

Kinship Care Policy

This policy aims to provide practice guidance in relation to children and young people placed in the care of Family, Friends or Connected Persons.

Definitions

- Kinship Care is a term used to describe the formal (when children are 'looked after' by the Local Authority) or informal (when the Local Authority are not actively involved) placements of children living with Family and Friends or Connected Persons;
- A Family and Friend is considered to be 'a relative, friend or other person with a prior connection with a child';
- Relative is defined as "a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent";
- A Connected Person is someone who would not fit the term 'relative or friend', but who has a pre-existing relationship with the child. It could be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as (for example) a childminder, a teacher or a youth worker;
- Placements of Looked After Children with Family, Friends or a Connected Person who have not been approved as foster carers can be made under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Review (England) Regulations 2010. (Sch.4 CPP&CR (England) Regulations 2010.

NB: For the purpose of this policy we will refer to Kinship Care placements for looked after children as 'Family and Friends'.

This procedure should be read in conjunction with:

Legislation

- The Children Act 1989

Regulations

- Care Planning and Case review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Fostering (England) Regulations 2011

Statutory Guidance

- The Children Act 1989 Statutory Guidance and Regulations: Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Volume 4: Fostering Services
- Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities

Good Practice Guidance

- Initial Family and Friends Care Assessment: A good practice guide 2017
- [Looking after Someone Else's Child \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- Staying Put: Good Practice Guidance

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1. Introduction

1.1 This policy will cover a child's journey through care when looked after by the Local Authority and placed with Family and Friends carers in an emergency. Family and Friends carers in these situations would not be approved foster carers therefore would need to be temporarily approved as Family Friends carers under Regulation 24. As with any placement the responsible Local Authority must be satisfied that the placement is the most suitable means to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

1.2 The Local Authority must carefully consider whether it is necessary for a child to be placed with Family and Friends before their suitability to be foster carers has been assessed in accordance with the Regulations. These provisions are only to be used in exceptional circumstances and where there are clearly defined reasons why a full foster carer assessment cannot be undertaken before a placement is made. Reasons for this relate to risk factors connected to the potential for Family and Friends carers not being approved at the end of the assessment process resulting in a further placement move for a child in accordance with the Regulations and Statutory guidance noted in this policy.

1.3 Regulation 24 provides that where the local authority is satisfied that an immediate placement with a Connected Persons is the most appropriate placement for the child notwithstanding that the proposed carers are not approved as foster carers, the carers can have temporary approval for a

period of up to 16-weeks provided that an assessment of their suitability under Regulation 24 [Sch.4 CPP&CR (England) Regulations 2010 in support of reg.24] has taken place.

1.4 Regulation 24 also provides that, when a Family and Friends foster carer is temporarily approved, as a foster carer under Reg 24 of the Care Planning, placement and Case Review Regulations 2010, a full assessment is completed as soon as practicable, where the intention is for the child to stay with the carer. [Fostering standard Reg 30.14]

1.5 Subject to Regulation 25 (4) of the Care Planning, placement and Case Review Regulations 2010, Regulation 24 temporary approval can be extended for up to 8-weeks (beyond the initial 16-week temporary approval period) if either:

- a) temporary approval is likely to expire before the assessment is completed;
- b) until the outcome of an Independent Review (if the outcome of the assessment is that the Connected Person is not approved and seeks a review via the Independent Review Mechanism).

1.6 Before deciding whether to extend the approval, the Local Authority must first:

- a) consider if the placement is still the most appropriate placement available;
- b) seek the views of the Fostering Panel;
- c) Inform the IRO [Reg.25 (5)];
- d) The decision to extend the Reg 24 temporary approval must be made by the nominated officer;
- e) [Reg.25 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010].

1.7 If information of concern comes to light whilst a child is placed in a Reg 24 placement and it is decided that this is no longer the most suitable placement for the child(ren) a review of the child's care plan is required to be held before the child is moved to another placement [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (Reg 14)]. There is no such requirement if the child is at risk of significant harm or there is a need to protect others from serious injury, or if the period of temporary approval expires. [The fostering Network – Practice information Note]

1.8 If the period of temporary approval and any extension to that period expires and the connected person has not been approved as a local authority foster carer in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations, the responsible authority must terminate the placement after first making other arrangements for the child's accommodation [reg.25(6) Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010].

1.9 There is no provision within the Care Planning Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 to terminate temporary approval. The carers' temporary approval remains in place until it expires even if the child for whom they were approved to care for is no longer in placement [Fostering Network – Practice information note]

2. Principles Underpinning Kinship Care

2.1 The child's welfare is paramount.

2.2 If a child cannot live with his/her birth parents, care by Family and Friends carers should be the first placement choice, provided this meets the needs of the child.

2.3 It is essential that a pro-active approach is taken to considering Family and Friends in the child's network that may be able to offer either short-term or long-term care.

2.4 The child's family need to be involved in decisions about the future planning for the child where appropriate.

2.5 Every child has 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 his/her childhood.

2.6 For most children, the best prospect for their emotional, physical, social, cultural, language and legal needs to be met will be to remain with or return to live with their birth parent(s).

2.7 If however, a child cannot return home within a timescale that meets his/her needs, then long term care by Family and Friends carers (provided this is consistent with the child's welfare) must be considered.

2.8 In these circumstances, the carers should be supported to obtain an appropriate legal order giving them legal responsibility for the child through a Child Arrangements Order, Special Guardianship Order or Adoption Order. This policy supports the 'No Order' principle of the Children Act 1989, 'the aim of the Children Act 1989 is to ensure that an Order is only granted where it will positively improve the child's welfare', (Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Vol. 1).

2.9 This policy supports (where possible) processes for children who need to be cared for away from home, to be cared for by Family and Friends and for children not to become 'Looked After' unless legal proceedings are essential to safeguard the welfare of the child.

2.10 Families themselves are usually best placed to find their own solutions and to make safe plans for children: intervention from the Local Authority should be at the minimum needed to safeguard the welfare of the child and to support the family. Family and Friends carers and the children they care for will be supported in the community by universal services as well as by appropriate services from Children and Young People's Services.

2.11 The majority of Family and Friends carers will have had a previous, or ongoing significant relationship with a child for whom they are offering to care and whose needs they can meet in circumstances where it has been assessed the child cannot live, either temporarily or permanently with his/her birth parent(s).

2.12 Family and Friends arrangements coming within the scope of this policy will have been initiated, facilitated, or supported by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Children and Young Peoples Services.

3. Situations Where these Procedures do not Apply

3.1 These procedures do not apply where a child (under 16 years) goes to live with a relative or friend and this is a private arrangement between them and the child's parent/person with Parental Responsibility.

3.2 If a child (under the age of 16 (or 18 if Disabled) goes to live an adult who is not a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, step parent (including civil partnerships), sister or brother for more than 28 days or more, this arrangement may come within the definition of Private Fostering. Private Fostering applies when children are not placed with close relatives, in which case the Local Authority has a duty to follow practice guidance as set out in policies and procedures specific to Private Fostering.

3.3 A privately fostered child is a child under 16 (or 18 if Disabled) who is cared for by an adult who is not a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, step parent (including civil partnerships), sister or brother where the child is to be cared for in that person's home for 28 days or more.

4. Pathways into Care

4.1 Children can become 'Looked After' following:

- a. Section 20 voluntary accommodation agreement where those holding parental responsibility must consent to this agreement as the child(ren) is not subject to any legal order giving parental responsibility to any other party. It is essential in such arrangements that clear agreements are made and those agreeing to the section 20 voluntary accommodation agreement, fully understand the process;
- b. Following an Interim Care Order being granted by the courts, this gives the local authority shared parental responsibility with the parents or those currently holding parental responsibility.

