



**Borough of Poole
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE - SOCIAL CARE**

FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARE STRATEGY

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Authorised by: Gerry Moore, Service Unit Head

Signed:

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1. Introduction

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

1.2 The Department for Education (DFE) has produced [Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities: Family and Friends Care](#) (2010) which sets out expectations in relation to Local Authorities to ensure 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 looked after.

1.3 This Borough of Poole Family and Friends Care Strategy sets out the Borough of Poole's approach towards promoting and supporting the needs of children cared for by family and friends. It covers the assessments which will be carried out to determine the services required and sets out what the Borough of Poole will do to deliver effective services to children and young people who are living with family members or friends in any of the following circumstances:

- Family Care (informal)
- Private Fostering arrangement
- Family and Friends Foster Care
- Residence Order
- Special Guardianship Order
- Adoption

The Manager with overall responsibility for this strategy is Principal Manager Children in Care Services.

2. Key principles

2.1 Children's welfare and their best interest will always be at the centre of the work Borough of Poole undertakes.

2.2 Children's experiences, their wishes and feelings will always be considered in any processes which are making decisions about their care.

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- 2.3 Support will be based on the needs of the child rather than merely their legal status. The Borough of Poole will seek to ensure that family and friends carers are provided with support to ensure that children do not come into care or remain in care for longer than is needed.
- 2.4 Children should be enabled to live within their families unless this is not consistent with their welfare. The Borough of Poole will therefore work to keep children within their own families and provide services to support families, wherever this is consistent with the child's safety and well-being.
- 2.5 Where a child cannot live within their immediate family and the Borough is considering the need to bring the child into Care, the Borough will make strenuous efforts to identify potential carers within the child's network of family and friends who are able and willing to care for the child.
- 2.6 Permanence¹ for children will be promoted by seeking to enable those who cannot live with their parents to remain with members of their extended family or friends.

3. Strategic Approach

- 3.1 The Borough of Poole will consider the needs of children in different circumstances in the local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- 3.2 Integrated public services, working in partnership with the private and voluntary sector will help ensure easy access to services.
- 3.3 Early interventions, including children's centres will be aware and sensitive to the needs of children and their carers. Support at universal, universal plus, partnership plus and statutory/specialist levels will be available, depending on assessed need (See Borough of Poole Threshold Document).
- 3.4 Allocation of service will be based on need, irrespective of their status (ie. child in care vs child in informal arrangement with relatives).
- 3.5 Information will be available to the public about the relevant support services available, primarily through the Family Information Service².
- 3.6 Service providers will be aware of the particular needs and possible disadvantages experienced by children in Family and Friends Care.
- 3.7 The Borough of Poole aims for children not to become looked after unless to do so is the most appropriate way to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

¹ Permanence is the legal framework of emotional, physical and legal conditions that give a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity.

² <http://www.poolefamilyinformationdirectory.com/kb5/poole/fis/home.page>

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4. Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.1 Practice in Children's Services is sensitive to diversity and any assessment will take into account the individual needs and experiences of children and young people.
- 4.2 Impact assessments are undertaken to ensure that services provided do not negatively impact on people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act.

5. Research supporting Family and Friends Care

- 5.1 It is recognised Family and Friends Care can provide, where appropriate, a better alternative to growing up in the care of the local authority. This is particularly the case where the arrangement is supported by a residence order or a special guardianship order or through adoption.
- 5.2 Many children who live in Family and Friends Care do well in life, but others are vulnerable to failing to achieve good outcomes. Many family and friends carers both want and need support to enable them to meet the needs of the children they care for.
- 5.3 [Appendix 2](#) is an extract from Family and Friends care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (p8. 2.4-.2.8) setting out 'Challenges facing family and friends carers'. This is reproduced here to ensure professionals are aware of the vulnerabilities some children and young people in this group experience.
- 5.4 Key managers in Poole will have access to management information which identifies the number of family and friends foster carers, and of those to whom they are providing special guardianship or adoption support services. The information will be available to managers and staff in Children and Young People Social Care as well as Children Young People and Learning and partner agencies.

