

**Darlington Borough Council
People Services**

**Children, Families and Learning
Children's Social Care**

Family and Friends Policy

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Darlington Borough Council aims to improve outcomes for children and young people who are unable to live with their parents, and are cared for by immediate or extended family, friends or others who are known to them. We believe that children who are unable to live with their parents and who are being brought up by people who know them, should receive support to safeguard and promote their welfare irrespective of their legal status.

1. Policy

This policy sets out the range of arrangements that enable children and young people to be cared for by people they know, if they are unable to remain in the care of their parents.

The policy outlines the assessment, planning and decision making process as well as the support services, which may be available from the Local Authority (LA), partner agencies, such as health and housing, and voluntary agencies. The policy is available to family, friends and connected persons who are caring, or wish to apply to care, for a child or children who are known to them and are unable to live with their parents. (Definition: A connected person is a relative, friend or other person who is 'connected' with a child. This could include a person who is known to the child in a professional capacity, such as a childminder or teacher).

The policy can be read in conjunction with the HM Government: The Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Volume 2 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review available as a download on the Department of Education Website.

2. Principles underlying the policy

All decisions made in relation to children will have their best interests as the paramount consideration. The primary aim of the LA is to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded and their welfare promoted so that they can achieve their full potential.

Children and young people will be encouraged to express their wishes and views about any decisions that will affect them. Their views will be taken into account and where they cannot be acted on; a clear and honest explanation will be given.

Children and young people will be supported and assisted to become independent, to reach their full potential and play an active part in their community and society as a whole.

Where a decision is made that a child or young person cannot safely return to the care of their birth parents the LA will make plans for permanence in a time-scale appropriate to the child's needs.

Contact between children and young people and those important to them, including immediate and extended family, friends and community links, will be actively promoted and maintained as long as it is in the best interests of the child.

Family, friends or connected persons will be supported to enable them to care for a child to the best of their ability. Advice and information will be given regarding partner or voluntary agencies that can also provide the services and support required.

Services to children and young people, family, friends and connected persons will respect their race, culture, language, disability, sexuality and faith.

Children and young people, family, friends and connected persons who are dissatisfied with the service or support they have received will be provided with information on the complaints procedure of the Local Authority. The complaints procedure can be accessed via the link below or can be provided in hard copy on request.

http://www.darlington.gov.uk/dar_public/Documents/ Resources/Resources/InformationAndInsight/ComplaintsUnit/CSCC_Procedure.pdf

3. Family Meetings

- A family meeting should be held to identify any family members or connected persons who could provide appropriate care for the child
- If a parent or other person with Parental Responsibility asks the LA to provide accommodation for a child, or
- When a decision is made to start Care Proceedings

If there are serious concerns regarding a child's safety or welfare the Local Authority may take immediate action to remove a child from their parents, or those who have parental responsibility. In such situations a family meeting should take place once the child is safeguarded.

Parental responsibility may be held by a child's parent or parents, or someone who has been given Parental Responsibility through an order made in court, for example, a Residence or Special Guardianship Order. (Definition: Parental responsibility means all the rights, responsibilities, duties and powers which a parent of a child has which enables them, by law, to make decisions about a child and his property).

A Family meeting is organised by the child's social worker and will bring together all those who are involved with a child to discuss and plan for the child's future. The social worker should help all those attending to formulate a plan, within their own resources, to support the child and, where appropriate, their current carers. The suitability of any person identified as a possible carer should be explored following the meeting and details of the meeting recorded.

Viability assessment to be completed and decision made and recorded about whether or not a child will move to family and friends/connected person with temporary approval of the agency decision or alternatively where a child will be cared for by a family member or friend as an informal arrangement this also needs to be agreed by a manager and recorded. **(See Appendix 1: Viability Assessment Guidance)**

Details of the various ranges of options for caring for a child or young person when they are not able to live with their birth parents are detailed below.

4. Range of outcomes for children and young people who are not able to live with their birth parent(s).

4.1. Informal placement with a family member

Birth parents or those with parental responsibility may ask a relative to care for their child, either temporarily, or on a more permanent basis. The legal definition of a relative is: A grandparent, aunt or uncle, brother or sister (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent.

