



WHAT IS FRIENDS & FAMILY FOSTER CARE?



Changing lives in
Warrington through
Fostering

www.warringtonfostering.co.uk



Contents



What is friends and family foster care?	pg 2
Who are friends and family carers?	pg 3
What does the role of friends and family foster carer involve?	pg 3
The assessment process	pg 4
What other options are there?	pg 6
What financial support will I receive?	pg 6
Support for foster carers	pg 6
Role of the supervising social worker	pg 7
Common words and phrases used	pg 8
Feedback and complaints	pb 11



What is friends and family foster care?

If a child is unable to live with their parents for a variety of reasons, it is the preferred option for them to grow up in the care of their family or with an adult who they have a significant relationship.

Some families will make these arrangements themselves and these are referred to as 'private fostering arrangements'.

Most families will find solutions to care for children within their family network themselves.

Sometimes, however this is not the case and the Local Authority will intervene within a family situation. The decision may have been made to ensure that the welfare needs of the child are safeguarded; they need to come into care.

This will be the time when family and friends may come forward to be considered as friends and family foster carers.

Who are friends and family foster carers?

Anyone who has a close relationship to the child entering care such as:

- Grandparent/s
- Aunt or Uncle
- Adult sister or brother
- Extended family member
- A friend of the family who has an important relationship with the child

To be a friends and family foster carer you must also:

- Be over 18 years of age
- Have an established relationship with the child
- Have safe and secure accommodation with a suitable bedroom for the child
- Must be willing to have a medical, police checks and supply character references
- Be able to take the child to school every day
- Be willing to positively promote contact between the child and their family



What does the role of friends and family foster carer involve?

Friends and Family foster carers will be expected to:

- Be available for home visits from your social worker and the child's social worker.
- Keep daily written records about the child which will be put on the child's file
- Complete the core training for foster carers
- Work honestly and openly with all professionals involved in the child's life
- Promote contact between the child and their family, if appropriate
- Attend at least 50% of arranged family & friends foster carer support groups
- Attend all meetings regarding the child and work within the care plan

Most of all you need to provide the child in your care a safe, nurturing and loving home for the child to grow up in.



The Assessment Process

Although you may have always known the child or for a significant part of their life, you will still need to be assessed before you can be a friends and family foster carer. This is because the Local Authority has a responsibility to ensure anyone who cares for a child in care can do so safely.

The assessment process will cover the following:

- You will be expected to have a full medical check with your own GP
- Provide personal referees who can comment on your suitability to care for the child
- Have an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service criminal records check
- Agree for an assessing social worker to visit you and complete a report about you. This report will look at your life history, your childcare experience, your availability for required meetings and training required as a foster carer, interview your referees, ex-partners, contact education, health etc. The report is very in-depth as we need to ensure that all children in care are safeguarded and offered the best life chances whilst in care.

- Once your assessment is complete, it will be presented to the Warrington fostering panel for approval or non-approval. The Warrington Fostering Panel is made up of childcare and medical professionals, and independent members who have experience of children in care and foster care. The Agency Decision Maker will then agree to your approval as a foster carer.

Important

You will be expected to co-operate with us during the assessment process and meet all the agreed expectations.

If you are unable to meet any of the agreed expectations then we may stop the assessment which will mean the child will not be placed in your care.

Our priority is to ensure that the child's welfare needs are met and that we can work in partnership with those caring for the child.





The process flowchart

Firstly, there may be a meeting held called a family group conference or you may be asked by the child's parents to put yourself forward to be considered as the carer for the child. You will be contacted by the fostering service social worker to gather some information from you in a screening call. This information will then be discussed with the Team Manager. If we feel everything is ok, we will arrange a home visit. If it is not possible to proceed we will let you know the reasons why.



The child's social worker and the fostering service social worker will come and visit you. After this visit we will make a recommendation about whether you should be assessed as a foster carer. If not, we will let you know the reasons why.



The assessment will begin. This is called a Regulation 24/Viability Assessment. You will be asked to provide information about yourself. This will include details about previous addresses, any jobs you have had, all adult relationships including marriages and divorces. You will be asked to provide personal references. We will make checks with the police, your own children's school and health; we will make financial checks and contact any Local Authority where you have lived.



