



Family and Friends Care Policy

March 2017

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Policy Context: Children Act 1989, The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. Statutory Guidance, Family and Friends Care. Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 and Special Guardianship (Amendment) Regulations 2016

Introduction

Children may live with members of their extended family, friendship network or other people who are known to them for a variety of reasons, within a range of arrangements and for varying periods of time.

This policy sets out Barnet Children's Service approach to promoting and supporting the needs of children living within these alternative arrangements.

Values, principles and objectives

The safety and welfare of the child will be the primary consideration in making a decision about the suitability of arrangements for any child.

For a child unable to live with a parent, a placement within his/her own family will be the placement of choice providing that this is consistent with their welfare.

If placement within the family is not possible, a placement with friends or within the child's wider network should be the next option that is explored, every effort will be made to identify potential carers from within the child's network of family and 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 recognise that family life will vary according to culture, class, religion, and community and assert the importance of ethnicity, culture and language being significant factors in shaping decisions affecting children.

Children, parents, family members and family friends should be involved in decision making and planning about child placements as collaboratively as possible.

A permanent placement within a child's extended family or friendship network will, where appropriate, provide a better alternative to growing up in the care of the local authority.

Permanence is the framework of emotional, physical and legal conditions that gives a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity.

If it is not possible to address issues of concern that have led to the intervention of the Local Authority and a successful return to the care of the parents is not possible then Barnet Children's Service recognise and acknowledge that Family and Friends Care will often provide an important alternative route to permanence for the child, particularly where this can be supported by the most appropriate legal order, either a Special Guardianship Order, or Adoption.

Evidence Base

Evidence from research suggests that outcomes in relation to; health education and behavioural outcomes for children looked after by family or friends is at least as good, and sometimes better than for other looked after children despite the fact that children placed with family or friends have equally challenging needs. Placements with family or friends tend to be more stable. In addition it is easier for children being looked after by family or friends to maintain a sense of family and cultural identity and to maintain contact with the rest of their family and social network.

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 research into such arrangements.

Legal framework

The local authority has a general duty under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need, and so far as is consistent with that duty to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, in particular through the provision of family support services.

The definition of a child in need in section 17(10) is wide. A child in need is a child whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development or their health or development would be significantly impaired without the provision of services by the local authority.

Section 20 (1) of the 1989 Act provides that every local authority must provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who appears to them to require accommodation as a result of there being no person with parental responsibility for the child, their being lost or having been abandoned, or the person who has been caring for him being prevented (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason) from providing them with suitable accommodation or care.

The local authority before providing accommodation under section 20 must, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child's welfare, ascertain and give due consideration to the child's wishes and feelings regarding the provision of accommodation.

If a person with parental responsibility for the child objects to the local authority providing accommodation, the authority should consider whether the child's welfare requires him to be looked after by the authority, and if so seek the necessary order under Part 4 of the 1989 Act.

Section 23 (6) of the 1989 Act directs that, when a child is looked after away from home, the local authority: "shall make arrangements to enable him to live with a relative, friend, or other person connected with him, unless that would not be reasonably practical or consistent with his welfare".

The range of legal circumstances where children and young people live away from home with family and friends consists of the following:

- **Private family arrangement / informal family and friends care arrangements**

Provided that the carer is, in relation to the child, a grandparent, brother, sister, half sibling, uncle or aunt, (including by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent, the placement can be agreed informally with those holding parental responsibility for the child. Most such arrangements remain entirely private without the need for support or further intervention from the local authority's children's social care services.

If however intervention is required due to concerns about the welfare of a child in a private care arrangement an Initial Assessment will be completed to determine if any further intervention is required.

At times a CAF (Common Assessment Framework) might be appropriate and can be requested by the carer or parent of a child. It may be of particular relevance when a child or family may benefit from specific and time limited support, but when the child's needs do not reach the threshold for Social Care intervention (such intervention may only be triggered where the child's needs are identified to be complex or where the child may be at risk of harm). Lead Professionals for a CAF may include a health visitor, teacher, CAMHS, etc.

