

Together for Children's Kinship Local Offer

June 2026

To be read in conjunction with The Information for Kinship Carers and Special Guardians Handbook



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Introduction

Children may be brought up by members of their extended family, friends or other people who are connected with them, for a variety of reasons and in a range of different arrangements.

Family and friend carers play a unique role in enabling children and young people to remain with people they know and trust if they cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents. Many children who live in family and friends care do well in life, but some can be vulnerable and require support to reach their potential. Many family and friends carers both want and need support to enable them to meet the needs of the children that they care for.

The Family and Friends Care Guidance (2010) makes it clear that children and young people who are unable to live with their parents should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare, whether or not they are cared for by the Local Authority. Where Local Authority is discussed in this Policy, for Sunderland this relates to Together for Children (TFC). Some family and friends carers may be older, in poorer health and less well off financially than others who may be looking after children and young people. Caring for another child or young person is likely to significantly change family life both for the carers and for the child or young person.

In statutory guidance, a family and friends carer means someone who is a family member or friend of a child, or has some other pre-existing relationship with the child, and with whom the child is living full time. This could be in any of the following circumstances:

- 1) In informal arrangements with a relative (relative is defined by section 105 of the Children Act 1989 as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step parent
- 2) In informal arrangements with friends or other family members which last for a period of less than 28 days (if the intention is for the arrangement to last more than 28 days, then this may be private fostering)

- 3) As a private fostering arrangement
- 4) As a cared for child with foster carers approved by a fostering service provider
- 5) Under a Child Arrangements Order or a Special Guardianship Order
- 6) In arrangements which may lead to an Adoption Order

It has been estimated (2018, national data) that up to 300 000 children are cared for full time by family and friends carers, of whom over 7000 are cared for children with family and friends foster carers. TFC acknowledges the commitment and dedication that many kinship families make in order to care for their children, often having to change their lifestyle and plans for the future. This Kinship Local Offer sets out how TFC will help kinship carers, to give children and young people the best possible family experience whatever the child's legal status, needs and circumstances.

To highlight its commitment to kinship carers, TFC created a dedicated team in 2019, the Kinship Team, to promote expertise and to develop practice within this area.

The Kinship Team is available for all kinship carers to contact, regardless of the circumstances of the care arrangement, including those who have recently moved to the local area. Others affected by kinship arrangements who are seeking support or advice, including parents, can also make contact. The contact details for the Kinship Team are kinshipteam@togetherforchildren.org.uk or call the Duty Worker on 0191 561 5667.

Our values, principles and objectives

A key principle of the Children Act 1989 is that children are best brought up within their families and, for the purposes of the Act, the term 'family' is to be understood broadly and could include-relatives, friends and other significant people in the child or young person's life. The child's welfare being paramount is a central value, along with the child or young person's family being involved in the decision making and the planning for the future for the child or young person.

Children should be enabled to live within their families unless this is not consistent with their welfare. The children and their families should be

provided with appropriate support based on the individual child or young person's needs.

If the Local Authority does need to care for a child or young person they have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to place with relatives or with people with whom the child or young person is connected, as an alternative to being cared for by strangers, unless this is not consistent with the child or young person's welfare.

Children and young people have the right to have the opportunity to develop secure attachments to carers who are capable of providing safe, effective and loving care for the duration of their childhood.

The Kinship Team and colleagues within TFC are committed to working with carers, children and young people in order to promote working together and the best outcomes possible.

Professional practice

TFC is committed to using sensitive and appropriate language as identified by members of TFC's Change Council and following feedback from children and young people.

Information from children, young people, kinship carers and families will be treated sensitively and stored confidentially. The consent of kinship carers will be gained prior to information about them is sought. In certain instances, information may be requested to be shared with others, for example within legal proceedings and if this occurs, the permission of individuals will be requested.

Evidence base

Most children and young people would prefer their parents to be supported to continue to care for them rather than becoming cared for by the Local Authority. If this is not possible, children and young people say they would prefer to live with members of their extended family. However, there can be an expectation that there is some form of assessment of the proposed carers, recognising that not all family members would be the right people to care for them.