The Viability/Regulation 24 assessment can take up to 6 weeks to complete. Once this has been completed and has been approved by the Agency Decision Maker, it is likely the child will be placed with you. You will have what is called temporary approval as a foster carer. You will receive fostering allowances once the child is placed with you.



Once you have 'temporary approval' as a friends and family foster carer, the child may be placed with you. It is at this time that the full fostering assessment is completed. It has to be completed and presented to the fostering panel within 16 weeks of your temporary approval as a foster carer. If this does not happen for any reason the child would not be able to remain in your care under Fostering Regulations 2011. Again, you are expected to co-operate fully with us during this part of the assessment process.

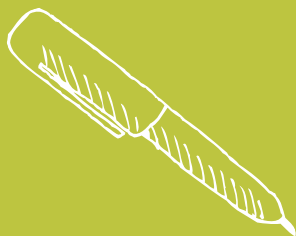


When your final assessment report is complete you will read it and authorise it. It will then be ready to be presented at the fostering panel. You will be asked to attend the panel meeting with the assessing social worker. Panel members like to meet all potential new foster carers. The fostering panel will make a recommendation whether you should become a fully approved foster carer or not. It is then the local authority's Agency Decision Maker who will make the final decision. If you are not approved, we will let you know the reasons why.



What other options are there?

The child's social worker will have spoken to you regarding other ways in which the child could come and live with you. For example, you apply for a Special Guardianship Order or a Residence Order. These, however are not always the best options for the child and would need to be fully considered.



What financial support will I receive?

Once you are approved and the child is placed in your care you will receive fostering allowance payments. These payments are to assist you in the daily costs of caring for the child. You will receive additional allowances for the child's birthday, religious celebrations and an annual holiday. We will provide you with the fostering payment guide at our first meeting.

IMPORTANT:

You cannot claim child benefit or tax credits for the child whilst receiving fostering allowances.

Support for foster carers

As a friends and family foster carer you have access to a wide range of support:

- You will have regular contact with your own supervising social worker.
- All carers have access to an out-of-hours support service.
- You will have an annual review by an independent reviewing officer to check you are getting all the support you need.
- The child will have regular contact with their own named social worker.
- You will receive an induction pack and handbook providing

you with all the information you need to help you in your role as foster carer.

- Support with Health and Educational issues for the child.
- We are committed to the personal development of all carers and offer comprehensive training in a wide range of child related subjects.
- Carers have access to a range of specialist support including education, child mental health, psychologist etc.
- Our own foster carer support group hold regular coffee mornings and organise social events and fun activities for all carers and their families, including trips and parties.
- All our foster carers receive full membership to the Fostering Network - a national organisation who provide specialist support to foster carers including legal services, training and reading materials.

- We have two people carriers for foster carers to use, free of charge, for days out or for holidays - we can also help with driving lessons for foster carers who don't drive.
- We provide equipment for your home such as cots, stair gates, if needed, and can supply special equipment for some children and young people, such as computers.

Role of the Supervising Social Worker

As a friends and family foster carer, you will be supported by your own allocated supervising social worker.

Your social worker will visit you on a monthly basis, but more often if you or the worker feels it is necessary. You will also be able to contact your social worker by telephone if you have any form of enquiry or difficulty.

You will also have at least one unannounced visit a year. This isn't to check up on you, the regulations that we work to state that we must make these visits to you.

Your social worker will provide support and supervision as required by the Fostering Regulations and Standards; this will include advice, guidance, training and your annual review.



Common words and phrases you may come across during your assessment

Child in Care

Children who cannot live at home with their parents and the local authority have intervened and the child has entered care. The child may be in care under Section 20 of Children Act 2004, or be subject to either an Interim Care Order or a Full Care Order.

Children Act 2004

This is the law that social workers and children's services must adhere to when they are safeguarding children.

Accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act 2004

This is a provision in the act that empowers the local authority to accommodate a child living within the area if it is considered that to do so would safeguard that child and promote their welfare. This would be with the full co-operation from the person or persons with parental responsibility for that child. The key feature of this provision is that a child would not be accommodated if any person with parental responsibility objects. This is "voluntary" accommodation of a child.



Care Order

This is an order made by the court. It can either be an interim or full care order. They are court orders that place parental responsibility with the local authority along with the parents. The orders ensure the local authority can keep children safe.

