



Family and Friends Care Policy

April 2012

Version 1 Draft 2011
Version 2: April 2012 Date for Review: April 2013

Index

Section	Contents	Page
1	Introduction	3
2	What is family and friends care?	3-4
3	Principles and values underpinning the Policy	5-7
4	Aims and objectives of the Policy	7
5	Evidence Base	7
6	Glossary of Terms and Definitions	7-9
7	Relevant Legislation and Guidance	9
8	Management Accountability, Monitoring and Evaluation	9-10
9	Feedback, Complaints, Compliments and Enquires	10-11
Appendix 1	Caring for Someone Else's Child Options <i>(Source: Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2011)</i>	12-14
Appendix 2	Private and Informal Arrangements	15-17
Appendix 3	Private Fostering	18-23
Appendix 4	Family and Friends Foster Care	24-28
Appendix 5	Residence Orders, Special Guardianship Orders and Adoption	29-33
Appendix 6	Duties of the Local Authority in respect of Children in Need and Duties of the Local Authority to Children that May be Suffering Significant Harm	34
Appendix 7	Useful Organisations and Information for Friends and Family Carers	35-40
Appendix 8	Research Evidence and Children's Views <i>Source: Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities Department of Education 2011 annexe B pg 44-48</i>	41-45

1. Introduction

The Statutory Guidance for local authorities, Family and Friend Care published in 2011 makes it a requirement for each local authority with responsibility for children's services to publish a policy setting out its approach towards promoting and supporting the needs of children living with family and friends carers, whether or not they are looked after children.

2. What is Family and Friends Care?

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

Children and young people are described as living in family and friends care when they are:

- in an informal arrangement with a close relative (see Appendix 2 for further details)
- in an informal arrangement with other family members or friends which last for a period of less than 28 days (see Appendix 2 for further details)
- in a private fostering arrangement, if not a close relative (see Appendix 3 for further details)
- a looked after child placed by the local authority with family or friends approved as foster carers (see Appendix 4 for further details)
- under a residence order or special guardianship order (see Appendix 5 for further details)
- placed for adoption with family or friends (see Appendix 5 for further details)

There are a number of reasons why children and young people may be in family and friends care arrangements. Some examples include:

- children and young people who have been assessed as being unable to live with parents to safeguard their welfare
- children and young people whose family is going through a crisis
- children and young people whose parent(s) is(are) unable to care for them because of ill health, alcohol, drug or mental health issues
- children and young people living with friends to continue their schooling when parents move away for employment or education
- children and young people with families overseas
- children and young people living with host families while attending a language school or undergoing medical treatment.

Family and friends care encompasses a range of private and public arrangements provided by relatives or friends on a temporary or permanent basis, dependent on the child's circumstances. These can be made informally by parents and family and friends or, more formally. In the case of a looked after child the local authority may have placed the child with family and friends approved as foster carers for that child. Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, allows a child to be placed with a connected person for up to 16 (sixteen) weeks or while the carer is being assessed as an approved foster carer.

When there is a crisis or difficult circumstances arise in the family, family and friends often rally round to make sure the children are well looked after, and often make arrangements between themselves to look after children until the crisis or difficulty has passed. Parents or those with parental responsibility have the authority to make such arrangements.

The great majority of children living with families and friends do so without the intervention of the local authority. There are occasions and in some circumstances where assistance may be requested to support a family and friends arrangement for children. These children, without the support provided by those family and friends, would be dependent on statutory fostering or residential care, or would be 'children in need' without support. This policy clarifies how that support, if assessed as needed, will be arranged.

The local authority only becomes involved if there are welfare or protection issues with which the family needs support or intervention or if the arrangement falls within the definition of private fostering or if the child is or becomes looked after.

Family and friends carers have said that they are often uncertain as to what help is available and how to access services. This policy should help family and friends' carers and anyone in contact with them to understand the type of arrangements they are undertaking, the duties and responsibilities involved in these care arrangements, the types of services available and where to go for further information.

The appendices attached to this policy sets out the different sort of arrangements that lead to children being cared for by people from within their wider family and friendship network and the role of the local authority within those arrangements.

- Informal/private arrangements (**see Appendix 2**)
- Private fostering (**see Appendix 3**)
- Family and friends foster care (**see Appendix 4**)

It outlines the assessment, planning and decision making process. It also makes clear what support children and young people who are unable to live with their parents and their carers should receive to safeguard and promote their welfare, whether or not they are looked after by the local authority.

Information about the meaning and implications of different legal situations and possible options for family and friends carers, and the main differences between entitlement to support by family and friends carers under Children Act 1989 section 17 (child assessed as being in need) and section 20 (child who is looked after), is outlined in **Appendix 1- 'Caring for Somebody Else's Child Options'**.

Where a relative, friend or other connected person wishes to make a long term commitment to caring for a child, they may apply for a residence order or a special guardianship order to obtain parental responsibility and a legally protected arrangement. Where a child is already living with a family and friends carer it may also be possible for them to apply for an adoption order. Information for friends and family carers on legal orders residence order, special guardianship and adoption can be found in **Appendix 5**

The general duties of the local authority with regards to children in need or to those children who may be suffering significant harm can be found in **Appendix 6**

A list of useful organisations and information for family and friends carers can be found in **Appendix 7**

3. Principles and Values Underpinning the Policy

This policy sets out how the local authority will balance its duty under the Children Act 1989 to ensure that children are safeguarded and the requirement under the Human Rights Act 1998 that 'authorities do not intrude unnecessarily in family life'.

This policy is based on principles which are described below;

- That in any family and friend's arrangement, the child's best interests and safety are paramount and must take precedence over the interests of others involved.
- That children have a right to be safeguarded and protected
- Children are best looked after within their families, with parents playing a full part, unless compulsory intervention in family life is necessary
- Children and young people will become looked after only where this improves their life chances and no child or young person will become looked after by the local authority or be made subject to a care order unnecessarily
- The aim should always be to assist families in resolving their problems which would enable them to be reunited or to be found permanent stable placements with family and friends or an alternative family close to home
- Parents should be expected and enabled to retain their responsibilities and to remain as closely involved as is consistent with the child's welfare, even if that child cannot live at home whether temporarily or permanently
- If children have to live apart from their families, both they, their parents and carers will be given adequate information and support as required to enable them to make an informed choice about the most appropriate form of care
- Those children unable to live with their parents should be enabled to live within their families or with friends where this is consistent with their welfare.
- That the local authority will seek to work in partnership with family or friends carers through the use of this 'Family and Friends Care' Policy
- That support within family and friends arrangements will be based on the assessed needs of the child rather than their legal status. Where appropriate, family and friends carers may be provided with support, to ensure that children do not become, or remain longer than is necessary, looked after by the local authority.
- That parents and carers require information and support at different stages of the child's life. Not everyone's needs are the same; some need general information and support; some need extra support during difficult or uncertain times whilst others may need more intensive help over a longer period of time

- Children, parents, family members and family friends should be involved in decision making and planning about child placements as collaboratively as possible and the local authority will provide support to facilitate this as required
- Children are active participants and that their wishes and feelings should be taken into account in all relevant processes when adults are trying to solve problems and make decisions about them
- Continuity of relationships is important and attachments should be respected, sustained and developed
- That actions under this policy aim to promote permanence and stability for children by enabling those who cannot live with their parents to remain with members of their extended family or friends whenever possible.

The local authority recognises the important contribution family and friends make in providing care for children who for a number of reasons cannot remain with their family of origin and supports the principle of placing children with family and friends carers as first choice, where it is safe to do so and is in the best interest of the child.

Children should where ever possible be enabled to live within their families unless this is not consistent with their welfare. We will work to maintain children within their own families, and facilitate services to support any such arrangements, wherever this is consistent with the child's safety and well-being.

