



Children and Family Support

Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carers

together for
children
SUNDERLAND

Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carer

WHAT IS A FAMILY AND FRIENDS (CONNECTED PERSONS) CARER?

This is when a child or young person who is 'looked after' by the Local Authority is placed with family member/s (other than a parent) or a friend who knows the child very well.

A child or young person is described as 'looked after' if they are accommodated by the Local Authority under Section 20 of The Children Act 1989 or subject to an Interim or Full Care Order issued by the Court.

WHO ARE FAMILY AND FRIENDS (CONNECTED PERSONS) CARERS?

Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carers can be:

- Grandparents
- Aunts and Uncles
- Adult brothers and sisters
- Other family members or friends of the family who have an important relationship with the child or young person

HOW DO I BECOME A FAMILY AND FRIENDS (CONNECTED PERSONS) CARER?

If a child becomes 'looked after' by the Local Authority, the child or young person's Allocated Social Worker will explore whether the child could be placed with his/her family or with someone well known to the child. If a family member or friend wanted to care for the child a social worker would need to assess whether this was safe and suitable and in the best interests of the child.

WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED OF ME AS A FAMILY AND FRIENDS (CONNECTED PERSONS) CARER?

You will be expected to:

- Provide good quality care for the child you are looking after
- Work jointly as part of a team of professionals, social workers, teachers, health workers, involved in meeting the child's needs
- Work co-operatively with all agencies involved, including being open and honest with professionals
- Attend pre and post-approval training, to help further develop your own skills and understanding of what is involved in caring for a looked after child
- Attend support groups and meet other connected carers
- Ensure the child is available for regular visits from their social worker, who will on occasions need to see the child alone

Assessment Process

WHAT IS THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

The assessment process for Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carers includes the following:

- You will be asked to have a full medical check with your GP. This will be paid for by together for children
- You will be asked to provide two personal referees (in addition to a reference from your family), who are not related to you and could comment on your suitability as a prospective carer. Referees will also be interviewed by the social worker
- You and members of your household over 18 will be asked to provide relevant ID and agree to a Disclosure and Barring Service check being undertaken

- A Fostering Social Worker will then prepare a report about you which would be presented to the Fostering Panel, who would give their view on whether you should be a Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carer for a particular child

This will be undertaken with you by a qualified social worker. The social worker will support and assist you throughout the process.

During the assessment process you will be asked to attend a four day Skills to Foster Training session with other Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carers. This is not a pass or fail exam, it's about meeting other Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carers in similar situations to yourself and obtaining information on what is going to happen and what may be expected of you in the future.

Please be aware that the child can be placed with the Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carer during the assessment (which can take up to 16 weeks to complete) and the carer will receive payment from when they are initially given temporary approval as a carer.

There are some situations when a person cannot be approved as a Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carer. These include:

- If the carer's home environment is assessed as not safe or secure enough
- The carer has no legal right to remain in the UK
- The carer has a conviction for a criminal offence against a child, an established or recent conviction history or has failed to disclose a criminal conviction
- The carer's Health Assessment shows that the carer is not able to care for the child
- Child Protection Agencies have concerns about the carer or family

What is the role?

WHAT HAPPENS ONCE I HAVE BEEN APPROVED AS A FAMILY AND FRIENDS (CONNECTED PERSONS) CARER?

Once it has been agreed that you can be approved, you will be sent a letter telling you that you are approved as a Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carer. The letter will name the children you are approved to care for.

The following will also take place:

- You will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker who will provide you with support, guidance and regular supervision
- You will receive relevant on-going training and development
- You will be paid a weekly allowance for the child for whom you care for

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER FOR THE CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON IN MY CARE?

The child will have a social worker who will visit him/her at 6 weekly intervals at least, to monitor their progress. This social worker will organise Looked After Reviews and work with other professionals such as health workers and teachers to ensure the child's welfare needs are met.

Allowance

WHAT PAYMENT WILL I RECEIVE?

Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carers will receive a weekly allowance for the child. The amount of the allowance depends on the child's age.

Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carers who receive a Fostering Allowance are not entitled to claim Income Support or Child Benefit for the child or young person in their care.

If you claim Income Support for yourself and your family, this will not be affected by being a Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carer. Job Seekers Allowance, however, may be affected.

The Fostering Allowance will start from the date the child is placed with you. Payment will normally commence two weeks after the child is placed.

This will be explained fully in the Skills to Foster Training session.

CAN I CARE FOR THE CHILD PERMANENTLY?

If the plan is for the child not to return to their parent's care and once everyone is satisfied that the placement is fully meeting the needs of the child, a connected carer may wish to apply to the court for an order which provides additional legal responsibility for the child's care on a more permanent basis. Your supervising social worker will discuss these options with you.

The orders available are:

- Child Arrangement Order – gives you shared parental responsibility until the child is 16 years old
- Special Guardianship Order – gives you full parental responsibility until the child is 18 years old
- Adoption Order – transfers legal responsibility from the child's parents to you

USEFUL CONTACTS

The Family Rights Group

0808 8010366

www.frg.org.uk/

Fostering Network

0800 0407675

www.fostering.net/

Grandparents Plus

0300 1237015

www.grandparentsplus.org.uk

Sunderland Fostering Service

0191 5612223

Sunderland Foster Care Association

0191 5612223

If any information in this leaflet needs to be explained or clarified then contact the Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Carers Social Workers in the Fostering Team on 0191 561 2223.

This Information is produced by Sunderland City Council. It can be made available on request in Braille, Large Print or Audio format. If English is not your first language we can arrange for an interpreter to explain it to you.

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