4.2 Emergency Placements and Planning

The provision for the making of REG 24 emergency placements with Family and Friends carers and the granting of temporary approval is done on the basis that such placements are made in exceptional circumstances, where the need for a placement 'could not easily have been foreseen' and it has not been possible to conduct a full fostering assessment prior to placement being needed. [Family-and-Friends-Care-Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities](#)

This may include the need for an immediate placement where a child is or would be at risk of Significant Harm if he or she is not removed from home immediately and/or any situation where proceedings are to be instituted and the Local Authority feel they need to hold parental responsibility.

4.3 If an immediate placement is necessary for the child's welfare you must as a Social Worker explain to the Family and Friends carer what this will mean in respect of day to day life for the carer and the child that includes the following:

- That the child will become 'looked after' and what this means especially in terms of their

role in respect of:

- Statutory Visit's, LAC reviews, Personal Education Plans, visits from social workers etc;
- That the carer will need to be assessed and approved under Regulation 24 before the child can be placed and that they will be required to attend training as part of any further /ongoing assessment; and
- That if the plan is for the placement to remain a fostering placement after the 16-week temporary approval period, they will need to have further regular in-depth assessment sessions with the fostering social worker in order to be assessed as a potential long-term Family and Friends foster carer. They will need to have DBS checks and medicals completed as well as attending the necessary training as part of the assessment and as an ongoing requirement.

4.4 Nobody has the right to be a foster carer, however Standard13 of the National Minimum standards for Fostering Services requires that people who express an interest in becoming foster carers are treated fairly, without prejudice, openly and with respect. [[Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities](#)]

4.5 However, whilst Family and Friends care provisions are designed to cover emergency situations, the legislation also makes clear that the Local Authority has a duty to forward plan. Where a placement may be needed across the longer term and it is clear that the carers may not meet the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, or the fostering standards 2011, alternative arrangements to place the child with the family member may need to be made by issuing Care Proceedings requesting consideration that the Court direct an alternative order i.e. 38 (6)/ CAO with ISO with the plan of an SGO. If a prospective carer does not meet the threshold for a CAO or SGO they will not meet the threshold for fostering regulations.

38 (6) placements

4.6 When a child is subject to an Interim Care Order, the court may decide to make a direction for the child to be assessed under Section 38(6) Children Act 1989. This enables the court to direct where the child should live, for a period of further assessment. Directions under Section 38(6) CA 1989 can result in a child being placed with a parent, relative or other connected person.

4.7 The assessment and therefore the 38 (6) order should be time limited and within 12 weeks of the order being made the exit route out of the 38(6) should be clear e.g. variation of the order to that of an Interim Supervision Order and Child Arrangements Order. There should be a clear assessment plan setting out the assessment sessions that will support you decide next steps for the child/ children across the 12 weeks of the 38 (6) and the date the assessment is to be filed with the Court should be clearly included in the Court Order. The assessment should be with legal 3 working days prior to the Court filing date.

Key points

1. A Section 38(6) direction can only be made where a child is subject to an interim care order and is therefore always a temporary position pending assessment outcome;
2. If a child is subject to a Section 38(6) direction and is in the care of a parent, we are not required to obtain approval of Placement with Parents from the Director of Children's

Social Care;

3. If a child is subject to Section 38(6) then Regulation 24 does not apply and the carer is not temporarily approved as a foster carer;
4. The child is a child in care and will need statutory visits, reviews, PEP etc.;
5. The placement is regulated by the court and only the court can make the decision to end the placement/assessment however, the police may still exercise their protective powers under S46 Children Act 1989 if the police have reasonable cause to believe that a child/children would otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm.

4.8 The circumstances in which directions under Section 38(6) are made will vary but typically involve situations in which the court wishes to enforce a placement that the Local Authority does not feel able to endorse via Regulation 24 as it does not meet or is unlikely to meet the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010).

Financial support to parents (and others with parental responsibility)

4.9 In some cases a direction under Section 38(6) can result in a child being placed with a parent or other person with parental responsibility. In such circumstances any financial support is at the discretion of the Team Manager in conjunction with the Service Manager. Dependent on circumstances it may be reasonable to provide a parent or person with parental responsibility with a 'start-up grant' e.g. to purchase beds, bedding, clothing etc. In addition, it may be appropriate to provide the carer with financial support until such a time as they are in receipt of child benefit. However:

- Any regular maintenance payments should not exceed the Child Benefit amount;
- In most cases it is expected that any maintenance payments to parents / carers in lieu of Child Benefit will be reclaimed by Rotherham CYPS when backdated Child Benefit payments have been made. This will need to be formalised via a letter of agreement with the parent / carer before the maintenance payments are made and signed by them.

Providing financial support to other Family and Friends carers who do not hold parental responsibility for the child

4.10 Directions under Section 38(6) do not result in Family and Friends carers becoming foster carers therefore will not receive "fostering allowances". However, caring for a child is a considerable expense for a family member caring for a child at the direction of the court and it is appropriate for RMBC to provide financial support in these circumstances.

- For the social worker to record the placement on LCS, they will need to make a request to IT Support to add the carer on the system. This will enable the social worker to create the "placement" however the carer will not be approved as a foster carer under 38 (6);
- Allowances will be based on Rotherham Children and Young People Services rates for Family and Friends foster carers and will be paid at the current basic rate. (please see finance section for further details);
- Extended Family or Friends caring for a child under a Section 38(6) direction will receive the equivalent to the fostering service basic allowances as noted in section 11. This will not be means tested during the s38(6) period whilst on-going assessments are being concluded.

- If the outcome of proceedings is that the Family and Friends carer is awarded a CAO or SGO their allowance from this point will be means-tested. It is recommended that where there is potential for the final outcome to be a Child Arrangements or Special Guardianship Order, the process of financial assessment be started early during the Section 38(6) period so that the carers and the court are fully aware of the financial support that will be available in the longer term;
- Payments in these circumstances will be made from the Children's Social Care budget as appropriate and would not be paid from petty cash or section 17 monies. Payments made to carers under 38 (6) are paid by procurement which is initiated by the children's social worker;
- Social workers will need to liaise with the Finance Team to ensure that regular payments are made to the carers for the child/ren at the correct rate of pay and are to be made automatically via bank transfer. The Finance Team will need the bank details of the carer/s to as appropriate;
- Where a regular maintenance payment is requested in advance of a financial assessment, this is at the discretion of the Team Manager in conjunction with the Service Manager but will not exceed a maximum of £50 per child each week without the approval of the Head of Service.
- Where the allowance is backdated, any previous payments made will be deducted from the backdated payment.

5. Viability Assessments

5.1 A viability assessment is completed by the child's social worker and does not determine where a child should live nor does it recommend which legal order should be used.

5.2 In practice, the social worker may be required to undertake viability assessments with several family members and often to tight deadlines.

5.3 Viability Assessment Form and Regulation 24 Assessment report on LCS are not dissimilar. The former should be used to support all court related viability assessment work; the later (as can be found on the new LCS Kinship Care Pathway) should only be used when looking to place a child/ren in an emergency under Regulation 24 circumstances.

5.4 A Regulation 24 assessment is completed by the child/ren's social worker to help determine a carers suitability to look after and care for a Family or Friend in an emergency and for a period of no more than 16 weeks. See Regulation 24 of the CPP&CR Regulations).

