



## **Family and Friends (Kinship) Care Policy**

**6<sup>th</sup> March 2012**



This policy sets out the arrangements for promoting and providing support to meet the needs of children placed with family and friends carers in North Somerset (for a summary of the law relating to different options when looking after someone else's child, please see **Annex A**). The policy has been written in accordance with the *Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities*.<sup>1</sup>

The policy will be regularly reviewed and made freely and widely available.

## Values, principles and objectives

Consideration of children's welfare and best interests will always be at the centre of the work that we do.

The North Somerset Family and Friends Care Policy is based on the principles underpinning the *Children Act 1989*. A key principle of the act is that children and young people should be enabled to live within their families unless this is neither in their best interests nor consistent with their welfare.

The local authority has a duty to promote informal arrangements within families to enable children to be cared for wherever possible by family members. We will support families to make their own arrangements to care for their children and to avoid the need for the children to be looked after by the local authority.

When a child cannot remain with their immediate family, and the local authority is considering the need to look after the child, we will make strenuous efforts to identify potential carers within the child's network of family or friends who are able and willing to care for the child.

A residence order, special guardianship order or adoption order may reinforce the child's sense of belonging and security when a successful return to the child's birth parents is not possible.

Support from the local authority will be based on the assessed needs of the child and North Somerset will ensure that family and friends carers (whether or not they are approved foster carers) are provided with support to ensure that children do not come into care or remain in care longer than is needed.

The wishes and feelings of children and young people, family and friends carers and parents will inform the policies and procedures of the local authority.

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Education (2011) *Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities*  
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Family%20and%20Friends%20Care.pdf>  
[accessed 25 July 2011]

## Evidence base

This policy is based on evidence of what works in supporting family and friends carers to meet children's needs, and knowledge of the services which carers and children want to be available to them. Key messages from research are identified in **Annex B**.

Staff who are responsible for implementing the policy will be offered appropriate training on the issues which family and friends carers face, the obligations, powers and responsibilities of the local authority and the contents of this policy.

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

This is an arrangement where a child who cannot be cared for by their parents goes to live with extended family, friends, or other 'connected persons'<sup>2</sup>. It used to be known as kinship care. There are many different forms of family and friends care:

- Private fostering
- Family care with a 'close' relative<sup>3</sup>(informal)
- Family and Friends/Connected Persons Foster Care (looked after child)
- Residence or Special Guardianship Order
- Adoption

Further information about each of these categories is given below.

## Private fostering

Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a 'close relative' for 28 days or more. A close relative is defined as 'a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step parent'. It does not include a child who is looked after by the local authority. This is a private arrangement made

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<sup>2</sup> A 'connected person' is a new term introduced by *The Children Act 1989. Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review 2011*

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-00185-2010> [accessed 25 July 2011] A 'connected person' is a relative, friend or other person connected with a child. The latter is someone who would not fit the term 'relative or friends', but who has a pre-existing relationship with the child. It could be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as a childminder, a teacher or a youth worker.

<sup>3</sup> *The Children Act 1989* defines 'close relative' as a sister, brother, aunt, uncle or grandparent (by full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or a step-parent.

between a parent and the carer, the parent still holds parental responsibility and agrees the arrangement with the private foster carer.

The parent and carer have a legal responsibility to inform the local authority, failure to do so constitutes a criminal offence. When the local authority knows of a proposed or existing arrangement it must assess the situation to ensure the arrangements are satisfactory and that they are in the best interests of the child. If, following the assessment, it is decided that the arrangement can continue, a social worker will visit the child and family on a regular basis (minimum 6 weekly in first year, then 12 weekly) to safeguard the welfare of the child and ensure the arrangements remain satisfactory.

The reasons why a child may be looked after through a private fostering arrangement may include:

- A child being sent to this country for education or health care by their birth parents from overseas
- A child living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or arguments at home
- A teenager living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- A parent's hours of work or study making it difficult for them to use ordinary care to look after their child

A private foster carer is responsible for the day to day care of the child and the care should be continuous. The parent (or person with parental responsibility) retains the responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. The local authority will need to be made aware of the situation to check everything is satisfactory.

The local authority has a duty to assess and monitor the welfare of all privately fostered children. If the local authority thinks that an arrangement is unsuitable and the child cannot be returned to his or her parents, the authority must decide what action to take to safeguard the child's welfare. This may mean providing support to the carer or, in some circumstances, finding alternative local authority accommodation.

The person who is fostering the child under a private arrangement has a responsibility to tell the local authority about certain changes in circumstances, such as change of address, any criminal convictions they acquire or anyone living at the address acquires, loss of employment etc. Changes should be notified in advance and, if this is not possible, then within 48 hours of the change.

If the arrangement comes to an end, the person who is fostering the child should also advise the local authority within 48 hours in writing that the arrangement has come to an

end. They should also notify the local authority of the name and address of the person who will be taking on care of the child and where the child is now living.

### **Family Care (informal)**

If they are not looked after by the local authority, children can live with a 'close' relative - their aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters or grandparents - without outside involvement.

The relative does not have parental responsibility which remains with the parent(s) but may do what is reasonable to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

However the local authority may become involved if it appears that services may be necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a Child in Need. In these circumstances the local authority has a responsibility under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to assess the child's needs and provide any services to meet any identified needs of the child, this may include discretionary financial support.

### **Family and friends/ Connected persons foster carers**

Where a child is looked after by the local authority, we have a responsibility wherever possible to make arrangements for the child to live with a member of their family who can be approved as a foster carer.

The child may be accommodated voluntarily with the agreement of the parent(s) or may be subject to a care order. If it is a voluntary agreement, parental responsibility remains with the parent(s); the local authority will share parental responsibility if the child is subject to a care order and will share limited parental responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child if s/he is subject to an emergency protection order.

Arrangements will be made to assess the suitability of the relative or friend.

This assessment will be carried out by a social worker from the fostering service. The child can be placed with the family members prior to approval as foster carers for up to 16 weeks. This temporary approval can only be extended in exceptional circumstances.

During the period of temporary approval the carers will receive a weekly allowance to support the child. The social worker will provide practical help and advice as well as emotional support. They can also provide any equipment that the carer may need to help them to care for the child.

Once approved as foster carers, the carers will be allocated a supervising social worker from the fostering service to provide them with support and supervision; and they will receive fostering allowances for as long as they care for the child as a foster carer.

