

Friends and Family (Connected Person) Policy

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 There are a range of reasons and circumstances in which children may need to be brought up by members of their extended families, friends or other people who are connected with them. The preferred option for most children who can not live with their parents is to grow up in the care of their family or with an adult with whom they have a significant relationship.
- 1.2 Where birth parents cannot look after their children, most families will find a solution from within their family network. However, they may need temporary or short term help from children's social care services.
- 1.3 This policy sets out the Milton Keynes Council's approach towards promoting and supporting the needs of children and young people who are living with family members or friends in the following circumstances:
- Family care informal arrangements with a relative.
 - As a private fostering arrangement.
 - As a Child in Care placed with family and friends foster carers.
 - Under a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order, or
 - In arrangements which may lead to an adoption order.
- 1.4 For a detailed summary of the meaning and implications of different legal situations, the rights of carers and parents, and the nature of decisions which family and friends carers will be able to make in relation to the child, see Appendix A 'Caring for Somebody Else's Child – Options').
- 1.5 In drawing up this policy, we have consulted children and young people, family and friends, foster carers. A summary of observations and suggestions from these consultations are included in section 13 showing how their views have informed this policy.
- 1.6 The manager with overall responsibility for this policy is:
- Head of Delivery
Corporate Parenting
Children & Families
Integrated Support and Social Care
Saxon Court
502 Avebury Boulevard
Central Milton Keynes
MK9 3HS

2 Definition

- 2.1 A Connected Person is defined as “A relative, friend or other person connected with a child”. The latter 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 child-minder, a teacher, a foster carer or a youth worker.
- 2.2 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.”

3 Values and Principles

- 3.1 Milton Keynes Council has a strong family support ethos and will seek to keep children within their birth family. It is an underlying principle of our strategy that children should be enabled to live within their families unless this is not consistent with their welfare.
- 3.2 Where a child cannot live within his or her immediate family and Milton Keynes Council is considering the need to look after the child, we will make strenuous efforts to identify potential carers within the child’s network of family or friends.
- 3.3 Support provided for any such arrangements will be based on the assessed needs of the child and not just their legal status, and will seek to ensure that family and friends carers are provided with support to ensure that children do not become a Child in Care of the local authority, or do not have to remain in care longer than is needed.
- 3.4 This principle applies to all children, including those who are in care to Milton Keynes Council.

4 Legal Framework

- 4.1 Services may be provided by local authorities to support both formal and informal family and friends care arrangements.
- *Family arrangements with no Legal Order*
- 4.2 The majority of family and friend’s carers act informally by agreement with those holding parental responsibility for the children they care for. Having parental responsibility means assuming all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent of a child has by law.
- 4.3 Providing they are a relative of the child as defined by section 105 of the Children Act 1989 (grandparent, aunt/uncle/sibling, step-parent) or

they have parental responsibility for the child, there is no requirement to notify the local authority of the arrangement. Most such arrangements remain entirely private without the need for the involvement of children's social care services, although support may be provided as a child in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

- 4.4 To clarify those children who may come within the definition of "Children in Need", the local authority has drawn up a "Levels of Need" document, which is available from MKSCB website www.mkscb.org
- *Family arrangements with a legal order or requirements*
- 4.5 In other circumstances, family and friends care arrangements may be subject to the requirements of legislation such as that which governs Private Fostering, Residence Orders, Special Guardianship Orders or children who are children in care of the local authority and placed with relatives, friends or other persons connected.
- 4.6 Some children are a Child in Care of the local authority by agreement with, or at the request of, their parents under Section 20 of the Children Act. Children may be accommodated (in residential or foster care) for a short or longer period. No court proceedings are involved, and the parents retain full parental responsibility.
- 4.7 Where the local authority's intervention necessitates taking the child in to care and the parents do not agree to S20, legal proceedings may be considered to secure the child's welfare. A decision to take care proceedings to secure the child's welfare can only be taken following a legal planning meeting and must be informed by a core assessment and the public law outline requirements.
- 4.8 It should not be assumed that a care order is necessary to secure permanent care with a relative or friend, even where care proceedings have been initiated. Other orders should be considered within the planning process which does not require the child coming into care in the longer term.
- 4.9 In relation to care proceedings, local authorities are required to demonstrate that they have considered family members and friends as potential carers at each stage of the decision making process.
- 4.10 Family Group Conferences are meetings held between professionals and family members that promote the involvement of the wider family to achieve a resolution of difficulties for children, and may help to identify short-term and/or permanent solutions for children within the family network. Milton Keynes Council provides a Family Group Conference service and will offer a conference meeting at an early stage of its intervention.

4.11 Care Leavers - The Local Authority has a duty to provide care leaving support to young people who are leaving care and making the transition to adulthood. This applies to children placed by the local authority with family and friends foster carers in the same way as it does to all other care leavers.

5 Decision on Levels of Intervention

5.1 Whether or not a child who is cared for by a family and friends carer should be in care will be a matter to be decided by Milton Keynes Council (MKC) on a case by case basis. It may not always be easy to determine; however, in deciding, the following must be applied: -

- Where MKC has had direct involvement in arranging a Family and Friends placement to safeguard a child from significant harm, the child will in most circumstances become a child in care;
- When a parent is unable to provide a child with suitable accommodation or care, private family arrangements may be made, but where these are referred to the MKC because of child protection concerns, an assessment of need must be made to determine whether S20 or S17 support is most appropriate;
- If MKC has played a significant role in the arrangements, the local authority must explain clearly to the carer the legal status under which any support is being provided.