6. Understanding the different types of Family and Friends Care and their Legal Status

- 6.1 The work across Family and friends Care is guided by [Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities: Family and Friends Care](#) (2010)
- 6.2 There are 6 ways in which family and friends may care for children and young people:
- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Family Care (informal) | Private fostering arrangement |
| Family and Friends Foster Care | Residence Order |
| Special Guardianship Order | Adoption |
- 6.3 Table 1 below shows the routes into these types of arrangements and the legislation that underpins them. There are separate policies supporting the detailed procedures for each of these areas.

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Table 1 - Route into the caring arrangement, parental responsibility and Legislation applying to arrangements

	Family Care (informal)	Private Fostering	Family and Friend Foster Care	Residence Order	Special Guardianship Order	Adoption
Route into caring arrangement	The relative has chosen to take on the care of the child but does not have parental responsibility, and the arrangement was not made by the Local Authority. This arrangement can only be made with a relative ³ . The Child is not a Child in Care. The Relative may perceive the parents to be unable to care for the child, or the parents may be dead or unavailable (eg in prison) or there may be an arrangement between relatives due to difficult family circumstances.	This is a private arrangement whereby the child is being cared for for 28 days or more (or the intention is that it will last 28 days or more) by anyone who does not have parental responsibility and is not a relative as defined in footnote 3. The Child is not a Child in Care.	The child has been placed with the relative or friend by the local authority, because the person who had been caring for the child was deemed not to be providing suitable care. The child is a looked after child and so the local authority must approve the relative or friend as a local authority foster carers. The child may be in Care with the agreement of the parents (s20) or subject to a care order.	The child may be at risk of coming into care or be in care and a family or friend applies for an order to care for them, or Application can be made without the support of parents or the Local Authority. Relatives may care for an order after the child has lived with them for one year.		An Adoption can be granted with the consent of the birth parents or under a placement order by a Court. Family and Friends Foster Carers can apply for an Adoption Order after a year of caring for the child. Informal Family carers can apply for adoption after a period of 3 years.
Parental responsibility	Parental Responsibility remains with birth parents but the person who cares for the child may do what is reasonable to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.	Parental Responsibility remains with birth parents	Parental Responsibility remains with birth parents if the child is in s20 Care. Where the child is in Care under a Care Order the Local Authority has PR and determines the extent to which it may be exercised by others.	Shared by Parents and holder of residence order.	The Special Guardian may exercise PR to the exclusion of all others with PR, apart from another Special Guardian.	PR transfers to adopters and ends for birth parents.
legislation		Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering, DfES 2005	The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013		Special Guardianship Guidance, DfE 2005	Statutory Guidance on Adoption July 2013

³ "relative" means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent, as defined in section 105 of the 1989 Act;

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7. Support that can be expected in different Family and Friends Care arrangements – please see individual policies for more detail.

The DFE have produced a information leaflet for Family and Friends Carers.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-and-friends-carers-information-leaflet>

7.1 Family Care (informal)

7.1.1 There is no role for the Local Authority in approving, monitoring or reviewing this arrangement.

7.1.2 Carers can expect to access all universal services for support and advice in caring for the child.

7.1.3 If there are needs identified, they may be offered an Early Help Assessment by a number of universal services to identify and address any needs of the child's that are not being met in the arrangement.

7.1.4 Where the child's needs are not being met in an arrangement that leads to them being identified as a child in need or at risk, social care will be involved to undertake an Assessment.

7.2 Private fostering arrangement (with non-relatives for longer than 28 days)

7.2.1 Parents and the carers have a legal duty to notify the Local Authority of a private fostering arrangement.

7.2.2 Children's Social Care will then undertake an Initial Assessment of the child's needs and commence an assessment of the private fostering arrangement to ensure the child's needs will be met.