The financial responsibility for maintaining the child remains with the person who has Parental Responsibility. If there are no concerns for the child's safety or welfare the LA will have any involvement in the arrangement, but relatives who need help or advice, including financial assistance, can contact the LA for support under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

Following an assessment the LA will determine what support is required. This depends on the needs of the child in placement and those who are caring for them. The child or young person does not become a Looked After Child because the Local Authority is not involved in making the placement. In some circumstances a weekly payment of £30 will be paid for a period of 6 weeks to give family members the opportunity to apply and receive any appropriate benefit payments.

4.2. Private fostering

If a parent places a child with someone who is not closely related to him or her for more than 28 days, either continuously or over the course of a year, the placement becomes a private fostering arrangement. It is a legal requirement for either the parent, or the person having parental responsibility, and the person providing the care, to contact the Local Authority and inform them of the arrangement.

The financial arrangements for caring for the child are made between the parent and the person caring for the child, but the child and their carers have the right to be assessed for advice and support, including help with finances. This right is outlined in Section 17 of the CA 1989.

Once a LA is made aware of a private fostering arrangement there is a duty to make sure that the child is safe and that their needs are being met. A visit will be made to the placement to assess that it is satisfactory. Statutory checks, including criminal record checks, will be carried out on all adult members of the household. Contact will be made with the person who placed the child and regular reviews and visits will be carried out. If the LA was involved in making the placement it is not private fostering.

The LA following an assessment may form the view that the placement is not in the best interest of the child and in those circumstances the child will need to return to the person with parental responsibility and they, or the LA if requested, will make other arrangements for the child.

4.3. Immediate or emergency placement by the Local Authority with a connected person

A child who is placed by the Local Authority with a family member, friend or connected person, will be a Looked After Child. A Looked After Child is a child or young person up to age of 18 years who:

- Birth parent(s), or anyone having Parental Responsibility, has asked the LA to care for them on their behalf. The child is 'accommodated' under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, or
- Is subject to a Care Order, including an Interim Care Order, under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989

A Looked After Child can only be cared for by an approved foster carer. If a family member, friend or connected person has been asked to care for a Looked After Child they will have to be assessed to become a Family and Friends foster carer. An immediate or emergency placement with a connected person can be made under Regulation 24 of the Case Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010. Temporary Approval is agreed by the Assistant Director Children, Families and Learning who is the LA Agency Decision Maker is for Darlington Borough Council. In the absence of the Assistant Director this role in relation to agreeing temporary approval can be delegated to another senior manager.

The LA will ensure that family, friend and connected person carers, regardless of whether they have temporary or full approval, will be fully supported in the care of any child placed with them. This will include assistance in making and supervising contact between a child and other members of their immediate or extended family.

Carers with temporary approval will have access to support groups and relevant training and the LA will facilitate access to professional support, for example access to support from the CAMHS Service (Children and Adolescence Mental Health Service), Looked After Children's Nurse and Education Co-ordinator, if it is felt to be appropriate.

4.4. Immediate placement with a local authority or independent fostering agency carer whilst a connected person is identified or assessed.

In an emergency the LA may place a Looked After Child in a foster placement whilst they make enquiries as to whether there are any relatives, friends or connected persons who could care for the child. This information can be gathered from the child's parents or through a family meeting. If there is a

relative, friend or connected person who is a potential carer the LA may make a decision to undertake a viability assessment. This requires the family member, friend or connected person to work with the placing social worker to complete a report that considers their suitability to care for the child. If the outcome is positive the child may be placed immediately (see 5.1) or a full assessment will be carried out by the Fostering Service whilst the child remains in an approved foster placement.

5. Placement of a child or young person with a connected person

5.1. Criteria for making a Regulation 24 placement

When an immediate or emergency placement is required it can only be considered under Regulation 24. Although the determining factor in the placement being made is that it is felt to be in the child's best interests, the LA must be satisfied that those who will be caring for the child will be able to prioritise and meet their needs, and will work in partnership. Therefore an assessment is carried out prior to the child being placed.

5.2. Pre-placement assessment (Schedule 4 report)

The proposed carer(s) for the child have to be approved and an assessment is carried out using Schedule 4 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010.

This schedule outlines the information and checks, including a local police check, required before a child can be placed. The LA has a duty to safeguard and promote a child's welfare and before a decision can be made it is important to have as much information as possible about the carers and all those living in the household.

The assessment is carried out by the placing social worker with access to advice from a worker from the Family Placement Service if required. The assessment, which must be substantially completed before a child is placed, will determine if approval is given.