- **Private fostering arrangement**

If the carer is not one of the family members who can make a private family arrangement, and the placement continues beyond 28 days or is intended to do so, then the arrangement falls within the definition of private fostering under section 66 of the 1989 Act.

Parents and private foster carers have a duty to notify the local authority of the placement, (**See Appendix 2**) and the local authority then has a duty to assess the suitability and provide ongoing monitoring of the private fostering arrangement. Unless the young person is disabled, (under which circumstance the arrangement will be monitored until the young person's 18th birthday), he or she will cease to be privately fostered at the age of 16 (or 18 for a disabled child) and will revert to informal family and friends care

Examples of private fostering arrangements include:

- children with parents overseas;
- children / young people living with host families for a variety of reasons, including attending language schools, undergoing medical treatment, attending schools away from home;
- unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children;
- local children living apart from their parents, i.e. adolescents estranged from their parents; and
- children whose parents are imprisoned, being detained under the mental health act, or unable to care for their children due to medical reasons.

- **Child Arrangement Order**

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

A Child Arrangement Order (CAO) gives parental responsibility to the person to whom the order is made, parental responsibility remains shared with the parents following the making of a Child Arrangement Order.

The “contact” aspects of a CAO (with whom the child is spend time with), will cease to have effect when the child reaches 16 years, unless the court is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances.

The “residence” aspects of a CAO (whom the child is to live with) can last until the child reaches 18 years old unless discharged earlier by the making of a Care Order by the court.

Child Arrangement Orders are private law orders and cannot be made in favour of a local authority.

Interim Child Arrangement Orders can be made.

The holder of a CAO does not have the right to consent to the child's adoption nor to appoint a guardian. They can also not change a child's name or arrange for the child's emigration without the consent of all those with Parental responsibility or the leave of the court.

Anyone can apply for CAO (including a parent) or seek leave of the court to do so.

Whilst support may be offered, the aim will be to make arrangements for a child that are self – sustaining in the long term.

- **Looked after child placed with family and friends foster carers (connected persons)**

If a child already looked after by the local authority is placed with a family member or friend, then section 23 of the 1989 Act stipulates that the carer must be approved as a local authority foster parent. These arrangements are known as **Regulation 24 placements**, (Care Planning, Placement and Case Review England Regulations 2010) The child can be placed with the connected person prior to such approval, subject to an assessment of the placement, for up to 16 weeks (Regulation 24 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010).

This temporary approval can only be extended for a further eight weeks in exceptional circumstances. The Connected Person / Reg 24 assessment will be presented to Barnet's Fostering Panel for full approval. Local authorities remain responsible for looked after children who are placed with family members and friends in exactly the same way as they are for all other looked after children.

Connected Person is defined as "a relative, friend or other person connected with a child". The latter is someone who would not fit the term 'relative or friend', but who has a pre-existing relationship with the child. It could be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as (for example) a child-minder, a teacher or a youth worker." In this policy the term family and friends refers also to other connected people as defined above.

Assessments of Family and Friends Foster Carers or connected people are undertaken by the Carer Recruitment and Assessment Team. There will be a requirement to undertake checks in accordance with Barnet's procedures. These include medical checks and criminal history checks via the Disclosure Barring Service.

Where temporary approval is given to a placement under the procedure, the carers will receive a fostering maintenance allowance and support from the Fostering Support and Development Team. They will be allocated a Supervising Social worker who will visit to offer support and monitor the placement every 4-6 weeks. If a child remains in a connected person placement for longer than 16 weeks, the National Minimum Standards for Foster Care will apply to the foster care and provision of care of the child.

The allocated assessing social worker will be responsible for undertaking checks and explaining the assessment process. The Supervising Social Worker will be responsible for explaining to Family & Friends Foster Carers (also known as Connected Carers) requirements of them as foster carers and offering support and supervision to them within this role.