7.2.3 The arrangement is assessed but the carer is not 'approved' in the same way as a Local Authority Foster Carer. The arrangement can be 'prohibited' if assessed by the Local Authority to be unsuitable.

7.2.4 Carers can expect to access all universal services for support and advice in caring for the child.

7.2.5 Children's Social Care will provide advice and support as determined by their assessment. If the child meets a criteria to be a child in need services will be provided under a child in need plan, which is reviewed regularly until the child no longer requires services as a child in need.

7.2.6 Carers in Private Fostering arrangements can access some of the training offered to Foster Carers.

7.2.7 There is a statutory requirement for a social worker to visit the child (minimum 6 weekly in year 1 then 12 weekly after that).

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7.2.8 Further detail about the response to Private Fostering Arrangements is set out in the [Private Fostering Policy](#).

7.3 Family and Friends Foster Carers (Placement with Connected Person)

7.3.1 To enable them to care for a looked after child, relatives, friends or other persons who are connected with the child must be approved as foster carers under the 2011 Regulations or temporarily approved as foster carers under the 2010 Regulations.

7.3.2 A number of matters will require specific consideration in the assessment of family and friends as foster carers:

- Family relationships and safeguarding the child
- Timing of, and attitude towards, the assessment
- Motivation and impact on the family
- Carers' own feelings
- Accommodation
- Location
- Health
- Parenting capacity
- Criminal convictions
- Fostering service expertise

7.3.3 The Carers have a responsibility to act in compliance with the Care Plan for the child and to follow guidance applicable to all foster carers.

7.3.4 Family and Friends Foster Carers can access universal services and will also have access to the support of a Family Placement Worker in the Fostering Team and can access training and resources available to other foster carers.

7.3.5 Children will have an allocated Social Worker while they remain in care and will be visited regularly alongside regular reviews of their needs and plans to meet these. Young people in Family and Friends Foster Care will have the same entitlement to leaving care services as other young people in care.

7.3.6 Carers will be reviewed annually to review their approval and identify additional training and support needs.

7.3.7 The same allowances and fees will be paid to these carers as any other equivalent foster carer.

7.3.8 Further detail about the response to Family and Friends Foster Carers can be found in the Connected Person Policy (to follow).

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7.4 Residence Order

7.4.1 There is no entitlement to support for families with a Residence order.

7.4.2 Carers seeking or granted a Residence Order can expect to access all universal services for support and advice in caring for the child. If there are needs identified, they may be offered an Early Help Assessment by a number of universal services to identify and address any needs of the child's that are not being met in the arrangement.

7.4.3 Where the child's needs are not being met in an arrangement that leads to them being identified as a child in need or at risk, social care will be involved to undertake an Initial Assessment.

7.4.4 Further detail about the response to supporting Residence Orders can be found in the Residence Order policy (to follow).

7.5 Special Guardianship Order

7.5.1 If the child was looked after prior to making the SGO Borough of Poole will assess the need for special guardianship support services. It is at the discretion of the Borough as to whether to offer support in line with the Borough of Poole SGO policy.

7.5.2 A young person who was a child in care prior to making of the SGO may be entitled to leaving cares support services this will be made clear at the point of agreeing the SGO support plan.

7.5.3 Further detail about the response can be found in the [Special Guardianship Policy](#).

7.6 Adoption

7.6.1 Children in adoptive placements are entitled to an assessment for adoption support services, which may be provided in accordance with Regulations and National minimum Standards.

7.6.2 Consideration of access to Care Leavers Services will be included in the review of the adoption support plan.

7.6.3 Further detail about the response can be found in the Adoption Policy.

8. General Principles for provision of financial support

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

- *One-off payments* – to overcome a crisis, following the best assessment that can be achieved in the circumstances.