6. Temporary Approval of Immediate Placements of Looked After Children with Family and Friends Carers using Regulation 24

Procedure for Emergency Placements

6.1 If the Local Authority are looking to place a child or children with Family and Friends carers,

they must be approved as temporary foster carers under Regulation 24 of the CPP&CR 2010. To achieve this, the allocated social worker for the child must complete the Regulation 24 assessment that can be found on LCS (Kinship Care - Linking Child to the Carer and Further Assessment) once the Kinship Care Pathway has been triggered.

6.2 To assist in the completion of the Regulation 24 assessment, a home visit must be conducted by the child's social worker (with support from a fostering social worker where possible) so that arrangements can be made to assess the carers. The following should be taken into account as part of the assessment process:

- The carers age in relation to the age of the child/ren;
- Relationship to the child;
- Health and lifestyle of the carers;
- Criminal history;
- Work pattern and financial stability;
- Childcare experience and ability to meet the needs of the child they wish to care for
- Nature of the carers relationship with the child's parents/birth family if different to their own;
- Motivation to care for the child and details of their own parenting experiences;
- Their knowledge of why the child is known to children's services and their understanding of the local authorities concerns;
- The carers ability to safeguard and protect the child and attitude towards promoting family time for children with members of their birth family as advised by the Local Authority;
- The carers ability to manage and supervised family time with the parents and details of the carers own previous or current involvement with children's services;
- Consider any complicating factors that may impact on the carers continued care of the child in the short and long term to include smoking.

6.3 The child's wishes, and feelings should be obtained (wherever possible) to include the wishes and feelings of the child's birth parents which should be clearly recorded in the Regulation 24 assessment report.

6.4 Safeguarding checks (social care and police checks at a minimum) should be completed and available before the child is placed. In addition, a Health and safety checklist and Pet Questionnaire should be completed (as necessary) to ensure the home provides a safe physical environment for the child to be placed.

6.5 Consideration should be given to the impact of the placement on any other child already resident in the family placement being proposed. Consent should be obtained to complete checks on all members of the household where appropriate.

6.6 The Family and Friends foster carer/s must be provided with full information about the role of 'foster carer' and what will be expected of them, either prior to or on the day the child is placed with them. See [Family-and-friends-care-becoming-a-foster-carer](#).

The potential carer must be able to work openly and honestly with professionals and be willing and able to take part in all relevant meetings connected to the child in their care (LAC and PEP review meetings), maintain accurate written records and attend relevant training applicable to their role as foster carer.

6.7 Family and Friends carers will need to be made aware that all adult members of the household will be required to have DBS checks. Carers will also be required to have up-to-date medical health

checks and make themselves available for assessment visits that can often be considered intrusive. All members of the fostering household will be spoken to as part of this process to include adult children living away from the home.

6.8 Where placement details are likely to be featured in the court arena as a proposed long-term placement for the child, the child's social worker must obtain the agreement of the carers to disclose the assessment report to the court using the designated form as appropriate.

6.9 All immediate family members of the carers need to agree with the family becoming a fostering family. Family members may choose to withdraw from the assessment at any point in the process. The family member should be asked to provide written confirmation if they wish to withdraw from the assessment process and/or care of the child/ren.

6.10 As part of any assessment, it should be made clear to the Family and Friends carer that in the event court conclude that a child/ren are unable to return to the full-time care of their birth parents that the Local Authority will be looking to secure permanence for that child in another way. This could include a variation to the care order by way of a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order. Alternatively, if the Local Authority consider that the child's plan should be one of long term fostering, this should be made clear to the carers and fostering service as soon as practicable.

6.11 A decision should also be made as to whether there are any obvious barriers to the carer undertaking and completing a foster carer assessment. This should be made on the basis of information is available as set out in schedule 4 (SCHEDULE 4 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010) which must be available to approve a temporary Regulation 24 foster placement. If there are any concerns as to whether the carers would be approved as Family and Friends carers in the given timescale of 16 weeks; this should be taken into account from the outset to support appropriate permanence plans being secured for the child.

6.12 The REG 24 assessment must be completed on LCS following the New Kinship Care Pathway. Guidance for this can be found in LCS Help Guide 98 - Kinship Care v 1.4. The completed Regulation 24 assessment requires Team Manager oversight in social care and fostering before HOS authorisation can be obtained. Where concerns are identified within the assessment at approval or authorisation stage; these should be shared and discussed further with the allocated social worker and team manager responsible for the case so that alternative plans for the child can be discussed and agreed.

Completion of the Regulation 24 assessment and Pathway on LCS should be completed prior to or on the day of placement (wherever possible).

6.13 If a decision is made to place a child in an emergency placement the child's social worker must be able to demonstrate the following:

- The legal avenue being pursued is the most appropriate for the child and that the other options such as family plans, Child Arrangement Orders or Special Guardianship have been considered;
- Circumstances leading up to the request for the child needing to be placed were unforeseen;
- The child has a pre-existing relationship with the carers or has been introduced to them.

6.14 A full fostering assessment will need to be presented to Fostering Panel in 16-weeks if the child is to remain with Family and Friends carers (or in exceptional circumstances 24-weeks if a Regulation 25 Extension report has been completed and approved at Panel). This will allow for the child to

remain in the care of Family and Friends post 16 / 24 week assessment periods lapsing. Once a full assessment has been completed and presented to Fostering Panel, the Agency Decision Maker will make a final recommendation and decision as to the suitability of them as Family and Friends foster carers.

6.15 If the assessment is not complete by the end of the 8-week extension period the Fostering Regulations and Care Planning and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 make clear that the placement must come to an end and alternative accommodation identified in the absence of an alternative order being obtained as part of the court process.

6.16 If the carer being assessed has made a referral to the IRM then approval will continue until the matter has been heard by the IRM (Independent panel).

7. Initial Checks to be Undertaken by the Social Worker

7.1 Before placing a looked after child with Family and Friends carers the social worker must complete the following safeguarding checks:

- The child's social worker must complete Emergency Police check (PNC) by completing a Police Check Request form (SSCC187). Checks must be completed on all persons in the household age of 18 years and over;
- The social worker must also complete LCS checks to see if the proposed carers are known to social care and whether there are any concerns about their parenting capacity (if they have parented before) or any other significant concerns which may deem them unsuitable to care for children;
- Additional checks in relation to Family and Friends carers health should be completed immediately if there are any significant health concerns raised as part of the REG 24/viability assessment process.

8. The Placement

8.1 A Placement Planning Meeting should be held before the placement or, where this is not possible because of the urgency of the placement, within 5 working days, as for all Children Looked After.

8.2 Where the placement appears suitable and is approved, a written Placement Plan should be completed by the child's social worker with the proposed carer and signed off by the social worker's team manager.

8.3 The carer must also sign a Foster Carer Agreement that makes clear their role and responsibilities. A copy of this agreement should be kept on the carers file and a copy given to the carer. Family and Friends carers approved under Regulation 24 will be entitled to the same level of support and services available as would be for unrelated approved Local Authority foster carers.

8.4 On the placement of the child, the child's social worker will ensure the child's Care Plan and the written Placement Plan is given to the carer. These forms must be signed by the social worker's team manager.

8.5 If the child was not previously Looked After, the child's social worker will send a notification of the child's placement and a request for the child's first Looked After Review to the Safeguarding and Reviewing Team.

8.6 Weekly visits (until the first review and then 4 weekly following this) will enable the child's social worker to assess the quality of the child's experience in the placement and how the relationship with the carer and other members of the household is developing. In particular, the social worker and fostering social worker must consider whether any additional support and services are required to ensure that the placement continues to meet the child's needs.