- **Special Guardianship Order**

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 Special Guardianship order to obtain parental responsibility. The effect of such an order will be to give the person in whose favour the order is made parental responsibility for the child. Although the special guardian shares parental responsibility with the child's parents, the special guardian will have the legal right to make all day to day arrangements for the child.

The parents will still have to be consulted and their consent is required to change a child's name, adoption , placement abroad for more than 3 months and any such fundamental issues.

Special Guardianship Assessments are undertaken by the Carer Recruitment and Assessment Team. The applicant needs to submit a request in writing to the child's social worker, or the Carer Recruitment and Assessment Team , or an assessment can be ordered by the court, usually as part of Public Law Care Proceedings.

In the event of children previously looked after by the Local Authority, once an SGO has been granted, it will automatically discharge the care order and the Local Authority will no longer have parental responsibility. The child or young person ceases to be a "looked after child". An SGO lasts until a child's 18th birthday.

Barnet uses **Family Group Conferences** (FGC) to enable family and friends networks to develop care and support plans around the child/ren in question. FGC's can also be used to identify who is the best placed person(s) to provide a) support to the birth family, b) alternative long term care for a child, c) facilitating contact with birth parents and family, and d) offer natural and practical support to prospective Special Guardians.

- **Adoption Order**

An Adoption Order is the most legally secure order, on the making of such an order, parental responsibility is removed from the birth parents and remains only with the adopters. The local authority may only place a child for Adoption with the consent of the birth parent or following the making of a Placement Order in court.

Assessments of prospective adopters are undertaken by the Adoption Team. An approved Foster Carer may apply for an Adoption Order if the child has been placed with them for a year. Other informal carers may apply for an Adoption Order if the child has lived with them for a period of 3 years.

- **Family Group Conferences**

A Family Group Conference is a collaborative decision-making forum that brings together informal (family, friends, community) and formal (professional, agency) networks to discuss the plan for a child and make decisions for the child's future.

An independent Family Group Conference Co-ordinator convenes Family Group Conferences. S/he will help family members to devise a suitable plan to care for the child from within their own resources.

Family Group Conferences aim to promote the involvement of the wider family to achieve a resolution of difficulties for children in need, and may help to identify short-term and/or permanent solutions for children within the family network.

We will offer a family group conference or other form of family meeting at an early stage. If a child becomes Looked After, perhaps following an emergency, without a Family Group Conference having been held, then (where appropriate) we will arrange one as soon as possible.

Financial Assistance

Whilst parents and others with parental responsibility retain their responsibilities for the maintenance of their children placed in private family or private fostering arrangements, family and friends carers may experience significant financial difficulties as a result of taking on the care of a child or children. They may have limited incomes already, be on a pension, or have to give up employment or reduce their hours of work to care for the child who is joining their family. The financial impact of taking on the care of one or more children can be considerable, particularly if this was not planned for in advance.

The carer should ensure that they have obtained all of the benefits and contributions available to friends and family to support any private care arrangements made between them and the parents of the child. Carers can apply for Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit if it is no longer being paid to a parent. An exception to this eligibility to apply for benefits is when someone is an approved foster carer or is providing care under Regulation 24.

If the child is assessed by the local authority as being a child in need the authority has the discretion to make one off payments, under Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989, to support these arrangements, in exceptional circumstances the local authority may make regular payments if without such support the child would need to be accommodated by the local authority.

Private fostering arrangement

Privately fostered children may also be assessed as children in need, meaning that the local authority may provide support services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. This may include financial assistance for one-off expenditure or regular financial support.

Child Arrangement Order

There is no similar right to an assessment for support for holders of a Child Arrangement orders, but the local authority **may** pay an allowance where it considers that this is necessary.

The circumstances where this may be considered by Barnet Children's Service are; if at the time the order is made, the children in question have an allocated social worker.

