

Family and Friends Care

(Can also be referred to as kinship care or connected persons care)



Introduction

Family and friends carers play a unique role in enabling children and young people to remain with people they know and trust if they cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents.

Family and friends carers are relatives, friends and other people with a prior relationship with somebody else's child, who are caring for him or her full time.

One of the common concerns expressed by family and friends carers is that they are not given clear information about the different legal options, the types of support available to them, details of any financial support available and the kind of social work involvement that will be necessary.

This booklet summarises Blackpool's policy regarding family and friends care. Its primary aim is to give information about the various legal options open to family and friends carers and how family and friends carers can be supported.

(Wherever the term parent is used, it includes those who may hold parental responsibility but who are not a birth parent.)

Summary of Legal Options for Family and Friends Care

Informal Kinship Care

This is an arrangement made directly between the parent(s) and the informal kinship carer. An informal kinship carer can be a friend or a relative or someone else with a prior relationship with the child.

The child is not a looked after child under this arrangement.

Private Fostering

This is a private arrangement whereby a child (under 16, or under 18 if disabled), is being cared for, for 28 days or more (or the intention is that the arrangement will last for 28 days or more), by anyone who is not a close relative and who does not have parental responsibility.

A close relative means grandparent(s), brother(s), sister(s), uncle or aunt (by full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or a step parent(s).

The child is not a looked after under this arrangement. However, private foster carers must give Children's Services at least 6 weeks' written notice of their intention to foster a child privately.

Sometimes, an informal kinship carer can also be a private foster carer, for example, a family friend or distant relative (like a cousin).

Residence Order

A Residence Order is an order from the court to say who a child should live with.

Relatives / Friends can apply for a Residence Order after having the child living with them for one year. For some older children, or those for whom adoption is not appropriate, a residence order may be the best option.

Special Guardianship Order

A Special Guardianship Order is applicable for a child of any age and could be granted for unaccompanied minors, where there are significant links with the birth family or where the birth family cannot be found.



The eligibility criteria to be a Special Guardian is that the person is:

- A guardian of the child
- Anyone currently holding a residence order
- A relative with whom the child has lived for one year
- A person with the consent of those who hold a residence order
- A person with the consent of the local authority, where child is in local authority care
- A person with the consent of those with the Parental Responsibility
- A local authority foster carer with whom the child has lived for one year preceding the application

Special Guardianship does not completely break the legal link with the child's parent(s). However, it does mean that the Special Guardianship can take significant decisions about the child and their upbringing, without having to consult with the child's parent(s).

Adoption Order

Relatives, friends and private foster carers can apply to adopt a child they have been caring for, when the child has lived with them for a total of 3 years out of 5 years. If you do not satisfy this requirement, it is possible to apply for an adoption order if the court gives permission for this.

Family and Friends Foster Care

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

As the child is looked after, Children's Services must approve the relative or friend as a local authority foster carer.

The child may be looked after voluntarily with the agreement of the parent(s) or may be looked after and subject to a court order.

Who has Parental Responsibility?

If the child is looked after voluntarily, under Section 20 of the Children act 1989, parental responsibility remains with the parent(s). If the child is subject to a care order or emergency protection order, Children's Services share parental responsibility with those who held it before the child was looked after.

What is the assessment and approval process?

If a child is looked after by the local authority, placements may only be made with a relative or friend if they have been assessed and approved as foster carers under the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

An assessment of the friends/relatives capacity to care for the child will be completed by the Fostering Team. This is a rigorous process that involves a number of visits to them in their home, and the completion of a BAAF Form F. This goes into detail about things such as the person's background and childhood, previous and current relationships/marriage, support networks, experience as a parent(s), their



relationship with the child's family and other relevant issues.

Applicants will need to provide details of their income and names of people who are prepared to act as referees for them.

Once the assessment is complete, the fostering worker will make a recommendation to the Fostering Panel with a written report. Prospective foster carers will be invited to attend the Fostering Panel if they would like to. The Fostering Panel makes a recommendation to the Decision Maker who has the final decision about whether or not someone is approved as a foster carer. The Decision Maker is the Service Director of Social Work and Safeguarding.

How long can the child/young person live in this arrangement?

For as long as the local authority considers the placement meets the child's needs and is in line with the care plan.

Will there be any supervision of the placement?

Yes. Children's Services have a duty to visit looked after children. The child's social worker will visit the child within the first week of the child being placed, then at least every 6 weeks.

You will have a fostering social worker who will visit you every 6 weeks. The fostering social worker will explain the process of annual reviews of foster carers' approval, and how foster carers are offered opportunities for training and development.

Will the placement be reviewed?

Yes. Children's Services have a duty to review a looked after child's care plan within 28 days of the child becoming looked after, then within the next 3 months and then every 6 months until the child is no longer looked after.

What services/resources will be available to support the placement?

As approved foster carers you will be supported by a fostering social worker or support worker who will visit on a regular basis. Carers may be required to attend training courses and will be offered the opportunity to attend support groups.

The child will receive support for their health and education needs. The child's social worker will discuss with you what services/resources you or the child may need to ensure the child's needs are met in the placement.

An older looked after child may be eligible for leaving care support services.

Will there be any financial support available?

Yes. A weekly allowance is payable to meet the costs of caring for the child. The weekly allowance is currently:

- 0-4 years: £142.00
- 5-10 years: £156.00
- 11-15 years: £175.00
- 16+ years: £200.00

Child benefit and child tax credit are not payable to foster carers.