Research has found that family and friends foster cared for arrangements last longer than arrangements with unrelated carers.

TFC works closely with the children and families who receive services from the Local Authority, to ensure that service provision is responsive to their expressed needs.

TFC has made a commitment to children and young people, to listen to what they say and action their wishes when possible and giving reasons, if this is not possible.

Cared for children and their parents are encouraged to express their views as part of the child's review process and as part of the review of the approval of kinship foster carers.

As part of the assessment of kinship foster carers, the Local Authority consults with the prospective carers and their family, to ensure their voices are heard and the child's needs are met. Assessments seek the views of children and their wider family members.

The legal framework

There are many options for caring for somebody else's child and they all have their own legal framework.

If the Local Authority becomes involved, an assessment will be undertaken as to how best to meet the child or young person's needs. A decision will be made as to the support that will be required and whether or not the child or young person would need to become cared for.

The Family and Friends Care guidance 2.12 states:

“Local authorities and their partners should make sure that family and friends carers are aware of relevant support services, and that these can be readily accessed by those caring for children whether or not these are cared for by the Local Authority.

Whilst recognising the requirements which may go with a particular legal status, it is essential that services are not allocated solely on the basis of the child's legal status, and that commissioners and providers of services are aware that many children in family and friends care have experienced multiple adversities similar to those of children who are cared for by Local Authorities.

Where support services are identified as necessary to meet the child's needs, these should not be withheld merely because the child is living with a carer under an informal arrangement rather than in a placement with a foster carer or with a person with a residence or Special Guardianship Order or an adopter.”

The Local Authority has a duty to provide support under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to children in need, which will ensure that wherever possible children's needs are met through the best use of resources designed to safeguard and promote their welfare. This will help to ensure that, subject to meeting the statutory criteria, children do not become cared for by the Local Authority unless that is the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote the child or young person's welfare.

Support services are available to families without the child or young person becoming cared for and therefore children should not become cared for if the only reason for doing so, is to access these services. Local authorities should make the decision of whether or not a child or young person becomes cared for (or ceases to be cared for), based on an assessment of the individual child or young person's needs and circumstances.



Permanence focus

There is a focus at TFC which appropriately promotes permanence for children and young people by seeking to enable those who cannot live with their parents to remain with members of their extended family or friends. For most cared for children, permanence is achieved through a successful return to their parent's care. Where this is not possible, family and friend's care can provide an alternative route to permanence for children. Within this Kinship Local Offer there is a focus upon narrowing the gap in outcomes between children who have experienced challenges and their peers and sets out TFC's approach, in regards to promoting and supporting the needs of children living with kinship carers.

The established Kinship Team within TFC, is a specialist team focused upon the assessment and support of kinship carers.

In establishing this Kinship Local Offer current working practices and feedback to workers from kinship carers have been utilised.

Management accountability

The Head of Service for Cared for Children is the senior manager with responsibility for this Kinship Local Offer.

The Director of Children's Social Care, Senior Managers and the Team Manager for the Kinship Team will ensure that TFC staff understand the Kinship Local Offer, have appropriate training and operate within the framework, so that it is applied in a consistent and fair manner across the area. The Director of Children's Social Care and the Head of Service will ensure that local partners are aware of their responsibilities towards children living in these arrangements and are proactive in meeting their needs. They will also take a lead role in ensuring that the Kinship Local Offer is publicised, so that anyone considering becoming a family and friends carer can be aware of its content and are clear about how to contact TFC and other agencies for further information.

Staff within the Kinship Team will be fully familiar with their roles and responsibilities.



TFC's approach

Early support

The majority of kinship arrangements work well and meet the needs of the child with the support of universal agencies such as health, education and housing services. It is important, however, that any difficulties are responded to early. Families may need advice and assistance during the early stages of considering whether to care for a relative or a friend's child, in order to weigh up the options and to consider what support services they might require. This advice can be obtained from a variety of sources, including the child's social worker, a worker from the Kinship Team and local support agencies.