5.3. Approval of a placement with a connected person

The assessment is considered by the manager of the placing team in conjunction with the Assistant Director Children Families and Learning who is the Agency Decision Maker. If they are in agreement, the potential carers will be granted temporary approval as foster carers for 16 weeks only.

Immediately the child is placed a further assessment will be carried out by a fostering social worker alongside the child's social worker. If the assessment is not completed within 16 weeks, temporary approval can be extended for up to 8 weeks. Prior to an extension being considered the view of the Family Placement Panel must be sought.

6. Responsibilities of the placing social worker

6.1. Notification of the placement

The child's social worker must notify all those involved with the child that the placement has been made and an initial Looked After Child review should be arranged to take place within 20 working days of the placement starting.

Prior to, or within 5 working days of making the placement a Placement Plan should be drawn up. The information to be recorded in the Placement Plan is specified in Schedule 2 of the 2010 Regulations. Carers need to have as much information as is available to support them in caring for the child. Where a Placement Plan is not available, the carer must be told of any behaviour that has been a cause of concern in the past, which may put their home or family at risk. The carer will be given advice and support to put a safer caring policy into place.

6.2. Financial support for the placement

Arrangements for financial support must be made by the placing social worker once the child is placed. Payments will be made in line with the allowances recommended by Fostering Network for the 16 weeks of temporary approval and, if a further extension of temporary approval is granted, until such time as the carer receives full approval or the child is moved from the placement.

Boarding out allowances are currently paid at Fostering Network recommendations from 2010.

Darlington Borough Council BOARDING OUT ALLOWANCES 2011/12

Age	Total	Per night
0-4	£125.09	£17.87
5-10	£142.45	£20.35
11-15	£177.38	£25.34
16+	£215.74	£30.82

If a carer requires additional finance to enable them to care for a child, for example, to purchase a bed or clothing, the social worker will submit a request to the manager of the Family Placement Service

6.3. Visits to the placement

If a child is placed under Regulation 24 (temporarily approved foster carer) a visit must be made at least weekly, until such time as the first Looked After Child review is held. Following this, visits must take place not less than once every 4 weeks until the carer is granted full approval under Regulation 27 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, or the final hearing of the care proceedings has taken place.

7. Responsibilities of the Family Placement Service

7.1 Assessment of connected person following temporary approval

The assessment will comprise of a series of interviews with all members of the household. Checks and references will be required, which will include contact with the Criminal Record Bureau, friends, family and employers. Confirmation of income and housing status will also be required. The assessment will be completed using BAAF (British Association of Adoption and Fostering) documentation for the purpose of assessing Connected Persons as foster carers.

However, there is greater flexibility in the assessment of family and friends and connected persons in respect of certain issues, such as accommodation. Looked After Children are expected to have their own room but if the child is a family member or a relative of a friend it may be appropriate for the child to share a bedroom with the carer's own child. In the event of room sharing risk assessments will be completed and safe caring advice provided by the child's social worker and supporting social worker from the Family Placement Service.

If a family member, friend or connected person is unable to take on the care of a child due to limited accommodation, the LA will undertake to support application for alternative accommodation with Darlington Borough Council Housing Department and other local housing providers.

7.2. Assessment of potential family, friend or connected person where the child is not placed under Regulation 24

If a child is placed with a LA or independent agency foster carer and a potential family, friend or connected person carer is identified, the same assessment as described in 7.1. is carried out. Unlike Regulation 24 carers who have temporary approval, the full assessment may take longer than 16 weeks.

A preparation group is available to all those who are caring or wish to care for children known to them and this will provide greater understanding of the expectations of the LA and the support and advice carers can access.

All family and friends carers are considered on their ability to meet the individual needs of the child related or known to them. However, following approval, carers will be expected to meet the National Minimum Standards for Foster Care.

At any time during the assessment the LA can make a decision not to proceed. A meeting will be held to explain why this decision has been made and applicants will be advised to seek independent legal advice.

7.3. Role of the Family Placement Panel

On completion of the assessment a report will be presented to the Family Placement Panel by the assessing social worker. Temporarily approved carers and applicants will be given a copy of the report prior to the meeting.

The recommendation of the assessing social worker will always be discussed with applicants or carers before the Panel.

Temporarily approved carers and applicants are encouraged to attend the Family Placement Panel and may bring a friend or family member with them who will act as a supporter.