While the child remains a looked after child, as a foster carer, they will be expected to cooperate with all the processes that are in place to ensure that the child receives appropriate care and support, for example cooperating with the child's social worker and promoting the child's education and health needs.

## Residence Orders, Special Guardianship Orders and Adoption

**A Residence Order** is a legal order made by a court specifying who the child should live with and gives them parental responsibility if they do not have it already (shared with child's parents). A Residence Order will usually last until the child is 16.

A court can order a joint Residence Order, which is an order to say that the child shall spend time living with more than one carer. Family and friends carers may apply for an order after the child has lived with them for one year.

A Residence Order provides security for the young person but if parental responsibility is shared with other non-resident parents, agreement will have to be reached about the upbringing of a child.

The resident carer takes the general day to day decisions concerning the upbringing of the child, and these should be exercised without interference from the non-resident parent. These will be decisions about how the household will function and the child's daily routine. The parent with parental responsibility is able to have a say in the major decisions concerning the upbringing of the child. Such decisions can include where the child should attend school, what religion the child should be brought up in, the child's name etc

Discretionary allowances may be paid to relatives or friends with whom a child is living under a Residence Order. The carer has the right to apply to the local authority for a Residence Order allowance to assist with accommodation and maintenance of the child (Children Act Schedule 1 section 15)

North Somerset will only consider such applications where:

- The child is assessed as a child in need and is unable to be cared for by either birth parent **and**
- A residence order is assessed as the best way of meeting the child's needs **and**
- The child would otherwise need to be looked after by the local authority

Residence Order holders are entitled to claim child benefit and child tax credits and these will be taken into account when assessing Residence Order allowances.

**A Special Guardianship Order** is a new option introduced under the *Adoption and Children Act 2002*<sup>4</sup>. It can offer greater security without absolute severance from the birth family as in adoption.

Relatives may apply for a Special Guardianship Order after caring for a child for one year. 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

Where the child was Looked After immediately prior to the making of the Special Guardianship Order, the local authority has a responsibility to assess the support needs of the child, parents and Special Guardians, including financial support.

Where entitlement to an allowance has been established the applicants will be financially assessed and advised in writing of the allowances to be paid.

**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.

North Somerset has a range of services to support adopted children and adoptive parents. The support to be provided to individual adoptive families is set out in the Adoption Support Plan and this may include financial support.

Where a decision in principle has been made for the payment of allowances to adopters a financial assessment will be carried out to decide the level of financial support payable.

**Adoption or Special Guardianship?** Special guardianship may be more suitable than adoption if:

- An older child would struggle to deal with the status of being adopted.
- The child has a good relationship with the parent(s) or members of the family, and/or the carer and parent(s) have a good relationship and special guardianship will enable the carers to fulfil the main care role without disrupting this relationship. There is a close relationship between the carer and the parent. (ie the grandparents)

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<sup>4</sup> *Adoption and Children Act 2002* <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/38/contents>

- More than 'occasional contact' is planned between the child and the birth parent(s) and family.
- The child stands to inherit money or receive money in some other way.
- Adoption is against the potential carer's culture or beliefs.
- There is a need to maintain cultural links and the need is greater than the ability of the adopters to provide this link.
- It is in the best interests of the child rather than remaining in the care system or being adopted.

When deciding to apply for a Special Guardianship order the welfare of the child or young person and what is in his or her best interests is the paramount consideration.

## Family Group Conferences

Family Group Conferences (FGC's) are meetings held between professionals and family members to achieve the best outcomes for children. The term 'family', in the context of FGCs, refers to both blood relatives and to non-related significant family friends or neighbours. Further details of the FGC process may be found in **Annex D**.

In North Somerset, an FGC will always be considered where there are concerns about a child who may not be able to live with their parents. FGCs promote the involvement of the wider family in the decision-making process to achieve a resolution of difficulties, and offer a way of ensuring that all resources within the family's wider social networks have been engaged for the benefit of the child.

If a child becomes looked after, perhaps following an emergency protection order, an FGC will be considered as soon as possible

FGCs are a very effective way for the family to make decisions about the best ways of resolving issues, including making care arrangements which is why North Somerset has made a strong commitment to their use. However, it is not the overriding decision making forum and the local authority may have to take further action if it believes that proposals from an FGC will not adequately safeguard the child and be in their best interests.

## Supporting contact

Contact with their immediate families is generally a positive experience for children who are not living with their parents, helping them to maintain a sense of belonging and identity. Contact arrangements should meet the needs of the child. Most children living

with members of their extended families will be in contact with one or both of their parents and often also with other relatives, this will help to promote positive relationships.

The local authority has a duty to promote contact for all children in need, although there are differences in the way that duty is expressed depending on whether or not the child is looked after.

The local authority is required to promote contact between a child who is not looked after but who is living away from home and his or her family where it is necessary to do so in order to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. The local authority has a duty to try to promote contact between a looked after child and his or her family unless it is consistent with the child's welfare.

New research into family and friends care by the Family Rights Group highlights that although family and friends placements can work well for children, contact can be problematic. Management of contact can often be a source of considerable anxiety and conflict for family and friends carers. It can place emotional and practical strains on all the parties involved. Family dynamics and relationships may be fundamentally changed, particularly for grandparents and others who are becoming 'second time round' carers and children may not understand why they are being brought up by relatives, whilst parents may resent the fact that their children do not live with them. Family mediation may be helpful. It can help parties to communicate better and resolve disputes, taking account of the child's wishes in a supported environment. Formal mediation may be accessed by a solicitor; other types of mediation may be available via the local authority. For further information, contact the Fostering Team.

Where there are child protection concerns, there may be a need for the involvement of Children's Services to support safe contact arrangements. Contact may be limited through a court order and it may need to be carefully managed, monitored and supported, to ensure that it does not become unsettling and possibly harmful for the child. In some circumstances the management of contact arrangements and independent supervision of contact can be supported by Children's Services. Family and friends foster carers who need advice and support regarding contact arrangements can access more information from their Social Worker.

Other family and friends carers who are concerned about contact should telephone the Referral and Assessment Team who may be able to help (01275 888266).