5.2 In any event, where MKC has instigated the arrangement for a child to live with a friend or relative, MKC will provide an appropriate range and level of support for those arrangements.

6 Difference in Entitlement

6.1 There are some differences between the entitlement to different forms of support by informal family and friends carers and by those who are foster carers to a child accommodated by the local authority. The main differences are summarised in the table below and a broader overview is provided in Appendix B.

Child in need (sec 17)	Child in care (sec 20 , sec 31)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child is not a Child in Care of the local authority. • the child will not have a care plan but there may be a child in need plan or child protection plan. • if there is a child in need plan a social worker or other worker will visit the child and carers. • the child may be offered access to an advocacy service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child is a Child in Care. • the child must have a care plan (including health plan and personal education plan, placement plan) which will be reviewed by an independent reviewing officer. • a social worker will visit the child and carers and oversee the child's welfare. • the child will have access to an independent advocate when required. • a fostering social worker will be appointed

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the carers will not usually have a separate social worker. • the local authority has discretion to give financial assistance (which can be on the basis of regular payments) but there is no entitlement and payments may be means tested. • Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit may be payable. • support may be offered to the carers and/or child but is discretionary. • there is no entitlement to leaving care support. • any support offered will cease when the young person becomes 18, unless criteria are met for support from adult services. 	<p>for the foster carers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a weekly fostering allowance will be paid. • there is no entitlement to Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit. • training and support must be offered to the foster carers. • on leaving care the young person may be eligible for ongoing support under the 1989 Act (as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000). • the local authority is able to offer continuing support (including financial support) to the carers until the young person is 21, and to support the young person in respect of education and training until they become 25.
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7 Provision of Financial Support – General Principles

- 7.1 In relation to financial support, local authorities may provide carers of children in need with financial support on a regular or one-off basis.
- 7.2 The legal status of the child may have a bearing on the levels of financial support which may be available to carers. There are different legislative provisions which apply to financial support for children living with family or friends in looked after/ adoption/ special guardianship/ residence order arrangements.
- 7.3 There are three categories of payment or subsistence, which may be considered subject to financial assessment. One or more of these may be applicable, depending on the particular circumstances of the case:
- 7.4 Subsistence crisis (one-off) payments: These should be used to overcome a crisis, following the best assessment that can be achieved in the circumstances.
- 7.5 Setting-up these are for such items as clothing, furniture, or bedding. The social worker must be satisfied that the carers' financial position justifies the payment through a financial assessment. Assistance may be given subject to conditions, including repayment in certain situations. However, in most situations, it will be inappropriate for the Department to seek to recover money provided under these circumstances.
- 7.6 Weekly living contribution It is possible for the local authority to make regular payments where family members or friends care for a child whether or not the child is a child in care or not. Where regular payments are to be made, relative carers should be assisted to maximise their Income/Benefit as regular payments may adversely affect an individual's claim to income support.

- 7.7 In all cases where regular financial support is agreed, a written agreement will be drawn up detailing the level and duration of the financial support that is to be provided, and the mechanism for review.
- 7.8 The following criteria will be applied to all such payments:
- The purpose of the payments must be to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.
 - As part of the assessment, a view should be taken as to whether the carers need financial support based on their reasonable requirements in taking on the care of the child.
 - There are no other legitimate sources of finance.
 - Payments will be paid to the carer, not the parents.
 - The payment would not place any person in a fraudulent position.
- 7.9 To ensure that carers are claiming all that they are entitled to they should be referred to www.direct.gov/benefitsadviser and or the local Citizens Advice Service.

8 Living with Family and Friend

- 8.1 The following sections of this policy set out the various arrangements in which children may be living with family and friends or connected people and the support that we may provide.

Family arrangement with no legal order

- 8.2 Where a child cannot be cared for within his or her immediate family, the family may make their own arrangements to care for the child within the family and friends network. The local authority does not have a duty to assess any such informal family and friends care arrangements, unless it appears to the authority that services may be necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child.

Private fostering arrangements

- 8.3 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 or close relative, where the child is to be cared for in that home for 28 days or more.
- 8.4 Close 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.'
- 8.5 In a private fostering arrangement, the parent retains parental responsibility and agrees the arrangement with the private foster carer.

The local authority has a duty to assess and monitor the welfare of all privately fostered children. The local authority may also become involved with a child in a private fostering arrangement where the child comes within the definition of a Child in Need.

Family and friends foster carers – “Connected Persons”

- 8.6 Where Child in Care status has been assessed and approved by a Head of Delivery or Resources Panel the child can be placed with a family or friend or other connected person following their assessment and approval as foster carers under fostering regulations (section 10).
- 8.7 Provision is made under regulation 24 (Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England)) to place the child with the family for up to 16 weeks while they are being assessed as foster carers. A child should only be placed on an immediate basis if it is in the best interest of the child to place her/him immediately to safeguard their welfare, and that the placement cannot wait until the full approval process can be completed (see section 12).
- 8.10 When such a child is already in a local authority placement and a relative or friend comes forward and offers to care for the child, the social worker must carefully consider the situation and the available options. In most cases it would be appropriate to support the current placement, whilst carrying out an assessment of the proposed family and friends arrangements. This might result in an agreement at the next child care review to discharge that child from care to the family member, with an agreed level of practical and financial support if required. Where the child will remain in care the full assessment of the family offering the placement will take place and if successful this will lead to a planned move following their approval as foster carers via the fostering panel.
- 8.11 The social worker should refer to the child’s next statutory review, together with their assessment of the merits of the expression of interest. Where an early placement change is proposed, an early review must be convened to agree the change of plan.