7.4. Role of the Decision Maker

The Panel will make a recommendation for the Regulation 24 carer or applicants to be:

- Approved, or
- Not approved

The Panel may also recommended that the case is deferred for further information

The Panel acts independently of the Fostering Service and can only make a recommendation. This is forwarded to the decision maker. The decision maker must make a decision within 7 working days of receiving a final copy of the minutes and the Family Placement Panel's recommendation. The decision will be verbally communicated to applicants within 2 working days and a letter confirming the decision will be sent out within a further 5 working days (Standard 14.9, Fostering Services, National Minimum Standards).

All applicants, including those who are currently caring for a child, can appeal if they do not agree with the decision made by the decision maker. If the carers have been given temporary approval this will be extended until such time as the appeal process is completed.

Appeals must be made within 28 days of receiving the decision letter, which will give details on how to appeal. Applicants may appeal through the LA own appeals process or use the Independent Review Mechanism. **(Appendix 2: Information Leaflet on the Role of Independent Reviewing Mechanism)** This is an independent body, which will be convened to review all of the information presented to the original panel. Leaflet giving details of the IRM to be provided to any prospective carers.

7.5 Support after full approval

Following approval a supervising social worker from the Family Placement Service will be introduced to the carers. Supervision visits will be made monthly or more frequently if it is felt that the carer requires additional support. Carers will also be provided with the details of support groups and training opportunities.

Following approval family and friends carers will continue to be paid an allowance in line with the Fostering Network recommendations. **(See 6.2 Financial Support for Placement)** The allowance covers the cost of caring for the child or children in their care. Family and friend carers do not receive a fee, which is a reward element paid to career foster carers in recognition of specific skills, qualifications or experience.

8. Responsibilities of connected person carers

Regardless of the existing relationship between the carer and the child, carers are expected to sign a fostering agreement, which confirms that they will:

- Care for the child as a member of the family
- Agree not to use any physical punishment
- Inform the LA of any serious injuries, accidents or illnesses the child may experience
- Inform the LA if a child is missing
- Maintain confidentiality
- Advise the LA of any change of circumstances affecting the child, the carers or any member of the family
- Allow the LA access to the child at any time
- Allow the LA to remove the child at any time

9. Support services to connected person carers

The LA gives an undertaking that children in placement will have an allocated social worker and that all foster carers will have a named supervising social worker. Training, support and advice will be made available to facilitate carers in meeting the needs of the child placed with them. All carers will be provided with support to complete the Children's Workforce Development Standards (CWDC) for Foster Carers.

Assess to all social activities organised by the Family Placement Service and any other social activities available via Darlington Borough Council.

On approval carers will also be joined as members of Fostering Network.

Carers and Looked After Children (LAC) also have access to the services such as education support and the LAC nurse and Education Co-ordinator and services provided by CLASP CAMHS Services based at the Mulberry Centre, Darlington Memorial Hospital.

Support and services are also available from statutory and voluntary agencies. **(See Appendix 3)**

10. Long term options

Booklets are available on request giving full details of the specific orders detailed below.

10.1. Residence Order

A Residence Order (RO) determines where a child will live and a report has to be completed and presented to court. This should incorporate the views of all those involved, including the child. Carers cannot apply for a Residence Order until the child has been resident for a year. The LA or the parent of the child does not have to be in agreement with an application for a Residence Order for it to be made.

The order lasts until a child reaches 18 and the carer may receive child benefit and child tax credit. The LA can agree to the payment of a Residence Order allowance but this is discretionary, means tested and subject to annual review.

The parent or those who had parental responsibility for the child prior to them being looked after, retains parental responsibility but the carer is able to make day to day decisions.

10.2. Special Guardianship Order

A Special Guardianship Order (SGO) can be applied for, with or without the support of the LA or the parent of a child, after the child has been resident for a year. A report is completed by the LA and presented to the court.

Although parental responsibility continues to be shared by the carers and the child's parents the carers are able to make a final decision. The order lasts until a child is 18 unless it is varied or discharged prior to that age. A parent must obtain leave of the court to apply for a SGO to be revoked.

In preparing the report for court the LA must include an outline the support plan for the child and the carers, both now and in the future. This may include financial assistance, which can be paid either as a one off payment or as regular payment. All allowances paid are means tested and reviewed

annually. The carers may be eligible to apply for child benefit and child tax credit.

The LA has discretion to provide services or support to the child or the family and, if the child was a looked after child prior to the making of an SGO, they may be entitled to leaving care services and support.