The National Association of Child Contact Centres, staffed by volunteers, provides information on its website [www.naccc.org.uk](http://www.naccc.org.uk) and through its helpline 0845 4500 280. There are local contact centres in Weston-super-Mare, Clevedon and Nailsea. Families make their own arrangements about using this type of contact. Further details about

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contact centres are available from the Family Information Service (01275 888778; [www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk))

## Information about services and support

National and local sources of information and support may be found in **Annex C**. In the first instance, please contact the Fostering Team (01275 888999) for support, advice and information which is specifically about fostering and the Family Information Service (01934 426300) for information about local and national organisations.

## Support groups

Family and friends carers may sometimes feel isolated: that they are the only people bringing up someone else's child and that nobody else understands the pressures they are experiencing. Groups can help to combat the isolation which many carers feel when they take on the role, particularly when they are dealing with the complex needs of vulnerable children, for which they had not planned. They are also a valuable way of helping carers to access information about services which will help them to care for the children, as well as ensuring that they are treated with understanding and respect and receive emotional support.

North Somerset is working with partner agencies and the voluntary sector to find ways to encourage peer support and access to support groups.

There is a newly established peer support group for all grandparent carers (grandmothers and grandfathers) in North Somerset: Grandparent Carers Reaching Around North Somerset (GRANS). Regular meetings, with invited speakers, are planned during term-time and family events will be organised during school holidays. For more details, contact Fiona McShane at Oldmixon Primary School on 01934 812879 or email at [Fiona.mcshane@staff.oldmixon-pri.n-somerset.sch.uk](mailto:Fiona.mcshane@staff.oldmixon-pri.n-somerset.sch.uk)

## Training

North Somerset tries to ensure that all foster carers, approved by the local authority, are equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the care needs of children placed with them, and to achieve the knowledge and skills outlined in the Children's Workforce Development Council's (CWDC) Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards for foster carers. As the context of family and friends foster care differs from other types of foster care, an amended set of standards has been produced for family and friends

carers<sup>5</sup>. Working to achieve the standards can provide a focus for the work of support groups and opportunities for family and friends foster carers to meet other foster carers. It is expected that all approved foster carers, whether unrelated or family and friends, complete the training and meet the standards.

Training may also be offered to other family and friends carers if they are receiving support from the local authority and training would help meet their need.

For further details, please contact the Fostering Team.

Generic evidence based parenting programmes are available to all parents in North Somerset. In 2011-2012, some foster carers will be trained in delivering *Incredible Years* (for pre-school and primary school aged children) and *Family Links* (for older children) to other foster carers. Attendance at these groups will provide evidence for the TSD Standards.

Other local authority training is also available to approved foster carers including family and friends carers. For further information, see North Somerset's Continuing Professional Development website: [www.cpd.n-somerset.gov.uk](http://www.cpd.n-somerset.gov.uk)

## Financial support

Financial assistance may be available when the local authority has assessed a Child in Need under Section 17(6) of *The Children Act 1989*. Please contact your social worker or ring the Referral and Assessment team on 01275 888266 for further information about:

- Eligibility criteria
- When means testing applies
- How to apply for financial help from North Somerset
- How and when decisions are made about eligibility

There are three categories of payment, which may be considered. One or more of these may be applicable, depending on the particular circumstances of the case:

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<sup>5</sup> CWDC TSD Standards for Family and Friends Foster Carers <http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/foster-care/standards/the-foster-care-standards-workbook/family-and-friends-carers> [accessed 28 July 2011]

## 1. Subsistence crisis (one-off) payments

These should be used to overcome a crisis, following the best assessment that can be achieved in the circumstances.

## 2. Setting up

These are for such items as clothing, furniture or bedding. The social worker must be satisfied that the carers' financial position justifies the payment through a financial assessment. Assistance may be given subject to conditions, including repayment in certain situations.

## 3. Weekly living contribution

North Somerset may make contributions/regular payments where family or friends care for a child whether or not they are looked after. Where regular payments are to be made, relative carers may need assistance to maximise their Income/benefit as regular payments may adversely affect an individual's claim to income support.

In all cases where regular financial support is agreed, a written agreement will be drawn up detailing the level and duration of the financial support that is to be provided, and the mechanism for review.

### **The following criteria will be applied to all such payments:**

- The purpose of the payments must be to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child
- As part of the assessment, a view should be taken as to whether the carers need financial support based on their reasonable requirements in taking on the care of the child
- There are insufficient sources of finance
- Payments will be paid to the carer, not the parents
- Tax and benefit rules will apply in all cases.

**Looked After Children** If a child is 'looked after', then the person caring for them, for tax, benefit and tax credit purposes, is a foster carer.

As a foster carer they will receive financial support from Children's Services in two parts: an allowance; and a fee. The fee element needs to be declared for tax purposes but the allowance should not be declared as it is not a fee and is non-taxable.

Foster Carers cannot receive child benefit or child tax credit for the foster child, nor include them on housing benefit and council tax benefit claims. They may be able to

receive working tax credit as a self-employed foster carer however or possibly income support if single.

**Family and Friends carers (informal – child not looked after)** the new carer can apply to take over any child benefit or Disability Living Allowance (DLA). The carer can make a child tax credit claim (or additional claim); can include the child in housing benefit and council tax benefit claims; and can apply for carers' allowance but there is more 'conditionality' (ie conditions attached to eligibility) if applying for income support or Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) compared to foster carers.

**The Welfare Reform Bill 2010-2011** is currently passing through Parliament. The welfare reforms will affect allowances.

The Family and Friends Care Policy will be updated when the Welfare Reform Bill becomes law<sup>6</sup>.

## Management accountability

The senior leader who holds overall responsibility for the Family and Friends Care Policy is the Resource Service Leader who may be contacted on 01275 888296.

The policy incorporates the views of service users and we welcome comments from others. The implementation of the policy will be monitored and reviewed annually

The policy will be shared with local authority staff and partner agencies (for example, Housing) to ensure that all practitioners and managers operate within its framework and it is applied in a consistent and fair manner across the authority. It will be disseminated widely so that anyone who is considering becoming a family and friends carer can be aware of its content and be clear about how to contact the local authority and other agencies for further information about relevant services.

## Complaints

When a family or friends carer is not satisfied with the level of support provided to enable them to care for a child, they can have access to the North Somerset Complaints Procedure. Our aim would be to resolve any such dissatisfaction without the need for a formal investigation but where an informal resolution is not possible a formal investigation will be arranged.