All Child Arrangement Order payments are discretionary, subject to financial assessment and approval by the appropriate budget holder. All allowances are subject to annual review or limited to the specified period agreed upon at the time of receipt.

Special Guardianship Order

In the case of a child or young person who was looked after immediately prior to the making of a special guardianship order, the child, special guardian or parent has a right to receive an assessment by the local authority for support services, which may include financial support. This assessment uses the Dfe means test model.

In the case of a special guardian who was previously the child's foster carer, financial support may include not only an allowance but also an element in lieu of a fostering fee for up to two years, or longer if the local authority considers this to be appropriate.

The Carer Recruitment and Assessment will complete a financial assessment form and submit this to Finance as part of the completion of the Support Plan.

Looked after child placed with family and friends foster carers (Connected Persons)

Maintenance allowances for the child paid to family and friends foster carers will be on the same basis as those to all other foster carers.

Accommodation

In some instances taking on the care of an additional child or children in the circumstances outlined in this policy, will place additional pressure in terms of the suitability of or size of the family home.

In some circumstances, following an assessment, financial support can be offered for the purchase of additional furniture, for example beds and wardrobes.

Support may also be offered in making applications to the housing department or housing associations for housing transfers to larger properties. In exceptional circumstances and subject to agreement from the Resources Panel, payment of deposits to enable carers to move to a privately rented property may also be considered.

Information about Services and Support

London Borough of Barnet has a dedicated Carer and Recruitment and Assessment team to provide advice and guidance on assessments and the type of order that may be sought. This team can provide information and advice on all aspects of kinship care to social workers, other agencies and members of the public.

This team is responsible for fostering assessments of connected people, Special Guardianship assessments and fostering assessments.

The Post Permanence Team provides support to Special Guardians post order. They also provide advice and guidance in relation to adoption and post adoption support.

There is Special Guardianship Training and information leaflets on the services in Barnet available from the Carer Recruitment and Assessment Team. These can be requested by in writing, by phone or email.

Information and training opportunities are available on website www.specialguardiansnorthlondon.co.uk

How to contact us

Carer Recruitment and Assessment Team

Tel: 020 8359 6274

Email: fostering@barnet.gov.uk

Post Permanence Team

Tel: 020 8359 5705

Email: adoption@barnet.gov.uk

Fostering Support Team

Tel : 02083595731

Email : duty.FosteringSupport@barnet.gov.uk

Customer Services Tel: 020 8359 2000

Email: first.contact@barnet.gov.uk

Complaints

Where a family or friends carer is not satisfied with the level of support provided to enable them to carer for the child and would like to make a comment or complaint then they can access Barnet's complaint's procedure.

A copy of the procedure can be requested by email:

childrens.service.complaints@barnet.gov.uk or tel: 020 8359 7008

Your views

We would like to hear your views about how we can further improve this policy. Please send your comments to fostering@barnet.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Assessment of family and friends as foster carers

It is the role of the supervising social worker to explain to family and friends carers the fostering task, its requirements and expectations and their role in supervising and supporting the placement.

The assessment will cover all matters detailed in the relevant fostering service regulations and national minimum standards. The assessment will be recorded on the NLFAC Family Friends Fostering – SGO Assessment Template , and will be jointly completed by the Child's Social Worker as well as the assessing/supervising social worker of the carer(s).

Family and friends carers can often experience the assessment as an intrusive process and for many the process can be very challenging. Carers should be given full details of the assessment process and what the assessment will cover and the reasons for this. There are various checks and references that are taken as part of the application and consent will be sought from applicants to undertake these checks.

It is important to be open and honest with regards to sharing information. Data protection policies are adhered to and information can be sought regarding this if there are any concerns.

Special guardianship training is offered to support SG applicants with this.

If the assessment is directed by the court or the applicant intends to apply for an order, then the team will need to file this assessment with the court. If applicants have any concerns regarding information, they should discuss this with the Assessing social worker or their line manager.

