



**Briefing and recommendations on
Family and Friends Care:
raising children within the wider family as an alternative
to care**

Prepared by
Family Rights Group on behalf of the Kinship Care Alliance

Endorsed by:

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Summary

Typically, family and friends carers are grandparents, aunts or uncles, who step in to care for a child because of parental difficulties, mental or physical ill health, domestic abuse, alcohol or substance misuse, imprisonment or bereavement. Family and friends carers do exactly what the government wants to encourage people to do as part of 'Big Society': they step forward to act rather than waiting for the state care system to pick up the pieces. Yet these carers often receive little or no support in this task. They and the children they care for are the forgotten families of family policy. We want to change that.

The Kinship Care Alliance is an informal network of voluntary organisations, local authorities and academics working with or having an interest in family and friends care. The Kinship Care Alliance campaigns for greater **recognition and respect** for family and friends ('kinship') carers. The Kinship Care Alliance has been meeting since 2006 and is serviced by the charity Family Rights Group.

- There are an estimated 200,000-300,000 children living with family and friends carers. Only 7,200 of them in England are *looked after* children, conferring a right to support;
- Family and friends placements are more stable than unrelated care placements
Children feel loved and report high levels of satisfaction;
- 3 out of 4 family and friends carers experience severe financial hardship;
- A third are lone carers and 1 in 3 live in overcrowded conditions;
- 3 out of 10 have a chronic illness or disability;
- Only 1 in 6 (15%) of local authority foster placements are with family and friends carers;
- The vast majority (69%) of local authorities do not have a written coherent approach to family and friends care;
- 8 out of 10 people agree that family and friends carers should receive financial support.

Our proposals would not only assist children who are currently living in family and friends care arrangements, but we know from our direct work with families that, with the right support framework, more children who are currently in the care system could be living securely within their family networks. The latter would not only be beneficial to these children's outcomes, but if it led to even a reduction of 5% in the care population, could reduce expenditure on the care system in England and Wales by over £100 million per annum, which could be very effectively reinvested at local and national level to develop and improve support to children in family and friends care arrangements.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Since 2006 Family Rights Group has been meeting regularly with a number of voluntary organisations working with family and friends carers, local authorities and academics, under the auspices of the *Kinship Care Alliance* to develop a joint policy agenda designed to:

- prevent children from being unnecessarily raised outside their family; and
- enhance outcomes for children who cannot live with their parents and who are living with relatives.

1.2 Family Rights Group is the charity in England and Wales that advises parents and other family members whose children are involved with, or require, social care services. We run a confidential telephone advice service for families. Established in 1974, we promote policies and practices that assist children to be raised safely and securely within their families.

1.3 Whilst we continue to have serious concerns about the lack of effective support for family and friends carers, since the *Alliance's* formation there have been some welcome, if limited, developments:

- The new Court protocol for managing care proceedings, known as the Public Law Outline¹ and recent guidance to local authorities² recommend that, except in the case of an emergency, all family and friends care options should have been explored before care proceedings are started.
- The inclusion of the following provisions in the Children and Young Persons Act 2008: (CYPA)
 - i) To ensure that *looked after*³ children, who cannot return home, are, wherever possible, placed with relatives who are approved as local authority foster carers, and hence are paid accordingly (s.8);
 - ii) the extension of the right of relatives to apply for a residence or special guardianship order in respect of children they have been caring for, for over a year, without needing the court's permission to make the application (s.36&38); and
 - iii) extension of the power of local authorities to provide cash support to children in need (s.24), thus making it easier for local authorities to provide limited financial support to family and friends carers when the children they are raising are assessed as being in need.
- Draft family and friends care guidance was issued for consultation

¹ Judiciary of England & Wales/Ministry of Justice (April 2008) *The Public Law Outline: Guide to Case Management in public Law proceedings* http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/cms/files/public_law_outline_PD_April_2010.pdf

² DCSF (2010) Children Act 1989 Regulations and Guidance, Volume 1 Court Orders www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/careproceedings.htm

³ A child is looked after when s/he is in care under a care or emergency protection order or when s/he is accommodated by agreement with the parents or others with parental responsibility (s.22 (1) Children Act 1989 (CA)).

1.4 Nevertheless these steps don't go far enough and many relatives and friends continue to lack support for themselves and the children they are raising, despite these children's vulnerabilities. Moreover, the unintended consequences of proposed benefit changes and reductions in local authority non-statutory services could have an adverse impact on many of these carers and children, driving more into an already heavily burdened care system at enormous financial and social cost.

This paper sets out the current context for family and friends carers, and recommendations for action.

2. WHEN AND HOW DOES FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARE ARISE?

2.1 There are no official statistics of the total number of children living with relatives but the estimated figure is between 200,000-300,000⁴ children, only 7,200 of whom are *looked-after* children, conferring a right to support.

2.2 Family members often start to care for a child because there is a crisis in the parental home. For example, there may have been incidents of violence, alcohol or drug misuse, mental or physical illness, disability, a death, separation, divorce, domestic abuse, imprisonment, or any combination of these. The children concerned are likely to have experienced trauma and possibly inadequate or inappropriate parenting as a result of being exposed to any of these circumstances.

2.3 Some relatives and friends who step in to care for the child in an emergency may be dealing with a situation that starts as a short term arrangement but becomes open ended with no clear indication as to how long it will continue. In many cases it becomes clear later that the children are with them indefinitely and many of them are left struggling to cope financially, emotionally and socially⁵.

Case study: Nadine and her siblings

Nadine is 24 years old, the oldest of four children. Her mother died in 2007. She moved into her mother's housing association flat and took over her tenancy, in order to care for her younger sister (age 15) and brother (age 10). The children's father is in and out of prison and does not have parental responsibility for the children.

Although originally assured that the local authority would help, her requests for help have been rejected other than a grant of £40 for Christmas. Nadine is struggling financially to look after the children, using her very limited income to provide for her two siblings as well as herself. The social worker advised her to give up work, so that she could claim welfare benefits for her two siblings.

⁴ Richards A and Tapsfield R (2003) *Funding Family and Friends Care: The Way Forward* (Family Rights Group)

⁵ Farmer E and Moyers S (2008) *Kinship Care: Fostering Effective Family and Friends Placements* (Jessica Kingsley)

3. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARE?