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 universal and targeted services may be needed. Workers involved would promote the use of relevant services.

There are also a wide range of resources available to support children in the local area, including children's centres, early year's provision, local family hubs, day care and out of school services, schools and colleges, health services, leisure facilities, youth support services and specific support groups for kinship carers. Kinship carers are encouraged to access all the universal services available both locally and nationally.

Family group conferences

Where there are support needs or concerns about children's welfare and those at risk of harm, TFC will always look within the connected network for a short-term and/or permanent solution for the child and a Family Group Conference may be considered in order to achieve this. Family Group Conferences are meetings with family members, which aim to achieve the best outcomes for children.

A Family Group Conference (FGC) is arranged by a specialist worker within TFC, who has experience of such meetings and has a level of independence. They visit the child, their parents, and members of the child's wider family

in preparation of the FGC. The child should be offered support to help them participate in the meeting.

FGCs are intended as a respectful and empowering process in which parents, children and members of the wider family are given clear information about the worries and are asked to produce a plan which addresses those worries and answer specific queries. This plan may involve extended family members supporting the child and parents but it may also involve the child living with a connected carer. The family will be made aware of the support services that are available to them.

Where the plan meets the needs to safeguard the child, TFC would look to agreeing the plan. This plan can be reviewed at the request of the family or by workers involved. FGCs can be arranged at any time of the process, for example once a child is living with kinship carers and consideration is required in terms of future family time arrangements.

Together for Children will also always look at the family network for kinship carers and the children they care for and may use family network meetings (FNMs) to identify any support and safety that the network can provide.

During a FNM, the family network will make a clear plan with rules about what this will look like in practice. FNMs will usually be run by a child's social worker and/or a kinship social worker.

The family network and social worker(s) will have a way to record progress (e.g. Whatsapp group or written journal) and will come together regularly to review the plan.

Financial support

Parents retain their responsibility for maintenance of their children if they live with informal family and friends carers. However, it can be a significant burden to informal family and friends carers who may not have the financial resources to maintain a child. Some family and friends carers will need to give up work in order to provide care for a child or young person.

Informal family and friends carers should access benefits advice to ensure that they claim all the benefits and tax credits to which they are entitled.

However, there may still be financial difficulties. Local authorities have the power to make payments to children in need under Section 17 of the

Children Act 1989. Payments can be made as a one off payment which, for example, could help with equipping a bedroom for the child or young person or the Local Authority could provide financial help on a regular basis.

The child's social worker will discuss with parents and those caring for the child the need for financial support and if this is considered necessary to meet the child's needs and any financial support will be made in line with TFC's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

If the child or young person does require to be cared for by the Local Authority and moves into foster care, then the fostering allowances would be paid to the carer at the appropriate rate.

Accommodation

Sometimes family and friends carers will find that taking a child or children into their home places undue pressure on their accommodation.

TFC would offer support to kinship carers living in social housing, in terms of their housing situation should they be required to apply for alternative accommodation, for example a larger property.

Education

TFC recognises the importance of continuity of education for children and young people.

Advice and guidance on educational matters for children cared for by kinship carers will be provided, by advising carers of the most appropriate services.

Young people aged 16–19 in kinship carer arrangements may be entitled to the Government funded bursary scheme. Priority schools admissions are available for those children who have been cared for but who are now living with their family under a Child Arrangements Order, Special Guardianship Order or Adoption Order.

Currently from the age of two years, children who have had a previous cared for experience, are entitled to up to 15 free nursery hours per week for 38 weeks of the year, from the term after their second birthday. Carers would speak to their nursery provider regarding this.