Assessments should look at the capacity of the carer to meet the needs of the particular child, highlighting strengths and how any risks or concerns might be reduced by the provision of support, providing the safety of the child is not compromised. The assessment should look carefully at what support might be needed to help the family support and facilitate contact arrangements and assist in their assuming different roles with the child.

The supervising social worker will co-ordinate completion of the full assessment of the carer and be responsible for presenting this to Barnet's Fostering Panel within 16 weeks from the date of temporary approval. In exceptional circumstances, a further 8 weeks may be granted to complete the assessment and present it to the Fostering Panel.

Statutory checks

Applicants must undergo statutory checks as follows:

CRB, medical (only applicants), Local Authority and OFSTED. Applicants and adult household members will be asked to give their written consent to these checks.

Every household member over the age of 16 must complete a CRB check. They should be asked to give their written consent to these checks.

Employment checks will need to be undertaken when a carer works (or has worked) in a relevant field, for example, working with children or vulnerable people, as a childminder or nursery nurse or if this would be helpful in terms of verifying information.

Applicants will be asked if they have a criminal record at the initial visit stage, and if so, full details of the offence/s should be provided. During the assessment all applicants should identify the significant people in their networks who will either regularly stay overnight in the home or who may offer them direct support in terms of childcare. Ideally, they should identify a “nominated carer” who will be able to provide support care for periods of 5 days and longer. The nominated carer will also be required to agree to a DBS check and provide references as part of the Nominated Carer’s assessment.

The Supervising Social Worker will ensure that DBS’s and medical forms are completed as soon as possible and no later than the second visit. They will also ensure that the relevant identification documents have been seen and obtained in order to process DBS checks. This is detailed in the DBS link or pack, and more information can be found online at: <https://www.gov.uk/.../organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

The assessing social worker will ask carers to book an appointment with their GP to complete their statutory medicals where needed and ensure that this takes place.

References

Applicants are required to provide details of three personal referees, two of which should not be family members. Referees should be people who have known the applicants for a significant length of time and can comment on the applicant’s ability to foster. Where a joint application is being made the referees should know both applicants. Where this is not the case additional referees would need to be approached.

Where a carer has children from a previous relationship the father or mother of these children should be interviewed whenever possible. In addition to interviewing referees, where possible, all adult children of the applicant/s should be interviewed, as should significant previous partners of the applicant/s.

All adult members of the household over the age of sixteen will need to be interviewed.

The assessing social worker will meet with the referees to discuss the written reference they have provided and to clarify any outstanding issues. Alternatively s/he can meet with the carers and address the issues highlighted in the pro forma. The referees will be asked to consider the nature of fostering and/or providing a permanent alternative home for the child, and to describe the applicant’s experience of and aptitude for caring for children. They will also be specifically asked whether there is any cause for concern around the applicants in relation to their ability to offer safe and consistent care for a child.

Health and Safety, Fire Escape Plan, Safer Caring Policy and Pet Questionnaires

A full health and safety assessment will be undertaken of the applicant/s' home, looking at all issues related to safety and potential hazards. Applicants will be fully informed of the outcome and will receive advice in relation to any alterations required around the home. They will also be supported to complete a Fire Escape Plan.

All fostering families are required to complete and submit a Safer Caring Policy, to optimise the child placed in their care's welfare and safety, and to reduce the risk of allegations against the carers and other household members.

A pet questionnaire must be completed on all applicants who have pets in the household, specifically dogs, cats, and other exotic animals. Occasionally, a specialist dog assessment may be requested to consider the safety of a dog in the household, risks to any child being placed with the family, and to provide guidance to reduce risks.

Training

Applicants will have access to local authority and online training whilst subject to assessment. As part of the assessment specific training courses may be recommended to enhance safeguarding awareness, positive attitudes and understanding of safer caring, managing contact with relatives, behavioural management or any other training that may be deemed appropriate for the particular needs of the child and/or the circumstances of the fostering household.