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<sup>6</sup> For an update on the bill's progress: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/welfarereform.html> [accessed 24/10/2011]

North Somerset is committed to the delivery of quality services that meet your needs. There may be times when things go wrong and you do not receive the standard of service you expect. If you feel that you have good cause for complaint, then we need to know. We will deal with your complaint confidentially unless this is not possible, for example if legislation applies.

### **Step one - Go direct**

If you know the specific service that your complaint is about please take it up with the relevant officer or team manager in the first instance. The team manager must respond to your complaint within 10 working days. If you are not sure who to speak to, you can call in to any council office, contact our [Customer Services Officer](#) or give your [feedback online](#).

### **Step two – Independent investigation**

If the Team Manager is unable to resolve the complaint, then with your consent a further investigation of the complaint will be undertaken by a person independent of the team providing the service.

### **Our response**

We aim to reply to your complaint within 10 working days. If we can't reply fully within that timescale we will let you know.

### **Local Government Ombudsman**

If you are not satisfied with the final response you can ask for your complaint to be examined by the [Local Government Ombudsman \(LGO\)](#).

Please contact our [Customer Services Officer](#) for further information.

### **Contact Telephone Numbers**

**Resource Service Leader 01275 888296**

**Fostering Service 01934 421900**

**Referral and Assessment Team 01275 888266**

**GRANS (contact Fiona McShane) 01934 812879**

**ANNEX A: CARING FOR SOMEBODY ELSE’S CHILD – OPTIONS**

|                                   | Private fostering  | Family care (informal)   | Family and friends foster care   | Unrelated foster care   | Residence order  | Special guardianship order (SGO)   | Adoption  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|---|--|--|---|
| Route into the caring arrangement | <p>This is a private arrangement whereby the child 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 does not have parental responsibility, and who is not a close relative.</p> <p>Relative means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (by full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or a step parent.</p> <p>The child is not a looked after child.</p> | <p>The relative has chosen to take on the care of the child but does not have parental responsibility, and the arrangement was not made by the local authority.</p> <p>The child is not a looked after child.</p> <p>Relative may perceive the parents to be unable to care for the child;</p> <p>or the parents may be dead or otherwise not available (e.g. in prison);</p> <p>or there may be an agreement between relatives due to difficult family circumstances.</p> | <p>The child has been placed with the relative or friend by the local authority, because the person who had been caring for the child was deemed not to be providing suitable care.</p> <p>The child is a looked after child and so the local authority must approve the relative or friend as a local authority foster carer.</p> <p>The child may be accommodated voluntarily with the agreement of the parents or may be subject to a care order.</p> | <p>The child is a looked after child being accommodated by the local authority under section 20 Children Act 1989 or because the child is subject to a care order; but has been placed with a foster carer by the local authority.</p> <p>(Alternatively, the local authority may choose to place a child into residential care where this is considered to best meet the child’s needs).</p> | <p>The child may be at risk of becoming ‘looked after’ and a friend or relative applies for an order, or</p> <p>The child may have been ‘looked after’ and their foster carer or other relative/friend applies for an order.</p> <p>In either circumstance, application can be made without the support of the parents or the local authority.</p> <p>Relatives may apply for an order after the child has lived with them for one year.</p> <p>Or, there can be benign reasons, e.g. after parents’ death and in line with a prior agreement between the birth parents and the carer.</p> | <p>The child may be at risk of becoming ‘looked after’ and a friend or relative applies for an order, or</p> <p>The child may have been ‘looked after’ and their foster carer or other relative/friend applies for an order.</p> <p>In either circumstance, application can be made without the support of the parents or the local authority.</p> <p>Relatives may apply for an order after the child has lived with them for one year.</p> <p>Or, there can be benign reasons, e.g. after parents’ death and in line with a prior agreement between the birth parents and the carer.</p> | <p>Looked after children: the LA may decide that the child should be placed for adoption. They can only do so with the consent of the birth parent or under a placement order made by a court.</p> <p>An approved foster carer can apply for an adoption order after a year of caring for the child.</p> <p>Other informal carers could apply for an adoption order if the child has lived with them for a period of 3 years.</p> |
| Parental Responsibility (PR)      | Remains with birth parents   | Remains with birth parents but the person who cares for the child may do what is reasonable to safeguard or promote the child’s welfare  | Remains with birth parents if child accommodated under section 20 CA, or if the child is subject to a care order or emergency protection order the local authority will have parental responsibility and determines the extent to which it may be exercised by others.   |   | Shared by parents and holder of residence order.   | PR shared with parents and any one else with parental responsibility for the child. The special guardian may exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of all others with PR, apart from another special guardian.   | Transfers to adopters and relationship with birth parents is severed.   |
| Approval basis                    | The arrangement is assessed by LA, but the carer is not ‘approved’ as a local authority foster carer is. The arrangement may be prohibited if assessed by the local authority as unsuitable.   | None   | Approved as local authority foster carers in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations. (If child is looked after, carers <b>must</b> be approved as foster carers even if close relative.)   |   | Appointed by court following application.  | Appointed by court, following application from the applicant. LA must investigate the matter and prepare a report for the court dealing with the suitability of the applicant to be a special guardian.  | Adoption agency assesses and approves prospective adopters, court makes order regarding specific child. If the child is not looked after then notice of intention to adopt must be given to the LA who then carry out an assessment / report for the court.   |

Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities

|                       | Private fostering  | Family care (informal)  | Family and friends foster care  | Unrelated foster care | Residence order   | Special guardianship order (SGO)   | Adoption   |
|-----------------------|--|---|---|-----------------------|---|--|--|
| Duration              | Subject to discretion of person with PR and readiness of private foster carer.   | Subject to discretion of person with PR   | So long as placement remains in line with child's care plan, as determined by LA  |                       | Age 18.   | Age 18 unless varied or discharged by the court before the child reaches 18 years.   | Permanent lifelong relationship  |
| Placement supervision | It is not a placement, but there are statutory visits to child by social worker (minimum 6 weekly in first year, then 12 weekly)   | None  | Statutory: visits to child by social worker and supervision of foster carers by supervising social worker   |                       |   | None   | When child is placed for adoption by the LA, the placement is supervised and there are statutory reviews. Once the adoption order is made, none. |
| Review of placement   | It is not a placement, but the LA may do formal reviews in addition to ongoing assessment during visits.   | None  | Statutory reviews of child's care plan (minimum 6 monthly) and annual reviews of local authority foster carers' approval  |                       | None  | None   | See above  |
| Support services      | Provision of advice and support as determined necessary by the LA, which may assess the child as a child in need, with a child in need plan, and provide services / support for child/family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 | No entitlement but the LA may assess the child as a child in need, with a child in need plan, and provide services / support for child/family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 | Support to meet child's needs including health plan and personal education plan.<br><br>Training and practical support to foster carers in accordance with the Fostering services Regulations, NMS and CWDC standards.<br><br>Young person may be entitled to leaving care support services |                       | No entitlement<br><br>(But LA has discretion to provide services / support for child/family under section 17 of the CA) | If child was looked after prior to making the SGO, LA must assess for need for special guardianship support services. LA has discretion whether to provide support.<br><br>Young person may be entitled to leaving care support services if was a looked after child prior to making of the SGO. | Entitlement to assessment for adoption support services, which may be provided at discretion of LA in accordance with Regulations and NMS.       |

Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities

|                                   | Private fostering   | Family care (informal)  | Family and friends foster care   | Unrelated foster care | Residence order   | Special guardianship order (SGO)   | Adoption   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|-----------------------|---|--|--|
| Financial support – entitlement   | <p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p> <p>Financial responsibility to maintain the child remains with holders of PR</p> | <p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p> <p>Financial responsibility to maintain the child remains with holders of PR.</p> <p>Guardians Allowance payable if both parents have died, or the only surviving parent cannot be found or serving 2 years or more prison sentence.</p> | <p>Child benefit and child tax credit not payable.</p> <p>Weekly allowance to meet the costs of caring for the child. This should meet at least the national minimum rate set by DCSF.</p> <p>The Manchester City Council judgment ruled that allowances must be the same for all foster carers, whether or not family &amp; friends.</p>  |                       | <p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p>  | <p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p>   | <p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p> <p>Entitlement to assessment for financial support (part of adoption support) if child looked after prior to order.</p> |
| Financial support – discretionary | <p>LA has discretion to make one-off or regular payments under section 17 Children Act</p>  | <p>LA has discretion to make one-off or regular payments under section 17 Children Act</p>  | <p>Some fostering providers pay their foster carers a fee to recognise the carers' skill, experience and commitment.</p> <p>The Manchester City Council judgement (which requires allowances to be paid on the same basis regardless of the relationship of the carer to the child) did not consider fees. However, Statutory Guidance for Fostering Services requires that any policy in relation to the payment of fees must be applied to all foster carers who meet the criteria in the same way and must not discriminate on the grounds of a pre-existing relationship with the child.</p> |                       | <p>LA has discretion to pay residence order allowance – usually if child was previously fostered by the carers, or exceptionally if making residence order prevents child becoming looked after. Any allowance reviewed annually.</p> | <p>Entitled to an assessment for financial support under the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 if child looked after prior to order and meets the criteria in the regulations.</p> <p>Subject to assessment as above and for former foster carers can include an element of remuneration.</p> <p>Regular or one off payments.</p> <p>Any allowances reviewed annually.</p> | <p>Subject to assessment, one off payments or regular adoption allowance may be paid.</p>  |

## ANNEX B: RESEARCH EVIDENCE AND CHILDREN'S VIEWS

(from *Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities*<sup>7</sup>)

### Introduction

1. Research about the characteristics and effectiveness of family and friends care in the UK mainly focuses on the placement of looked after children with family and friends foster carers, including comparisons with children placed with unrelated foster carers. When interpreting the relevance of research studies, care must be taken to ensure an understanding of the differing terminology used, especially the definitions used for kinship and family and friends placements. This is especially true in relation to studies undertaken outside of the UK where different legal frameworks exist, making comparison with practice in England more difficult.
2. This annex provides an introduction to some of the key research findings relevant to the requirements of this statutory guidance, but for fuller information the studies themselves should be consulted. It is largely based on a research briefing *Family and Friends Care* published in 2008 by Research in Practice, which is available from the Department for Education website.<sup>8</sup> Other useful research overviews include the kinship care special issue of *Adoption and Fostering*<sup>9</sup> (2009), chapter 4 ("Going into kinship care") of *Quality Matters in Children's Services: Messages from Research*,<sup>10</sup> and the Family Rights Group's *Family and Friends Care: A guide to good practice for local authorities*<sup>11</sup>
3. The Campbell Collaborative systematic review of kinship care analysed 62 research studies, 57 of which were undertaken in the USA although none in the UK.<sup>12</sup> It highlights issues which will be found pertinent to family and friends carers in this country, providing notice is taken of the definitions set out on page 8 of the review.

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<sup>7</sup> Department for Education (2011) *Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities*  
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Family%20and%20Friends%20Care.pdf>  
[accessed 25 July 2011]

<sup>8</sup>

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/f/family%20and%20friends%20care%20research%20briefing.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> *Adoption and Fostering* volume 33 number 3, Autumn 2009. British Association for Adoption and Fostering.

<sup>10</sup> Stein M (2009). Jessica Kingsley.

<sup>11</sup> Family Rights Group (2009). <http://www.frg.org.uk/pdfs/Good%20practice%20guide%20book%20final.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Kinship Care for the Safety, Permanency, and Well-being of Children Removed from the Home for Maltreatment (2009) <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org>

## Profile of children and carers

4. Farmer and Moyers<sup>13</sup> studied looked after children placed with family and friends foster carers and with unrelated foster carers. They found the two groups of children to be remarkably similar in terms of their characteristics and the kinds of adversities they had experienced prior to placement, and had similar levels of emotional and behavioural difficulties. The parental difficulties that had led to the children being looked after were also very similar. However, the family and friends foster carers were significantly more disadvantaged than the unrelated foster carers, with 27% being lone carers, 31% having a disability or chronic illness, 35% living in overcrowded conditions, and 75% experiencing financial hardship.
5. Hunt, Waterhouse and Lutman,<sup>14</sup> in a study of children placed with family and friends foster carers through care proceedings, also found great similarities with children placed with unrelated foster carers.