Fostering Regulations 2011

These are the regulations that all fostering services must adhere to when assessing and supporting foster carers. The regulations also set out the required timescales for reports to be completed and the amount of visits you should expect to receive. You will be given a copy of the regulations when you are approved as a foster carer.





Regulation 24/Viability Assessment

A viability assessment is a preliminary assessment process, usually required when the local authority is seeking to identify alternative child care arrangements for a child who is unable to remain with their parent.

The viability assessment is a concise, informative assessment, designed to gather all the necessary information, in a short time-frame to determine the suitability of the identified person as an alternative carer.

Temporary Approval

Once the viability assessment has been approved and signed off by the Agency Decision Maker you will have 'temporary approval'. This only lasts for a period of 16 weeks, by which time a full fostering assessment will have been completed and taken to fostering panel. Panel will then make a recommendation as to whether you should be fully approved as a foster carer.



Agency Decision Maker

This is the senior manager within Warrington Borough Council who has the responsibility for making the final decision as to whether you can be approved as a friends and family foster carer.

Family Group Conference

A Family Group Conference (also known as Family Group Meeting) is a family led meeting which empowers families to find their own solutions to the issues and difficulties they face. Family Group Conferences provide an opportunity for families, communities and agencies to work collaboratively together to safeguard and promote the welling being of children and young people.

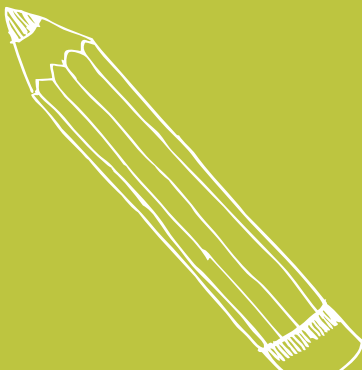
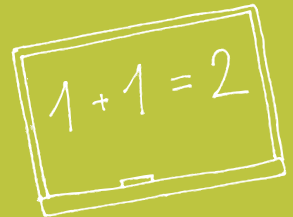


Special Guardianship Order

A special guardianship order is an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's 'special guardian'. It is a private law order made under the Children Act 1989 and is intended for those children who cannot live with their birth parents and who would benefit from a legally secure placement.

Residence Order

Residence orders decide where the child is to live and with whom. The granting of a residence order to someone automatically gives him or her parental responsibility for the child if they do not already have it. Parental responsibility obtained as a result of a residence order will continue until the order ceases. A residence order lasts until the child is 16 or 18 if the circumstances of the case are exceptional and the court has ordered that it continue for longer.



Feedback & Complaints

We would like to ask for your help in providing some feedback on your experience of our Service. Your views will be extremely helpful to us, to monitor how we currently work and help shape future service development for other friends and family carers. You can contact us at

Warrington Fostering Service
2nd Floor, Quattro Building
New Town House
Buttermarket Street
Warrington
WA1 2NJ
Tel 01925 442026
Email: fosteringinfo@warrington.gov.uk
www.warringtonfostering.co.uk

If you are unhappy about any aspect of our service you have the right to complain. You can contact us direct at the above address or you can contact:

Warrington Borough Council Complaints Officer

Tel: 01925 442 965

Ofsted

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They report directly to Parliament and are independent and impartial. Ofsted inspect and regulate services which care for children and young people including fostering services. You can contact Ofsted at:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Other useful resources

The Fostering Network

The UK's leading charity for foster care and provides and advice and information. All our approved foster carers receive free membership to the Fostering Network.

Tel: 020 7620 6400

Email: info@fostering.net

www.fostering.net

British Association for Adoption & Fostering (BAAF) - The UK's

leading adoption and fostering membership association.

Tel: 020 7421 2600

Email: mail@baaf.org.uk

www.baaf.org.uk

Warrington Fostering Service
2nd Floor, Quattro Building
New Town House
Buttermarket Street
Warrington
WA1 2NJ
Tel 01925 442026
Email: fosteringinfo@warrington.gov.uk
www.warringtonfostering.co.uk



Follow us on facebook: www.facebook.com/warringtonfostering



Follow us on Twitter: www.twitter.com/warringtonfoste

Changing lives in
Warrington through
Fostering

WARRINGTON
Borough Council