8.7 The child's social worker must visit and see the child alone in the placement (unless she/he refuses). The visits are to be fully recorded as statutory visits.

8.8 The child's social worker will update the electronic record with the details of the placement as part of the New Kinship Care Pathway. The social worker and/or fostering social worker will notify the fostering payments team (Central Hub) of the placement to ensure payments are triggered to the carer; this will be achieved with support from the fostering service when 'adding provider services' once Head of Service (HOS) approval is in place. This is part of the Kinship Care Pathway process.

8.9 Notification of the placement will also be sent by the child's social worker to the relevant local Children and Young People's Services Department if the placement is in a different local authority area.

8.10 The child's social worker must notify all family members consulted and involved in the decision-making process of the placement. These notifications must be made in writing, advising of the placement decision and the name and address of the person with whom the child is to be placed unless there are safeguarding reasons for not doing so.

8.11 The child's social worker must notify the Independent Reviewing Officer of all those involved in the day-to-day arrangements for the child, including nursery/school, GP and any health professional or YOS worker actively involved with the child.

8.12 Notification must be made to any person with a contact order or Child Arrangements Order under Section 34 or Section 8 of the Children's Act 1989.

8.13 It will be necessary for the child's social worker to ensure the child is registered with a GP, Dentist and Optician, either by retaining practices known to him or her (which is preferable) or in the area where they are placed. This will be further supported by the Family and Friends carer for the child.

8.14 In relation to a child becoming Looked After for the first time; it will also be necessary for the social worker to arrange an Initial Health Assessment (See Initial Health Assessment process for details).

8.15 The social worker must arrange for the completion of a Personal Education Plan.. Every effort should be made to enable the child to remain at the same school unless there are reasons which would be detrimental to his or her well-being.

9. Assessment and Full Approval of Family and Friends Carers to include Planned Placements of Family and Friends where Children are Looked After and already Placed in LA Accommodation

This work is undertaken by members of the fostering team that builds on the work already completed by the child's social worker.

Family and Friends Assessments where Regulation 24 is in place

9.1 All Family and Friends assessments must be carried out in accordance with Schedule 3 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011. There is a 16-week timescale from the first day of placement for the completion and ratification of assessments for Family and Friends carers. The fostering social worker will therefore need to complete their written assessment by the end of week 12 for the assessment to be submitted to Fostering Panel for their consideration and to avoid the approval of the placement expiring post 16 week timescales lapsing that could result in the child needing alternative accommodation. If a Regulation 25 extension report is in place to support further assessment; reports should be made available to Fostering Panel at the end of week 20 for the same reasons as stated above.

Where the move is planned

9.2 Where the placement is a planned move the prospective Family and Friends Carer will need to be fully assessed as a foster carer prior to a child being placed in their care in accordance with the Fostering Regulations and Sch.4 CPP&CR (England) Regulations 2010 dependent on the child's care plan.

In some circumstances during permanence planning, potential carers are identified within the extended family network or via the facilitation of Family Group Conferencing. The suitability of potential carers is informally assessed using the 'Initial Viability Assessment tool' as noted in section 5. This is completed to assess the viability of a potential Family and Friends carer prior to a formal assessment being agreed and commencing. Please refer to the practice guidance published by the [Family Rights Group](#):

Once a copy of the Initial Viability Assessment has been shared with the fostering service a joint home visit should take place between the child's social worker and a member of the fostering service to meet the prospective foster carer/s. This will help inform assessments and determine if applicants are suitable to foster. If professionals and the applicants feel confident about further assessment work being completed, plans can be made during this visit with a view to commencing the full assessment.

When assessments of prospective foster carers link directly to a child known to them (family member or connected person) the fostering service will always aim to complete this type of assessment using the Family Rights Group tool that supports a more child specific assessment being completed. In all other circumstances the fostering service will complete a Skills to Foster assessment as would be completed. The Skills to Foster assessment tool is used to assess all prospective foster carers wishing to foster more generally.

It is important to remember that Family and Friends assessments to support planned placement moves for children in care should be completed in a timely manner when considering the needs of the child requiring permanence and where applicable timescales for court proceedings. The importance and timely identification, engagement with and initial viability assessment of extended Family and Friends carers can be critical in securing the most appropriate placement for a child.

9.3 Once a Full Family and Friends fostering assessment has been completed and presented to the Fostering Panel the Agency Decision Maker is required to make a recommendation and decision about a carers approval and suitability to foster once they have received the minutes from Fostering Panel.

As part of the assessment, early consideration will need to be given to the following:

9.4 Identifying the child/children's specific needs in order to accurately assess the prospective carer's ability to meet those needs and any information from the child's record. This should include a chronology for the child wherever possible.

- Consideration to be given to any historical information in respect of the Family and Friends carers where there has been previous social care involvement. To support this a close inspection of the carers case files will need to take place (where appropriate) so that any issues or potential risks can be considered as part of the full assessment. It is important to note that this information should have been shared/discussed as part of the viability between the prospective foster carer/social worker;
- Clarification of the child's legal proceedings with the social worker or legal guardian will help inform further assessment processes;
- The fostering social worker will benefit from having sight of copies relating to any other assessments that have been done or been commissioned in respect of the carers or children concerned;
- A copy of the social workers viability/Regulation 24 assessment should be made available from the child's social worker as appropriate.

Checks

9.5 The fostering services administration team will arrange for the carers to undertake a full medical examination with their GP once notified that the carers have been temporarily approved as Regulation 24 Family and Friends carers. Where the applicants live or have lived outside the local authority area, checks must be made with the local authority and health trust where the applicants live/have lived; this task is completed by the administration team as noted above.

- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks will be completed by the allocated fostering social worker. This will be done by using the online DBS checking service once allocated.

Care must be taken to complete all DBS checks accurately, ensuring full identification of documents are seen by the social worker on completion. Once the online DBS check application form has been completed and verified by the assessing social worker a Criminal Record Check Request form should be completed and sent to hrEBulk@rotherham.gov.uk to support this process. Failure to complete this task could result in delays in achieving either a placement or approval.

- Where the applicant or any member of the household has been known to Children and Families' Services, information should be obtained from the relevant social worker;
- Where applicants have recently moved to the UK (within the last 10 years), checks will need

to be made through International Social Services and/or the relevant Consulate on all members of the household aged 16 and over;

- Where the applicant has school age children, the relevant school(s) will be contacted, with the permission of the applicant, for information regarding the applicant's ability to promote the child's education;
- On receipt of statutory checks, the administration team will update electronic records as appropriate;
- Where there are concerns about an applicant's circumstances as a result of the information obtained from the above checks, this should be referred to the fostering social worker and team manager. A decision about whether the assessment will proceed at this stage will be made by the fostering team manager in consultation with the allocated worker and children's social care team;
- If the applicant withdraws, the administration team will update the electronic records alongside the fostering social worker;
- Where the checks reveal that the applicant or a member of the household is a Disqualified Person (Foster Carer) and there are concerns about the placement the fostering team will ensure this is communicated to the social care team so that future planning for the child can take place to inform appropriate decision making;
- Where the information relates to an offence which does not automatically disqualify the applicant, for example because the applicant is seeking approval in relation to a specific child only, the manager must consider whether the application should still proceed. Such convictions will not necessarily preclude an application, but this will depend on the seriousness of the offence and how long ago it was committed. In a case where the conviction would usually disqualify an applicant, the case should be referred to the Fostering Panel and the Agency Decision Maker (Fostering) for a preliminary decision. In any other case where there is doubt, discussion with the fostering team manager and social worker will be required;
- An early referral can be made to the Fostering Panel and/or Agency Decision Maker (Fostering) where complexities in an assessment are identified and need Panel and Agency Decision Maker oversight.
-
- Information relevant to the carers that has been obtained from the DBS should be recorded on file including details of the disclosure number, date received, and any details of offences recorded on a Content DBS form and maintained on the carers case file. This information may only be retained on the applicant's file for a limited period and should not be kept for longer than necessary when a decision is made as to whether the information precludes them from becoming a foster carer or not DBS Policies regarding DBS information now state;

'once a recruitment (or other relevant) decision has been made, we do not keep certificate information for longer than necessary. This retention will allow for the consideration and resolution of any disputes or complaints or be for the purpose of completing safeguarding audits.'