9 Permanence Options

- 9.1 The principles of good permanence planning must apply to all family and friends arrangements made by the local authority. This means good quality assessments of the child’s needs and assessment of the carer(s) ability to meet those needs. It also means determining at an early stage the most appropriate legal status by which to secure permanence for the child. Placements which begin as foster placements status should not remain so indefinitely if another legal status can provide a greater degree of security, stability and sense of permanence for the child. These include:

Residence Order

- 9.2 A Residence Order is a Court Order which gives parental responsibility to the person in whose favour it is made, usually lasting until the child is 18. Parental responsibility is shared with the parents.
- 9.3 Relatives may apply for a Residence Order after caring for the child for one year. Residence Orders may be made in private family proceedings in which the local authority is not a party nor involved in any way in the arrangements. A Residence Order in favour of a relative or foster carer (who was a 'Connected Person') with whom a child is placed may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a child in need or a child in care.
- 9.4 The local authority may subject to financial assessment pay Residence Order Allowances to relatives or friends, unless they are a spouse or civil partner of a parent, with whom a child is living under a Residence Order.
- 9.5 Details of the financial assistance that may be available to holders of a Residence Order are at http://portalconstructor.co.uk/foster_carers_room

Special Guardianship Order

- 9.6 Special Guardianship offers a further option for children needing permanent care outside their birth family. It can offer greater security and without the level of legal severance from the birth family which happens in adoption. Relatives may apply for a Special Guardianship Order after caring for the child for one year. As Special Guardians, they will have parental responsibility for the child which, while it is still shared with the parents, can be exercised with greater autonomy on day-to-day matters than where there is a Residence Order.
- 9.7 Special Guardianship Orders may be made in private family proceedings and the local authority may not be a party to any such arrangements. However, a Special Guardianship Order in favour of a relative or foster carer with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a child in need or a child in care.
- 9.8 Where the child was in care immediately prior to the making of the Special Guardianship Order, the local authority has a responsibility to assess the support needs of the child and the Special Guardians, including the need for financial support.
- 9.9 The MKC Special Guardianship Order Allowances Policy provides details of the financial assistance that may be available to holders of Special Guardianship Orders.
http://portalconstructor.co.uk/foster_carers_room

Adoption Order

- 9.10 Adoption is the process by which all parental rights and responsibilities for a child are permanently transferred to an adoptive parent by a court. As a result the child legally becomes part of the adoptive family.
- 9.11 An Adoption Order in favour of a relative or foster carer (who was a 'Connected Person') with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a child in care.
- 9.12 Local authorities must make arrangements, as part of their adoption service, for the provision of a range of adoption support services. They also have to undertake assessments of the need for adoption support services at the request of the adopted child, adoptive parents and their families, as well as birth relatives. The support required is then set out in an Adoption Support Plan and this may include financial support.
- 9.13 The Adoption Support Scheme provides details of financial assistance that may be available to holders of Adoption Orders, the applicable criteria and who within the local authority will make decisions.

10 Fostering Assessment and Approval

- 10.1 To care for a child who remains in care relatives, friends or other connected persons must be approved as foster carers. Regulations set out the legal requirements in relation to the assessment, approval, review and termination of approval of foster carers.
- 10.2 The assessment and approval process for family and friends who apply to be foster carers for a specific child is the same as for any other foster carer except that the timescales for the assessment are different where the child is already in the placement.
- 10.3 Family and Friends foster carers will usually have knowledge and experience of the child who they are to foster, and children and young people may benefit from placements with relatives and friends because they can often provide more continuity than placements with previously unknown carers.
- 10.4 The assessment will balance the strengths of the carers arising from their position within the family network against any aspects which may make them less suitable. When a foster carer is being assessed for approval for a specific child or children, there is no need to consider their suitability to care for other children.
- 10.5 The needs of the child should be kept central to the process, but a number of matters will require specific consideration in the assessment of family and friends as foster parents':

Accommodation

- 10.6 Children living with family and friends foster carers have the same rights to privacy and suitable sleeping accommodation as other children. A child who would be unhappy to share a bedroom with a child unknown to them may not mind sharing with a relative (child) who they know well. The wishes and feelings of each child will be an important factor in helping the social worker to assess the suitability of the accommodation.
- 10.7 Fostering and Social Work Staff will whenever possible, support family and friends carers living in social housing to make application to housing providers to seek a priority to move to more suitable accommodation if this will prevent the need for a child to enter or remain in care.

Location

- 10.8 The requirement that a decision to place a child in care outside Milton Keynes must be approved by a Head of Delivery, does not apply if the child is being placed with a foster carer who is approved by Milton Keynes or who is a person connected with the child.
- 10.9 In the event that a relative, friend or other person connected with the child is living outside of England and Wales we will ensure, as far as is practicable, that the requirements imposed on the placement mirror those that would have applied if the child or young person had been placed in England or Wales.