Virtual Schools

In 2022, Virtual School Headteachers were given an extension to their role and became the 'Strategic lead to champion the educational attendance, attainment and progress of children who have, or have had, a social worker'. The 2022 extension to the role was further expanded in 2024 to include children who live with a Kinship Carer. The Kinship Team can support in terms of involvement from the Virtual School, who are very much focused on ensuring that the needs of children are promoted. Helen Shaw, Education Advisor at the Virtual School, Together for Children Sunderland, has provided the following information-

The Virtual School, Together for Children, is not an actual physical school. We are a team of dedicated professionals with a wide range of experience in education who are committed to ensuring the best possible life chances for children and young people. We provide personalised support to ensure Cared for Children (CfC) receive the best educational experiences to maximise their outcomes. The Virtual School also has a duty to promote the education of previously cared for children (PCfC), children who have or have ever had a social worker (CWSW), as well as those children who live with kinship carers (CKC), through the provision of advice, guidance, representation and raising awareness of the barriers these children and young people may face in their education.

The Virtual School Team provide support for young people, parent/carers, education and social work colleagues as well as multi-agency professionals on a wide range of educational issues including:

- School and college admissions
- Attendance and suspension/exclusions
- School transitions
- Attainment and progress
- SEND and early identification of additional educational needs
- Aspirations and Post 16 pathways
- Understanding of the effect of adverse childhood experiences on educational progress
- Trauma-informed, attachment aware practice

We want young people to achieve beyond expectations, build upon their successes, and improve their progression and future economic well-being. We offer training, information gathering and network opportunities for school professionals, TFC colleagues, parents and carers, including our Virtual Reality Headset training which is an immersive experience to help develop understanding of trauma and how this impacts children and young people. We work with school professionals on a variety of topics such as the key adult role and what this means. We also organise regular education information sessions for carers which can be bespoke to meet needs and interests.

Supporting family time (contact)

The Local Authority has a duty to promote family time for all children in need, with their families. However, depending on the legal status this duty is different. Schedule 2 (Children Act 1989) paragraph 10 states that "Every Local Authority shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable where any child within their area who is in need and whom they are not looking after, is living apart from their family - a) to enable him to live with his family and b) to promote contact between him and his family, if in their opinion it is necessary to do so, in order to safeguard or promote his welfare".

If the child or young person is cared for by the Local Authority paragraph 15 of Schedule 2 of the Children Act states that "the authority shall unless it is not reasonably practicable or consistent with his welfare, endeavour to promote contact between the child and - a) his parents; b) any person who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him; and c) any relative, friend or other person connected with him".

Management of family time arrangements can cause some challenges for those involved. This can be due to family dynamics and how the parents of the child or young person may be viewing the arrangement.

If there are any concerns regarding safeguarding the child or young person's welfare, then there will be a need for TFC's Children's Services to be involved and ensure that safe family time arrangements are made.

Support groups

Kinship carers may sometimes feel isolated when they take on this role, particularly when they are managing the complex needs of vulnerable children for which they had not planned. Getting together with others in a similar position can often be an invaluable source of support in itself. Support groups are a valuable way of helping carers to access information about services which will help them to care for the children, as well as ensuring that they are responded to with understanding and respect and receive emotional support. The Kinship Team is committed to providing support groups and kinship carers who have/are working with the Agency will be invited, if they wish to be. Some of the support groups will have a theme, for example in terms of managing and responding to different behaviours, so relevant and supportive information is discussed. There are also independent support groups which are available both locally and nationally.

The Kinship Team responds to feedback from kinship carers and will change the location, day and time of support groups to best meet the needs of those attending. More convenient community facilities are utilised, including local Best Start Family Hubs, following feedback from kinship carers.

Support - all carers

The need for support services from the Local Authority will be assessed as part of the assessment process of kinship carers and by a child or young person's social worker, in their role. Other community based services, including the Child and Young People's Service, can be accessed via other professionals such as a health visitor, GP or the child's school.

Private fostering arrangements

A private fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement of a Local Authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or 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. However, a person who is a relative under the Children Act 1989 i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of full or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent cannot be a private foster carer.

The period for which the child lives with the private foster carer should be continuous, but that continuity is not broken by the occasional short break.

If a child or young person is living in a private fostering arrangement, the private foster carer becomes responsible for providing the day to day care of the child or young person in a way which will promote and safeguard his or her welfare. Overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the privately fostered child remains with the parent or other person with parental responsibility. Local Authorities do not formally approve or register private foster carers. However, it is the duty of Local Authorities to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are, or will be, privately fostered within their area is being, or will be, satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. It is the Local Authority in whose area the privately fostered child resides which has legal duties in respect of that child.