3.1 Despite a documented lack of adequate support for such placements, there are well evidenced advantages⁶ for children who cannot live with their parents to being raised by family and friends:

- Children in family and friends care tend to be in more stable placements than those placed with unrelated foster carers.
- Children feel loved and report high levels of satisfaction.
- Children placed within their family can more easily maintain a sense of family and cultural identity.
- Contact with family members is more likely to be maintained than when children are with unrelated foster carers.
- Children placed with family and friends carers appear to be as safe and their behaviour is perceived to be less of a problem when compared to children with unrelated foster carers.

3.2 These positive outcomes for children in family and friends care are achieved despite the adverse circumstances in which many such carers find themselves, and the lack of state support provided. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that ***these outcomes could be far better, and more children could be safely placed with family and friends, if there was proper investment in meeting these children and their carers' needs.***

Case study - Tracey and her great grandson

Tracey's teenage granddaughter, Heather has a young son, Ben.

Heather went to the Children's Services' offices in January 2008 and said that she couldn't cope any more with bringing up Ben. The social worker took Heather and Ben to Tracey's home and asked Tracey to care for Ben.

Tracey is happy to continue to care for Ben, he's settled and contented and she feels she can give him a good home. However, Tracey is dependent upon her pension and is very concerned that she will be unable to continue to raise Ben unless she receives support. The social worker has said that she "*cannot pay Tracey as she is a relative*", but that Ben is not safe with Heather and if Heather tries to take Ben, Tracey should call Children's Services straight away.

⁶ Roskill C (2007) *Wider Family Matters* (Family Rights Group); Doolan et al (2004) *Growing up in the Care of Relatives and Friends* (Family Rights Group); Hunt J (2003) *Family and Friends Care*; Scoping Paper for Dept of Health; Broad, B (ed) (2001) *Kinship Care: the placement of choice for children and young people* (Russell House)

4. WHAT ARE THE SUPPORT NEEDS OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARERS?

4.1 Family and friends carers are more likely to be older, in poorer health and in more disadvantaged circumstances when compared to unrelated foster carers, yet receive significantly less support. Farmer and Moyers (2008)⁷ found that:

*“family and friend carers were significantly more disadvantaged than unrelated foster carers. Significantly, more were lone carers (27% v 14%) and they lived, at least initially, in overcrowded conditions (35% v 4%). In addition, many more kin carers had a disability or chronic illness (31% v 17%) and experienced financial hardship (75% v 13%)... The most pressing (need) was for **counselling and specialist help for children with severe and persistent behavioural and emotional difficulties**. They also required adequate financial payments to cover the costs of caring for the children. Some carers were in situations of severe financial hardship.”*

They conclude *“carers’ commitment and willingness to continue against the odds benefits the children they are looking after, but the good outcomes for these children are sometimes achieved at the expense of the kin carers themselves.”*

4.2 Despite the benefits to children of maintaining contact with their parents⁸, siblings and other significant people in their lives, **managing contact arrangements** can cause significant difficulties for family and friends carers (for example there may be tensions between the adults, or the children may experience confused emotions and display challenging behaviour, all of which needs to be worked through), yet they often receive little or no help in managing such arrangements⁹.

4.3 In some cases however, the inadequacy of support for children living in such arrangements not only has a detrimental effect on the carer but also on the child’s well-being and development, and can even cause the placement to break down and the children to end up in the state care system after all.

Case study: Polly and Bill and their granddaughter

Polly and Bill agreed to care for their granddaughter, Sally who was unable to live with her parents due to child protection concerns from birth. They shared Children’s Services’ concern and were happy to take on this arrangement. However, they are on a limited income and Polly has had to take unpaid leave from her job to care for Sally. Bill doesn’t work and receives incapacity benefit. Taking on the care of Sally has left them financially very stretched and they reluctantly approached the local authority for support. This was rejected by the local authority which asserted it was a private arrangement, even though the placement was organised by the social worker who had assured them finances would be “sorted out” after the child’s birth, and formed part of the child protection plan.

⁷ Farmer E and Moyers S (2008) *ibid*

⁸ It has long been established that by far the majority of children who are looked after return home to their families whether during their minorities or after they leave care at 18 (Bullock et al, 1998) and that contact is the key to early discharge from care (Rowe et al, 1984). There is also evidence that, contact is important for children’s well-being even where they will never return to the parental home

⁹ Farmer and Moyers (2008) *ibid*

5. WHAT IS THE LEGAL STATUS OF CHILDREN IN FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARE AND WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHILD AND CARER'S ENTITLEMENT TO SUPPORT?

5.1 There are a range of possible legal options for a child living with a family and friends carer:

- a private arrangement with no legal order,
- a residence or special guardianship court order or
- the child is *looked after* by the local authority.

5.2 The child is living with the carer under a private arrangement

5.2.1 This is a private arrangement between the parents and the carer and in law the carer cannot make any significant unilateral decisions about the child¹⁰. In theory, at least, the parent can remove the child at any time. Further,

- if the carer is a close relative within the definition of s.105 Children Act 1989 (i.e. a grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, (whether by full or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or a step-parent then this arrangement can be agreed with the parents and there is no requirement to inform the local authority;
- if any other relatives, such as a cousin or friend, is caring for (or intends to care for) the child for more than 28 days without a legal order, then it is a private fostering arrangement. The local authority must be informed of the latter and is required to undertake checks.

5.2.2 Support entitlements:

- The local authority has no duty to support the child, but has the power to provide support services if the child is assessed as being a child *in need*
- The carer can apply for child benefit and child tax credit for the child.
- If at least one of the child's parents has died, the carer may additionally be able to claim Guardian's Allowance (£14.30 a week per child), but only in narrowly defined circumstances.

5.2.3 Some private arrangements arise because relatives take precipitate action to prevent children unnecessarily entering the care system. If, for example, a local authority suspects a child is at risk of harm, sometimes arrangements will be made between the parents and relatives with the strong encouragement of the local authority that the child goes to live with relatives. Such children are very vulnerable, but because the relative has stepped in, the child does not become *looked after i.e. part of the care system*.

¹⁰ They do not have parental responsibility (as defined in s.3 Children Act 1989) for the child hence they do not have the right to make key decisions about his/her upbringing.