The local authority recognises the value and long term benefits of supporting and helping a relative or friend care for a child. The provision of such support whether universal or targeted, can play a significant role in preventing the potential breakdown of such arrangements, and ultimately prevent the need for a child to come into the care of the local authority. Most importantly the provision of support and services can help to ensure that the child needs are met, their welfare safeguarded and protected and that carers receive the help they need to enable them to do so.

The majority of private/informal arrangements work well and meet the needs of the child with the support of universal agencies such as health and education services. It is important, however, that any difficulties are responded to at the earliest stage. Partner agencies have a key role to play in identifying and supporting children who are living with family and friends carers. Services need to be aware of and sensitive to the needs of these children and their families. To enable family and friends to offer appropriate care for children and young people who cannot live with their parents, access to a range of high quality universal and/or targeted services will be needed. Support services should not be withheld because a child is living with a carer in a private/informal arrangement. Early intervention, underpinned by the common assessment framework (CAF) will help prevent difficulties escalating to the point where specialist services are required. These services are key to the identification of those children who have a higher level of need e.g. those who are in private fostering arrangements where statutory intervention and the provision of specialist services are required.

Where a child cannot live within his or her immediate family and the local authority is considering the need to look after the child, we will make every effort to identify potential carers within the child's network of family or friends who are able and willing to care for the child. Keeping children as close as possible to their family and social culture reduces the likelihood of placement breakdown, reduces the anxiety in children of having to live with

strangers in an unfamiliar environment and often results in better outcomes for the child. We will provide support for any such arrangements based on the assessed needs of the child, not simply on his or her legal status, and will seek to ensure that family and friends carers are supported to ensure that children do not need to become accommodated by the local authority or where accommodated do not have to remain looked after longer than is needed.

The local authority recognises that many of the children and those who become family and friends carers will come from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, and/or may have particular disabilities, and that these factors must be taken into consideration when establishing the best arrangements for children.

The local authority strives to work in partnership with children, parents, carers and other professionals in all aspects of its support and services to family and friends care arrangements.

4. Aims and Objectives of the Policy

The purpose of the policy is to provide guidance and information on how the local authority in collaboration with its partners and local services will support the placement of children with their family (relatives) and friends.

The aims and objectives of the policy are

- that children who live apart from their family of origin have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond
- to ensure that family and friends carers receive the support they require to meet the needs of the children they are caring for.
- to increase the likelihood of success of family and friends placements when children and young people cannot live with their parents
- That actions taken under this policy aim to promote and enable good outcomes for children living with family and friends.

5. Evidence Base

This policy has been drafted having regard to available research, including research set out in Annex B of the *Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2011*. (See Appendix 8) In addition the local authority shall regularly consult with children, young people, parents and family and friends carers and take into account their views to assist in improving and developing the local authority's services and support.

6. Glossary of Terms and Definitions

Accommodation

Section 20 (1) Children Act 1989 - Every local authority shall provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who appears to them to require accommodation as a result of:-

- (a) there being no person who has parental responsibility for him;
- (b) his being lost or having been abandoned; or
- (c) the person who has been caring for him being prevented (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason) from providing him with suitable accommodation or care.

‘Child’ means a person under the age of 18. Where the policy refers to older children the term ‘Young Person’ is used.

‘Child in Need’ is defined in Section 17 (10) of the Children Act 1989, which provides that a child be taken to be in need if (a) he is unlikely achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining a reasonable standard of health, or development without the provision for him of services by a local authority under this Part; (b) his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or (c) he is disabled. *The Act uses the word “he” in relation to the child however it should be taken to mean he or she.*

‘Connected person’ means a relative (as defined in section 105 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by section 75 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004), friend of or other person connected with a **‘looked after child’**. A person in the last category may be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as a child minder, a teacher or a youth worker although these are not exclusive categories. Such people would not fit the term ‘relative or friend’ but nevertheless may be an appropriate person with whom to place a child because of this pre-existing relationship.

‘Family and friends carer’ means a relative, friend or other person with a prior connection who is caring for that child full time.

Family and Friends- ‘Foster Carer’ - means a person who is approved as a foster carer (by a Local Authority or an independent fostering provider) in accordance with regulation 27, or temporarily approved under regulation 24. A ‘looked after’ child can only be placed by the local authority with an approved foster carer, but regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, allows a child to be placed with a connected person for up to 16 (sixteen) weeks or while the carer is being assessed as an approved foster carer.

‘In care’ means the child is the subject of a care order or an interim care order or an emergency protection order and is in the care of the local authority.

‘Informal arrangement’ means an arrangement where a child is living with a family and friends carer who does not have parental responsibility for the child. These arrangements are not made by the local authority but are agreed between the carer and the person(s) with parental responsibility. Reference to informal arrangements does not include children who are looked after by the local authority or where the child is privately fostered, placed for adoption or subject to a residence order or special guardianship order. The legislation that applies to these arrangements does not apply to informal arrangements

‘Looked after child’ A child (under 18 years) is looked after by a local authority if s/he is in their care by reason of a care order (Section 31 of the Children Act 1989) or an interim care order (Section 38 of the Children Act 1989), or is being provided with accommodation under Section 20 of the 1989 Children Act. Children who are placed away from home under an emergency protection order, where they are accommodated by or on behalf of the local authority, are looked after children. So, too, are those children on remand to local authority accommodation or under supervision with a residence requirement requiring them to live in local authority accommodation and those children in police protection or arrested and at the police’s request accommodated by the local authority (Section 21 of the 1989 Act). (*Source: Care Planning, Placements and Case Review Regulations 2010*)

‘Parent’ in relation to the child includes anyone who has parental responsibility for the child.

‘Parental responsibility’ Parental Responsibility means all the duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which a parent has by law in relation to a child. Parental responsibility diminishes as the child acquires sufficient understanding to make his or her own decisions.

- A child's birth mother always holds Parental Responsibility, as does the birth father if married to the mother.
- Unmarried birth fathers who are registered on the child's birth certificate as the child's father on or after 1 December 2003 also automatically acquire Parental Responsibility. Otherwise, they can acquire Parental Responsibility through a formal agreement with the child's mother or through obtaining a Parental Responsibility Order under Section 4 of the Children Act 1989.
- Parental responsibility can be acquired by any person through a court order, for example a [Residence Order](#) or [Special Guardianship Order](#). As well as an unmarried father, a step parent or a parent's civil partner can apply for a Parental Responsibility Order under section 4 of the Children Act 1989.
- The local authority acquires Parental Responsibility through an [Emergency Protection Order](#), an [Interim Care Order](#) and [Care Order](#). In these circumstances the local authority shares Parental Responsibility with the parents and those with Parental Responsibility, including special guardians.

Birth parents do not lose their parental responsibility unless an adoption order is made. Where a child is placed with prospective adopters, the prospective adopters acquire parental responsibility as soon as the placement is made. This will be shared with the birth parents and with the adoption agency making the placement.

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

‘Relative’ means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or stepparent. ([Section 105 of the Children Act 1989](#))

7. Relevant Legislation and Guidance

This policy should be read in conjunction with statutory guidance and legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Children Act 1989 (as amended)
- The Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- The Children Act 2004
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 and Standard 30, National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011
- The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005; and the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering (2005)
- Statutory Guidance on Fostering Services (DfE 2011)
- Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, 2000
- Special Guardianship Guidance (DfES 2005)

- Adoption and Children Act 2002 (revised February 2011 DfES 2011)
- Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005
- Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (DfE 2011)

8. Management Accountability, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Head of the Children Living Away From Home Division holds overall responsibility for the Family and Friends Care Policy. The local authority shall ensure that the policy meets statutory requirements and is responsive to the needs of children and carers.