Criminal convictions

- 10.10 The 2011 Regulations normally prevent anyone from becoming a foster carer if they, or any other member of their household, have been cautioned for or convicted of specified offences committed over the age of 18. However, the fostering service may consider the approval of a foster carer for a particular child even though they would otherwise have been debarred by these regulations, if they or a member of their household are related to the child, providing Milton Keynes Council is satisfied that the child will be safe and the placement is in the child's interests. The reasons for any such decision will need to be fully explained and recorded and agreed with the Assistant Director.

Supporting contact with parents

- 10.11 Local authorities are required to promote contact between a child living away from home and their family unless it is not practicable or consistent with the child's welfare. The overall objective of the contact arrangements will be included in the child's care plan and the specific arrangements will be set out.

- 10.12 The assessment of a relative or friend to be a child's foster carer will need to address carefully the carer's ability to manage the contact arrangements in the child's contact plan, and include any support which the local authority needs to provide to enable this.
- 10.13 Information will be made available to family and friends carers about local contact centres and family mediation services, and how to make use of these services in managing contact.
- 10.14 Once a foster carer is approved, they must be notified in writing of this fact and of any terms of the approval. For a family and friends foster carer, the terms of approval will usually specify that they may foster only a specific named child or children.
- 10.15 While the child remains in care, as a foster carer, family and friends carers will be expected to co-operate with all the processes that are in place to ensure that the child receives appropriate care and support, for example, contributing to reviews of the child's care plan, meeting with the child's social worker and promoting the child's education and health needs.

Levels of Support

- 10.16 A connected person approved as a foster carer (including those temporarily approved) will be entitled to the same support and services as are available to unrelated foster carers, including relevant fostering allowances, any fees for which they meet the criteria set by MKC fostering service and any appropriate training courses.
- 10.17 The allowances paid by MKC will be calculated for family and friends foster carers on the same basis as for all other foster carers, and any variations would relate to the child's needs, the skills of the carer or other relevant factors and criteria applied to all of the service's foster carers.

11 Temporary Approval of a Family and Friends as a Foster Carer

- 11.1 There will be circumstances when the most appropriate placement for a child in care is with family or friends and the need for such a placement is urgent. Regulations allow for the temporary approval of a "connected person" as a foster carer for up to 16 weeks.
- 11.2 The authority must be satisfied that the placement is the most suitable means to safeguard and promote the child's welfare, and that the placement cannot wait until the full approval process can be completed.
- 11.3 When making a decision regarding the potential placement of the child with a family and friend's carer or other person connected with a child, the child's social worker must undertake a home visit and assess the

suitability of the carer to care for the child using the Initial Assessment for Temporary Approval Form (Appendix B) and obtain signed authorisation for the placement from a Head of Delivery.

- 11.4 As the placement will have been made without the benefit of a full fostering assessment, the visiting requirements are higher than for other foster placements. The visiting requirements are that the child's social worker must visit the child at least once a week until the first statutory review and thereafter at intervals of not more than 4 weeks. The child's social worker must visit and see the child alone in the placement (unless the child refuses). The visits will be fully recorded as statutory visits. When the assessment has been presented to Fostering Panel and approved, visits may return to 6 weekly.
- 11.5 The period of temporary approval may only be extended if either:
- The approval process has taken longer than anticipated (in these circumstances the temporary approval may be extended for a further 8 weeks); or
 - The family or friends has not been approved following the assessment process and seek a review of the decision through the Independent Review Mechanism (and in those circumstances the temporary approval will continue until the outcome of the review is known).
- 11.5 If an extension is required an Authorisation for Continued Approval from 16 to 24 weeks (Appendix C) should be completed by the fostering social worker and be agreed and signed by the Agency Decision Maker.
- 11.6 If these time periods expire and the carers have not been approved as a foster carer, the authority must arrange for an alternative placement and remove the child from the family or friends carers.

Role of the child's social worker

- 11.7 The home must be visited by the child care social worker as part of the assessment in to the suitability of arrangements and must included an assessment of:
- the nature and quality of any existing relationship with the child;
 - their capacity to care for children and in particular in relation to the child;
 - provide for the child's physical needs and appropriate medical and dental care;

- protect the child adequately from harm or danger including from any person who presents a risk of harm to the child;
- ensure that the accommodation and home environment is suitable with regard to the age and developmental stage of the child;
- promote the child's learning and development; and
- provide a stable family environment which will promote secure attachments for the child, including promoting positive contact with the appropriate person and other family & friends, unless to do this is not consistent with the duty to safeguard and promote the child's welfare;
- particulars of any criminal offences of which they have been convicted or in respect of which they have been cautioned;
- the nature of the neighbourhood in which their home is situated and resources available in the community to support the child and the family & friends.

11.8 The child's wishes and feelings about the proposed arrangements must be ascertained, subject to age and understanding, and the views of the child's parents and others with parental responsibility must also be obtained.

11.9 The child's social worker should complete the above information in the Initial Assessment for Temporary Approval form. It may not be possible to assess all the above requirements if a child has been placed on an immediate basis. However, the basic requirements in relation to the carer's ability to provide safe and adequate care, ability to work in partnership with the parents and the local authority, and suitability of the accommodation including sleeping arrangements must be assessed as a minimum.

11.10 The child's social worker should also seek consent from the proposed carer and all members of the household aged 16 and above to undertake criminal checks through the Police. If this is not possible, the social worker should ensure that the proposed carer and all the members of the household aged 16 and above have signed a declaration confirming both current and spent convictions.