5.3. The carer has obtained a residence order for the child from court.

5.3.1 This gives the carer parental responsibility¹¹ for the child, which means they can make most decisions about the child. The residence order may have been granted despite the parents contesting the order, in which case the carer may have incurred significant legal bills (see section 6.5). If the child is living with the carer because of concerns about the parents' ability to care for the child, then the local authority may strongly encourage the carer to apply for the order.

5.3.2 Support entitlements

- The local authority has a *discretionary* power but is not required to pay a residence order allowance¹². The criteria used and rates paid vary significantly across the country and even within authorities. A survey of carers conducted by Family Rights Group in early 2010 found that only around 28% of those with a residence order received an allowance.
- The local authority has no duty to support the child, but has the power to provide support services if the child is assessed as being a child *in need*.
- The carer can apply for child benefit and child tax credit for the child.

5.4. The carer has obtained a special guardianship order for the child from court.

5.4.1 This order applies until the child is 18 and gives the carer 'exclusive' parental responsibility, although there are some decisions about which the parents must still be consulted e.g. change of name. The local authority may encourage the carer to apply for a special guardianship order if they have child protection concerns about the child living with his/her parents or the child is currently in care.

5.4.2 Support entitlements

- The local authority has a *discretionary* power but is not required to pay a special guardianship allowance¹³, subject to means testing.
- The local authority has no duty to support the child, but has the power to provide support services if the child is assessed as being a child *in need*.
- The carer can apply for child benefit and child tax credit for the child.

5.5. The child is looked after by the local authority

5.5.1 When Children's Services have concerns about a child's safety and well-being, and they decide it is unsafe for the child to remain at home, then, provided they have the necessary authority, they can place the child with a relative or friend where this is consistent with the child's welfare (s.23 Children Act). Such authority is derived from either:

- the parents agreeing to the plan (in which case the child is *accommodated* under s.20 Children Act 1989) or
- where such agreement is not forthcoming, they have been granted a care

¹¹ As defined in s.3 Children Act 1989

¹² schedule 1, para 15 CA

¹³ schedule 1, para 15 CA

order by a court (in which case the child is *in care*).

5.5.2 In these circumstances, the child is *looked after* and the local authority should assess and approve the relative or friend wishing to care for the child as a foster carer in order to place the child with them. Only 1 in 6 (15%)¹⁴ of local authority foster placements are with family and friends carers, the rest are placed into non-relative foster care.

5.5.3 Support entitlements

- Foster carers are entitled to receive a fostering allowance and other support¹⁵.
- The child will have their own social worker and should have regular reviews.
- Family and friends carers who are approved as local authority foster carers are entitled to receive the same fostering allowance as unrelated carers¹⁶, yet many still face financial discrimination in some local authorities: a survey in 2007-8 found that 25 authorities admitted to paying their family and friends foster carers at a lower rate than their other foster carers¹⁷.

5.5.4 We regularly encounter poor practice on this issue.¹⁸ Despite it being held to be unlawful¹⁹, many local authorities argue that a child placed in such circumstances is not *looked after*, but rather that the arrangement was a private one made between the parent and the carer concerned, which they merely facilitated. Hence they assert they are not under any duty to support and monitor the placement²⁰

Case study – Fiona and her 3 nephews and nieces

Fiona is raising her niece and two young nephews.

Jackie (Fiona's sister) and her children originally came to stay with Fiona, in order to provide Jackie with respite. Jackie disappeared for a few days but returned. Two weeks later Jackie left the children with Fiona during a contact visit arranged by Children's Services and Fiona has had no contact with Jackie since.

The children are on the child protection register and the local authority has said that

¹⁴ DfE Children looked after in England, year ending March 2010

¹⁵ as required by s.23 (2) CA 1989 and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, Regulations 17, Department of Health 2002.

¹⁶ The Queen on the application of L and others v Manchester City Council; the Queen on the application of R and another v Manchester City Council [2001] Family Law Reports 43. In this case Munby J held that family and friends carers should be paid the same rate of fostering allowance by the local authority as unrelated foster carers.

¹⁷ The Fostering Network Survey of allowances and fee payment schemes 2007-08: recommended minimum allowances.

¹⁸ FRG's advice service regularly receives calls from family members in such circumstances where the local authority has refused to accept responsibility to support the placement

¹⁹ In the case of Southwark LBC –v- D [2007] 1 FLR 2181, the Court of Appeal has confirmed that where the local authority has been involved in making such a placement and has not agreed otherwise with the carer, the child is treated as being looked after by the local authority, hence their carer should be assessed as a local authority foster carer and should receive a fostering allowance and support to care for the child according to s.23 (2) CA.

²⁰ See for example R (on the application of A) Coventry City Council [2009] EWHC 34 (Admin); R (Collins) –v- Knowsley MBC EWHC 2551 (Admin QBD) Family Law Dec 2008 p1270.

if Jackie tries to remove the children they will go to court for an order. The local authority has advised Fiona to ring the police if Jackie tries to remove the children.

The local authority has so far provided no financial support but has advised about benefits although Fiona is not yet in receipt of these. The authority has said they will begin paying in total £50 p/w but won't pay retrospectively. It is not clear to Fiona how the local authority has come up with the figure of £50.

6. THE ADDITIONAL COSTS FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARERS OF TAKING ON A CHILD

6.1 Parents are legally liable to support their children²¹; relatives and friends are not²². The legal responsibility to support children when their parents cannot lies with the State, but in reality the additional financial as well as emotional costs regularly fall upon carers. These family and friends carers often already have existing responsibilities, for example caring for older relatives, and/or their own children.

6.2 There is no academic or government study which has analysed in depth the costs to family and friends carers of bringing up a child who cannot live with their parents. However, analysis by The Fostering Network found that the cost of caring for a foster child is fifty percent higher than the cost of caring for a birth child²³. These extra costs are rooted partly in the emotional distress that the children have often experienced, and which can be expressed in challenging and destructive behaviour, bedwetting and difficult eating habits. In addition, there are significant costs associated with maintaining contact with birth families and engaging with the social workers and health and education staff who are involved with the child and attending relevant meetings/appointments. This is why foster carers receive specific allowances from local authorities, paid at substantially higher rates than state benefits and tax credits.