10.3. Adoption

Approved foster carers, including connected persons carers, can apply to adopt if a child has been resident for a year.

Adoption transfers all of the parent's parental responsibilities to the adoptive parents. The LA, acting as an adoption agency, assesses and approves potential adopters and the court makes the order. If the child is a looked after child the carers must give the LA notice that they intend to apply for adoption. Until such time as an adoption order is made, the LA will continue to supervise the placement of the child with the carers. Once the order is made the LA withdraws, unless their on-going involvement is part of the support plan drawn up at the time the report was presented to court. Adoptive parents have an entitlement to be assessed for support and services and may receive either a one off payment or a regular allowance, which is means tested and reviewed annually. Adoptive parents can claim child benefit and child tax credit.

Appendix 1

Darlington Borough Council People Services

Children, Families and Learning Children's Social Care

ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR THE TEMPORARY CARE OF A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON BY SOMEONE OTHER THAN A PARENT OR CURRENT CARER

1. INTRODUCTION

This guidance seeks to bring consistency to the assessment and decision-making process *prior to the move of a child* when:

- a. a child or young person needs, in the judgment of Children's Social Care, to be temporarily out of the care of their parents or current carer due to safeguarding concerns; or
- b. an adult wider family member or friend indicates that they would be willing to care for a child or young person currently subject to care proceedings within the Family Court but not subject to an Order
- c. an adult wider family member or friend indicates that they would be willing to care for a child or young person currently subject to voluntary accommodation in Local Authority care under s.20 Children Act 1989; or
- d. a child or young person is made subject to Police Protection under s.46 Children Act 1989 and Children's Social Care is informed of the need to identify suitable accommodation; or
- e. a child or young person is made subject to an Emergency Protection Order under s.44 Children Act 1989; or
- f. an adult wider family member or friend indicates that they would be willing to care for a child or young person currently subject to care proceedings within the Family Court and subject to an Interim Care Order under s.38 Children Act 1989
- g. an adult wider family member or friend indicates that they would be willing to care for a child or young person currently subject to a Care Order under s.31 Children Act 1989

2. ISSUES TO CONSIDER

2.1 CLARIFY THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE CHILD

It is essential that the assessing Social Worker determines what the legal status of the child is. Although *the assessment process is the same*, in scenarios (e), (f) and (g) the completed Viability Assessment will need to be approved by the Assistant Director for Children, Families and Learning prior to placement. This is because the child to be moved is a Looked After Child and Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 applies. Furthermore, the Local Authority will have the same responsibilities to the carers as it does to all other Foster Carers, including the payment of a weekly allowance and the provision of support.

In scenarios (a) and (b) it should be clear to the assessing Social Worker that the child is not Looked After. Therefore the approval of the Viability Assessment will be made by the relevant Practice Supervisor or Team Manager and not by the Assistant Director. Further, Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 does not apply. Therefore although the Local Authority may seek to support the care of a child by the viable carers, it does not have the same responsibilities to the carers as it does to all other Foster Carers. In particular, the Local Authority payment of a weekly allowance is not a statutory requirement and the Local Authority may only seek to 'cover' the period between the child moving to the care of the viable carers and appropriate benefits being paid. This 'in lieu' period should be time limited to six weeks.

In scenario (c) a Viability Assessment may be undertaken in order for a Looked After Child to move from a placement under s.20 Children Act 1989 to new carers assessed as viable. Care needs to be taken by the Social Worker to establish whether such a move would cease the child's Looked After status or not. This will depend upon there being an Exit Review chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer. So far as is possible and agreed, a Looked After Child's status should be ended in favour of a family's own care arrangement, subject to it being assessed as viable.

In scenario (d) a child or young person is not Looked After by virtue of Police Protection. However care needs to be taken by the Social Worker at the point of discharge of Police Protection (up to a maximum of 72 hours). An outcome by way of family arrangement or voluntary agreement to accommodate or an Order of the Court is possible. The Social Worker will need to clarify whether the child is Looked After or not.

2.2 ENSURE THAT THERE IS CLEAR WRITTEN CONSENT TO THE MOVE OF A CHILD BY ALL THOSE WITH PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

With the exception of children and young people made expressly subject to Police Protection (limited to 72 Hours) no member of Children's Social Care should move a child to a viable carer without the express written agreement of those with parental responsibility or an Order of the Court and agreed Interim Care Plan.