11.11 Where the child's social worker is in any doubt about the suitability of the carer to provide the required safe care, she/he should request a joint visit with a fostering social worker, or consult the fostering team manager for advice before the child is placed.

11.12 The child's social worker should set up a placement planning meeting before the placement or, where this is not possible because of the immediacy of the placement, within 5 working days.

11.13 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. The child's social worker will apply all of the council's policies and procedures relating to children in care and, where appropriate, request the child's first child in care review.

Role of Head of Delivery

11.14 The authority to grant temporary approval of foster carers is the responsibility of the Head of Delivery. The completed temporary approval form must be signed by a social work team manager and the fostering team manager and be forwarded to the Head of Delivery who will need to be satisfied that the immediate arrangements are in the best interest of the child, and meet the immediate placement requirements before confirmation the authorisation for temporary approval of the carer for up to 16 weeks. If an extension to this is required an Authorisation for Continued Approval should be completed by the Fostering Social Worker and must be reviewed agreed and signed by the Agency Decision Maker

Role of the fostering service –temporary approval

11.15 Once the placement has been approved by the Agency Decision Maker, the fostering team manager will arrange for the payment of fostering allowance and allocate a fostering social worker to carry out the assessment. An information pack will be made available to potential foster carers about the assessment process and they will be given the name and contact details of the allocated fostering social worker.

11.16 The assessing fostering social worker will immediately arrange for a slot to be booked on the fostering panel within 16 weeks for the assessment to be considered.

11.17 Once approved as foster carers, carers will be allocated a fostering social worker to provide them with support and supervision and they will receive fostering allowances for as long as they care for the child as a foster carer.

12 Complaints Procedure

12.1 Where a family or friends carer is not satisfied with the level of support provided to enable them to care for the child, they have access to MKC's complaints process. Our aim is to resolve any complaint without the need for a formal investigation but where an informal resolution is not possible, then a formal investigation will be arranged.

- 12.2 The timescales and process are set out in the Complaints Procedure which is made available in the fostering information pack or directly available from.

Customer Care Manager
Milton Keynes Council
1 Saxon Gate East
Central Milton Keynes
MK9 3EJ

Tel 01908 253 697 or Minicom 253 394

13 **Third Party Contributions to Policy**

- 13.1 The following represents a collection of views comments and suggestions from the consultation on this policy with foster carers' mentors; grand parents' groups' children in care and professionals'. Where possible these views have been reflected in the amended policy.

- I have read through the policy document for friends and family. I think it is very informative and clear. I am particularly impressed with Appendix C – caring for somebody else's child as it sets out, in a transparent manner, the differences in carers and what is expected from both sides and sums up the document very well.
- We found the language of the policy difficult to read or decipher, and feel it would be particularly difficult for someone without knowledge in this area to understand what was being said. There were too many long, complicated sentences which were hard to follow. The language was often quite technical.
- The policy did not describe its evidence base for saying what works and what doesn't in family and friends care, although it did say that the council had consulted with children & young people, parents and carer. The rights and voice of carers, parents and children were not apparent in the policy.
- The policy did not give any contact details for the senior manager who holds overall responsibility for the policy, only the title of the post s/he holds. Nor did it lay out how the manager is going to ensure the policy is implemented.
- The policy did not provide information about local resources for family and friends carers.
- Although the policy does list benefits and allowances that carers might be entitled to, it does not signpost them to information and advice about entitlement to and claiming the benefits and allowances.
- The policy is clear that family/friends carers who are foster carers should be paid allowances and enhancements on the same basis as all other foster carers.

- The policy does not provide details for carers about residence order and special guardianship allowances – when, how and how much carers will be paid.
- The policy does state that where financial support is offered there should be a written agreement detailing the level and duration of support and the mechanism for review.
- There is no mention of payment of carers' legal fees – this is not a requirement, but it is something we'd like to see in policies so it could be worth mentioning in your feedback.
- The policy does mention support for carers in social housing to be given priority to move, but makes no mention of protocols with housing for partnership working, or of financial support towards accommodation costs.
- The policy only mentions supporting contact for looked after children, but children in other legal arrangements are likely to need this support as well.
- The policy does not mention Family Group Conferences at all.:
- The section on family and friends as foster carers does not provide details on how and when decisions will be made about children becoming looked after, nor on what framework will be used to assess that children need to become looked after.
- The policy does not spell out that it is not acceptable to discriminate against foster carers who have a pre-existing connection with the child.
- The policy does not deal with f/f foster carers being supported to meet the CWDC's TSD standards.
- The policy does not deal with providing training that will be specific/appropriate for f/f carers.
- The policy does have a section dealing with complaints, but it only deals with complaints by carers and not by children:
- The legal chart that was attached was a useful tool, although it could have done with some more explanation, eg what is meant by parental responsibility.
- A good informative policy document – does it need to mention training on offer and would mentoring s