DBS now leave it up to the recruitment decision makers to decide how long you keep the certificate information.

References

9.6 Each applicant will be asked to provide the names of three personal referees, who are adults, who have known the applicant for a considerable length of time (at least 5 years). One of the referees can be a family member; other references must be non-family members. All referees should be people who know the applicants well in a personal capacity. It is good practice for one of the personal referees to have known the carers in some capacity whilst parenting their own children (if applicable).

- Where there is a joint application, referees must know both applicants, or additional referees will be required. A proforma questionnaire must be sent to the referees prior to the visit. This information can then be used in the interview to lead the discussion. A separate record of the interview must be completed, and the fostering officer must comment on the weight to be given to the referee comments.
- A written reference must be obtained from each applicant's current employer regardless of the applicant's occupation. Where the carer has had a previous job working with children it will be useful to follow up a reference with an ex-employer. Where the carer/s have made previous applications to foster or adopt, the relevant agency must be asked to confirm in writing the outcome of the application and provide a written reference.
- Referees and any other family members spoken to during the preparation of the report should be informed in writing about the position in relation to confidentiality. A written reference will not be shown to prospective foster carers unless the applicant requests disclosure and the referee consents to disclosure. The same applies to information and opinions shared in the course of conversation. These will not be disclosed to an applicant without permission. However, referees and others should be made aware that it will often be necessary to discuss with applicant's information and opinions expressed although where this happens, the particular source of the information or opinion will not be disclosed.
- Where there are existing children in the household, contact with health visitor, nursery or school may be made. All adult children of the applicant(s) living away from home or adult children who are no longer household members must be contacted and interviewed. The assessing social worker will also contact the previous partners / spouses of the applicants, particularly if they have cared for children together (taking care not to disclose confidential personal information about the applicant). Where there were any children of the relationship or where children were cared for jointly, the social worker will arrange to interview them face-to-face wherever practicable.
- For Family and Friends carers the views of the child's parents must have been sought by the social worker, so it will not always be appropriate for the fostering social worker to interview them as part of the assessment. This can be achieved with the support of the child's social worker to inform the full assessment report.

Health

9.7 The applicants will be provided with the relevant medical form to fill in with their details and send to their GP with a covering letter requesting that the GP conduct a medical examination and complete the form and send it to the fostering services administration team. On receipt of this the administration team will pass the information on to the Medical Adviser for comments.

- Where the medical information suggests that the applicant may not be suitable for health reasons, this should be discussed in detail with the applicant(s) and withdrawal may be advisable at this stage. Additional advice may be sought from the Medical Adviser or the Medical Adviser may raise questions with the GP where this is appropriate. It may be necessary for reports from other health professionals also to be obtained and presented to the Medical Adviser and the Fostering Panel.

General

9.8 Where there are concerns about an applicant's circumstances at any point, for example where there are concerns about their health or about the information obtained from referees, this must be referred to the fostering team manager and the applicant may be advised not to proceed with the application. Any such advice must be confirmed to them in writing and the reasons explained. A further visit may also be arranged to the applicants to explain the decision.

- If the information leading to a decision not to proceed relates to a previous conviction of one of two joint applicants or a member of the applicant's household, the details of the offence can only be disclosed to the applicant with the consent of the relevant person; without such consent, the applicant can only be informed that the reason relates to information obtained from the checks but no details can be given;
- If the applicant withdraws, the administration team will update the electronic records;
- Where the applicant disagrees with the decision and/or is not willing to withdraw, a brief report on the application should be presented to the Fostering Panel outlining the circumstances and reasons why approval is not recommended. The brief report must include DBS, medical advisor's summary and referee interviews, if undertaken. The procedure to be followed should be the same as if the report was a full report on the applicants and the applicants will be able to attend Fostering Panel;
- The Fostering Panel can decide to make a recommendation that the applicant is not suitable to foster, or it can request that the agency completes and returns a full assessment of the applicants to Fostering Panel.

Assessment Report

9.9 The assessment report used has been taken from the 'Family Rights Group'. It is an assessment tool designed specifically for Family and Friend's foster carers. This assessment can be carried out either when someone has been given temporary approval to be a foster carer for a particular child/ren under Regulation 24 and 25 of the Care Planning, Placement and Care Review Regulations 2010; or it can be done without the child being in placement when a planned placement move needs to be considered.

The assessment report requires the following information:

Record of Key information

- Birth parents - birth mother, birth father;
- Others with Parental Responsibility;
- Connected Carers;
- Others relevant to the Connected Carers;

- Accommodation and Neighbourhood;
- Transport and Amenities;
- Home Safety;
- Pets;
- Pre-court Involvements;
- Preparation for role as Family and Friends Foster Carer;
- Checks and References.

Meeting the child's Needs - Information from the connected person:

- The history of the child (as known by the connected person);
- Relationship with the child (as identified by the connected person);
- Needs of the child: (as identified by the connected person);
- Health;
- Education;
- Emotional, behavioural, and social development;
- Planning for the future;
- Court orders and hearings .

The Parents

The connected person's views of each parent, their relationship with each of the parents, their view of the child/ren's relationship with each parent.

Contact

It is often assumed that contact is more straightforward for Family and Friends placements, however research has shown that it is often more complex therefore careful planning and anticipation of difficulties can assist.

Information about the Family and Friends Carers

- Individual profiles;
- Household income and employment;
- Relationships/partnerships;
- Children in household;
- Other adult members of the household -including adult children not living at home;
- Housing;
- Parenting capacity/family lifestyle – changes may need to be made to parenting or lifestyle to meet the needs of the child.

9.10 The assessment requires the assessor to explore the applicant's attitudes and lifestyle issues in relation to the 5 Every Child Matters expectations and outcomes as follows:

- Be Healthy

Consider the applicant's capacity to meet the child's basic care needs, including healthy diet, adequate sleep, cleanliness, exercise, self-care skills, developmental issues, emotional health and well-being, sexual health, views on drug use, promote healthy choices, and any other health related matters.

- Enjoy & Achieve

Consider how the applicant will encourage the child to participate fully in education, leisure and recreational activities. Will they encourage hobbies and after school activities? Will they include the

child in their own hobbies and interests?

- Stay Safe

Is the carer able to keep the child safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence, and sexual exploitation? Safe from accidental injury and death? Safe from bullying and discrimination? Safe from crime and anti-social behaviour (both in and out of school?) Ensure that they have security and stability and are well cared for.

- Make a positive contribution

Will the applicant help the child/children being placed to make a positive contribution to society? To be non-discriminatory, to develop positive relationships and to choose not to bully. To develop self-confidence, and to successfully manage with life events.

- Achieve economic well-being

Consider the applicants ability to support and encourage further education, employment or training on leaving school. What is the applicants view on employment, decent homes and sustainable communities, and the child's potential to sustain a home free from poverty?