Where a child is to live with private foster carers, it is a legal requirement for the Local Authority to be notified about the proposed arrangement, in writing, at least six weeks before an arrangement begins (or immediately where the arrangement is to begin) within six weeks. There is also a notification requirement on any person (including parents) who is involved in arranging for a child to be privately fostered, or who becomes aware of such an arrangement.

After a notification is received about a private fostering arrangement TFC will arrange to complete a Private Fostering Assessment and regular visits will be made to observe that the child or young person is being appropriately looked after and to discuss if we can also give help and give advice to the carers, parents and the young person. According to Regulation 8 of the Private Fostering Regulations 2005, visits will be conducted at least every six weeks in the first year of the private fostering arrangement and at least every twelve weeks each subsequent year.



Kinship Foster Carers - family and friends foster carers

Assessment

If, following assessment, the plan for the child or young person is to be cared for (Section 20 or Section 31 of the Children Act 1989) they must be cared for by an approved foster carer.

TFC will take a pro-active approach to identifying, considering and supporting kinship carers in the child's network who may be able to care for the child. A Family Group Conference can be held at this stage or later on in the process. If the care is needed quickly, family and friends carers can be temporarily approved by a Service Manager within TFC, for 16 weeks (this can be extended for a further 8 weeks in some circumstances, which is a Regulation 25 approval), following the completion of a Schedule Four Viability Assessment of proposed kinship carers. During the sixteen week period, a foster carer assessment (Form C) will be completed which also includes a number of Agency checks e.g. DBS, schools, health and the connected carers will be asked to identify referees who will be asked to provide information about them. The Form C is presented to the Fostering and Permanence Panel, who make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Manager (Head of Service for Cared for Children) as to whether the carers should be fully approved.

In considering whether a relative, friend or other connected person should be approved as a foster carer, consideration must be taken of the needs, wishes and feelings of the child concerned and the capacity of the carer to meet those particular needs.

The assessment will balance the strengths of the carers arising from their position within the family network against any aspects which may be more challenging. The carer's past experiences of parenting will be assessed as part of a fuller picture of their capacity to care for the child.

The legal framework for formal placements of connected carers is within Regulation 24 of the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Updated 2015).

Support for kinship carers

Kinship foster carers will be involved with all the processes that are in place to ensure that the child receives appropriate care and support, for example, contributing to reviews of the child's Care Plan, working with professionals, including the child's social worker and promoting the child's education and health needs.

Once approved as foster carers, kinship carers will receive support and supervision from a Fostering Social Worker, generally the same worker who completed their assessment discussed above. In addition, the child will have a plan which sets out the specific arrangements surrounding the child and the carers, including the expectations of the kinship carers and the support they can expect to receive to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities for the child. A Delegated Responsibility agreement will be drawn up in order to clarify day to day/specific and longer term decision making the carers and child are allowed to make. The support that is provided to kinship foster carers is set out below.

When cared for by a kinship foster carer, the child's care continues to be managed by a social worker to ensure their needs are being met. The Fostering Social Worker, from the Kinship Team, will provide support and supervision. Visits will take place on a regular basis.

A cared for agreement will be drawn up and signed by the kinship carer, which sets out how the carer will work with TFC and about the support and training that will be provided.

As discussed in Section 3, an approved kinship carer will receive a fostering allowance to cover the cost of caring for the child. When receiving this allowance, the carers will not be able to claim other benefits, such as Child Benefit or Child Tax Credits because the fostering allowance includes this element of payment. Kinship carers will receive fostering allowances for as long as they care for the child as a foster carer, following approval. A fostering fee is also payable post full approval.

All kinship carers, temporarily approved or fully approved under the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, are entitled to training and support. The allocated Fostering Social Worker will be responsible for overseeing the carer's support, supervision, training and development. Support groups and training are provided to kinship carers.