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- *Setting up payment* – for items such as clothing, furniture or bedding etc. The social worker must be satisfied that the carers' financial position justifies the payment through a financial assessment. Assistance must be given subject to conditions, including repayment in certain situations (in most circumstances it will not be appropriate to require repayment).
- *Weekly living contributions* – It is possible for the local authority to make regular payments where family members or friends care for a child whether or not the child is in care. Where regular payments are to be made carers should be assisted to maximise their income / benefits as regular payments may adversely affect an individual's claim to income support. In all situations where regular financial support is agreed, a written agreement will be drawn up detailing the level and duration of the financial support that is to be provided and the mechanism for review.

8.2 The following criteria will be applied to all such payments:

- The purpose of payments must be to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.
- As part of the assessment, a view should be taken as to whether the carers need financial support based on their reasonable requirements in taking on the care of the child.
- Payments will be considered where there are no other legitimate sources of finance
- Payments will be paid to the carers, not the parents.
- The payment would not place any person in a fraudulent position.

9. Financial Support that can be expected in different Family and Friends Care arrangements

9.1 The individual procedures set out the financial support available.

10. Accommodation

10.1 The Borough of Poole will work with landlords to ensure that, whenever possible, family and friends living in social housing are given appropriate priority to move to suitable accommodation if this will prevent the need for a child to come into care.

11. Supporting contacts with parents

11.1 The local authority has a duty to promote contact for all children in need, although this differs depending on whether they or not they are in care.

11.2 Where the child is not in care the local authority is required to promote contact between the child and their family 'where it is necessary to do so in order to safeguard and promote his or her welfare'. As part of arrangements, it may be identified that specific assistance is required to ensure that such contact can be managed safely. If necessary, information will be made available to family and friends carers about local contact centres and family mediation services and how to make use of their services.

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11.3 Where a child is in care the local authority is required to endeavour to promote contact between the child and his or her family 'unless it is not practicable or consistent with the child's welfare'. The overall objective of the contact arrangements will be included in the child's care plan.

12. Family Group Conferences

12.1 Borough of Poole offer Family Group Conferences to support families to make arrangements to support and care for their own family members. These will be considered in assessment and planning for children.

13. Implementation of Policy / ensuring compliance and consistent application

13.1 The Borough of Poole Fostering and Adoption Teams will advise and support other teams to ensure they are applying the policy correctly. There will be regular training and awareness raising with all staff teams delivered by the fostering and adoption teams.

13.2 The responsible manager will ensure that local partners are aware of their responsibilities towards children living in family and friends care and are proactive in meeting those needs. The joint working arrangements document with Children's Centres will include this aspect of access to resources.

13.3 The Policy will be publicised sufficiently to ensure that anyone who may be considering becoming a family and friends carer can be aware of its content and be clear about how to contact the local authority and other agencies for further information about relevant services.

14. Complaints process

14.1 Borough of Poole - Children's Social Care have a complaints and Representations process available to all service users.

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Appendix 1 Definitions

“care plan” means the plan for the future care of a looked after child prepared in accordance with Part 2 of the 2010 Regulations;

“a child in need” is defined in section 17(10) of the 1989 Act, which provides that a child shall be taken to be in need if :

he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a local authority under this Part; (b) his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or
he is disabled;

“child” means a person under the age of 18. Where the context particularly refers to older children the term “young person” is used;

“connected person” means a relative, friend, or other person connected with a looked after child. A person in the last category may be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as a childminder, a teacher or a youth worker although there are not exclusive categories.