This policy shall be reviewed and refreshed regularly and at least annually and shall be updated where appropriate

The implementation of this policy shall be monitored against, and informed by, the use of specific data gathered and up to date analysis of that data.

Staff will be responsible for developing an applied understanding of the policy, operate within its framework, apply the policy in a consistent and fair manner across the service and have an appropriate knowledge of their responsibilities towards children living in family and friends care and proactively meet identified needs. Staff responsible for implementing this policy will receive appropriate training and will be competent in this area of work.

The local authority's partners will be made aware of this policy and of their responsibilities towards children living in family and friends care and will be expected to be proactive in meeting those needs.

It is the responsibility of the service manager for Fostering and Adoption to ensure that this policy is publicised sufficiently to ensure that anyone who may be considering becoming a family and friends carer can be aware of its content and know how to contact the local authority and other agencies for further information about relevant services.

A copy of this policy shall be made freely and widely available and shall be published on the local authority website Redbridge I.

This policy document invites feedback from people who are accessing and using the policy to inform updates and revision of the policy. Feedback should be sent to the Head of Children Living Away from Home, Station Road Centre, Station Road, Barkingside Essex, IG6 1NB

9. Feedback, Complaints, Compliments and Enquiries

The local authority recognises the importance of feedback and welcomes complaints, compliments and comments as a valuable form of feedback about its services and performance. Should a child, parent, carer, professional or any person wish to complain, comment or feedback compliments, further details are available at www.redbridge.gov.uk or contact can be made via the Customer Care Contact Centre on 020 8554 5000

Where a family or friends carer is not satisfied with the level of support provided to enable them to care for the child, then they have access to the local authority's complaints process. Our aim would be to resolve any such dissatisfaction without the need for a formal investigation but where an informal resolution is not possible, then a formal investigation will be arranged. The timescales and process are set out in the complaints procedure.

Should anyone have a question or is seeking advice and information about any aspect of family and friends care contact

Duty Team
CPAT
Lynton House
255-259 High Road
Ilford
IG1 1NN
Tel: 0208 708 3885

Appendix 1: Caring for Someone else’s Child Options (source: Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2011)

	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 must 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.

	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. Training and practical support to foster carers in accordance with the Fostering services Regulations, NMS and CWDC standards. Young person may be entitled to leaving care support services		No entitlement (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. 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.

	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 & 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>

Appendix 2

Private and Informal Arrangements

What is a Private and Informal Arrangement?

“A private and informal arrangement” means an arrangement where a child is living with a family and friend’s carer who does not have parental responsibility for the child and the arrangement was not made by the local authority

Arrangements made with carers who are not a close relative and that will last for 28 days or more are not private and informal arrangements but private fostering arrangements. See Appendix 3 private fostering arrangements for further details.

Parental Responsibility

The carer becomes responsible for providing the day to day care of the child. However, parental responsibility remains with the birth parent(s) in an informal/private arrangement. This means that the birth parents remain legally responsible for safeguarding and promoting the child’s welfare and they should be involved in all major decisions concerning the child. Parental responsibility remains with the birth parent(s) but the family carer may do what is reasonable to safeguard and promote the child’s welfare.

Assessment and Approval Process

There is no statutory requirement for the local authority to assess and approve a family carer so long as they are a close relative.

If the carer is not a close relative, and the placement is going to last for 28 days or more, this would be classed as a private fostering arrangement and the local authority would need to be notified. Further details on private fostering (the assessment, services and support) can be found in Appendix 3: Private Fostering Arrangements.

Supervision and Review

There is no statutory duty on the local authority to provide supervision and review of the placement unless the child or young person becomes known to the local authority as a ‘Child in Need’. If this becomes the case the local authority will advise of the assessment and planning process, support and services available. General information on the local authority’s duties with regards to Children in Need can be found in Appendix 6

Support Services Available

Children cared for by family and friends and their carers can access universal services such as day care facilities for children under 5, after-school and holiday activities for school age children, support with securing a school place, and anti-bullying support and preventative services, subject to capacity of these services and any assessment requirements if relevant.

Information on local services available can be found in Appendix 7: Useful Organisations and Information for Friends and Family Carers

Targeted and specialist support services may also be available to family and friends carers where the child is assessed as a 'Child in Need' under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. The definition of a 'Child in Need' can be found in Section 6 of this policy- Glossary of Terms and Definitions and further details in Appendix 6.

The local authority and its partner agencies can provide information, advice, support and services to parents on any aspects of the arrangement, to carers in looking after a child and to children such as;

- caring for the child including practical support, parenting strategies, emotional support of the child, dealing with separation and loss or ways to ensure the child remains in contact with their family; their culture and religion or other aspects that will enhance their ability to provide effective care.
- Where to get financial support e.g. welfare benefits (carers can claim child benefit and child tax credit, if not being paid to the parent, but financial responsibility to maintain the child remains with the holders of parental responsibility).
- on dealing with contact issues, how to access mediation services and contact centres
- dealing with health and education issues
- dealing with different stages of the child's development and need
- signposting and assistance in accessing local resources such as appropriate child care, health care, nursery or school, leisure activities, holiday activities
- advice on accommodation and housing issues
- links to support groups in the area, national groups
- information on the advice and support that is available from other agencies, including health services, education, housing services, youth support services, independent advice and advocacy services, voluntary organisations and community groups.
- caring for a disabled child, respite, support and services available
- dealing with drug, alcohol misuse or offending behaviour
- considering long terms options with regards to caring for the child
- advice on what to do if they are concerned about the child or child's care (both for information and if a situation arises).
- reunification with the child's parent or family and support if required when the child returns to the care of their parent or family

These are just some of the areas and issues that the local authority can provide advice, information and support on. Should a child parent or carer or child need advice, support or services and the local authority is currently not involved with the family, contact can be made with the following;

- Advice and information can be sought from the FiND Family Information Direct (FiND) a one stop information and advice service for children, young people, families and people who work with families or
- the Duty Social Worker at the Child Protection Assessment Team (CPAT) or
- from one of Redbridge's Children's Resources Centres.

There are also national and voluntary organisations which can provide advice and support to family and friends carers. Details of local services, voluntary and national organisations can be found in Appendix 7: Useful Organisations and Information for Friends and Family Carers.

Entitlement to Financial Support

Before they are asked to make, or when they make a commitment to a child, carers should be provided with clear information from parents about the level of support, including any financial assistance that they will be offered. This will include how finances have been or will be calculated and how long this support will last. Carers, who may, for example, have to give up their job to care for the child(ren) will then be able to make an informed choice about whether the placement is feasible for them to enter into.

Parents will always be expected to make appropriate financial arrangements with the carer to enable the carer to look after the child. However, if a child's needs cannot be met by a family member or friend without financial support, carers may be eligible for state benefits available for the child's maintenance (such as child benefit, child tax credits, disability living allowance) but only if these are not being claimed by the parents. If this is the case, carers who wish to make a claim will need to agree with the parents that they can make a claim instead.

Information and advice on finance and benefits is available through the local Welfare Benefits and Money Advice Service or Redbridge Citizen Advice Bureau. Further details on where to get advice on finance and benefits can be found in Appendix 7: Useful Organisations and Information for Friends and Family Carers.

Appendix 3 Private Fostering

What is private fostering?

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (without the involvement of the local authority), for the care of a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if the child or young person is disabled) by someone who is not a close relative with the intention that it should last, for 28 days or more.

Private foster carers may be:

- from the extended family such as a cousin or great aunt
- a friend of the family
- the parent of a friend of the child
- someone previously unknown to the child's family but connected with the child. This could include someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity, such as a childminder, a teacher or a youth worker.

However, a person who is a close relative, i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of full blood or half blood or by marriage) or step-parent **will not** be a private foster carer.