9.11 The assessor should explore any specific issues noted for the child.

- Involvement of other Relatives, Friends and Community Support - Support networks are a crucial part of the complex task of Family and Friends carers;
- Contingency planning - It is important to have a plan in place in the event that unforeseen changes occur;
- Legal Context - There are a range of legal options for Family and Friends Carers – this should be discussed with the carers to identify which legal arrangement they feel would suit their situation best;
- Working with Professionals - Family and Friends carers often find that their task is more challenging and complex than other foster care arrangements and they may need more, not less professional support.

Any other issues that the carer may need addressing or resolving.

Views of the children and the Parents

- Views of the children – wishes and feelings about the Family and Friends placement plan;
- Views of the parents and others with parental responsibility;
- The child's social worker should already have gathered this information as part of the initial viability/Reg 24 assessment and this should be shared for this section of the assessment, as a result there may be no need to repeat these sessions.

Analysis of Proposed Placement with Connected Person

- Analysis of the benefits and risks for the child in this Family and Friends placement;
- Analysis of Issues for the Family and Friends Carers;
- Analysis of the match between children and carers;
- Plans for preparation and support;
- Review Process;

- Analysis, conclusion and Recommendation;
- Connected persons comments in relation to the assessment and analysis.

10. Criteria for Foster Carers

10.1 Individual and Joint - Will be considered from married couples, civil partners, unmarried couples or single people.

10.2 Religion - Will be considered from people of any or no religious persuasion.

10.3 Ethnicity - Will be considered from people of any race or culture.

10.4 Age - The minimum age for foster carers is generally 21 years. In exceptional circumstances, e.g. with some Family and Friends Carers, the minimum age may be reduced to 18 years. There is no specific upper age limit.

10.5 Gender - gender / gender identity are not a factor in determining if a person is suitable to foster.

10.6 Sexual Orientation - Will be considered from people of any sexual orientation.

10.7 Income and Work Commitment – Prospective foster carers may be in work or not.

10.8 Health - Applicants will be required to have a full medical and undergo any further tests/checks that may be required by the Fostering Panel's Medical Adviser. The Medical Adviser will advise on the applicants' ability, from a health point of view, to meet the needs of a child who is fostered. Any comments or advice given by the Medical Adviser must be taken seriously by the applicants and will be addressed during the assessment process.

Applicants are expected to positively promote a healthy lifestyle which will enable a child to reach his or her full potential. This would encompass attention to nutrition, exercise, routine and hygiene.

It is expected that foster carers will comply with nationally recommended alcohol consumption levels and that children's needs and safety will always be met .

10.9 For Smoking Advice and Guidance please follow the link: [BAAF Practice Note 68-Reducing Risk Environmental Tobacco Smoke.pdf](#)

10.10 Criminal Convictions - A person who is seeking approval as a foster carer will not be considered if s/he or any adult member of the household is within the category of Disqualified Persons (Foster Carer) unless the application is to foster a child who is already living with the applicant(s) and at least one of the applicants is a relative of the child, in which case the caution/conviction will not automatically preclude them but will be taken into account when assessing the suitability of the applicant.

Other convictions will not necessarily preclude a person, but this will depend on the seriousness of the offence and how long ago it was committed. All such cases will be referred to the fostering team manager and / or service manager who may also consult the Agency Decision Maker.

10.11 Accommodation - Applicants may own their own home or live in rented accommodation.

They will need living and sleeping accommodation appropriate to the number and ages of the children they are seeking to foster. They must be able to offer separate bedrooms for each foster child. Only in exceptional circumstances would sharing bedrooms be allowed and this would never be with adult sons or daughters of the foster carer.

For Family and Friends carers it is sometimes necessary for children to share a bedroom in order to keep siblings together within the extended family. Where the placement is intended to be long term, it may be necessary for the foster carers to seek alternative housing or where this is not possible to seek approval for financial support to provide additional space via an extension. The fostering social worker must discuss shortfalls in accommodation at an early stage.

It is important that the home environment is child-friendly, welcoming to children, safe and meets reasonable levels of hygiene.

All applicants will have a safety check on their home undertaken by a trained safety assessor. This will include the outdoor space, animals (including the sleeping and toileting arrangements for any pet) and the holding of any firearms.

10.12 Child Care Experience - It is important that carers have some experience of 'hands-on' care of children of the age group in which the applicants are interested or are family members with close ties to the children they intend to care for.

10.13 Family Time - All applicants must be prepared to facilitate family time with the child's parents, siblings or significant other family members.

11. Training, Support Groups and Finance Matters

11.1 Training - There is an expectation that Family and Friends carers will undertake the 'Skills to Foster' training programme. The purpose of the course is to raise awareness and a carers understanding of the key issues which need to be addressed by all carers. This course will be offered either prior to approval or just after approval at fostering panel. The course will consist of 3 full day sessions.

11.2 All Family and Friends carers are required to complete the Training Support and Development Standards workbook for Family and Friends foster carers. It is the responsibility of the supervising social worker to ensure that this is completed within 18 months of the carer/s being approved.

11.3 The Family and Friends carer will be expected to develop their skills and knowledge by undertaking relevant training which will be identified jointly by them and their supervising social worker during any subsequent review period.

11.4 All approved foster carers are expected to complete a minimum of 3 training programmes per annum / in any one 12 monthly review period. These should consist of x 1 face to face training event and x 2 on-line learning and development opportunities. Family and Friends carers will be supported in identifying any relevant training events by their supervising social worker.

11.5 Support Groups – Support groups are offered to all approved foster carers for RMBC. There is a daytime support group for newly approved and existing foster carers. An evening support group for carers who cannot attend day-time events as a result of work or childcare commitments and there is a support group for carers who care for very young children (0 – 4 years). Details about support

groups are advertised in the monthly Newsletter for foster carers that is available electronically / or hard copy.

11.6 Finance Matters – For information about financial support offered to Family and Friends carer/s please see APPENDIX 1 for details.

Family and Friends carers will be supported financially to care for the child/ren in their care according to the age and status of the placement. The flow chart in APPENDIX 1 explains the payments that carers should receive and who is responsible for ensuring these payments are made.

The table in APPENDIX 1 relates to fostering allowances which are payable to carers of children placed under Regulation 24 and for 2 years after an Order is granted (e.g. SGO, ICAO, CAO). All other payments are means tested.

12. The Panel Recommendation

12.1 The fostering social worker will attend Fostering Panel together with the child's social worker and the Family and Friends carers. The decision to attend rests with the applicants and a wish not to attend will not prejudice consideration of their application. However, it is often helpful for the applicants to attend as this gives further amplification to the written assessment. Family and Friends carers who decide they wish to attend Panel should be fully prepared as to the procedure prior to their attendance.

12.2 Fostering Panel will consider the reports together with all the supporting documentation and any additional information presented verbally and make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker (Fostering) regarding the suitability of the applicant for fostering.

12.3 Where a brief report is presented to Panel, the Panel can recommend that the applicants are not suitable to foster or request that a full assessment report is completed. In instances where the report submitted to Panel does not contain all the required information, the Panel is able to request that a further full report is submitted for consideration.

12.4 The recommendation, with reasons, will be recorded in writing and, where approval is recommended, the category of fostering, any limitations of the approval to named children (for example in the case of a Family and Friends carers) or conditions as to the age range or number of children to be placed in the foster home will also be specified.

12.5 Where the carers decide not to attend Panel, the fostering social worker undertaking the assessment will advise the applicant of the Panel recommendation within 24 hours of the Panel meeting taking place. This will be verbally, by telephone or, where appropriate as part of a home visit.