6.3 Based upon our work with family and friends carers who are not foster carers, there are four key financial issues:

- The immediate costs of a child coming to live with the carer, often in an unplanned situation;
- The costs of applying for a legal order to provide the child with security and permanence;
- Lost income as a result of the carer reducing their working hours, foregoing career opportunities, losing pension rights or even giving up paid work;
- The actual ongoing costs of raising a child.

6.4 The immediate costs of a child coming to live with the carer, often in an unplanned situation

²¹ s.1 Child Support Act 1991

²² The only way in which they might become liable is if they adopted the child in which case they become the legal parents.

²³ The Fostering Network (2004) *Allowances for Foster Carers* (The Fostering Network); Oldfield N (1997) *The Adequacy of Foster Care Allowances* (Ashgate)

6.4.1 Many placements with family and friends carers occur in an emergency or initially as a temporary arrangement. Family Rights Group is aware from its advice line, the electronic family and friends care discussion board and its 2010 internet survey of over 200 family and friends carers²⁴ of many cases where children have arrived at the door of carers with nothing, no nappies, bottles, suitable clothing, toys or bedding. Carers rarely receive local authority section 17 payments to cover these initial costs. In the 2010 internet survey, a third of the carers had spent between £500-£1000 and over a further third had spent over £1000 when the children arrived. The items most commonly bought were clothes and shoes, beds and bedding, other furniture, school uniform and toys.

6.5 Costs of applying for a legal order, which may be contested

6.5.1 Some family and friends carers incur large legal costs when applying for a residence or special guardianship order to secure the care of children at risk of harm. The 2010 internet survey²⁵ by Family Rights Group found that carers' expenditure on legal costs ranged from less than £200 (where the respondents had kept costs low by representing themselves in court) to £38,000 for complex cases.

6.5.2 The majority of those who incurred substantial costs received no financial assistance. For example, in one case a grandmother and grandfather had incurred £24,000 of solicitors' and barristers' fees in the process of obtaining a Residence Order for their ten year old grandchild, during a protracted court case that involved drug tests on the mother and psychiatric reports. They did not receive any help with these costs.

6.5.3 Many family and friends carers don't qualify for legal aid because they have a small amount of savings put away for their retirement or have substantial equity in their home or earn a modest salary, any of which may take them outside the financial eligibility criteria.

6.5.4 Although local authorities have the power to provide assistance with legal costs where they encourage a family and friends carer to apply for a residence order or special guardianship order to safeguard the child without the child having to be taken into care, in many cases local authorities fail to provide this assistance.

6.6 Lost income as a result of reducing hours, foregoing career opportunities, losing pension rights or even giving up paid work

6.6.1 In taking on the care of a young relative, some family and friends carers are forced to reduce their hours, or give up work completely. In the 2010 internet survey:

- A third of respondents had left or lost their job or taken early retirement
- A quarter of respondents had reduced their working hours or taken a lower graded job to cope with looking after the child/ren.

²⁴ Family Rights Group (Jan 2010) The harsh reality – the financial situation of family and friends carers www.frg.org.uk

²⁵ Family Rights Group (Jan 2010) The harsh reality – the financial situation of family and friends carers www.frg.org.uk

6.6.2 Unlike new birth parents or adoptive parents, family and friends carers are not entitled to statutory paid leave from employment when a child arrives. In some cases carers have lost their job because of the number of meetings that they are required to attend with statutory services in terms of the child's care, particularly if the child has significant behavioural problems and is at risk or has been expelled from school. In some cases the social worker has made clear that the carer is expected to give up their job to look after a child, because of the child's needs and difficulties.

6.6.3 Giving up or reducing work commitments can have a dramatic immediate and long term impact on the carer's financial situation. Reducing hours means lost income, loss of working tax credit if hours drop below 16 a week, and loss of promotion prospects. Giving up work can mean loss of pension rights as well as income, and for some people this means having to draw state benefits for the first time. For older carers leaving their job may mean they will never be able to get back into the labour market.

"Like most we have had a dramatic change of life style. All 'retirement' plans gone. I had to give up work and if I try and return later I will have lost all seniority therefore will be on minimum wage"

– grandparent carer, Family Rights Group Discussion Board

6.7 The on-going costs of raising a child, who may have additional vulnerabilities

6.7.1 Family and friends carers often experience enormous financial strain. For many, the cost of providing for the children's day to day needs means giving up their own hopes of a comfortable and secure middle age and retirement. Some have to abandon plans to downsize their homes to fund their planned retirement, or have to spend their savings moving to a bigger home or extending their home to accommodate the children. For those older family and friends carers who have retired, there is real anxiety as they see their hard-earned savings dwindle away, knowing that there is no prospect of getting back to work to achieve financial security for themselves and the children. They often try to protect the children from the worst effects of financial impact, choosing to go without things themselves so that they could spend more on the children. In this context, financial help from local authorities or from state benefits can make a great difference to their ability to cope financially.

"I had to leave a well-paid job, I struggle every day with bills, I go hungry to feed my grandson... we don't have holidays, I have to go without any social life to afford to keep him." - Grandparent carer

"I lost my job as a direct result of having time off to attend court, care for the baby and attend his hospital appointments etc. My husband took redundancy and we had to sell our home and most of the furniture in order to pay the legal costs and fund a move of over 350 miles away to ensure the safety of our grandson... We went from a joint income of £76000 a year, a gorgeous home which we had worked hard for over 20 years to build - to having no home of our own, few possessions and living on an initial income of £9000." – Grandparent carer

7. Inequities and complexities of the benefits system

7.1 As described what assistance, if any, carers are entitled to, depends predominantly on the legal status of the child. But the situation is extremely complex, with officials and benefit administrators from local and central government agencies often struggling to interpret current rules. The Grandparents' Association benefits helpline service has found that many family and friends carers are under-claiming benefits up to around £5,000 each per annum because of not knowing what they are entitled to.

Case study – Tim and his nieces and nephews

Tim has been asked by social workers to take on the care of his brother's children. The family do not know for how long, and neither do Children's Services and they cannot give a time frame.

If Tim hadn't taken the children they would have been put into care.

Tim is on a basic wage and is worried about how he will care for them financially. When the children were placed, all they had were a few sets of clothes, a couple of teddies and one bottle for the baby. Tim has already spent money getting them more clothing and essentials but has received no assistance from the local authority.

One of the children should be starting primary school. Tim lives an hour away from her school, and thinks the child should be schooled at a local school near him, yet one of her parents is not agreeing, and Tim is receiving no guidance from the local authority as to what to do.