Smoking

It is the department's policy that children under the age of five should not be placed with carers who smoke. However, in the case of connected carer placements these risks will need to be balanced against the benefits of the placement for the child.

Carers should be informed of the health implications for the child if they continue to smoke, actively encouraged to stop and to smoke outside the house if they continue to smoke. This includes not smoking in any confined spaces where the child may be present, i.e. in a car.

Completion of the assessment

The assessing social worker should give the carer a copy of their assessment and give them the opportunity to make any comments, which they can record on the assessment format. They should be asked to sign the assessment.

The assessing Social Worker, will then present the assessment to the Fostering Panel. All applicants should be invited as well as any child/ren's social worker and supervising social worker (if applicable).

Support

Family and friends foster carers often have a range of practical support needs, which may include issues around housing, finance, transport, education and health. They are also sometimes in need of emotional support and advice about difficult contact arrangements, strained family relationships and behavioural problems in the children they are caring for. It is the role of the supervising social worker to assist the carers with these needs, and at

times refer them to the appropriate specialist service that may best assist the family.

Each family and friends carer will be allocated a supervising social worker from the Fostering support and development team.

The support needed by the carers is likely to vary and it is the responsibility of the assessing social worker to oversee a support plan (package), which reflects the individual circumstances of the placement as well as the needs of the child.

All foster carers receive a weekly fostering maintenance allowance in line with the rates recommended by the Dept of Education . This will be paid from the date carers are temporarily approved and continue for as long as they care for the child as a foster carer. All rates are reviewed annually. A start up equipment grant may be paid to carers if assessed as needed. Further information is available in the allowance policy.

Foster carers will have access to a comprehensive training programme. Assistance with childminding and travel costs is available to facilitate to enable carers to attend courses. Connected carers will be supported to complete a national foster care training programme called the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care (TSD). They will be responsible to complete and submit this portfolio within 18 months from date of approval by the Fostering Panel.

Connected carers are encouraged to attend the fostering support groups and coffee mornings, as well as other social activities organised by Barnet's Foster Carer's Association.

The supervising social worker and the child's social worker will provide the connected person carer with a comprehensive guide of support available including information about parenting groups where appropriate. Barnet's Family Focus and Youth Services Teams may also provide various activities and programmes for local families and children in their care.

Contact for looked after children

Contact can be stressful for various reasons for some family and friends carers. Barnet Children's Service supports contact with families where it is seen to be in the best interests of the child. The supervising social worker and child's social worker will discuss contact arrangements with the foster carer from the onset of the placement. Contact plans will be regularly reviewed and monitored throughout to ensure the child's needs are the primary focus. The Local Authority will supervise contact for looked after children if this is in their best interests, and a more natural alternative is not viable. The assessing social worker will provide advice and guidance and consider any issues raised by applicants.

Childminding

We recognise that sometimes pre school children are placed in an emergency with carers who are working full time. In these circumstances consideration will be given to funding reasonable childminding or nursery costs on a time-limited basis. Before considering this we would want to establish that there are no other appropriate family or friend available to provide this support and that other state provision was being fully utilised. Connected carers will be asked to make a contribution to childminding costs.

Accommodation

The suitability of family and friends living arrangements will be considered as part of the assessment process.

Subject to an appropriate risk assessment it will be acceptable for children in care to share bedrooms with other children, and for kinship placements it may also be acceptable for children to sleep in the same room as adult relatives for a limited period of time; depending on factors such the age of the child, their relationship with the carer, the wishes and feelings of all parties, and a full risk assessment.

We will consider paying for additional furniture if assessed, as needed, for example beds and wardrobes. We will also support carers with applications to the Council and Housing associations for larger properties, and at times referrals to Housing Floating Support where appropriate. We may also consider the payment of deposits if carers have to move to larger accommodation in order to meet the needs of the looked after children placed with them.