For the move of a child or young person deemed Looked After to a viable carer Written Agreement must be obtained on the Placement and Information Record form on Care First. For a child or young person moved to a viable carer by way of family arrangement a signed Written Agreement must be obtained. Without written agreement for a child to move to a viable carer 'by way of family arrangement' no move should be undertaken and legal advice obtained.

2.3 ENSURE THAT THE LANGUAGE USED VERBALLY AND IN WRITING IS CONSISTENT WITH THE STATUS OF THE CARERS

Because the responsibilities of the Local Authority to the child and young person and their viable carers differ as to whether they are or are not deemed Looked After, the Social Worker needs to ensure that the language used is clear and consistent. A child is not 'placed by the Local Authority' nor 'accommodated' if the move of a child is by way of family arrangement. Likewise, agreement to such a move is not 'Section 20' nor does the child become 'in care'. The carers themselves do not become 'foster carers'. It is important that the child, the parents, the viable carers and other professionals are clear as to the status of the care arrangement.

2.4 CONSIDER PRIVATE FOSTERING REGULATION IN THE CASE OF NON-FAMILY VIABLE CARERS

Private Fostering Regulations are statutory regulations that apply to all children and young people under the age of sixteen cared for over twenty eight days by a non-family member. Thus, if a non-family member is assessed as viable and a child or young person is moved to their care, the Private Fostering Regulations will apply and need to be separately complied with by the assessing Social Worker.

3. THE ASSESSMENT FORM

A Viability Assessment is a relatively brief assessment undertaken to decide whether a full assessment should be embarked upon with a view to whether the applicant is potentially suitable to care for a child, as either a temporary foster carer or a possible Special Guardian.

However, very often a Viability Assessment will be required to determine whether a child can move to a viable carer in the context of an immediate safeguarding concern. Accordingly, it is acknowledged that there will be circumstances in which the Viability Assessment Form will need to be completed very quickly and that some of the information gathered prior to placement will be relatively superficial. Nevertheless, minimum information will be necessary for the applicants to be approved as viable, either by the relevant Practice Supervisor/Team Manager or by the Assistant Director, Children, Families and Learning.

The Viability Assessment Form is divided into:

SECTION	
A	Details of Child/ren to be Moved
B	Details of Applicant Carer
C	Criminal and Agency Checks
D	Child/ren's Needs
E	Assessment of Applicant
F	Home Environment
G	Views and Wishes
H	Analysis and Conclusions
I	Details of Author of Assessment
J	Temporary Approval
K	Consent (if required)

Every effort must be taken to complete all the sections on the form. Section K is only necessary if the move of a child/ren is by way of family arrangement.

If it is impracticable to complete any section, the approving Manager must note this in deciding whether to agree to the move of a child to the applicant carers. In these circumstances there will need to be arrangements in place for filling in any gaps as soon as this is practicable after the move of the child to the viable carers.

4. FURTHER ASSESSMENT WORK AFTER APPROVAL

Should an assessment be approved as viable (by either the relevant Practice Supervisor/Team Manager or Assistant Director of Children, Families and Learning) further assessment work is required. As soon as is practicable, a Viable Carers Assessment Pack should be provided to the carers by the Social Worker and completed. The contents should include:

- 2 CRB FORMS (and Guidance Sheet on appropriate forms of identity verification)
- 2 AH1 MEDICAL FORMS

- 1 NOTES ON MEDICAL (to be provided to carer)
- 1 ACCESS TO MEDICAL FORM (to provided to carer)
- 1 CONSENT TO ENQUIRIES FORM
- 1 NSPCC FORM

The Social Worker will need to ensure that there is a completed CRB for all those who are over the age of eighteen who reside at the property where the child is/is to be cared for and consideration must be given as to whether a non-cohabiting partner of a carer or other adult with a significant caring role should also be subject to CRB checks.

The AH1 medical forms needs filling in by the Social Worker at Part A and filled in by the applicant carers at Part B. Two sets of signatures are required at Part B. The Notes on Medical and Access to Medical forms to be provided to carer.

Two sets of signatures are required by each Applicant. Additionally, signatures are also required from all those who are over the age of sixteen who reside at the property where the child is/is to be placed.

The NSPCC form must be filled in by the carers (not Social Worker) in black ink.