## Attachment and placement stability

6. Security of attachment and continuity of care are recognised as important factors in children's long-term well-being, and the capacity of family and friends placements to deliver these is a strong theme in the research. Children are generally reported to feel secure, happy and integrated into the family, with most studies reporting that this is more common than for children placed with stranger carers. Much of the research also highlights the high levels of commitment demonstrated by carers, their strong bonds with the children, the pleasure they find in the children themselves and the satisfaction they derive from caring.
7. The emerging evidence on placement stability suggests a more complex picture than previously thought, when family and friends placements were considered to fare better than stranger care no matter how stability was measured. The weight of the evidence still supports that conclusion: placements last longer, and children have fewer moves both overall and before entering placement. It is the evidence on disruption which is now less clear-cut. Reported rates in UK research range from less than 10% to around a third, the rate most commonly found in the international literature. Few studies suggest rates are higher than for non-related foster care, and the

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<sup>13</sup> Farmer E and Moyers S (2008) *Kinship Care: Fostering Effective Family and Friends Placements*. Jessica Kingsley.

<sup>14</sup> Hunt, J., S. Waterhouse, et al. (2008). *Keeping them in the family : outcomes for children placed in kinship care through care proceedings*. London, British Association for Adoption & Fostering.

perception was that they were lower. Recent UK studies, however, suggest that rates may be very similar.

8. 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. A higher proportion of stranger foster placements were intended only as short term placements from the outset, and the majority ended for positive reasons such as a return home or a planned move. Breakdown rates were almost identical for both types of placement (18% and 17%), which is much lower than Hunt et al's follow-up of children placed through care proceedings which reports a 28% disruption rate. Both studies, however, highlight the importance of behavioural difficulties in placement breakdown. Hunt et al took the view that some of the family and friends placements could have been sustained with better support.

### **Continuity of experience and the maintenance of relationships**

9. Family and friends care is also likely to contribute to a children's sense of security and personal identity through minimising the degree of disruption they experience in other ways. Children usually go to people they know, with whom there is a shared culture, and are more likely to remain in the same neighbourhood and school. Although carer attitudes towards parents are not necessarily favourable and relationship difficulties are more common than in placements with unrelated carers, studies typically report that contact is more likely, though not necessarily with both parents and often involving complex arrangements without independent supervision.

### **Quality of care and child safety**

10. There is little research focusing on child safety issues in family and friends placements, and that is contradictory as to whether rates are higher or lower than for unrelated foster placements. There is little evidence to support concern about the quality of care provided by family and friends carers in more than a minority of cases. Standards may be variable and lower than the average for unrelated foster carers, and carers may be more inclined to use physical punishment.
11. A US government investigation reported that in more than 90% of family and friends arrangements almost all parenting tasks were carried out adequately. In the UK Farmer and Moyers found that family and friends carers were more

likely to have poor parenting skills and substantially more were struggling to cope, although 73% of placements were judged to be positive for the child, 14% adequate and only 10% detrimental. Hunt et al found that while few placements were entirely free of concerns about quality, only 20% raised major issues.

### **Child well-being**

12. The evidence about child functioning, although quite limited and mixed, is broadly positive. On a range of measures – health, education, emotional and behavioural development - children appear to do about as well as those in unrelated foster care placements with some studies suggesting they may do better. In the UK, Farmer and Moyers’ findings for children placed with family and friends carers were remarkably similar to those for children placed with unrelated carers, whilst Hunt et al reported most children in family and friends placements as doing reasonably well with 47% displaying no emotional and behavioural problems.
13. Based on a preponderance of the available evidence, the Campbell Collaborative review concluded that children living with family and friends carers appeared to experience better outcomes with regard to behaviour problems, adaptive behaviours, psychiatric disorders, well-being and placement stability than did children with unrelated foster care. Furthermore, there was no detectable difference between the groups on reunification, length of stay, family relations, or educational attainment. However, children being brought up by family and friends were less likely to be adopted or make use of mental health services.

### **Assessment of foster carers**

14. In Farmer and Moyers’ study most family and friends carers understood the need for assessment as foster carers, but a number felt that the approach adopted did not fit their circumstances very well, especially when they had been caring for the child for a considerable period. 65% of the carers were assessed when the child was already living with them which meant that whilst the child’s progress and attachment could be assessed, it could be harder to deal with shortcomings or to withhold approval from an ongoing placement.
15. Doolan et al<sup>15</sup> found that carers resented the concentration on risk when their suitability to care for children was being assessed and wanted a sensitive, inclusive respectful process that valued their skills and knowledge. Hunt et al

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<sup>15</sup> Doolan P, Nixon P and Lawrence P (2004), *Growing up in the care of relatives or friends: delivering best practice in family and friends care*. Family Rights Group.

emphasise the need to focus on parenting capacity rather than specific concerns, which often fail to evidence themselves on follow up.

### **Supporting family and friends placements**

16. Family and friends carers have said that they are often uncertain as to what help is available and how to access it, reluctant to press their case, find the response variable and are frustrated by changes of worker. They also complain that social workers tend to under-estimate their needs; help may not be given sufficiently early or tail off too soon. 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.
17. The help which family and friends carers reported they wanted includes financial and practical support, information and advice, opportunities to meet with other carers, access to universal and targeted services, help to the child, and help for the child's parents to get their lives together again. Workers are likely to need help and training to fully understand the particular support needs of family and friends foster carers.

### **Local authority policies and structures**

18. A consistent theme in research is that family and friends care is a distinctive form of care which requires its own policy and practice guidance, systems, structures and services tailored to the particular needs of these families and a transparent and fair system of remuneration. In a survey by Family Rights Group in 2007, 69% of local authorities responding did not have a written coherent approach to family and friends care.<sup>16</sup>

### **Children's views on care by friends and families**

19. Few children or young people want to become looked after by the local authority; most would prefer their birth parents to be supported to continue to care for them, or if that is not possible to be able to live with members of their extended family. Of young people consulted by the Children's Rights Director for England in response to *Care Matters*, 75% thought that families should be

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<sup>16</sup> Report on freedom of information survey of local authority policies on family and friends care conducted by Family Rights Group and University of Birmingham. Family Rights Group (2009).

given a chance to suggest other ways of looking after children before they go into care.<sup>17</sup>