Appendix 2

Notification of possible private fosteringⁱ arrangement

Where there are **child protection concerns** about a child, a “**children’s social care interagency referral form**”ⁱⁱ needs to be completed instead of this notification-form.

About the referred child

Date of referral:

Child’s name and surname			
Date of Birth		Gender: M / F	
Address where child currently resides			
Postcode			
Telephone number			

Please provide the following information relevant to the child, if known:

Child/young person’s ethnicity and first language

Is an interpreter or signer required? Yes No

Does child have identified special education needs/disability? Yes No

Name and address of School:

About the child’s carers and parents:

(Details of carers are essential; details of parents would be helpful if known)

Name and Surname	DOB (if known)	Relationship ⁱⁱⁱ to child:	Address and telephone

Reasons why you suspect arrangement to be Private Fostering: (Please use bullet points if you prefer)

Referrer’s Name:

Date:

Phone Number / Email address:

Agency:

Please Turn Over

When completed, please return this form to:

Duty Social Worker

MASH

North London Business Park

Oakleigh Road South

N11 1NP

Tel: 020 8359 4066/4097

Fax: 0871 5948766

Email:

dutyfrontdesk@barnet.gov.uk

Should you have child protection concerns, please contact:

Duty Social worker – contact details as above

¹ **Definition of Private Fostering:** when a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone else (excluding child's parents, anyone with Parental Responsibility for the child, a blood uncle/aunt, grandparents, or sibling) for a period of 28 days or longer. This is an arrangement between the parents and the carers. Failure to report a private fostering arrangement to the relevant Local Authority where the child resides is a criminal offence under the Children Act 1989.

² The "*Children's Social Care Interagency Form*" is a separate referral form and a **child protection referral** should first be made **BY TELEPHONE AND WITHIN 48 HRS, FOLLOWED IN WRITING USING THE RELEVANT FORM** (contact Referral and Assessment Team on 020 8359 4066). This "*Notification of Possible Private Fostering Arrangement*"-form should only be used when there is suspicion of an existing Private Fostering arrangement, and where there are no other child protection concerns.

³ State whether person is a carer or parent. If carer, clarify relationship of carer to child. If described as aunt or uncle, verify exact relationship, i.e. whether birth relative, or whether used in context of affection or respect.

Appendix 3: Caring for somebody else's child - options

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence order	Special guardianship order (SGO)	Adoption
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 4: Entitlement to support by family and friends carers under Children’s Act 1989 Section 17 and Section 20

Child in need supported under section 17 (in an informal arrangement)	Child accommodated under section 20
The child is not looked after by the local authority.	The child is looked after by the local authority.
The child will not have a care plan but there may be a child in need plan or child protection plan.	The child must have a care plan (including health plan, personal education plan and placement plan) which will be reviewed by an independent reviewing officer.
If there is a child in need plan or a child protection plan a social worker or other worker may visit the child and carers.	A social worker will visit the child and carers and oversee the child’s welfare.
The child must be offered access to an advocacy service where they make or intend to make representations under section 26 of the 1989 Act.	The child must be offered access to an advocacy service where they make or intend to make representations under section 26 of the 1989 Act.
The carers will not usually have a separate social worker.	A supervising social worker will be appointed for the foster carers.
The local authority has discretion to give financial assistance (which can be on the basis of regular payments) but there is no entitlement and family income may be taken into account since the local authority must have regard to the means of the child and parents under section 17(8) of the 1989 Act.	A weekly fostering allowance will be paid.
Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit may be payable.	There is no entitlement to Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit.
Support may be offered to the carers and/or child but is discretionary.	Training and support must be offered to the foster carers.
There is no entitlement to leaving care support.	On leaving care the young person may be eligible for ongoing support under the 1989 Act (as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000).
Any support offered will cease when the young person becomes 18, unless criteria are met for support from adult services.	The local authority is able to offer continuing support (including financial support) to the carers until the young person is 21, and to support the young person in respect of education and training until they become 25.