On completion of the above please return all the above forms to the Senior Administrator in the Family Placement Team who will process the enquiries. The Social Worker will be informed of the results of the checks undertaken.

Appendix 2
Independent Review Mechanism Leaflet

Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)

Do you know that you can apply to an independent panel for your case to be reviewed if this agency decides that you are not suitable to foster a child? *Do not worry about the cost because this agency will pay for this service.*

If you feel that this agency made a wrong decision regarding your suitability to foster a child, you can apply to an independent body known as the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) to review your case. The IRM will go over your case and the whole process in order to make a recommendation to this agency regarding your suitability to foster. They would do this by re-examining the information presented to the original panel, any relevant information received by this agency after the papers had been sent to the fostering panel and most importantly your reasons for requesting a review. You will be invited to the panel and the panel will receive legal and medical advice if necessary.

Please be aware that the IRM does not make a decision on your case but only makes a recommendation, which will be sent to you and this agency. However, this agency **MUST take the IRM's recommendation and the original panel's recommendation into consideration when making its final decision. Please note that the IRM does not handle complaints however, any complaint should be dealt with through the agency complaints procedure.**

This information is available in the form of an A5 leaflet.

APPENDIX 3

NATIONAL AND LOCAL RESOURCES, SERVICES AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE FROM STATUTORY AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

Action for Prisoners' Families

Works to reduce the negative impact of imprisonment on prisoners' families. Produces publications and resources, and provides advice, information and training as well as networking opportunities.

www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk

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

Tel: 020 8812 3600 E-mail: info@actionpf.org.uk

Advice line: 0808 808 2003 info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk

BeGrand.net

Website offering information and advice to grandparents, plus online and telephone advice.

www.begrand.net

Helpline: 0845 434 6835

British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)

Provides information and advice about adoption and fostering and publishes resources.

www.baaf.org.uk

Address: Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS

Tel: 020 7421 2600 Email: mail@baaf.org.uk

Children's Legal Centre

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

www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Address: University of Essex Wivenhoe Park Colchester Essex CO4 3SQ

Tel: 01206 877 910

E-mail: clc@essex.ac.uk

Child Law Advice Line: 0808 802 0008

Community Legal Advice - Education: 0845 345 4345

Citizens Advice Bureau

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

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Department for Education

Lists 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.

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

www.familyfund.org.uk

Tel: 0845 130 4542 Email: info@familyfund.org.uk

Family Rights Group (FGR)

Provides advice to parents and other family members whose children are involved with or require children's social care services because of welfare needs or concerns. Publishes resources, helps to develop support groups for family and friends carers, and runs a discussion board.

www.frg.org.uk

Address: Second Floor The Print House 18 Ashwin Street London E8 3DL

Tel: 020 7923 2628

Advice line: 0800 801 0366 Email: advice@frg.org.uk

The Fostering Network

Supports foster carers and anyone with an interest in fostering to improve the lives of 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.

www.fostering.net

Address: 87 Blackfriars Road London SE1 8HA

Email: info@fostering.net

Tel: 020 7620 6400

Fosterline: 0800 040 7675 Email: fosterline@fostering.net

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.

www.grandparents-association.org.uk

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

Parents Against Drug Abuse (PADA)

Delivers support and services to the families of substance users, including a national helpline.

www.pada.org.uk

Address: The Foundry Marcus Street Birkenhead CH41 1EU

Tel: 0151 649 1580
National Families Helpline: 08457 023867

TalktoFrank

The government's national drugs helpline which offers free confidential drugs information and advice 24 hours a day. Information and advice is also available via the website.

www.talktofrank.com

24 hour advice line: 0800 77 66 00

Text: 82111 Email: frank@talktofrank.com

Young Minds

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

www.youngminds.org.uk

Address: 48-50 St John Street London EC1M 4DG

Tel: 020 7336 8445

Parents helpline: 0808 802 5544

Local Supports

BAAF North East Regional Office

MEA House

Ellison Place

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE1 8XS

Tel: 0191 261 6600

Fax: 0191 232 2063

email: newcastle@baaf.org.uk

Advice and information line: 0113 289 1144 (Mon-Fri, 9am – 1pm)

SWITCH DARLINGTON

Drug and Alcohol workers working with Young People aged 10 - 18 years

Contact Details:

SWITCH DARLINGTON

Beaumont Street

Darlington

DL1 5SX

Tel. 01325 267240

Email SwitchDarlington@darlington.gov.uk