7.2 As well as having to overcome the complexity of the current system, there are however, certain inequities within the benefits system or interpretation of current rules which disadvantage family and friends carers, namely:

7.2.1 Changes to **income support rules** mean that lone family and friends carers who are permanently raising children aged 7 or over (and from October 2011 the age will reduce further to children aged five or over) outside the looked after system no longer qualify for income support but will be switched to Job Seeker's Allowance and must comply with specific job-seeking requirements. The responsibilities of taking on a child who isn't your own are recognised by the dispensation from this rule given to foster carers, and family and friends carers who are *temporarily* caring for a child under 16 years old but do not apply to those who have given the child a permanent home outside the care system.

7.2.2 **Guardian's Allowance** - whilst the weekly amount paid out as a Guardian's Allowance is small, nevertheless it is an important source of additional income to impoverished carers of children whose parents have died or where one parent has died and the other parent has been sentenced to a custodial sentence with a minimum of 2 years left to serve or in a hospital by court order.

7.2.2.1 However, a family and friends carer cannot receive Guardian's Allowance if the parent in custody has less than two years left of their sentence or is on remand. The needs of the child are no less whatever the terms of their parent's imprisonment. In one case, maternal grandparents were raising children whose mother was murdered by their father, but they did not qualify for Guardian's Allowance because the father was remanded in custody before sentencing.

7.2.3 **Proposed changes to future benefits:**

7.2.3.1 The proposed total **benefits 'cap'** of approximately £500 a week to be introduced in 2013 is intended to ensure fairness between families who work and families who do not (George Osborne, conference speech 4th October 2010), and to ensure that families living on benefits take responsibility for the number of children they choose to have (Jeremy Hunt, BBC2 Newsnight, 6th October 2010). The cap will apply to jobseeker's allowance, income support, employment support allowance (the replacement for incapacity benefit), housing benefit and council tax benefit, as well as child tax credit, carer's allowance and child benefit.

7.2.3.1.1 Unfortunately the proposed changes will have an **unintentional detrimental impact on family and friends carers** whose family size suddenly increases when they take on the care of someone else's children. Many family and friends carers already have dependent children or dependent elders in their household. Although most take in one or two children, some take in and look after large sibling groups. War widows and those on disability living allowance as well as those on working tax credit will be exempt from the cap but many family and friends carers don't fall into these categories.

7.2.3.2 Currently the Government proposed **changes to housing benefit** include:

- The local area housing allowance being capped at the notional cost of rent on a 4 bedrooomed property;
- Basing the 'average' on the 30th percentile of rents in the area, not the 50th percentile, which will reduce the availability of low cost private rented accommodation;.
- From April 2013 people who are on Job Seeker's Allowance for over a year will lose 10% of their housing benefit;
- Significant increases in 'non-dependant deductions' (the amount that older, working or non-working members of the household, such as adult children, should pay towards the family's housing costs if the family are on housing benefit.

Yet when a family and friends carer takes on the care of children within their family the size of the household will often increase rapidly. The combined effect of the above changes is likely to particularly hit carers needing to move from overcrowded accommodation as a result of taking on the children and will especially affect those in higher rental areas in inner cities, whose only option will be to move out of area at the expense of disrupting the children's schooling and losing crucial support networks.

The unintended impact will be that carers will be trapped in a cycle of poverty: they lose their job to take on the care of the children, yet appropriate housing within their

community becomes unaffordable. Moreover, the 10% cuts in housing benefit may mean spiralling debt as they try and do their best for the children.

"I am not able to work because of taking on the care of my three grandchildren. There's no way I would have let them go into care. I really worry about what the benefit changes will mean for me. I don't get enough housing benefit to cover my rent at the moment. I suffer from depression so what would happen if I ended up in hospital because of the strain of it? What if we all end up homeless?" - single grandmother looking after grandchildren aged seven, five and two, with 18 year old son living at home.

7.2.3.3 The proposal to restrict time limit **contributory Employment and Support Allowance** for those in the Work Related Activity Group to one year, will badly affect those family and friends carer couples where one partner is out of work due to illhealth and stress but because the other partner is in work, they don't qualify for means tested assistance.

7.2.4 Proposed changes to **tax credits**

7.2.4.1 Currently those households with children earning up to £58,000 will receive some element of **child tax credit**, this will reduce to £41,329 in April 2011. The Chancellor has also announced that the tapered reduction will come in at a much lower earnings level, so that from 2012 families with one child would receive no tax credits once they earn above £23,275.

Given that child tax credits are the main source of means that family and friends carers currently receive to cover basic costs of bringing up an additional child, the likely reduction for households on modest earnings will hit them extremely hard.

As described in section 6.6 the impact of taking on the care of children, particularly those with significant needs, can lead to couples both reducing their working hours to cope. They will potentially be adversely affected by the changes to the eligibility rules that couples with children must work 24 hours a week between them, with one partner working at least 16 hours a week in order to qualify for **working tax credit**.

7.2.4.3 The Government's proposal to extend 15 hours per week of free early education and care to all disadvantaged two year old children from 2012-13 is to be warmly welcomed and will assist many carers. Unfortunately however, as a result of proposals to reduce through working tax credit, the proportion of childcare costs paid from 80% to 70%, carers in low income jobs, who rely on childcare for a baby they are raising or after school clubs for a primary school child, are going to have to cover more of these childcare costs from their own income,

7.2.5 **Sure Start Maternity Grant** – it is proposed that this will be restricted to the first child only. The grant is a one-off £500 payment for those on a low income to help towards the costs of a new baby. Again this restriction will hit carers, such as uncles and aunts who already have a child and are taking on the care of a baby

7.2.6 Child benefit

Child benefit is the only universal benefit all family and friends carers receive and it is a relatively straightforward, speedy process for carers to claim the benefit in place of parents. The freezing of child benefit will therefore affect carers and the children they are raising, and a smaller number will be affected by the removal of child benefit from households where this is high earner.

7.2.7 Education Maintenance Allowance

The proposed abolition of education maintenance allowance is likely to affect many low income households, including those where relatives or friends' parents have taken in a young person whose relationship with their own parents has become so conflicted that they've moved out.