APPENDIX A CARING FOR SOMEBODY ELSE'S CHILD-OPTIONS

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence order	Special guardianship order (SGO)	Adoption
Route into the caring arrangement	This is a private arrangement whereby the child is being cared for for 28 days or more (or the intention is that the arrangement will last for 28 days or more) by anyone who does not have parental responsibility, and who is not a close relative. Relative means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (by full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or a step parent. The child is not a looked after child.	The relative has chosen to take on the care of the child but does not have parental responsibility, and the arrangement was not made by the local authority. The child is not a looked after child. Relative may perceive the parents to be unable to care for the child; or the parents may be dead or otherwise not available (e.g. in prison); or there may be an agreement between relatives due to difficult family circumstances.	The child has been placed with the relative or friend by the local authority, because the person who had been caring for the child was deemed not to be providing suitable care. The child is a looked after child and so the local authority must approve the relative or friend as a local authority foster carer. The child may be accommodated voluntarily with the agreement of the parents or may be subject to a care order.	The child is a looked after child being accommodated by the local authority under section 20 Children Act 1989 or because the child is subject to a care order; but has been placed with a foster carer by the local authority. (Alternatively, the local authority may choose to place a child into residential care where this is considered to best meet the child's needs).	The child may be at risk of becoming 'looked after' and a friend or relative applies for an order, or The child may have been 'looked after' and their foster carer or other relative/friend applies for an order. In either circumstance, application can be made without the support of the parents or the local authority. Relatives may apply for an order after the child has lived with them for one year. Or, there can be benign reasons, e.g. after parents' death and in line with a prior agreement between the birth parents and the carer.		Looked after children: the LA may decide that the child should be placed for adoption. They can only do so with the consent of the birth parent or under a placement order made by a court. An approved foster carer can apply for an adoption order after a year of caring for the child. Other informal carers could apply for an adoption order if the child has lived with them for a period of 3 years.
Parental Responsibility (PR)	Remains with birth parents	Remains with birth parents but the person who cares for the child may do what is reasonable to safeguard or promote the child's welfare	Remains with birth parents if child accommodated under section 20 CA, or if the child is subject to a care order or emergency protection order the local authority will have parental responsibility and determines the extent to which it may be exercised by others.	Shared by parents and holder of residence order.	PR shared with parents and any one else with parental responsibility for the child. The special guardian may exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of all others with PR, apart from another special guardian.	Transfers to adopters and relationship with birth parents is severed.	
Approval basis	The arrangement is assessed by LA, but the carer is not 'approved' as a local authority foster carer is. The arrangement may be prohibited if assessed by the local authority as unsuitable.	None	Approved as local authority foster carers in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations. (If child is looked after, carers must be approved as foster carers even if close relative.)	Appointed by court following application.	Appointed by court, following application from the applicant. LA must investigate the matter and prepare a report for the court dealing with the suitability of the applicant to be a special guardian.	Adoption agency assesses and approves prospective adopters, court makes order regarding specific child. If the child is not looked after then notice of intention to adopt must be given to the LA who then carry out an assessment / report for the court.	

Appendix B CARING FOR SOMEBODY ELSE' S CHILD-OPTIONS

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence order	Special guardianship order (SGO)	Adoption
Duration	Subject to discretion of person with PR and readiness of private foster carer.	Subject to discretion of person with PR	So long as placement remains in line with child's care plan, as determined by LA		Age 18.	Age 18 unless varied or discharged by the court before the child reaches 18 years.	Permanent lifelong relationship
Placement Supervision	It is not a placement, but there are statutory visits to child by social worker (minimum 6 weekly in first year, then 12 weekly)	None	Statutory: visits to child by social worker and supervision of foster carers by supervising social worker			None	When child is placed for adoption by the LA, the placement is supervised and there are statutory reviews. Once the adoption order is made, none.
Review of Placement	It is not a placement, but the LA may do formal reviews in addition to ongoing assessment during visits.	None	Statutory reviews of child's care plan (minimum 6 monthly) and annual reviews of local authority foster carers' approval		None	None	See above
Support Services	Provision of advice and support as determined necessary by the LA, which may assess the child as a child in need, with a child in need plan, and provide services / support for child/family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989	No entitlement but the LA may assess the child as a child in need, with a child in need plan, and provide services / support for child/family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989	Support to meet child's needs including health plan and personal education plan. Training and practical support to foster carers in accordance with the Fostering services Regulations, NMS and CWDC standards. Young person may be entitled to leaving care support services		No entitlement (But LA has discretion to provide services / support for child/family under section 17 of the CA)	If child was looked after prior to making the SGO, LA must assess for need for special guardianship support services. LA has discretion whether to provide support. Young person may be entitled to leaving care support services if was a looked after child prior to making of the SGO.	Entitlement to assessment for adoption support services, which may be provided at discretion of LA in accordance with Regulations