13. After the Panel Recommendation

13.1 The Agency Decision Maker (Fostering) will make a decision as to the suitability of the carers based on reports presented to Fostering Panel and the minutes detailing the Panel's recommendation. Where the decision is to approve the applicants as Family and Friends foster carers, the Agency Decision Maker will specify the terms of the approval i.e. the number and age range of children to be fostered, the type of placement and any specific inclusions/exclusions.

13.2 The Agency Decision Makers decision must be made within 7 working days of their receipt of the Panel minutes and must be recorded, together with reasons. Family and Friends carers should be advised in writing of the appeals and representations process including the Independent Review Mechanism in respect of contentious issues should they not be approved at Panel.

13.3 The fostering social worker will arrange for the carers to be given verbal notification of the Agency Decision Makers recommendation within 2 working days. Written notice of the decision, with reasons, signed by the Agency Decision Maker, should be provided to the carers within 5 working days of the decision being made; this task would be completed by Panel administration staff as part of Panel process.

13.4 If the Agency Decision Makers makes a recommendation not to approve carers, the assessing social worker and fostering team manager will assess the need for any further support available and needed for them and will agree and arrange any necessary follow-up actions.

13.5 Minutes taken from fostering panel must be kept on foster carer case files at all times.

14. Representations / Independent Review Procedure

14.1 If a decision is made to refuse an application, the applicant will be advised that if he or she wishes to challenge the decision, applicants should be advised of their right to submit representations within 28 days of the date of the written notice of the decision to the fostering team manager. In addition, as an alternative, they may exercise the right to apply to the Secretary of State to request a review of the decision by an Independent Review Panel. Any such application must be made in writing within 28 days of the decision and supported by reasons.

14.2 The only circumstances where the foster carer will not have the right to request a review by an Independent Review Panel is if he or she is regarded as disqualified as a result of a conviction or caution for a specified offence. If no written representations or notification of a request for a review are received within this period, the decision to refuse the application can be confirmed.

14.3 If written representations are received within the period, the Panel Adviser will arrange for the reports and other documentation to be reconsidered by the Fostering Panel, taking into account the written representations, and make a new recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker (Fostering).

14.4 The Panel Administrator will advise the applicant within 7 days of the date of the Panel meeting when they can attend, and their written representations will be considered.

14.5 In these circumstances, applicants who wish to attend the meeting of the Fostering Panel can arrange for a friend or support person to accompany them. Foster carers should always be given the opportunity to access independent support in circumstances where they feel they would benefit from this. The supervising social worker should ensure a referral to Foster Talk is completed to support this request before the Panel date; this should be done in consultation with the fostering team manager.

14.6 After considering the representations, the Panel will make further recommendations either confirming or amending their previous views, which the Agency Decision Maker (Fostering) will

consider before a final decision is made.

14.7 If the decision remains not to approve the carer/s, the team manager will arrange for them to be informed verbally within 2 working days. Written notice of the final decision, together with reasons, must be sent to the applicant by the Panel Adviser within 7 working days of the Panel meeting. Information about the Complaints Procedure must also be sent. A copy of the report to the Panel, the Panel's recommendation and the decision, with reasons, must be retained on the applicant's case file.

14.8 If the carers decide to refer the matter to an Independent Review, the relevant Panel reports, any new information obtained since the Panel meeting, a record of the decision made and reasons, a copy of the written notification of the decision and a copy of the Panel minute, if different, will be sent to the Independent Review within 10 working days of their written request.

14.9 The procedure for the Independent Review is operated by Coram Children's Legal Centre; the applicant and two representatives of the fostering agency will be invited to attend the Independent Review.

14.10 After considering the representations of both partners, the Independent Review may make a recommendation, which the Agency Decision Maker will consider before a final decision is made.

14.11 Written notice of the final decision, together with reasons, must be sent to the applicant within 7 working days of the receipt of the Independent Review recommendation.

15. After the Approval

15.1 Once approved, the Fostering Panel administration team will enter the foster carers' approval details, including their first review date, on the Fostering Register database and update the electronic records.

15.2 The foster carer will be allocated a supervising social worker within the fostering team. If the social worker does not know the new carer, he or she will take time to read the full Family and Friends assessment report and supporting documentation presented to the Fostering Panel. This should take place prior to introducing him or herself to the carers and arranging to meet them, their family and members of their support network as appropriate.

15.3 Family and Friends carers are provided with access to the Foster Carer Handbook and are required to sign and maintain a copy of the Foster Care Agreement which should be made available to them once approved at Panel. The Foster Carer's Handbook contains information about fostering in the Local Authority and covers policies, procedures, guidance, legal information and insurance details.

Within 1 week of their approval the foster carers will receive a letter which will include:

- Foster Care Agreement;
- ID registration and request form;
- Training and support group information where appropriate;
- Access to the Foster Carer Handbook.

15.4 The allocated supervising social worker will make sure that they follow up on the above stated

items. The Foster Care Agreement should be used by supervising social workers as part of their first initial home visit/meeting to explore and develop the carers' understanding of their role and responsibilities, foster carer tasks, and what carers may expect from the fostering service.

15.5 The foster carer will be given two copies of the Foster Care Agreement for signature and will retain one signed copy. The other will be kept on the foster carer's file, together with the report and supporting documents presented to the Fostering Panel, a copy of the Panel's recommendation and a copy of the approval decision. The Team Manager will also sign the agreement.

15.6 The Foster Care Agreement will contain the following information:

- The signed Foster Carer Agreement forms the basis of the on-going agreement between RMBC and its foster carers;
- The terms of the foster carer's approval including number, age range gender and type of placement (Family and Friends);
- The support and training to be provided to the foster carer;
- The procedure for the review of the foster carer's approval;
- The procedure for making representations and complaints;
- The requirement to inform the fostering service of any change of circumstance, address or in the household composition, or of any registration as a childminder or application to adopt or of any offence;
- The requirements in relation to confidentiality and internet usage;
- The procedures for behaviour management and unauthorised absences of children placed with the foster carer including the ban on corporal punishment;
- The procedures for informing the supervising social worker of the child's progress and any significant events relating to the child;
- The need to give 28 days' notice in writing of their wish to cease fostering (as appropriate);
- The need to allow access to the Regulatory Authority;
- The duty to promote the child's well-being and to promote their Health and Education.

15.7 The foster carer(s) must sign confirmation of receipt. The signed and dated confirmation of receipt will be placed on their file.

15.8 Foster carers will be assisted by their supervising social worker to produce a Safe Caring Policy and Fire Plan.

15.9 The supervising social worker will continue to provide support and supervision to the foster carer and will ensure that they understand the need to undertake DBS and other checks and assessments on any new member of the household and the need to repeat DBS checks on themselves every 3 years.

16. Register of Foster Carers

A register of all approved foster carers will be maintained by the fostering service containing the following particulars:

- a) The name, address, date of birth, sex and ethnic origin of each foster carer;
- b) The date of approval and of each review of their approval;
- c) The category and current terms of the approval;
- d) The name, address, date of birth of each person with whom a child is placed under Regulation 24 who is a Family and Friends Foster Carer and who has entered an agreement to provide care for the child placed, together with the date and terms of the agreement.

Once approved, the Fostering Panel administration team will enter the foster carers' approval details, including their first review date, on the Fostering Register database.

17. Changes in the Foster Carer's Household or Circumstances

17.1 The supervising social worker will ensure that any newly approved foster carer is clear about his or her role and responsibilities as an approved foster carer. They will ensure foster carers know when and how to notify the fostering service before any changes in the family composition occurs or where there is any significant change in their circumstances which affects their fostering, for example a new relationship, pregnancy or bereavement.