7.2.7 Conclusion Family and friends carers are doing exactly what the Government wants to encourage people to do as part of 'Big Society': stepping forward not sitting back and letting the state care system pick up the pieces. Their actions aren't based upon a wish to have more children but are driven by a moral decision based upon the needs of vulnerable children who they love. Yet they are still at risk of being pushed deeper into poverty by these proposed changes.

Example of the impact of proposed benefit changes on family and friends carers

A couple on Job Seeker's Allowance with one child would have benefit income of £177.72 a week (JSA - £102.75; Child benefit £20.30; Child Tax Credit £54.67) so could find somewhere to rent at up to £322.28 per week and still be below the benefit cap. However, if they take on a second child in an emergency (who is not looked-after), this pushes their benefit income to £292.86 so they would have to rent at £207.14 per week or less to stay below the cap. If council tax was around £25 per week, it would bring that figure down to £182.14 to avoid the cap. They are unlikely to be able to simply move if they are already in a property where they are paying £250 per week so they would have to meet the shortfall from *either* their other benefit income, *or* from the local authority who could but aren't required to fund them under Section 17 *or* from the Discretionary Housing Payment budget.

8. THE COSTS THAT FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARERS SAVE THE STATE

8.1 Family and friends carers raising a child who cannot live with their parents do so because of the love and security they feel they can offer the child. But they also save the state the huge amount of money that would have to be spent if the child was taken into care.

8.2 According to the cost calculator for Children's Services designed by the University of Loughborough, the total cost of looking after a child without any

additional support needs, who remained in the same local authority foster placement over a twenty-month time period, was £35,106. If the child had emotional and behavioural difficulties the total cost was more than six times higher: £215,756²⁶. If the child was in residential care, the standard unit cost was eight times higher than foster care.

8.3 Moreover, if the family member steps in prior to care proceedings, every unnecessary care case avoided, saves more than £25,000²⁷ associated with the court process alone.

8.3 All of these costs are saved when a vulnerable child is diverted from the care system by the intervention of a family and friends carer. A reduction of 5% in the care population could reduce expenditure on the care system in England and Wales by over £100 million per annum.

Case study: Dominique and her niece

Susan ran away from home and refuses to live with mum. Susan's mum has been suicidal in the past and has self-harmed. She has learning difficulties and is an alcoholic. Susan has exhibited disturbed behaviour and was in care earlier in the year.

Dominique is Susan's aunt although she didn't know Susan prior to her running away from home. Dominique took Susan in after she'd run away and a social worker then visited and asked Dominique to care for Susan long term. Susan is doing very well in Dominique's care and Dominique is happy for her to stay indefinitely but is on a low income. Susan's mum is also happy with the arrangement. However, they have received no financial support from the local authority nor has Susan received a full assessment of her complex needs.

9. WHAT ARE THE OTHER DIFFICULTIES FOR CHILDREN IN FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARE?

9.1 Invisibility of children with family and friends carers

9.1.1 There are no official demographic or socio-economic statistics on the total number of children living with relatives but the estimated figure is between 200,000-300,000²⁸ children, only 7,200 of whom are *looked-after* children.

9.1.2 This absence of data means that children who are outside the care system and being raised by family and friends carers have to date been effectively 'invisible' in high-level discussions, for example on tackling child poverty or achieving a fair society.

²⁶ Centre for child and family, Loughborough University, *Research evidence issue 7*

²⁷ DfES/DCA/Welsh Assembly (2006) *Review of the Child Care Proceedings System in England and Wales* p13

²⁸ Richards A and Tapsfield R (2003) *Funding Family and Friends Care: The Way Forward* (Family Rights Group)

9.2 Variations in policy and practice as to whether and when children are placed with family and friends carers

9.2.1 A recent study²⁹ found that social workers initiated only 4% of family and friends placements, so if relatives do not put themselves forward, it is unlikely that the local authority will place the child with them. Yet some relatives are providing a lot of support to the child's parents (who may be their own son, daughter, sister or brother) and are fearful that presenting themselves as potential carers might be perceived by the parent as undermining them. Others may not have a full picture of what is going on and do not realise the situation is as serious as it is. They may not be eligible for legal aid and may be very unclear as to their options.

9.2.2 **Family group conferences** are an effective way of identifying and enabling family members to come forward as potential carers.

9.2.3 Family group conferences are family-led decision making meetings involving all those who are significant in the child's life. Parents, relatives and friends develop a plan for the child's care, following significant earlier preparation by an independent co-coordinator who explores the issues with each person attending the meeting. The family plan addresses child welfare and/or protection concerns including those identified and communicated to the family by the local authority. The child is supported to be involved in the meeting, with the use of an advocate where appropriate. The family plan is approved by the local authority *provided* it satisfactorily addresses the welfare and protection concerns.

9.2.4 FGCs are a proven mechanism to enable partnership between the state and families at all key decision making points for a child including:

- As a means of engaging the family to identify and support care arrangements for vulnerable children and their parents;
- As a way of identifying alternative care arrangements within the family when the parent cannot continue to look after the child, including identifying necessary support packages to avoid the child being received into state care. It also allows for contingency planning so that family members can come forward to be assessed as carers, whilst simultaneously supporting the parents' efforts to have their children back e.g. by undergoing drug treatment;
- As a means of planning for the child to see members of their family and to return home safely to their family network from state care wherever possible;

9.2.5 However, although the number of family group conferences taking place in England and Wales is increasing, whether or not a family is offered a family group conference is still largely ad hoc and some family group conference services are closing as a result of local authority cuts to non-statutory provision. A few local authorities, such as Kent have introduced a policy mandate that families should be offered an FGC before proceedings are initiated, but this approach remains the exception rather than the rule.

²⁹ Farmer and Moyers (2008) *ibid*

9.3 Assessment of family and friends as suitable carers

9.3.1 Currently assessment depends on legal status rather than need, thus risking inconsistent and inappropriate assessments. Some family and friends carers are subject to full fostering assessments that are essentially geared to unrelated foster carers who have had no previous relationship with the child which means that many of the strengths and support needs of family and friends carers can be overlooked. Other family and friends carers may not be assessed at all, despite the child's and carer's vulnerabilities.

9.3.2 A new approach is required to the assessment of family and friends carers: one which is child-led, and recognises that what a family and friends placement should be assessed on is whether the adult(s) can provide the particular child(ren) with the safe, loving and suitable environment they need, and also considers what assistance is required to support the relative in that task. There is also a need for those involved in carrying out such assessments and making associated decisions to have access to specialist training on family and friends care.