If the local authority is involved in making the placement, then the arrangement **is not** private fostering. (See Appendix 4 on Family and Friends Foster Care)

Notification- Legal Obligation

If the care arrangement for the child is to last for longer than 28 days, the private foster carer, or the person with legal parental responsibility for the child, has a duty to notify the local authority of the arrangements for the child.

Notifications should be made at least 6 weeks before the start of the arrangements begins or immediately if the child has already been placed with the private foster carer.

Anyone involved in or aware of a private fostering arrangement has a legal responsibility to notify the local authority. This is to ensure that private foster carers do not miss out on support services available and so that essential welfare checks can be carried out to ensure that the child is safeguarded.

A guide for parents and private foster carers on private fostering provides information on the rights and duties of parents and private foster carers is available both online at the Redbridge I website and in hard copy form.

Notifications should be made to Duty Team, CPAT, 255-259 High Road, Ilford , IG1 1NN.
Tel: 020 8708 3885

Private foster carers must also notify the local authority within 48 hours of a privately fostered child leaving their care, and they must provide the name and address of the person who will be caring for the child.

Parental Responsibility

The private foster carer becomes responsible for providing the day to day care of the child. However, parental responsibility remains with the birth parent(s) in a private fostering arrangement. This means that the birth parents remain legally responsible for safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare and they should be involved in all major decisions concerning the child. The local authority can provide advice and guidance as required by parents or private foster carers on drawing up agreements for the arrangement.

Assessment and Approval Process

The local authority does not formally approve or register private foster carers. However, it is the duty of the local authority to ensure that all children and young people residing in Redbridge who are being privately fostered are safe and properly cared for.

There is a duty on the local authority to visit the private foster carer's home and assess the suitability of the placement: to ensure the home is safe: to obtain information on the private foster carers to ensure they are not disqualified from fostering and to visit a child in a private foster home regularly and to make a record of each visit. Statutory checks will be carried out on the private foster carers and all adult members of their household as part of the assessment. Contact will also be made with the parent and person who place the child (if this is not the parent).

The purpose of the assessment is two-fold: to establish whether the private foster carers and their household and premises provide an environment in which the child's welfare will be safeguarded and promoted, and to assess whether the child is a 'Child in Need' under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Based on the information gathered through the assessment, the local authority will make a decision as to whether or not the placement is suitable and should continue.

If the local authority is not satisfied with the arrangements, the local authority will work with parents and carers to look what needs to be put in place and may request that alternative arrangements are made.

Supervision and Review

The local authority is required by law to visit a child who is privately fostered every six weeks in the first year, and every 12 weeks thereafter. Regular contact will be made with the parents, child and the carers.

Regular reviews of the arrangements will be made to ensure that arrangements are working and the placements are receiving all the support and services needed to look after the child

Support Services Available

Redbridge can provide advice and support to private foster carers, parents and children on all matters relating to the arrangement.

Universal services are those services available to all children, young people and their families. Children cared for by family and friends and their carers can access universal and preventative services, subject to capacity of these services and any assessment requirements if relevant. Information on services available can be found in Appendix 7 Useful Organisations and Information for Friends and Family Carers

Support and Services to children

Children will have access to the Private Fostering Social Worker for advice, information, help and support. A guide to private fostering for children is also provided to children in private fostering arrangements.

Privately fostered children should be provided with information, using methods or formats appropriate to their age and level of understanding, including

- About their private foster care and the carer's responsibilities,
- The meaning of their privately fostered status, and their right to be safeguarded.
- Their right to speak openly about their experience and to inform the social worker where they are unhappy about any aspect of the care they receive and how that information will be treated
- What support is available to them and how to access that support when they need it
- help in dealing with separation and problems with identity when they move to the placement, particularly when they are from a different culture to their carer
- Advocacy services
- Complaints procedure
- Leaving care arrangements if they are "a person qualifying for advice and assistance" under Section 24 of the Children Act 1989 (i.e. privately fostered at any time while aged 16 or 17. The social worker will advise the young person prior to their 16th birthday that 'Post 16' support and advice is available.

Children will be given the contact details of the Private Social Worker who will be visiting them while they are privately fostered; how they can contact their Social Worker if they have any worries about their care; if they would like the Social Worker to visit them to check on anything that is concerning them about their care or there are other matters about which they want to talk about.

If a child is assessed as being a 'Child in Need' by the local authority, then the appropriate support services will be put in place.

Support and Services to Private Foster Carers

Private foster carers or those intending to privately foster should be given a copy of the following

- **Private Fostering: A Guide for Parents and Private Foster Carers**
- **Complaints Leaflet**
- **leaflet on financial support and advice**

It is important that private foster carers are advised of the need to ensure that all aspects of the arrangement are agreed in advance and recorded in a written agreement, with the child's parents including clear statements around financial support and the proposed duration of the care arrangement. This is to ensure that the placement remains stable and avoids breakdowns that would have a negative effect on the child.

Private foster carers will be informed during the assessment process when they need to notify the local authority of changes of circumstances.

Private foster carers and prospective foster carers should receive advice that enables them to care for the child and meet their individual needs. This includes ensuring that the child has

access to universal services such as health and education. This can also include the following advice on:

- a) Caring for the child including practical support, parenting strategies, emotional support of the child, dealing with separation and loss or ways to ensure the child remains in contact with their family; their culture and religion or other aspects that will enhance their ability to provide effective care.
- b) Any issues that may arise for other members of the household as a result of the private fostering arrangement.
- c) Where to get financial support e.g. welfare benefits (Private foster carers can claim child benefit and child tax credit, if not being paid to the parent, but financial responsibility to maintain the child remains with the holders of parental responsibility).
- d) Promoting family contact
- e) Keeping relevant records to share with the parents on their child's progress and development, for example on health, education and significant events in the child's life. This information will be important when the child returns to live with the family.

Such advice should cover

- Maintaining and updating the child's medical history (with appropriate input from a health personnel), to include notes and dates of visits to the GP, health clinic, hospital etc
 - Keeping a file of school reports, examination results and special pieces of work
 - Noting the dates and means of contact with the parents and other people in the child's life (visits, letters, phone calls)
 - Recording the child's out of school activities such as sport, art, music, drama, clubs
 - Maintaining a financial record of money received in relation to the child's upkeep
 - Noting the dates and nature of contact with the local authority
 - Keeping an album of significant events/people in the child's life during their stay in private fostering
- f) signposting and assistance in accessing local resources such as appropriate child care, health care, nursery or school
 - g) links to support groups in the area
 - h) information on the advice and support that is available from other agencies, including health services, education, housing services, youth support services, independent advice and advocacy services, voluntary organisations and community groups.

In some circumstances Social Workers might need to refer private foster carers on to other agencies where there is an identified need for support, which is not available from other agencies. The local authority will need to consider whether this support should be provided under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. If a child is assessed as being a 'Child in Need' by the local authority, then the appropriate support services will be put in place

Private foster carers will be given the contact details of the Private Fostering Social Worker to whom they can go to for any advice and support, who they can contact at any time if they have any significant worries about the care of the child or would like to request a visit to the child. Private Foster Carers will also be given details of how to access the out of hours social work service.

Support and Services to Parents

Birth parents or person/persons with parental responsibility should be given or sent a copy of the following

- **Private Fostering: A Guide for Parents and Private Foster Carers**
- Information sheet for Parents called **Support, Information and Advice available to Parents**
- **Complaints Leaflet**

Parents need to be informed, that they are required by law to notify the local authority if they change address. Parents should also keep the Local Authority up to date with their latest contact details such as landline number, mobile phone, email or work contact, so that the local authority can maintain contact with them. They should also be advised to keep the private foster carer informed of any changes in their contact details. Children can become worried if their parents are not contactable particularly if they do not live locally or live abroad.