20. In 2009 focus groups were held for children and young people who either were looked after or had been so previously. Nearly half of the young people consulted felt that if possible a child should be placed to be looked after by someone from their own family, but many did not agree with the idea of special rules for making placements of looked after children with family members or family friends.<sup>18</sup> One stated “Just because they are family doesn’t mean to say they are good at looking after us.” One group was very clear that family members or friends should be “checked out” and fully approved as foster carers before a child was placed with them, rather than a placement being made with temporarily approved carers who are still being checked out. They said “An assessment should be done first in all cases before you move there by social services – even if the person’s a ‘connected person’, you can’t just assume they’re safe.” In contrast, a few children and young people thought that unless a placement was known to be unsafe, family members and family friends should not be checked at all. Some said how important it is for the child to have a say, especially when somebody they know is being considered. One said “They try and place you with families first but it is always relatives you don’t like.”
21. The advice of most children and young people in the focus groups was summed up as: “try families and friends, but assess first”; and “use the same judgment as when moving to live with another family member as social workers would when moving to a foster carers.”
22. Children interviewed by Hunt et al in their research mainly considered themselves as close to their family and friends carers and reported “a sense of ordinariness” in the arrangements. Doolan et al reported children living with family and friends carers as being happy and well cared for, often relating this to their pre-existing relationship with the carers.

### **Maximising the appropriate use of family and friends care**

23. 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

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<sup>17</sup> *Care Matters: Young people’s responses*, DfES 2007.

<sup>18</sup> *Planning, Placement and Review: A report of a children’s consultation to the DCSF by the Children’s Rights Director for England*, 2009.

for the children or were already doing so, whilst only 4% were initiated by the social worker. The Campbell Collaborative concluded that family and friends care can enhance the behavioural development, mental health functioning, and placement stability of children, but attention must be paid to increasing levels of support.

## **Annex C:**

### **National Organisations and Information for Family and Friends Carers**

#### **Action for Prisoners' Families**

Works to reduce the negative impact of imprisonment on prisoners' families. Produces publications and resources, and provides advice, information and training as well as networking opportunities.

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

Advice line 0808 808 2003

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

#### **Addaction**

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

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

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

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

Tel: 020 7553 7640

Email: [admin@adfam.or.uk](mailto:admin@adfam.or.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.

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

General advice line: 0808 800 5793

Exclusion advice line: 0808 800 0327

Exclusion information line: 020 7704 9822 (24 hour answer phone)

#### **Beating Eating Disorders**

0845 634 1414

[www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk)

#### **BeGrand.net**

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

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

Helpline: 0845 434 6835

### **Benefits**

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/index.htm>

[http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/your\\_money/benefits.htm](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/your_money/benefits.htm)

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

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

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

Tel: 020 7421 2600

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

### **Childline**

0800 1111

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

### **Children's Legal Centre**

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

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

Child Law Advice Line: 0808 802 0008

Community Legal Advice - Education: 0845 345 4345

Email: [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.

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

[http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/your\\_money/benefits.htm](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/your_money/benefits.htm) (benefits advice)

### **COSMIC (Children of Substance Misusing Carers)**

Groups for children and young people whose parents have been, or still are, dependent on drugs or alcohol

01934 426444

### **Cruse**

0117 926 4045

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

[www.rd4u.org.uk](http://www.rd4u.org.uk) (website for young people who have been bereaved)

### **Department for Education**

Lists details of telephone helplines and online services to provide information, advice and support on a range of issues that parents and families may face in bringing up children and young people.

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

**ERIC**

Childhood incontinence.

0845 370 8008

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

**Family Fund Trust**

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.

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

Tel: 0845 130 4542

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

**Family Mediation Helpline**

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

[www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk](http://www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk)

Tel: 0845 602 6627

**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.

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

Advice line: 0800 801 0366 (including advice about contact)

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

**The Fostering Network**

Supports foster carers and anyone with an interest 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 and complaints, legislation and financial matters.

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

Fosterline: 0800 040 7675

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

**The Grandparents' Association**

Supports grandparents and their families, especially those who have lost or are losing contact with their grandchildren because of divorce, separation or other family problems, those caring for their grandchildren on a full-time basis, and those with childcare responsibilities for their grandchildren.

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

Helpline: 0845 434 9585

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.

[www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/advice](http://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/advice)

Advice line: 0300 123 7015

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

**The Hideout**

Domestic abuse site for children and young people

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

**Mentor UK**

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

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

Tel: 020 7739 8494

Email: [admin@mentoruk.org](mailto:admin@mentoruk.org)

**Money saving sites**

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

[www.moneysavingsexpert.com](http://www.moneysavingsexpert.com)

[www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org) (recycling furniture and other goods)

**One Space (lone parents)**

Includes advice about finances

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

**National Association of Child Contact Centres**

0845 4500 280

<http://www.naccc.org.uk/>

**National Association of Kinship Carers**

Email: [nakinshipcarers@gmail.com](mailto:nakinshipcarers@gmail.com)

Or post on <http://groups/nakc/home>

**National Domestic Violence Helpline**

0808 2000 247

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

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

0845 122 8609 (for perpetrators)

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

**National Family Mediation (NFM)**

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

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

Tel: 0300 4000 636

Email: [general@nfm.org.uk](mailto:general@nfm.org.uk)

**NSPCC**

0808 800 5000

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.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.

[www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk](http://www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk)

Families helpline: 0808 808 2003

Email: [info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.co.uk](mailto:info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.co.uk)

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

Provides practical and emotional support to prisoners and to their children and families. The Kinship Care Support Service provides support and advice to family members and friends who care for children whose parents are in HMP Holloway.