Appendix B CARING FOR SOMEBODY ELSE' S CHILD-OPTIONS

	Private fostering	Family Care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence order	Special guardianship order (SGO)	Adoption
Financial Support-Entitlement-	<p>Can Claim child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p> <p>Financial responsibility to maintain the child remains with holders of PR</p>	<p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p> <p>Financial responsibility to maintain the child remains with holders of PR.</p> <p>Guardians Allowance payable if both parents have died, or the only surviving parent cannot be found or serving 2 years or more prison sentence.</p>	<p>Child benefit and child tax credit not payable.</p> <p>Weekly allowance to meet the costs of caring for the child. This should meet at least the national minimum rate set by DCSF.</p> <p>The Manchester City Council judgment ruled that allowances must be the same for all foster carers, whether or not family & friends.</p>		<p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p>	<p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p>	<p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p> <p>Entitlement to assessment for financial support (part of adoption support) if child looked after prior to order</p>
Financial support-Discretionary	<p>LA has discretion to make one-off or regular payments under section17 Children Act</p>	<p>LA has discretion to make one-off or regular payments under section17 Children Act</p>	<p>Some fostering providers pay their foster carers a fee to recognise the carers' skill, experience and commitment.</p> <p>The Manchester City Council judgement (which requires allowances to be paid on the same basis regardless of the relationship of the carer to the child) did not consider fees. However, Statutory Guidance for Fostering Services requires that any policy in relation to the payment of fees must be applied to all foster carers who meet the criteria in the same way and must not discriminate on the grounds of a pre-existing relationship with the child.</p>		<p>LA has discretion to pay residence order allowance usually if child was previously fostered by the carers, or exceptionally if making residence order prevents child becoming looked after. Any allowance reviewed annually</p>	<p>Entitled to an assessment for financial support under the special Guardianship Regulations 2005 if child looked after prior to order and meets the criteria in the regulations</p> <p>Subject to assessment as above and for former foster carers can include an element of remuneration.</p> <p>Regular one off payment.</p> <p>Any allowances reviewed annually.</p>	<p>Subject to assessment one off payments or regular adoption allowance may be paid.</p>



Initial Assessment for Temporary Approval as a Foster Carer Connected Person: Regulation 4/Schedule 4 Care Planning, Placement & Care Review Regulations, 2010	
Child/young person	
Date of Birth	
ICS ID	
Current address	
Prospective carer	
Date of Birth	
Address	
Relationship between Child and Carer	
Child's legal status and date	
Date child moved to prospective carers (if appropriate)	

Social Worker	
Phone	
E-Mail	
Social Work Team	
Social Work Team Manager	
Phone	
E-mail	
Head of Service	

Section 1: Details of child/young person and their birth family

1.1 Family Details

	Child 1	Child 2	Mother	Father	Sibling (if placed elsewhere)
Forename(s)					
Surname					
Address					
Date of Birth					
Child/Young Person's					

legal status					
Parental responsibility					
Name of any other person with PR					
Ethnicity					
Religion (and whether practicing)					
Language					
Nationality					
Immigration Status (if applicable)					
School					
Year					
Statemented?					
Occupation					

1.2 Background History on the child/young person

Brief background history	
Why child is currently unable to live with a birth parent	
What are the identified risks?	

1.3 Connection/relationship between child(ren) and carers

Details of relationship between child(ren) and carers	
How well do carers know the child? Have they previously cared for this child?	
Child's wishes and feelings on proposed plan	

Section 2: Details of applicant

2.1 Details of Applicant (2)

	1 st Applicant	2 nd Applicant
Address		
Telephone		
Name		
Previous Name		

Male/Female		
Date of Birth		
Place of Birth		
Nationality and immigration status		
Ethnicity		
Language/s spoken at home		
Religion (and whether practicing)		
Local Authority in which the applicant lives		
National Insurance Number		
Occupation		
Current weekly hours of work		
Proposed hours of work following placement		
Proposed hours of work		

2. 2 Details of Children in the Household

Name	
Gender	
Date of Birth/Age	
Ethnicity	
Type of School	
Name	
Gender	
Date of Birth/Age	
Ethnicity	
Type of School	
Name	
Gender	
Date of Birth/Age	
Ethnicity	
Type of School	

2. 3. Details of other Adult Members of the Household (including grown-up children living at home)

Name	
Gender	
Date of Birth/Age	
Ethnic Descent	
Relationship	
Name	
Gender	

Date of Birth/Age	
Ethnic Descent	
Relationship	

2. 4 Details of other significant adults (i.e. who will be involved/have contact with the children on a regular basis. Including other extended family members

Name	Details

Section 3: Checks and References

Local police check/and enhanced CRB disclosures to be undertaken on everyone in the household aged 18 years or over.

Local authority/ICS checks to be undertaken on all members of the household including any children.

	1 st Applicant	2 nd Applicant
Date and Outcome of local police check		
Date and outcome of Local Authority/ICS check		
Outcome and dates of checks on all other household members		
Details of any cautions, criminal convictions (spent or current) or pending investigations/charges in relation to <u>any</u> household member		
Details of any previous involvement with Social Services of any household member. Including having a child removed under any legislation or court order, or subject of a care or supervision order, or subject to a child protection plan		

Section 4: Accommodation

4.1 Details of accommodation, neighbourhood, community

Description of accommodation	
Size, ownership and security of tenure	
The ethnic composition of the locality	

Proximity and availability of specific amenities, including schools, medical resources, community and religious groups, and recreational facilities	
Car available to carers or proximity to public transport facilities	

4.2. Home Safety

Basic Health and Safety check and date undertaken	
Comment on hygiene of communal areas such as kitchen, bathroom. Are they appropriate for the age and abilities of this child(ren)?	
Comment on any issues/support arising and advice given	

4.3 Sleeping arrangements for the child

Comment on all pets – Name, breed, age, health	
Any identified risks/ and safeguarding action	

Section 5: Finance

5.1 Financial assessment Household Income and Employment

	1st Applicant	2nd Applicant
Details of working patterns – current and proposed. Availability to care for child(ren)		
What changes to employment or additional support needed to care for the child(ren) and associated cost implications		
Applicant's financial circumstances		
Will be getting an allowance for child's needs, financial impact of child joining the family		