Parents may need advice on a wide range of issue which the Private Fostering Social Worker can provide such as

- Advice around whether or not private fostering is the right choice of care for their child, or whether a specific private foster carer is able to meet their child's needs.
- Advice and support around making alternative arrangements for the care of their child where the local authority considers that it is not appropriate for the child to be privately fostered, and where a private fostering arrangement is prohibited and no other is contemplated.
- Parents may also require help in looking for an alternative to private foster care in the event that they are unhappy with proposed or current arrangements.
- if applicable, Parents may need to be advised on the desirability to keep siblings together if possible – unless a child has particular needs which preclude being with siblings.
- They may also need advice on what to do if they are concerned about their child or their child's care (both for information and if a situation arises).

The Private Fostering Social Worker should advise parents around the importance of promoting positive attachment. This should be done by emphasising to parents the need for them to remain in close contact with their child throughout the duration of the arrangement and advising of the implications of a child living away from home with someone else to whom they may become attached if parental involvement is not maintained.

Information and advice should always include looking at what can be done to help the child return to their family, and end the need for the private fostering arrangement. In each case the local authority needs to consider whether support or referral to another agency would remove the necessity for the child to be privately fostered and, where feasible and in the child's best interests and with the parents' consent, provide that support or make that referral.

It is important that parents are advised of the need to ensure that all aspects of the arrangement are agreed in advance and recorded in a written agreement with the private foster carer, including clear statements around financial support and the proposed duration of the care arrangement. This is to ensure that the placement remains stable and avoids breakdowns that would have a negative effect on the child.

Social Workers can provide assistance in brokering agreements between parents and carers on the nature of the arrangements. The arrangement between parents and carers should ensure that the child's holistic needs are being met. The agreement should cover:

- The direction and purpose of the placement
- Any financial arrangements
- Visiting patterns
- Meeting the child's educational needs
- Meeting the child's health needs
- Any other issues e.g. staying with friends etc

A template for written agreements can be provided by the local authority to parents or carers if required.

Parents or those with parental responsibility will be given the contact details of the Private Fostering Social Worker to whom they can go to for advice and support.

Entitlement to financial support

The local authority has written information on financial support and advice provided to all private foster carers

Appendix 4

Family and Friends Foster Care

What is a looked after child?

A child (under 18 years) is looked after by a local authority if s/he is in their care by reason of a Care Order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989) or an Interim Care Order (Section 38 of the Children Act 1989), or is being provided with accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. Children who are placed away from home under an Emergency Protection Order, where they are accommodated by or on behalf of the local authority, are looked after children. So, too, are those children on remand to local authority accommodation or under supervision with a residence requirement requiring them to live in local authority accommodation and those children in police protection or arrested and at the police's request accommodated by the local authority (section 21 of the 1989 Act).

(Source: Care Planning, Placements and Case Review Regulations 2010)

Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (Accommodation)

The local authority has a duty to provide accommodation for any child in need if:

- there is no person with parental responsibility for the child
- the child is lost or abandoned; or
- the person who has been caring for the child is prevented from providing suitable accommodation or care, for whatever reason.

Every local authority shall provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who has reached the age of sixteen and whose welfare the authority consider is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they do not provide him with accommodation. (Section 20(3))

A local authority may provide accommodation for any child within their area (even though a person who has parental responsibility for him is able to provide him with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

(Section 20(4))

Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (Care Order)

A Care Order is a court order made under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 which places a child compulsorily in the care of the local authority. Only a local authority or the NSPCC can apply for Care Orders.

A court may only make a care order if it is satisfied—

- (a) that the child concerned is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and
- (b) that the harm, or likelihood of harm, is attributable to—
 - (i) the care given to the child, or likely to be given to him if the order were not made, not being what it would be reasonable to expect a parent to give to him; or
 - (ii) the child's being beyond parental control.

When a child is subject to a Care Order, the local authority shares parental responsibility with the parents, however, the local authority can override the wishes of the parents if it believes this would be in the child's best interest.

If as a result of a local authority assessment, the local authority concludes that a child needs to be 'looked after' and placed in local authority care then the local authority has a legal responsibility to provide accommodation in an approved placement for example foster care.

The local authority will look at all the available options for placement but has a duty to give preference to a placement with a person who is a relative, friend or other person connected with the child (i.e. someone who would not fit the term 'relative or friend' but who has a pre-existing relationship with the child) before considering any other type of placement

If a relative, friend or other connected person is available and is able and willing to care for the child, they cannot do so unless they first all of been assessed and approved as foster carers, except in an emergency as set out below.

Approval of a foster carer is made under Fostering Services Regulations 2011 or temporarily approved as a foster carer under the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and in accordance with National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011.

Redbridge recognises that, unlike many non-related foster carers who begin the assessment process at a time of their choosing, family and friends carers usually have to make decisions about whether to take a child into their own home at short notice in response to a crisis. This means that family and friends carers will not always have prepared themselves in the same way for an assessment by a social worker, which can often feel intrusive.

The proposed carer should be given information about the assessment process which will follow if the placement is to last longer than 16 weeks, including the need for CRB checks and other agency enquiries on all members of the household aged 16 and over, as well as interviews with referees, adult children and ex-partners, which will be part of any such fostering assessment.

The completed assessment is presented to the local authority's Fostering Panel who will make the decision as to whether or not to approve the carers as foster carers.

The foster carer will be required to sign a foster carer's agreement before the placement of a child is made.

Emergency Placements

If the need for a placement is such that it is not possible to fulfil all the assessment requirements before the placement is made, the local authority can make arrangements for temporary approval of a relative, friend or connected person as a carer. This is so long as some minimum assessment requirements are met and approval has been given by the Head of the Children Living Away From Home Division. The local authority will need to be satisfied that the placement is the most suitable means to safeguard and promote the welfare.

Subject to successful completion of the assessment for temporary approval, the relative, friend or connected person may be immediately approved as the foster carer for a period not exceeding 16 weeks. This allows for a full foster carer approval process to be undertaken, including any criminal records checks required. In exceptional circumstances this temporary approval process can be extended for a further 6 weeks. If full approval is not achieved within the timeframe then the placement must be terminated and new arrangements made for the child.

Where the carer has not been approved following the assessment process they are entitled to seek a review and the temporary approval will continue until the outcome of the review is known.

The local authority may terminate the placement before the completion of the assessment process, where there are concerns that, in spite of provision of appropriate support, it is evident that the placement is not the most suitable way to promote the child's safety and well-being.

Supervision and review

Looked after children in foster care will be visited by their Social Worker at least once during the first week of placement. Thereafter looked after children are visited in accordance with statutory requirements and local procedures. Those children and young people placed immediately with family and friends under Regulation 24 will be visited by a social worker on a weekly basis until the carers are approved as local authority foster carers.

While the child remains a looked after child, family and friends foster carers will be expected to cooperate with all the processes that are in place to ensure the child receives appropriate care and support for example, allowing social workers to visit, contributing to the child's LAC (Looked after children) review and care plan, ensuring the child's health and education needs are met etc.

All foster carers have an allocated social worker from the Fostering Service who will visit on a regular basis, making scheduled and unannounced visits. The local authority is also required to review the approval of foster carers at least once a year.

Training

Family and friends carers are required to meet the training, support and development standards for family and friends foster carers as set out by the Children Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and will be supported to achieve this by the Fostering Social Worker. This will include the production and completion of a portfolio on the CWDC 6 Standards in line with Fostering Regulations 2011.

Family and friends foster carers will have the same access to training as local authority foster carers and will be encouraged to attend.

