varying needs. There is a greater degree of flexibility within the assessment for a connected carer compared to a mainstream foster carer. For example, it may be appropriate to approve a much older or much younger relative for a specific child; a relative with a criminal conviction or who smokes may also be approved. Such flexibility would not be given in the case of someone applying to be a mainstream carer. Approved Connected Persons Foster Carers receive a skill payment following a positive ADM (see section 4).

Connected Persons Foster Carers are expected to meet the National Minimum Standards for fostering. This includes attending mandatory training and the completion of the Training, Support and Development (TSD) standards within 18 months of approval.

Connected Persons Carers are supervised and supported and are allocated a Supervising Social Worker who will visit every 8 weeks. Sandwell Children’s Trust have a duty to visit looked after children therefore the child’s social worker will undertake all statutory visits.

Connected Persons Foster carers are invited to support groups and will have access to training.



Connected Person's approval is reviewed annually. The Fostering Panel will consider the first review. The Fostering Panel may consider subsequent reviews if referred by the fostering service provider. If a foster carer fails to meet the required standards, the review can recommend termination of approval which will be presented to the Fostering Panel. If a Connected Person's Carer received a Qualifying Determination Letter, which proposes not to approve them as carers, they have the option of making representation to the Independent Review Mechanism.

## Connected Carer Wishing to be Considered as a Mainstream Foster Carer

The Fostering Services national minimum standard 30 clarifies that when a foster carer is being assessed for approval for a specific child or children only, there is no need to consider their suitability to care for other children.

Connected Carers may be considered as Mainstream Carers should they meet the eligibility criteria e.g. have the physical space and be available to meet the needs of a wide range of children of different ages and varying needs. Connected Carers must have their Form C assessment updated to a Form F assessment. The assessment must be presented to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation followed by an Agency Decision.

Should a Connected Carer be approved as Mainstream Carer they can progress through the skills levels in the same way as all Mainstream Foster Carers (see Foster Carer Progression document).

## Resources

### The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010

- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/959/regulation/24/made>
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/959/regulation/25/made>

### Fostering services: National minimum standards

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fostering-services-national-minimum-standards>

### Children Act 1989: Family and friends care

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-family-and-friends-care>