Training

There are training opportunities for all kinship carers. The training provided reflects what kinship carers have requested or expressed an interest in. The Kinship Team provides relevant training which supports kinship carers in their care and support to children, and this currently includes the Solihull Therapeutic Training, PACE training and Secure Base.

Children Who Foster

Following a request from kinship carers, a Fostering Social Worker from the Kinship Team works with a colleague from the Fostering Service to facilitate a children's group for children of kinship carers/foster carers, where they can share their experiences and meet with others in the same situation as themselves. The group is focused upon and celebrates them as significant individuals also living within the 'fostering' household.

Foster carer reviews

Kinship carers will have their first Foster Carer Review within the first year of their approval, following a positive recommendation from the Fostering and Permanency Panel and the subsequent agreement of the Agency Decision Maker. The Review is booked in within ten months from this date, so it takes place within the twelve month timescale. This gives the kinship carer a suitable timeframe to attend training and support groups. Discussions and preparations for the Review take place within foster carer supervision and there is support provided to the kinship carer, regarding the completion of the documentation. Following the completion of the first Foster Carer Review, it is presented to the Fostering and Permanence Panel and the Agency Decision Maker. Subsequent Foster Carer Reviews will take place annually.

Participation and Engagement

When working with the Kinship Team there is an opportunity for kinship carers and children and young people to discuss and express their views about the work completed and the role of the team. Your views are welcomed as the team wants to keep evolving to meet the needs of kinship

carers and their families. TFC's Practice Development Team are running participation and engagement sessions for children and young people who are cared for by kinship carers, which is an opportunity for them to talk about their experiences, what has helped them and what would support them further. Since the Kinship Team has been developed we have wanted to hear from those affected by services and the work we do, in order for us to have greater understanding and be able to improve.

Care planning and alternatives to children being cared for

Permanence planning

Permanency planning is based on the philosophy that every child has the right to a permanent and stable home, preferably with his or her own family. The primary focus of permanency planning is to prevent children remaining unnecessarily cared for and to ensure the child's needs are met in a secure and loving family.

TFC, as corporate parent for cared for children, will work diligently to find permanent, safe homes for children in care, in a timely manner, as encompassed within TFC's Children's Social Care Early Permanence Planning Strategy (2020). The best possible care involves giving children security, stability and love through their childhood and beyond.

At any stage of the assessment process where it is considered in the child's best interests, would promote their welfare and achieve a permanence arrangement, consideration will be given to supporting the kinship carers to apply for an appropriate legal Order giving them parental responsibility. The relevant Orders are a Child Arrangements Order, Special Guardianship Order or an Adoption Order. See below for an explanation of these Orders. TFC will consider the payment of legal advice for kinship carers in these situations and financial support towards legal costs. Decisions about these costs will require the agreement of the relevant Head of Service/Service Manager.

TFC will review the child's care plan through the care planning process to ensure that the child does not remain cared for, for longer than necessary. The review will be chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer for the child.

Child Arrangements Order

A Child Arrangements Order may be helpful in situations where family or friends are caring long-term for children. Child Arrangements Order holders

acquire shared parental responsibility for the child and have to consult with everyone who has parental responsibility for the child about decisions affecting the child.

Although the parent, family member or friend will share parental responsibility, a Child Arrangements Order determines with whom the child is to live and prevents parents from removing the child from the carer. Where TFC is involved a support plan outlining the needs of the child, carers and other significant people, including parents, is compiled and presented to Court, following oversight from the Service Manager for Cared for Children. This covers a range of support areas, including family time, education, finance, health, emotional and social development and the needs of the wider family.

Special Guardianship Order

A Special Guardianship Order made by a Court determines that a child or a young person lives with a specified person permanently. The Special Guardian acquires enhanced parental responsibility for the child and makes day to day decisions about the child's care. Parental responsibility is shared with the child's parents, but the Special Guardian has the primary role as they care for the child.