Support Services Available to Carers

Family and friends foster carers will also have access to the same support, training and practical help available to the local authority's Foster Carers from the Fostering Service. The support and services available will be explained to the family and friends foster carer during the assessment process and will be provided with information literature on fostering in Redbridge. Information and advice on training for foster carers and on any aspect of the placement, caring for the child etc will be provided by the Fostering Service Social Worker and the Child's own allocated social worker as required.

Foster carers like any parent or carer can access universal and preventative service or be referred on for more targeted service or support if required. The child's Social Worker and the Fostering Service Social Worker will be available for advice and information on services available and can refer on for additional support services if required.

Entitlement to financial support

All family and friends carers who are approved as foster carers will be paid in accordance with the local authority agreed allowances. The rates are reviewed annually.

As part of the assessment and approval process, the Fostering Service may also provide an initial financial grant to carers for essential equipment and furniture.

Foster carers cannot claim child benefit or other ordinary state benefits in relation to children and young people, but they may be able to claim Disability Living Allowance or Mobility Allowance for disabled children and young people. They would also be able to claim benefits for themselves and any dependent children and young people that they are not receiving foster care maintenance payments for.

Local Authority Duties Towards Children Who Are Looked After

The local authority also has a number of responsibilities towards looked after children. The local authority must ensure that:

- the child or young person is allocated a Social Worker and is visited regularly in accordance with statutory requirements and local procedures
- the child or young person is provided with accommodation which meets his/her needs;
- the child or young person receives the best possible education – this includes making sure that young children access high quality nursery provision and that children and young people are supported to do as well as they possibly can in education;
- when making any decision about the child, the local authority consults the child, the parents or others with parental responsibility, and anyone else whose wishes and feelings are considered to be relevant, unless declared otherwise by the court;
- every looked after child will have a care plan which is reviewed regularly
- a personal education plan in place if the child is of school age;
- the child receives regular health assessments, access to health provision;
- contact is promoted between the child, parents, relatives, friends and any other person connected with the child unless such contact is not reasonably practicable or consistent with the child's welfare;
- the child will be offered access to an advocacy service where they make or intend to make representations under section 26 of the 1989 Act;
- the local authority assesses the needs and formulate a pathway plan for young people who are eligible for leaving care services, which is regularly reviewed.

Care Plan

All looked after children must have a care plan. The social worker is responsible for drawing this up in consultation with the child, their parents, carers and other relevant people. The care plan will contain information relating to the child's developmental needs, health, education, culture and identity, contact with family and the current and long term plan of care for the child.

It ensures that there is a plan for the child to achieve permanence and stability (permanence plan) to which everyone is working to including the family. For example it may be appropriate in some cases for a relative, friend or connected person to secure long term stability for the child legally e.g. by obtaining a residence order, special guardianship order or some cases adoption.

This plan is reviewed by the Independent Reviewing Officer, who will also check the suitability of the placement, services and support are meeting the child's needs and to ensure that there is a clear plan in place to achieve permanence and stability for the child. The first review takes place within 20 working days of the child becoming looked after. The 2nd review then takes place within 3 months and subsequent reviews take place within 6 months of the last review meeting unless an earlier meeting is required. The wishes and feelings of the child (as appropriate), the parents or those with parental responsibility and the foster carers will be sought and taken account as part of the reviewing process.

The Independent Reviewing Officer will also monitor the implementation of the care plan between review meetings.

Placement Plan

The local authority will also draw up a placement plan which sets out specific arrangements surrounding the child including expectations of the foster carer(s) and the support that they can expect to receive to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities for the child.

Support for Care leavers

The local authority has a responsibility to make support services (including financial support) available to young people who are eligible for leaving care services. Further details will be provided by the child's social worker as to rights and entitlements and services.

Appendix 5

Residence Orders, Special Guardianship Orders and Adoption

In circumstances where a Family and Friends Carer is caring for a child on a long-term, or permanent basis, the optimum way of offering that child legal security would be for his/her carers to apply for a Residence or Special Guardianship Order (from 2005), so that the day-to-day parental responsibilities that the carers take on for the child would be legally protected and defined by the legal order.

In circumstances where a child is “looked after” and is placed with family and friends foster carers the plan for the child to achieve permanence through his/her carers applying for a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order will be considered via the Looked After Review system.

Legal advice should always be sought as to up to date advice, the implications of the order and whether this is the appropriate course of action to take. The local authority will also be able to provide information on the latest policy and procedures in this area.

Residence Orders

A Residence Order is a court order under Section 8 of the Children Act 1989, which settles arrangements as to where and with whom a child will live. The order may include directions and conditions such as the time the child will spend with one carer or another.

In order to apply for a Residence Order, a family and friends carer must be one of the following:

- A guardian of the child
- A person with whom the child has lived for a period of at least three years
- A close relative with whom the child has lived with for one year immediately preceding the application, under a 2008 amendment to the Children Act 1989.
- A foster carer if the child has lived with them for at least 1 year immediately preceding the application to court

OR

- Where the child is in local authority care, have the consent of the local authority
- Have the consent of all those with parental responsibility
- Have the consent of the person currently holding a Residence Order in respect of the child
- However, if this is not the case it is possible to apply for a Residence Order if the court gives leave to do so.

The local authority cannot apply for a Residence Order.

The Residence Order will cease to have effect when a child reaches the age of 16. The court has the power, however, to direct that the order continue in force until the child reaches the age of 18.

Parental responsibility

Where a Residence Order is made in favour of a family and friends carer, the carer automatically acquires parental responsibility which is then shared with the birth parent(s).

However, the holder of the Residence Order can make decisions to safeguard and protect the child and enable them to meet their daily needs without the permission of the child's parent(s).

The child cannot be removed from a person in whose favour a Residence Order has been made, to live elsewhere unless the Residence Order is revoked or the local authority obtains an Emergency Protection Order or Interim Care Order. Birth parents have the right to apply for the Residence Order to be revoked. Although the court will only discharge the order if it considers this is in the child's best interests, it can be stressful and costly to respond to the application.

Where a child is subject to a Care Order to the local authority, the making of a Residence Order will discharge that Order.

Assessment and Approval Process

Applications for a Residence Order are made through the court. There will be an assessment of the applicant's suitability as a long-term carer and their ability to meet the needs of the child. Where the local authority has had previous involvement with the child, or the child is looked after, local authority will be asked to carry out the assessment. If not, the assessment will be undertaken by a CAFCASS (the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) Officer.

Entitlement to Financial Support

The local authority's policy is that eligibility to apply for a Residence Order Allowance is restricted to children already looked after by the local authority.

Residence Order holders may also be eligible for state benefits available for the child's maintenance (such as child benefit, child tax credits, disability living allowance) but only if these are not being paid to the birth parent(s). Information and advice can be sought from the Citizen Advice Bureau or the Welfare Benefits and Money Advice Service. Details of organisations can be found in Appendix 7: Useful Organisations and Information for Friends and Family Carers.

Special Guardianship

A Special Guardianship Order is an order appointing a person or persons to be a child's special guardian. A Special Guardianship Order also referred to as an SGO is intended for situations where a child needs to live permanently away from their parents and the carers wish to be able to make major decisions in respects to the child, similar to those carers who have adoption orders, but everyone agrees that the links with the birth parents should continue.

Although Special Guardianship restricts birth parents rights, they are not permanently ended. Special Guardianship is therefore a means for providing legal permanence for children for whom adoption is not appropriate. A Special Guardianship order remains in force until the child is 18 unless it is discharged earlier by the court.

The following people can make an application for a Special Guardianship Order:

- any guardian of the child
- a local authority foster carer with whom the child has lived with for at least one year immediately preceding the application
- anyone who holds a residence order with respects to the child or has consent of all those in whose favour a residence order is in force
- anyone with whom the child has lived with for three out of the last five years
- where the child is in the care of the local authority, anyone who has the consent of the local authority
- Anyone who has consent of all those with parental responsibility for the child
- any relative with whom the child has lived for a period of at least one year preceding the application
- any person , who has leave of the court

The court may also make a Special Guardianship Order of their own volition in any family proceedings concerning the welfare of a child if they consider an order should be made.