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

Tel: 020 7735 9535

**Parents Against Drug Abuse (PADA)**

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

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

Families Helpline: 0845 702 3867

**Parentline Plus (Family Lives)**

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

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

24 hour advice line: 0808 800 2222

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

**Samaritans**

08457 90 90 90

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

**SANE**

Mental Health charity  
0845 767 8000  
[www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)

**Shelterline**

Housing issues  
0808 800 444  
[www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

**Talk to Frank**

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.  
[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)  
24 hour advice line: 0800 77 66 00  
Text: 82111  
Email: [frank@talktofrank.com](mailto:frank@talktofrank.com)

**Voice**

Advocacy organisation for children living away from home or in need.  
[www.voiceyp.org](http://www.voiceyp.org)  
Young person's advice line: 0808 800 5792  
Email: [info@voiceyp.org](mailto:info@voiceyp.org)

**Winstons Wish**

Childhood bereavement, including suicide  
0845 03 04 05  
[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.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.  
[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)  
Parents helpline: 0808 802 5544

## **Local Organisations and Information for Family and Friends Carers**

### **Family Information Service**

One stop source of information for children, young people and families and those who work with them in North Somerset

01275 888778 or 01934 426300

[www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk](http://www.n-somersetcsd.org.uk)

### **Avon and Somerset Police**

0845 456 7000 (non emergency calls) or 999 in an emergency

### **Citizens Advice Bureau**

08444 111 444

Monday – Friday 10am – 2pm

[www.northsomersetcab.org](http://www.northsomersetcab.org)

### **Fostering Team**

01275 888999

[www.n-somerset.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/fostering)

### **Gemini Project**

Domestic abuse, accommodation and support

0870 066 4233

### **Housing Advice Team**

01934 426330

[www.n-somerset.gov.uk/housing](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/housing)

### **Jobcentre Plus**

0845 604 3719

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

### **Liberata**

For council tax and housing benefit

01934 888136

### **North Somerset Against Domestic Abuse (NADA)**

Support services, parenting groups, emergency accommodation or counselling

01934 627841

### **NSHousing (Alliance Homes Property Care from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2011)**

03000 120 120

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

**Social Care (Social Services)**

Referral and Assessment Team

01275 888266

Out of office hours emergency

01454 615165

Fostering Team

01275 888999

[www.n-somerset.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/fostering)

**Specialist Drug and Alcohol Service**

01934 412273

**Victim Support and Domestic Abuse FreeFone Service (DAFFS)**

0845 45 66 099 or

0800 6949 999

**Weston-super-Mare Hospital**

01934 636363 (non emergencies)

**Westonworks**

One stop skills and job shop in Weston-super-Mare (opposite the Healthy Living Centre). From 22 August 2011, NSHousing (Alliance Homes Property Care) and Credit Union will operate from the same building, forming the Information Station.

01934 426260

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

Further information about organisations and helplines may also be found on the Your Family, Your Voice website: [http://www.yourfamilyyourvoice.co.uk/site/information\\_support\\_17.asp](http://www.yourfamilyyourvoice.co.uk/site/information_support_17.asp)

## **ANNEX D: Family Group Conferences**

### **What is a Family Group Conference?**

A family group conference (FGC) is a decision making and planning process whereby the child/young person and their wider family group take the lead in making a plan and decisions that will safeguard and promote the child/young person's welfare. The term 'family', in the context of FGCs, refers to both blood relatives and to non-related significant family friends or neighbours.

### **Family Group Conference Process**

#### **Step 1: The Referral**

The family agrees the need for an FGC and an independent co-ordinator is appointed. Most local authorities or other public agencies run or commission FGCs in their area but will have their own criteria and processes about who can be referred for an FGC. The key is that there needs to be an agreement that a plan needs to be made for a child or young person.

The family should be offered the option for the FGC co-ordinator to reflect their race and share the same first language. The co-ordinator will work with the child and their family to set up a meeting.

If the family wishes, the FGC is held in the family's first language with, where necessary, the professionals using interpreters.

#### **Step 2: Preparation for the Meeting**

The co-ordinator, in conjunction with the child, young person, their parents or anyone else with parental responsibility, identifies the family network which can include close friends.

Family group members should then be visited by the co-ordinator and facilitated to attend an FGC through, if required, financial and practical assistance with travel, the choice of the venue, the availability of interpreters etc.

When inviting family members a date, time and venue for the meeting, convenient to the family, is agreed. The co-ordinator meets the child or young person to discuss who will be their support person or advocate in the meeting. It is important that a child or young person is given the option to have someone who is there for both expected and unexpected events. Thought needs to be given to who should fulfil this role. It could be someone already within their network or it could be a professional advocate. There may also be other people in the family group, such as a parent with

learning difficulties, who will need someone in the conference to support them, and it is the co-ordinator's job to ensure this happens.

The co-ordinator also makes contact with the professional network to organise their attendance at the meeting and to clarify that they have prepared clear, comprehensive and straightforward information about the strengths of the family, their concerns, their legal mandate and about available resources. This information should be provided in an accessible way for the family and take account of their needs.

### **Step 3: The Meeting**

#### **a) Information Giving**

At the start of the meeting, staff from agencies give the family the information they have about the child or young person and about services, resources and support that may be available. It is important that families are given full information in order that they can make decisions that take account of the agencies' concerns. Only those professionals directly involved or holding significant information, should attend. The family provide information and can clarify the information and ask any questions they might have. This part of the meeting is chaired by the co-ordinator.

#### **b) Private Family Time**

The co-ordinator and professionals withdraw, leaving the family to plan in private. The family has three basic tasks:

- To agree a plan that meets the needs of the child/young person
- To agree contingency plans
- To agree how to monitor and review the plan

The co-ordinator is available during this time should the family need any clarification or additional information. It is an important principle in family group conferences that the family have time to talk among themselves without any staff from agencies being present. The family should be able to meet for as long as they wish in private. Families value the co-ordinator's belief in their ability to come up with a plan.

#### **c) Agreeing the Plan**

Once the family have agreed a plan, the co-ordinator, the referrer and the key professionals meet the family again to hear the plan and negotiated resources. It is generally the referrer's task to agree the plan. Good practice suggests that, where the professionals are happy with the plan, it should be agreed in principle, even if

there is the need for further agreement or negotiation of resources outside the meeting. The only reason for not agreeing the plan is if it puts the child at risk of significant harm. This needs to be outlined to the family immediately and an opportunity to address concerns given immediately.

It is important that at this point the timescales and the names of those responsible for any tasks are clarified. Contingency plans and reviewing arrangements should also be agreed.

#### **Step 4: Reviewing the Plan**

The level of monitoring will depend on the reason for the referral. The family will have their own monitoring arrangements, and will need to know about the professional responsibilities for monitoring. The success of the plan will depend on the family and professionals working together, and informing each other about the progress of the plan.

The way in which the plan is reviewed will depend very much on the needs of the child, young person and family and the statutory responsibilities of any agencies involved. A review family group conference is often recommended and if no date is set, agreeing how family members can initiate the FGC process is important.

Adapted from: Family Rights Group [http://www.frg.org.uk/fgc\\_model.html](http://www.frg.org.uk/fgc_model.html) [accessed 25 July 2011]