Appendix 5: Useful organisations and information for family and friends carers

Action for Prisoners' Families Works to reduce the negative impact of imprisonment on prisoners' families. Produces publications and resources, and provides advice, information and training as well as networking opportunities. **Website:** www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk

Tel: 020 8812 3600

E-mail: info@actionpf.org.uk

Advice line: 0808 808 2003

Advice email: info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk

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

Website: www.addaction.org.uk

Tel: 020 7251 5860

Email: info@addaction.org.uk

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

Website: www.adfam.org.uk

Tel: 020 7553 7640

Email: admin@adfam.org.uk

British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Provides information and advice about adoption and fostering and publishes resources.

Website: www.baaf.org.uk

Tel: 020 7421 2600

Email: mail@baaf.org.uk

Corum Children's Legal Centre Provides free independent legal advice and factsheets to children, parents, carers and professionals. **Website:**

www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Family Child and Education Legal Advice Line: 0808 802 0008

Citizens Advice Bureau Helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice through local bureau and website.

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Tel: 08444 111 444

DirectMe Directme provides information on services and activities for children, young people and their families in Barnet.

Website: www.barnet.gov.uk/directme

Family Information Service Tel: 0800 389 8312

Email: directme@barnet.gov.uk

Family Lives Support and information for anyone parenting a child or teenager. A free-phone helpline, online chat and courses for parents.

Website: www.familylives.org.uk

Tel: 0808 800 2222

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

Website: www.familyfund.org.uk

Tel: 08449 744 099

Email: info@familyfund.org.uk

Family Rights Group (FRG) Provides advice to parents and other family members whose children are involved with or require children's social care services because of welfare needs or concerns. Publishes resources, helps to develop support groups for family and friends carers, and runs a discussion board.

Website: www.frg.org.uk

Advice line: 0808 801 0366

Email: advice@frg.org.uk

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

Website: www.fostering.net

Fosterline: 0800 040 7675

Email: fosterline@fostering.net

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

Helpline: 0845 434 9585

Welfare benefits advice and information: 0844 357 1033

Support Groups: 0844 3572907

Email: info@grandparents-association.org.uk

Grandparents Plus Champions the role of grandparents and the wider family in children's lives, especially when they take on the caring role in difficult family circumstances.

Website: www.grandparentsplus.org.uk

Tel: 0300 123 7015

Email: advice@grandparentsplus.org.uk

Home-Start Home-Start offers support, friendship and practical help to parents with young children in local communities throughout the UK

Website: www.home-start.org.uk

Home-Start Barnet Website: www.homestartbarnet.org

Home-Start Barnet Email: admin@homestartbarnet.org

Tel: 0800 068 6368 **Home-Start Barnet tel:** 020 8371 0674

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

Website: www.mentoruk.org.uk

Tel: 020 7553 9920

Email: admin@mentoruk.org

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

Website: www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk

Tel: 08456 026627

National Family Mediation (NFM) Provides mediation services to support couples who are separated, and their children and others affected by this. **Website:**

www.nfm.org.uk

Tel: 0300 4000 636

Email: general@nfm.org.uk

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

Website: www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk

Tel: 0161 702 1000

Offenders' Families Helpline Tel: 0808 808 2003

Email: info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.co.uk

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

Website: www.prisonadvice.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7735 9535

Email: info@prisonadvice.org.uk

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

Website: www.talktofrank.com

24 hour advice line: 0800 77 66 00

Text: 82111

Email: frank@talktofrank.com

Voice Advocacy organisation for children living away from home or in need. **Website:** www.voiceyp.org
Tel: 020 7833 5792
Young person's advice line: 0808 800 5792
Email: info@voiceyp.org

Young Minds Works to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people and empowering their parents and carers.
Website: www.youngminds.org.uk
Tel: 020 7089 5050
Parents helpline: 0808 802 5544
Email: parents@youngminds.org.uk