Parental responsibility

Parental responsibility is shared between birth parents and the family and friends carer. However, a Special Guardian can exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of others who share it, which means they can make all the major decisions about a child's upbringing without consulting the birth parents.

The Special Guardian may exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of all others with parental responsibility, apart from another Special Guardian, except:

- where the law requires the consent of more than one person with parental responsibility
- agreement to adoption
- removal of a child from the UK for more than 3 months without the leave of the court
- change the child's name without the leave of the court

Assessment and approval process

Someone intending to apply to a court for a Special Guardianship Order must give the local authority three months notice. Once an application has been made to the court, the local authority will carry out an assessment and prepare a report for the court. A Social Worker will assess the suitability of the applicant to be a Special Guardian and make a recommendation to the court. The final decision about whether or not a Special Guardianship Order is granted lies with the court.

Support and Services

Regulation 11 of the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 provides that the following people must receive an assessment of their need for special guardianship support services at their request, in cases involving looked after children or children who were looked after immediately prior to the making of a special guardianship order:

- the child
- the special guardian or prospective special guardian
- a parent

Regulation 11 also provides that the following people may be offered an assessment of their need for special guardianship support services:

- the child (where not looked after)
- the special guardian or prospective special guardian (where the child is not looked after)
- a parent (where the child is not looked after)
- a child of a special guardian (whether the special guardianship child is looked after or not)
- any person whom the local authority considers to have a significant and ongoing relationship with a child (whether the child is looked after or not)

If the local authority decides not to carry out an assessment where they have discretion, as above, they must give the person notice of the proposed decision in writing including reasons for the decision. The person who requested the assessment must be allowed at least 28 days to make representations in relation to the decision.

Payment of financial support to Special Guardians is only payable where the local authority considers that such support is necessary or appropriate in respect of specific circumstances, as set out in the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005.

The local authority has a separate policy and procedures on Special Guardianship which should be referred to.

Adoption

Adoption is made by a court order which creates a new legal relationship between a child and his/her carer. Adoption permanently ends the legal relationship between the child and their birth family, and as a result the child legally becomes part of the adoptive family and ceases to be part of any birth family. Once an Adoption Order is made it cannot be revoked.

An approved foster carer can apply for an Adoption Order after caring for a child for one year. Other informal carers can apply for an Adoption Order if the child has lived with them for a period of three years. However, if this is not the case it is possible to apply for an adoption order if the court gives leave to do so.

An Adoption Order in favour of a relative or foster carer (who was a 'Connected Person') with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a 'Child in Need' or a 'Looked After' child.

Individuals should not proceed to make arrangements for the adoption of a child without consulting the local authority, they may be committing an offence by placing or arranging the adoption of a child if they have not been previously approved.

The Adoption team is responsible for completing adoption assessments and provides a range of Adoption support services. Further details are available in the Adoption policy and procedures. There are also leaflets giving further information for prospective adopters available online from the Adoption Page of the Redbridge I website or from the adoption team directly.

Assessment and approval process

Where the child is not looked after, then family and friends carers must give notice to the local authority of their intention to adopt. The local authority will then carry out an assessment and prepare a report on the applicant's suitability to adopt the child and whether adoption is in the child's best interest. This will involve home visits from an adoption social worker and detailed discussions around various aspects of the carer's history, relationships past and present, family structure, support network, financial situation and employment. The Social Worker will also carry out statutory checks on all members of the household aged 16 and over, as well as interviews with referees, adult children and ex-partners. Based on the assessment, the local authority will make a recommendation to the court on the suitability of an adoptive placement.

Where a child is looked after, prospective adopters (including family and friends foster carers) must be assessed and approved as adopters in accordance with the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and its associated regulations and statutory guidance.

Supervision and Review

Once the Adoption Order is granted, this is a permanent arrangement, where the adopter accepts full parental responsibility for care of the child. There is, therefore, no need for supervision of the placement and the placement, nor for the placement to be reviewed.

Support Services Available for Family

Adopters are entitled to an assessment for adoption support services. An adoption support plan will be formulated and information will be given as to support post adoption.

Entitlement to financial support

Where the child was looked after prior to the making of an Adoption Order, adopters are entitled to an assessment for financial support, which may be provided at the discretion of the local authority.

Adopters may also be eligible for state benefits available for the child's maintenance (such as child benefit, child tax credits, disability living allowance). Information and advice on claiming benefits can be found

Appendix 6

Duties of the Local Authority in respect of Children in Need and the Duties of the Local Authority to Children that May be Suffering Significant Harm

Definition of Children in Need

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 sets out the definition for 'Children in Need' as:

- children and young people who need local authority services to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development; or
- children and young people who need local authority services to prevent significant or further harm to their health or development; or
- children and young people who are disabled.

Duties of the Local Authority in respect of Children in Need

Under Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989, the local authority has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area, and to promote wherever possible the upbringing of these children by their families by providing an appropriate range of services. This may include providing accommodation, giving assistance in kind or, in exceptional circumstances, in cash.

Where it appears that a child or young person and their family are in need of local authority support, the local authority is responsible for carrying out a Child in Need Assessment. If the child has been assessed as being a 'Child in Need', a 'Child in Need' Plan will be formulated and reviewed regularly.

Further details on the procedure, support and services for children in need will be provided by the local authority.

Where a child is receiving services under Section 17 (Children Act 1989), who is not looked after, moves to the area of another local authority, it is for the new authority to consider whether services should be provided to that child, in accordance with its own priorities for service provision and eligibility criteria.

Duties of the Local Authority to Children that May be Suffering Significant Harm

If for any reason the local authority suspects that a child is or is likely to suffer significant harm, they have a legal duty under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 to make enquiries, to investigate concerns and to make plans for the child to ensure that they are safe. The local authority will aim to achieve this by working in partnership with parents, carers, the wider family and other professionals such as those from Health and Education Services.

Appendix 7

Useful Organisations and Information for Friends and Family Carers

Action for Prisoners' families

Advice Line: 0808 808 2003

Website: www.prisonersfamilies.org

Addaction

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

Tel: 0207 251 5860

Website: www.addaction.org.uk

Adfam

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

Website: www.adfam.org.uk

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)

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

General Advice Line: 0808 800 5793 Exclusion Advice Line: 0808 800 0327

Exclusion Information Line: 0207 704 9822 (24hr answer phone)

BeGrand.net

Website offering information and advice to grandparents, plus on-line and telephone support

Helpline: 0845 435 6835

Website: www.begrand.net

British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)

Website: www.baaf.org.uk

Children's Legal Centre

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

Child Law Advice Line: 0808 802 0008 Community legal Advice- Education: 0845 345 4345

Website: www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Citizens Advice

020 7833 2181

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk www.adviceguide.org.uk

Contact a Family

Helpline provides advice, information and support to families on any aspect of raising a disabled child. The helpline also provides information to professionals working with families.

Helpline 0808 808 3555 or

Textphone 0808 808 3556

Mon-Fri 9.30am-5pm

Website: www.cafamily.org.uk

Department for Education

Lists details of telephone help lines and online services to provide information, advice and support on a range of issues that parents and families may face bringing up children

Website: www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families

Family Fund Trust

Helps families with severely disabled or serious ill children. Provides grants for things that make life easier and more enjoyable for the disabled child and their family

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

Email: info@familyfund.org.uk

Tel: 0845 130 4542

Website: www.familyfund.org.uk

Family Lives

Family Lives is a national charity providing help and support in all aspects of family life and runs a free confidential helpline for parents called Parentline Plus

Website: www.familylives.org.uk

Parentline Plus: Telephone: 0808 800 2222 (7am-12 midnight 7 days a week)

Family Mediation Helpline

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

Tel: 08456 026627

Family Rights Group

Provides advice to parents and other family members whose children are involved with or require children social care services because of welfare needs or concerns. Publishes resources, help to develop support groups for family and friends carers and runs a discussion board.