9.3.3 Currently Family Rights Group, in conjunction with BAAF and The Fostering Network and a number of local authorities are piloting a specially designed strengths-based, participative model of assessment for family and friends carers.

9.4 The postcode lottery: variations in local authority policies in overall approach, finances and practical support

9.4.1 There are wide variations between and within local authorities in policies, support, finance and attitudes towards family and friends care and in numbers of children placed with family and friends, especially where they have discretion.

9.4.2 The recent Freedom of Information (FOI) survey conducted by Family Rights Group³⁰ revealed the vast majority (69%) of local authorities do not have a written coherent approach to family and friends care and most authorities (61%) do not have any dedicated family and friends care posts.

9.4.3 The survey found that there was in particular a dearth of explicit support available to carers of children outside the *looked after* system. Some authorities do not publish policies setting out what support is available to carers; many have policies which allow the authority considerable discretion and don't spell out clear criteria upon which a carer/child will be assessed; and in a minority of cases the policies are unintelligible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

³⁰ Family Rights Group (2009) *ibid*

1. Financial support

The support needs of children who are taken in by family and friends carers, and of the carers themselves, should be recognised. There are four key elements needed to support family and friends carers' financially:

- A national financial allowance for friends and family carers who care for a child as an alternative to them being taken into care.
- Changes to the benefits system to recognise the specific situation of family and friends carers .
- Help with legal costs.
- Ending local authority discrimination against family and friends foster carers in terms of fostering payments.

1.1 National financial allowance

1.1.1 A national non-means tested, non-taxable financial allowance to cover the real costs of raising a child should be paid to relatives or other persons already connected to the child³¹, who take on the care of a child for more than 28 days continuously in the following circumstances:

- a) Where the child comes to live with the carer as a result of plans made within a section 47 child protection enquiry³²; or
- b) Where a child comes to live with the carer following a section 37 investigation;
- c) Where a carer has secured a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order to avoid a child being looked after, and there is professional evidence of the impairment of the parents' ability to care for the child; and/or
- d) Where the carer has a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order arising out of care proceedings; or
- e) Where the carer has a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order following the accommodation of a child.

1.1.2 These criteria are designed to ensure that the financial allowance will only be received where:

- a) the carer is raising the child; and
- b) the parent is unable to care for the child and there is judicial or evidence from a medical, social worker or legal professional of this.

A national financial allowance would mean no child is unnecessarily forced into the care system because a family member who could raise them is too impoverished to do so.

³¹ This could include family friends

1.2 Tax and benefits

1.2.1 Family and friends carers who are permanently raising a child should be treated on par with those who are taking on this role temporarily, and with foster carers, and are therefore given dispensation from **income support rules** which currently require that if the youngest child they are looking after is aged 7 or over they do not qualify for income support and instead receive Job Seeker's Allowance and must comply with specific job-seeking requirements.

1.2.2 The eligibility criteria for **Guardian's Allowance** should be amended to

- i. remove the requirement that a parent in prison must have a minimum of 2 years left to serve on their sentence; and
- ii. remove the requirement that a parent in prison must be convicted and sentenced i.e. so it includes situations where one parent is dead and the other is in custody *on remand*.

1.2.3 Family and friends carers who have parental responsibility for the child should be exempt from the proposed total **cap on welfare benefits**, just as it is proposed families caring for a disabled child will be exempt.³³

1.2.4 Family and friends carers who have parental responsibility for the child should be exempt from the proposed **caps on housing benefit** including the local area housing allowance maximum being limited to a 4 bedroomed property³⁴.

1.2.5 Within the **child tax credit system** an extra credit be awarded to family and friends carers who have parental responsibility³⁵, akin to credit awarded for disabled and severely disabled children. This would assist those on very low incomes although it wouldn't alleviate the impact of the tapering of tax credit for low/middle earning households.

1.2.6 That the changes to **Education Maintenance Allowance** are such that young people who cannot live with their parents and are being raised by family and friends carers are recognised as disadvantaged and entitled to assistance.

1.3 Legal costs of family and friends carers

That rules for public funding for legal costs should be amended so that relatives and friends are entitled to public funding to cover their legal costs in order to secure the child's future with them, if their case meets the merits test. This could be evidenced by the one of the following:

- The child being the subject of child protection enquiries and the local authority stating that the child cannot remain with the parents in the current circumstances;

³³ Such an exemption would only apply if no other person was claiming benefits for the child

³⁴ Such an exemption would only apply if no other person was claiming benefits for the child

³⁵ This would only apply if no other person was claiming tax credits/benefits for the child

- The child being the subject of a s.37 investigation and the local authority stating that the child cannot remain with the parents in the current circumstances;
- The child being accommodated when the family and friends carer seeks legal funding with a view to taking on or securing their care with them;
- The child being subject to care proceedings when the family and friends carer seeks legal funding to take on or secure their care with them.

1.4 Ending financial discrimination against family and friends foster carers

The forthcoming Family and Friends Care Guidance should make it clear that family and friends foster carers must receive the same foster allowance as unrelated foster carers.

2. Providing effective support to family and friends carers to ensure the children in their care reach their optimal development

2.1 Meeting immediate short term needs of children and carers

2.1.1 A child who goes to live with a family and friends may have acute needs as the result of abuse or trauma, but some local authorities refuse to even assess a child's need for support unless s/he is still at risk of harm once s/he has moved to live with the carer (which is usually not the case). The carer may also have support needs, particularly where they have stepped in to care for a child in a crisis without having the opportunity to reflect on the details of how they will manage.

2.1.2 The forthcoming Family and Friends Care Guidance should strongly encourage local authorities to treat children who are being raised by family and friends carers as children who are in need (as defined in s.17 (10) CA), hence they would be entitled to an assessment to determine what their needs are and what support services should be provided to meet those identified needs, under s.17 CA.

2.1.3 The definition of who is a child in need in Children Act 1989 s.17 (10) should be amended to include

(d) children being cared for by family members or friends

2.2 Meeting needs where family and friends take on the care of a child on a long term or permanent basis

2.2.1 Currently, the only way in which such carers can be guaranteed a right to the support they need is for the child to be 'looked after' i.e. to be and remain formally in the state care system as described above. Yet there may be no other good reason why the child needs to be in care.