“family and friends carer” means a relative, friend or other person with a prior connection with somebody else’s child who is caring for that child full time. An individual who is a “connected person” to a looked after child may also be a family and friends carer. A child who is cared for by a family and friends carer may or may not be looked after by the local authority;

“foster carer” means a person who is approved as a local authority foster parent (by a local authority or an independent fostering provider) in accordance with regulation 27 of the Regulations 2011, or temporarily approved under regulation 24 of the 2010 Regulations;

“informal arrangement” means an arrangement where a child is living with a family and friends carer who does not have parental responsibility for the child. References to “informal arrangements” in this guidance do not include arrangements where the child is looked after by the local authority or where the child is privately fostered, placed for adoption, or subject to a residence or a special guardianship order. The legislation which governs these arrangements does not apply to an informal arrangement

“looked after child” means a person under 18 who is subject to a care order under section 31 of the 1989 Act (including an interim care order), or is accommodated under section 20 of that Act ;

“parent”, in relation to a child, includes any person who has parental responsibility for that child;

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“parental responsibility” has the meaning given by section 3 of the 1989 Act, being all the rights, duties, powers responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property;

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

“relative” means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent, as defined in section 105 of the 1989 Act;

“responsible authority” means, in relation to a looked after child, the local authority or voluntary organisation as the case may be, responsible for the child’s placement.

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Appendix 2 Challenges facing Family and Friends Carers

(extract from Family and Friends care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (p8. 2.4-.2.8)

Although family and friends carers usually know the child whose care they are taking on, and are less likely to have to deal with the problems associated with a child moving to an unfamiliar household, they nevertheless face considerable challenges. Often there are significant and long term tensions within the family particularly in relation to managing contact, for which support may be necessary.

The most common reasons for family members and friends taking on the care of children are those related to parental factors such as domestic violence, alcohol or substance misuse, mental or physical illness or incapacity, separation or divorce, imprisonment, or death of a parent. Child related factors such as disability or challenging behaviour may also be reasons. In many instances the characteristics and needs of children living with family and friends carers in informal arrangements are very similar to, or the same as, those of children who have become looked after. It may be the particular circumstances giving rise to an emergency, the willingness of family members to intervene at a particular stage, or the response of the local authority which determines whether the child goes to live with family and friends carers on an informal basis or is placed by the local authority as a looked after child.

Family and friends often start to care for other people's children in a crisis or emergency situation. Sometimes the care will begin as a short term measure, but gradually or subsequently become open-ended or permanent. A child may arrive in the carers' home without advance planning, sometimes in the middle of the night, in a state of confusion and without their immediate possessions. Family and friends carers may provide a series of planned short episodes of care for children, for instance whilst a parent is working away or undergoing medical treatment, or children may come and go at short notice in response to the chaotic lifestyle of their parents. Such circumstances can be very challenging for the carers and normal family relationships may be strained not just between the carers and the child's parents, but with other siblings, children of the carers, and extended family members.

The impact of becoming a family and friends carer is often considerable. Many family and friends carers are the child's grandparents and while this may cover a wide range of ages and characteristics, they are often older and in poorer health than the child's own parents or unrelated foster carers. They may also be less well off financially, either because they are in receipt of a pension and unable to increase their income to take account of additional expenditure, or because they have to give up work in order to take on the care of the child. Frequently they take on the care of two or more children at the same time. The arrival of a child or children into the family can have a major impact on the lifestyle of the carers, who may have viewed their child rearing years as long since over and settled into a very different way of life, perhaps enjoying a quiet retirement. In addition there are often new pressures relating to accommodation, child care arrangements, education, behaviour and a vast range of other issues. Grandparents may also have complex feelings that their own children are unable to provide adequate care for the children.

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Each case will bring different challenges to family and friends carers. Single carers may face particular practical problems or emotional difficulties in caring for a child and may need support to help them to succeed. Sometimes an older sibling may become the carer, needing support to deal with their own feelings and problems in addition to those of providing full-time care for a younger brother or sister. An older sibling may have experienced similar difficulties to those of the child for whom they become the carer, whilst their new role may seriously disrupt their education, employment, or social life at a stage when they had not planned to have caring responsibilities. Uncles and aunts may have their own children of a similar age to those for whom they have become carers, which may place considerable pressures on the whole household.