Freephone Adviceline 0808 801 0366 Monday-Friday 10am-3:30pm or email

advice@frg.org.uk Website: www.frg.org.uk

The Fostering Network

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

Email: info@fostering.net fosterline@fostering.net

Fosterline: 0800 040 7675

Website: www.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

Helpline: 0845 434 9585

Welfare benefits advice and information: 0844 357 1033

Website: www.grandparents-association.org.uk

Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group

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

Offenders' Families Helpline: 0808 808 2003

Email: info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.co.uk

Website: www.partnersofprisoners.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

Tel: 0207 735 9535

Website: www.prisonadvice.org.uk

Parents Against Drug Abuse (PADA)

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

National Families Helpline: 08457 023867

Website: www.pada.org.uk

Refugee Council

Provides services, support and advice to refugees and asylum seekers

Advice line: 0808 808 2255

Website: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Talk to Frank

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

Advice Line: 0800 77 66 00 Text: 82111

Website: www.talktofrank.com

Voice

Advocacy organisation for children living away from home or in need

Young Person's Advice Line: 0800 800 5792

Website: www.voiceyp.org

Young Minds

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

Parents helpline: 0808 802 5544

Website: www.youngminds.org.uk

Financial support, advice and services

Welfare Benefits and Money Advice Service

The service offers advice and information on welfare and Social Security Benefits and Credits. The Telephone advice line: 020 8708 4180 - Monday, Wednesday and Friday between 10 am and 1 pm. Outside of these times you can leave a message

Email: welfare.benefits@redbridge.gov.uk

Redbridge Citizens Advice Bureau

Broadway Chambers, 1 Cranbrook Road, ILFORD, Essex, IG1 4DU Tel: 020 8514 1314.

Advice sessions; Drop in sessions Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays 9:30-12:00 noon

Carers Direct (Free, confidential information and advice for carers).

Call the Carers Direct helpline on **0808 802 0202** if you need help with your caring role and want to talk to someone about what options are available to you. If you are busy at certain times of day, you can send us a message to ask us to [call you back](#) for free at a time that is convenient to you. Carers Direct use Language Line, a telephone translation and interpreting service that has access to more than 170 languages. The helpline is open 8am to 9pm Monday to Friday, 11am to 4pm at weekends. Calls are free from UK landlines and mobiles or you can request a free [call back](#).

Child Benefit Enquiry Line

Tel: 0845 302 1444

Tax Credit Helpline

Tel: 0845 300 3900

Benefit Enquiry Line (BEL)

Tel: 0800 882200

Pension Service

Tel: 0800 99 1234 or textphone 0800 169 0133

Disability and Carers Service

(for attendance allowance or disability living allowance)

Tel: 08457 123456

Department for Work and Pensions

provides a wide range of information and advice on benefits

Website: www.dwp.gov.uk

Local Services

Family Information Direct (FiND)

A one stop information and advice service for children, young people, families and people who work with families.

100b Manford Way

Chigwell

Essex

IG7 4DF

0800 587 7500 or 020 8708 9197

Email: find@redbridge.gov.uk

http://www.redbridge.gov.uk/cms/contact_pages/f/families_information_direct.aspx

Opening times- Mon-Fri 9am -5pm (except Wednesday 11am -5pm)

They specialise in giving you information and advice on issues that impact on family life

- from childcare and childcare funding
- activities for children and young people
- family guidance on issues such as health and safety
- information on Children's Centres in Redbridge
- they have a new service called Informed Families which offers free support and advice to families with children who are disabled or have a special educational need (SEN)

- supporting your child's education and learning
- details of where to get advice and support in difficult times and
- they can tell you about useful services run by Redbridge and voluntary organisations.

Parent Link

Redbridge Parent Link is an independent information and support service for all Redbridge parents and carers of children with special educational needs.

- Services include: telephone discussion, information sent by post, home visits, accompanying parents to school/education meetings and support and assistance in preparing paperwork.
- Parent Link offers positive support for parents, individual support at the parent's request and contact with other sources of help and information.

Telephone opening hours: Monday to Friday - 9.00am to 5.00pm (answerphone service available). Please note that Redbridge Parent Link is closed during the Summer holidays.

Redbridge Children Centres

Children's Centres are a one-stop shop for young children and parents, providing access to family health care, advice and guidance about bringing up children, early education and childcare. Children's Centres also have links to career and employment services to support parents who want to return to work or training. They are open to all parents with children under five years old who live in the area. Contact Family Information Direct (FiND) for details of the nearest children centre and services on offer.

Child Protection Assessment Team (CPAT)

This team carries out initial assessments for families who are experiencing difficulties and need support and families who have a child with a disability or special educational need who require services. The Child Protection and Assessment Team operate a walk in service which does not require an appointment.

Lynton House
255-259 High Road
Ilford IG1 1NN
020 8708 3885

Children's Resource Centres-

The Children Resource Centres support children and young people aged 0-19 years and their families. Call for an appointment.

Children's Resource Centre West Locality (CRC)

c/o Ray Lodge Primary School, Snakes Lane, Woodford Green, IG8 7JQ
Tel: 020 8506 5285

Children's Resource Centre South Locality (CRC)

53 Albert Road, Ilford Essex IG1 1HL
Tel: 020 8822 4173 or 020 8822 4174

Redbridge Fostering Service

Tel: 020 8708 7528

Redbridge Adoption Team

Tel: 020 8708 7453

Station Road Centre
Station Road
Barkingside
Essex
IG6 1NB

Appendix 8

RESEARCH EVIDENCE AND CHILDREN'S VIEWS

Source: Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities
Department of Education 2011 annexe B pg 44-48

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 website¹. Other useful research overviews include the kinship care special issue of *Adoption and Fostering*² (2009), chapter 4 (“Going into kinship care”) of *Quality Matters in Children’s Services: Messages from Research*,³ and the Family Rights Group’s *Family and Friends Care: A guide to good practice for local authorities*⁴
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.⁵ 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.

Profile of Children and Carers

4. Farmer and Moyers⁶ 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%

¹ <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/f/family%20and%20friends%20care%20research%20briefing.pdf>

² Adoption and Fostering volume 33 number 3, Autumn 2009. British Association for Adoption and Fostering. 3
Stein M (2009). Jessica Kingsley

³

⁴ Family Rights Group (2009). <http://www.frg.org.uk/pdfs/Good%20practice%20guide%20book%20final.pdf>

⁵ Kinship Care for the Safety, Permanency, and Well-being of Children Removed from the Home for Maltreatment (2009) <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org>

⁶ Farmer E and Moyers S (2008) *Kinship Care: Fostering Effective Family and Friends Placements*. Jessica Kingsley.

being lone carers, 31% having a disability or chronic illness, 35% living in overcrowded conditions, and 75% experiencing financial hardship.

5. Hunt, Waterhouse and Lutman⁷, 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 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

⁷ 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.

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 al⁸ 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 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.⁹

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 given a chance to suggest other ways of looking after children before they go into care.¹⁰
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

⁸ 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.

⁹ *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).

¹⁰ *Care Matters: Young people's responses*, DfES 2007

family, but many did not agree with the idea of special rules for making placements of looked after children with family members or family friends¹¹ 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 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 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.

¹¹ *Planning, Placement and Review: A report of a children’s consultation to the DCSF by the Children’s Rights Director for England, 2009.*