Both Agency and Non Agency (private) applications require a SGO assessment. Where TFC is involved a support plan outlining the needs of the child, carers and other significant people, including parents, is compiled and presented to Court, following oversight from the Service Manager for Cared for Children at the Special Guardianship Order Panel. This covers a range of support areas, including family time, education, health, finance, emotional and social development and the needs of the wider family. There is more information available about Special Guardianship within 'The Information for Kinship Carers and Special Guardians Handbook', this is available by contacting the Kinship Team on email kinshipteam@togetherforchildren.org.uk or call the Duty Worker on 0191 561 5667.

Adoption Order

In some circumstances it may be appropriate for a child to be adopted by family or friends. When a child is adopted, the child's parents lose

all parental responsibility and the adoptive parent acquires parental responsibility for the child. The adoptive parents become the legal parents and the birth parents cease to be the legal parents, although the child in most cases maintains some form of contact with their birth parents, often indirect but sometimes face to face contact.

It is acknowledged that adoption has life long implications and TFC's Adoption Team offers adoption support services for adopted people, their birth families and their adoptive families. Support plans are compiled as part of the adoption assessment process which cover areas including the child's needs in terms of understanding adoption throughout their childhood, education, health, contact, emotional and social needs and finance. The needs of adoptive parents and other significant people, including birth parents and brothers and sisters, are also considered.

If you are thinking about adopting a child, please contact our Adoption Team on 0191 561 2221. They will give you more information about the process and invite you along to an information session.

Care leavers and 'Staying Put'

TFC is committed to young people staying with their kinship carers after the age of 18 and has a 'Staying Put' policy. Staying Put is the name that the government has given to arrangements whereby a young person aged 18 and above, remains living with their former foster carer. The aim of Staying Put is to help young people make the transition to independence and adulthood at a pace, and within a timescale that suits them, rather than having to move when they reach the age of 18.

Planning for a Staying Put arrangement at TFC starts to take place before a young person reaches the age of 16. The young person's social worker will meet with the carer and young person prior to the young person's 16th birthday to explain the Staying Put policy and to discuss options. The social worker from the Next Steps Team will provide guidance and support to the young person and their carers, who will have their own worker.



Complaints

A kinship carer can contact the Team Manager of the Kinship Team if they wish to discuss levels of support or wish to raise an issue. They can also access TFC's complaints process if they feel this is required. The contact details for this are customerfeedback@togetherforchildren.org.uk or by calling 0191 561 7997.

Your views

We would very much like to hear from you about your views or comments. Please send your feedback to: kinshipteam@togetherforchildren.org.uk



Glossary and definitions

Cared for child - the child is 'in care' or 'accommodated' by the Local Authority/TFC.

In care - a Court has made an Interim or Full Care Order, or an Emergency Protection Order on the child which gives the Local Authority/TFC the power to remove the child from the care of their parents.

Accommodated - the child is being cared for by the Local Authority/TFC with the agreement of their parents/ others with parental responsibility under Section 20 Children Act 1989.

Connected person - the term used in regulations and guidance to include relatives, friends, and other persons connected to the child.

Parental responsibility - the legal right to make decisions about a child's care and how they are raised.

Child in need - Under Section 17 (10) of the Children Act 1989, a child is a Child in Need if: he/she is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him/her of services by a Local Authority; his/her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him/her of such services; or the child is a disabled child.

Private fostering - an arrangement where a child under 16 (or 18 if the child has a disability), who is cared for by an adult who is not a parent or close relative, where the child is to be cared for in that arrangement for 28 days or more.

Close relative - is defined as: grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step-parent by marriage or civil partnership.

Child Arrangements Order specifying with whom a child will live - it usually lasts until the child is 18. Parental responsibility is shared with the parents. Carers can apply after caring for the child for one year.

Special Guardianship Order - Like a Child Arrangements Order specifying with whom the child will live, this Court Order states where a child should live and gives the carer parental responsibility. A Special Guardianship

Order gives the carer more authority to make decisions than a Child Arrangements Order.

Adoption Order - a Court Order made as part of the adoption process. All parental rights and responsibilities for a child are permanently transferred to the adoptive parent.