17.2 If the supervising social worker discovers that there has been a change in the foster carer's household without prior notice, this must be shared with the fostering team manager and an immediate review of the foster carer's and their approval status should be arranged. In these circumstances, a suspension of the foster carer's approval may have to be considered at the review which will require the review to be presented to Fostering Panel.

17.3 If a foster carer enters into a new relationship with a partner, there will be a presumption that he or she will have a part to play in caring for any child in the placement and therefore a full assessment of his or her suitability for this role must be completed before the partner moves into the foster home. The same procedure for this assessment will be carried out as for any applicant wishing to foster and it will be presented to the Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker thereafter in accordance with the preceding paragraphs of this chapter. There will be no presumption that any such assessment will be approved.

17.4 Pending the completion of the full assessment, where the foster carer wishes his/her partner to stay overnight before the full assessment is completed, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) enhanced check must be carried out, and a risk assessment must also be completed to determine the level of additional checks required, before agreement to overnight stays can be given. The risk assessment should take account of, amongst other things, the number and ages of the children in the placement, their views about the foster carer's partner, the significance and stability of the relationship (including how long they have known each other) and the foster carer's history of fostering. Any agreement to overnight stays must be endorsed by the fostering team manager and service manager.

17.5 in terms of other members of the household where a foster carer proposes that any person will join the household, notice must be given before this occurs in sufficient time to enable an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to be carried out before the proposed change in household composition occurs. This should be supported by a risk assessment that captures details of the new household member and any caring responsibilities that they may undertake for any child placed.

Where the new member of the household will play a part in caring for the child in the placement, consideration will be given to the need for a full Skills to Foster assessment as for any new partner of the foster carer. Otherwise, the assessment will be considered at a Foster Carer Review which should be convened to consider the change in the foster carer's circumstances. This will determine whether any change to the foster carer's terms of approval is required and if so, a report to the Fostering Panel will be prepared.

18. Ending the Placement

18.1 Where there is a proposal to end a placement, a review of the child's case must be undertaken to ensure that the views of all the people concerned has been heard.

18.2 When the placement ends, the child's social worker must update the child's electronic record and send notification to the finance section so that payments to the carer can be ceased.

18.3 The fostering social worker should be notified immediately that a placement has ended including reasons for this so that the carers electronic file can be updated.

18.4 The social worker will also send copies to those notified when the placement ended, including the independent reviewing officer.

18.5 Where appropriate, consideration must be given to holding a Disruption Meeting in which case the procedure set out in Placement Planning Meetings and Disruption Meeting Procedure should be followed.

NB: All relevant forms and leaflets can be found in the Resources and Forms Library

Financial Support for Kinship Carers

Kinship carers will be supported financial according to the status of the placement. The flow chart below explains the payments that carers should receive and who is responsible for ensuring these payments are made.

The following tables relate to fostering allowances which are payable to carers of children placed under Regulation 24 and for 2 years after an Order is granted (e.g. SGO, ICAO, CAO). All other payments are means tested.

| Child's Age | Basic | Clothing Allowance | | Pocket Money | Total Amount (weekly) |
|-------------|---------|--------------------|--------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 0-4 years | £123.31 | £9.75 | £1.94 | £135 | |
| 5-10 years | £137.98 | £9.75 | £4.49 | £152.12 | |
| 11-15 years | £168.08 | £12.65 | £8.64 | £189.37 | |
| 16+ | £206.25 | £12.65 | £11.39 | £230.29 | |

Fostering Allowance

Additional Allowances

| Child's Age | Birthday | Christmas/Eid/Cultural Celebration | Holiday |
|-------------|----------|------------------------------------|---------|
| 0-4 years | £133.54 | £133.54 | £267.08 |
| 5-10 years | £152.12 | £152.12 | £304.24 |
| 11-15 years | £189.37 | £189.37 | £378.74 |
| 16+ | £230.30 | £230.30 | £460.60 |

Birthdays & Christmas/Eid/Cultural celebrations = 1 weeks allowance

Holiday pay = 2 weeks allowance

APPENDIX 2

Useful Organisations

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.

Address: Unit 21, Carlson Court 116 Putney Bridge Road London, SW15 2NQ

Tel: 020 8812 3600

Advice line: 0808 808 2003

Email: info@actionpf.org.uk / info@prisonersfamilies.org

Website: www.prisonersfamilies.org

Adfam

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

Address: 25 Corsham Street, London N1 6DR
Tel: 020 7553 7640
Email: admin@adfam.org.uk
Website: www.adfam.org.uk

CoramBAAF

An independent membership organisation for professionals, foster carers and adopters, and anyone else working with or looking after children in or from care, or adults who have been affected by adoption. It is a successor organisation to the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF).

CoramBAAF, Coram Campus, 41 Brunswick Square, London, WC1N 1AZ
Tel: 020 7520 0300
Email: advice@corambaaf.org.uk
Website: <https://corambaaf.org.uk/>

Children's Legal Centre

Provides free independent legal advice and factsheets to children, parents, carers and professionals.

Address: University of Essex Wivenhoe Park Colchester Essex CO4 3SQ
Tel: 01206 877 910
Child Law Advice Line: 0808 802 0008
Community Legal Advice - Education: 0845 345 4345
Email: clc@essex.ac.uk
Website: www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Citizens Advice Bureau

Helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice through local bureau and

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Department for Education

Details of telephone help lines and online services to provide information, advice and support on a range of issues that parents and families may face in bringing up children and young people.

Website: www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families

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
Tel: 0845 130 4542
Email: info@familyfund.org.uk
Website: www.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 for family and friends carers, and runs a discussion board.

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
Website: www.frg.org.uk

The Fostering Network

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

Address: 87 Blackfriars Road London SE1 8HA
Tel: 020 7620 6400
Email: info@fostering.net
Fosterline: 0800 040 7675
Email: fosterline@fostering.net
Website: www.fostering.net

The Grandparents' Association

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

Address: Moot House The Stow Harlow Essex CM20 3AG
Tel: 01279 428040
Helpline: 0845 434 9585
Welfare benefits advice and information: 0844 357 1033
Email: info@grandparents-association.org.uk
Website: www.grandparents-association.org.uk

Grandparents Plus

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

Address: Grandparents Plus 18 Victoria Park Square Bethnal Green London E2 9PF
Tel: 020 8981 8001
Email: info@grandparentsplus.org.uk

Mentor UK

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

Address: Fourth Floor 74 Great Eastern Street London EC2A 3JG
Tel: 020 7739 8494
Email: admin@mentoruk.org
Website: www.mentoruk.org.uk

National Family Mediation (NFM)

Provides mediation services to support couples who are separated, and their children and others affected by this.

Address: 4 Barnfield Hill, Exeter EX1 1SR
Tel: 0300 4000 636
Email: general@nfm.org.uk
Website: www.nfm.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:

24 hour advice line: 0800 77 66 00
Text: 82111
Email: frank@talktofrank.com
Website: www.talktofrank.com

Voice

Advocacy organisation for children living away from home or in need.

Address: 320 City Road London EC1V 2NZ
Tel: 020 7833 5792
Young Person's Advice Line: 0808 800 5792
Email: info@voicepp.org
Website: www.voicepp.org

Young Minds

Works to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people and empowering their parents and carers.

Address: 48-50 St John Street London EC1M 4DG
Tel: 020 7336 8445
Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544
Website: www.youngminds.org.uk