2.2.2 ***A family and friends care support system needs to be developed*** on a statutory basis for family and friends carers who have an established caring arrangement of a child regardless of their legal status.

2.2.3 The forthcoming Family and Friends Care Guidance should strongly encourage local authorities to establish family and friends care support services, including:

- a) a dedicated family and friends care worker/team and
- b) the commissioning of services from the voluntary sector, for children who are being raised by family and friends carers on a long term basis (more than 28 days). These services should be similar to those local authorities must provide in respect of adoption and special guardianship support services³⁶, including
 - i. Making support groups available for carers, to combat the isolation many find themselves in when taking on a parenting role and dealing with the complex needs of vulnerable children which they had not planned for.
 - ii. Ensuring such children and their carers have access to an assessment of their needs and to support services meet their identified needs.
 - iii. Providing therapeutic services for the child as appropriate.
 - iv. Providing family and friends carers with access to counselling, advice, information and other support services.
 - v. Providing assistance with the arrangements for contact so as to promote positive relationships between the child and his/her parents and other family members and friends. This assistance should include:
 - a. cash to help with the costs of contact (travel, entertainment) – it is not means tested; and
 - b. mediation to help resolve difficulties which may arise on contact.
 - vi. Providing assistance to ensure the carer has a positive and continuing relationship with the child which should include:
 - respite care where the carer has a need for temporary respite from their caring responsibilities;
 - mediation, for example where there are difficulties over contact or there is disagreement between the carer and the parents about important decisions the child's life; and
 - training to support the carer to meet the child's particular needs.

In addition, local authorities should

- be expected to publish accessible policies and procedures in relation to family and friends care, both in relation to children within and outside the looked after system; and
- Be required to publicise availability and criteria for accessing support services for family and friends carers.

2.2.4 There also needs to be improved communication, co-ordination, understanding and prioritisation of the needs of these children and their families, including carers, by public agencies including schools, CAMHS, and housing departments and between adult and children's services, for example in addressing the impact of parental alcohol and substance misuse.

³⁶ These were introduced by the Adoption and Children Act 2002

2.2.5 Government funding must be made available to local authorities to fulfil such duties.

2.2.6 In the longer term, there should be new legislation which places local authorities under a statutory duty to ensure the provision of the above support services for children being raised by family and friends for more than 28 days, their carers and birth parents. This would include commissioning services from the voluntary sector and would mirror the statutory duties introduced under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 in respect of adoption and special guardianship (see for example s.14F Children Act 1989).

3. Enabling more children to be raised within their family network

3.1 Identifying and supporting relatives to come forward as carers

3.1.1 The forthcoming Family and Friends Care guidance should raise an expectation that local authorities will:

- Where the child is subject to child protection enquiries (s.47 CA 1989), assess the needs of and provide support/commission services to meet the identified needs of the child, their parents and wider family members in order to help them overcome the concerns raised during the enquiries;
- Where the child is subject to child protection enquiries (s.47 CA 1989), explore all safe alternatives for the child's care within the family network before, or where this is not possible as soon as reasonably practicable after the child becomes looked after;
- Where a child is subject to child protection enquiries (s.47 CA), assist all parents, relatives and friends who are involved in local authority decision-making processes to have access to free independent advice and advocacy services;
- Offer a family group conference to the child, their parents and extended family before, or where this is not possible as soon as reasonably practicable after a child becomes looked after.

3.1.2 In the longer term, new legislation should impose a statutory duty on local authorities to carry out the activities listed in 3.1.1.

3.1.3 As part of their inspection framework of English Children's Services, Ofsted should inspect services for children and their family and friends carers to examine how authorities comply guidance.

3.1.4. To enable family and friends carers to obtain parental responsibility without necessarily having to bring a case to court, we propose that there should be a provision for parents (with parental responsibility) to enter into a **parental responsibility agreement with a relative** (as defined in S105 CA 1989), as has already been extended to step parents.

3.2 Assessment of potential family and friends carers

3.2.1 A new approach to the assessment of family and friends carers is required: one which is child-led, and recognises that the purpose of an assessment of a family and friends placement is:

- whether the adult(s) can provide the particular child with the safe, loving and suitable environment s/he needs, and
- what assistance is required to support the carer in that task.

3.2.2 The forthcoming Family and Friends Care Guidance should

- outline a new approach to assessments of family and friends carers, which recognises the difference between this type of care and unrelated foster care, and incorporates key Children Act principles, including: the potential impact of placement upon the child's welfare; ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child; the capacity of the prospective carer to protect the child from harm; the level of continuity which these carers could provide for the child; how they would manage contact with the child's parents and other relatives, and, critically, what support they would need in order to meet the child's needs.
- include a clear expectation that both those conducting assessments and local panels which approve family and friends carers are aware of the difference between family and friends foster care and unrelated foster care. This would include the provision of local training and, potentially, setting up a panel specifically to deal with family and friends care placements.

3.2.3 The revised Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and Fostering Services Regulations should address family and friends foster care as a distinct form of foster care requiring a distinct set of standards and the forthcoming Family and Friends Care Guidance should reflect this.

4. Collection and publication of official statistics on family and friends care

4.1 There should be a new statutory duty on local authorities to collect and publish official statistics of children in family and friends care to whom they provide support whether or not the child is looked after.

4.2 That Wave 4 of the Understanding Society survey incorporates specific data on family and friends carers and the circumstances in which they are raising children.

Conclusion

The above recommendations set out actions that could be taken to improve the circumstances of children being raised in family and friends care arrangements. We would strongly recommend that a ***Family and Friends Care Bill*** needs to be introduced in order to provide real coherence to the system, to recognise the unique situation of children being raised and to put in place the steps necessary to transform

the lives of children being raising by family and friends carers now and those who could benefit from living in such arrangements in the future.

“I took on a lifelong financial burden nearly ten years ago. I have to pay for two instead of one for everything from my pension and savings... Tax credit payment and child benefit does not cover basic expenses let alone the essential extras (like school voluntary payments for activities). Children cost money until they are past eighteen years of age and it looks as if I will be doing it for that long. I think that I should be paid an allowance as are foster parents who provide less stability and are less reliable for long term care as they are strangers doing a job & not taking on a commitment.” - Grandparent carer