Section 6: Health

	1 st Applicant	2 nd Applicant
Name and address and telephone number of family doctor(s)		
Carers self report on their physical and mental health and how this impacts on their ability to care for the child(ren)		
Including any significant past/previous health conditions		
Any current or past issues of domestic violence or substance misuse		
If a member of the household smokes, where does this take place		
Awareness of associated health risks for child(ren) placed		

Section 7: Parenting Capacity – to meet the needs of the specific child(ren)

7.1 Ensuring Safety

Describe the carers capacity to protect the child(ren) from harm and danger	
Including any person who presents a risk to them	

7.2 Education

Ability to meet the child(ren)'s educational needs and promote learning and development	
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7.3 Leisure

Ability to meet provide a stimulating environment include appropriate leisure opportunities	
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7.4 Emotional and behavioural development

Ability to offer emotional warmth	
Provide boundaries without the use of physical chastisement	

7.5 Health

Ability to meet health and dental needs	
Child's current needs and what is required to meet these	

7.6 Valuing diversity

Including child's identity, heritage, cultural background, sexuality, religion	
--	--

Section 8: Family relationships/dynamics and contact

Birth parents views of the placement and their wishes for the child	
Relationship between birth parents and applicants	
Contact – Details of arrangements	
Detail any risks. What support is needed	

Section 9: Recommendations and analysis of placement

Outline current Care Plan	
Recommendations for placement	
Analyse how this placement will meet the needs appropriate for the age and abilities of this child(ren) at this time	
Identify any potential areas of concern	

Identify any issues requiring additional support, a risk assessment etc.	
Proposed length of placement	

Section 10: Signatures

Applicant 1	Name:
	Signature:
	Date:
Applicant 2	Name
	Signature
	Date
Social Worker	Name:
	Signature
	Date:
Team Manager	Name:
	Signature
	Date:
Head of Service	Name:
	Signature
	Date:

IMMEDIATE PLACEMENT AGREEMENT

This agreement is made under
Regulation, Schedule 4, Care Planning, Placement and
Case Review Regulations, 2010

Child/Young Person	Name:
	Date of Birth:

1. I/We agree:-

- To care for the child as if he/she were a member of my own family.
- To permit any person authorised by the local authority to visit the child at any time, but at least weekly until a more formal approval has been gained for this placement.

- To allow the child to be removed by the local authority at any time if it appears that this placement is no longer the most suitable way of promoting the child's welfare.
 - To ensure that any confidential information, which is given to me about this child or their family, is kept confidential and is not disclosed without the permission of the local authority.
 - To only allow the child to have contact with those people and at those times specified in the contact arrangement.
 - To protect the child from abuse and to promote their welfare
2. **I/We understand** that this arrangement will be the subject of a more comprehensive assessment by the local authority and that the child's continued placement will be determined by the outcome of that assessment.
3. **I/We undertake to give immediate notice to the Children & Families Service of:**
- Any intended change of address.
 - Any change in the composition of our household (to include any animal that may pose a danger or risk to children).
 - Any change in our personal circumstances and any other event affecting either our capacity to care for any child placed or the suitability of our household.
4. **We also undertake to:-**
- Maintain our home to a "fit" standard to ensure good health, safety and hygiene.
 - Ensure that the foster child has his/her own bed and personal storage space. Any room sharing to be determined in advance of the child(ren) being placed.
 - Allow the bedroom to be inspected.
 - Maintain bedroom furniture, bedding and child's clothing to a satisfactory standard. This may include listing a child's clothing and belongings at the time the child moves on.
 - Promote a child's positive image of their family.
 - Ensure that each child in our care is registered with a General Practitioner and that each child receives appropriate health care, which may include contact with General Practitioners, dentists, opticians and mental health specialists.
 - Notify the Children & Young People's Service of any incident where the child is missing from the foster home for any period longer than one hour unless the Child Care Plan indicates otherwise.
 - Not to use corporal punishment including slapping and rough handling to any child placed.
 - Tell the social worker of any incident of abuse that is revealed by the child. Such revelations must never be kept secret.
5. **Milton Keynes Council Children & Families Service** undertakes to:
- Provides social work to foster carers in order to promote the welfare of children in their care and good fostering practice.
 - Pay fostering allowances promptly.

Applicant 1	Name:
	Signature
	Date:
Applicant 2	Name
	Signature
	Date:
Social Worker	Name:
	Signature
	Date:

Authorisation for Temporary Approval

Placement start date	
Placement end date (max 16 weeks)	
Comments	
Signed	
Print Name	
Position	
Date	

CONFIDENTIAL

Authorisation for Continued Approval from 16 to 24 weeks

Connected Person: Regulation 24, Schedule 4 - Care Planning,
 Placement & Care Review Regulations 2010

Name of child(ren)		DoB	
ICS Number.			
Legal Status			
Child's Social Worker		Team	
Foster Carers Name			
Foster Carers Address			
Foster Carers Social Worker			
Placement start date			
End date (16 weeks)			
Carer temporary approval date			
Comments			
Carer approved by			
Fostering Social Worker			
Assessment start date			
Reason for assessment			
Reason for extension			

Appendix C
 Family & friends (Connected Person) Policy

Action to ensure report ready in 24 weeks		
	Social Worker	Team Manager
Name		
Signature		
Date		

Date Reviewed	
Decision Maker's Comments	
I approve / do not approve the above foster carer for a further period not exceeding 8 weeks in accordance with Regulation 25 of the Care Planning, Placement and Care Review Regulations 2010	
Signed	
Print Name	
Position	
Date	