Family Group Conference - a decision-making meeting in which a child's wider family network come together to make a plan about the future arrangements for the child.

Useful organisations and information for kinship carers

Action for Prisoners' Families - works to reduce the negative impact of imprisonment on prisoners' families. Produces publications and resources, and provides advice, information and training as well as networking opportunities. www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk Address: Unit 21, Carlson Court 116 Putney Bridge Road, London, SW15 2NQ Tel: 020 8812 3600 E-mail: info@actionpf.org.uk Advice line: 0808 808 2003 info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk

Addaction - offers a range of support developed for families and carers affected by substance misuse. www.addaction.org.uk Address: 67-69 Cowcross Street, London, EC1M 6PU 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. www.adfam.org.uk Address: 25 Corsham Street, London, N1 6DR Tel: 020 7553 7640 Email: admin@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. www.ace-ed.org.uk Address: 1c Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London, N5 2DQ General Advice line: 0808 800 5793 Exclusion Advice Line: 0808 800 0327 Exclusion Information Line: 020 7704 9822 (24hr answer phone)

BeGrand.net Website - offers information and advice to grandparents, plus online and telephone advice. www.begrand.net Helpline: 0845 434 6835

Children's Legal Centre - provides free independent legal advice and factsheets to children, parents, carers and professionals. www.childrenslegalcentre.com Address: University of Hertfordshire, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Hertfordshire, CO4 3SQ Tel: 01206 877 910 E-mail: clc@hertfordshire.ac.uk Child Law Advice Line: 0808 802 0008

Community Legal Advice - Education: 0845 345 4345

Citizens Advice Bureau - helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, Independent and confidential advice through local bureaux and website. www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Coram BAAF - supports agencies and professionals who work with children and young people in care. Website: <http://www.corambaaf.org.uk/>

Department for Education - lists details of telephone help lines and online services to provide information, advice support on a range of issues.

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. Address: 4 Alpha Court, Monks Cross Drive, York, YO32 9WN www.familyfund.org.uk Tel: 0845 130 4542 Email: info@familyfund.org.uk

Family Rights Group (FGR) - 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 and runs a discussion board. www.frg.org.uk Address: Second Floor, The Print House, 18 Ashwin Street, London, E8 3DL Tel: 020 7923 2628 Advice line: 0800 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 cared for children. Publishes resources and runs Fosterline, a confidential advice line for foster carers including concerns about a child's future, allegations and complaints, legislation and financial matters. www.fostering.net Address: 87 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8HA Email: info@fostering.net Tel: 020 7620 6400 Fosterline: 0800 040 7675 Email: fosterline@fostering.net

Kinship - champions the role of kinship carers and the wider family in children's lives, providing support and training opportunities and local/national updates www.kinship.org.uk

Mentor UK - promotes the health and wellbeing of children and young people to reduce the impact that drugs can do to lives. www.mentoruk.org.uk Address: Fourth Floor, 74 Great Eastern Street, London, EC2A 3JG Tel: 020 7739 8494 Email: admin@mentoruk.org

More Than Grandparents - Supporting Kinship Families,
Morethangrandparents@gmail.com Local charity in Sunderland, working
with and providing support to kinship families

Family Mediation Helpline - provides information and advice about family
mediation services and eligibility for public funding. 08456 026627 www.
familymediationhelpline.co.uk

Parents Against Drug Abuse (PADA) - delivers support and services to the
families of substance users, including a national helpline. Tel: 0151 649
1580. National Families Helpline: 08457 023867

Parentline Plus - provides help and support in all aspects of family life,
including information, an online chat facility and a 24 hour helpline. www.
familylives.org.uk Address: CAN Mezzanine 49-51 East Road, London,
N1 6AH. Tel: 020 7553 3080 24hr Advice line: 0808 800 2222 Email:
parentsupport@familylives.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. 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. www.voiceyp.org Address: 320 City Road, London, EC1V 2NZ 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. www.youngminds.org.uk Address: 48-50 St John Street, London,
EC1M 4DG Tel: 020 7336 8445 Parents helpline: 0808 8

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