

Harrow Council
People Services
Children & Young People Directorate
Corporate Parenting

Family and Friend Care and Support Policy
2024-2026

Title	Family and Friend Care and Support Policy
Who is the Responsible Senior Manager?	Jacinta Kane, Assistant Director, Corporate Parenting Services
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children Act 1989 • Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering, DfES 2005 • Children (Leaving Care) 2000 • Adoption Guidance: Adoption and Children Act 2002, DfES 2005 • Children and Adoption Act 2006 • Children and Young Persons Act 2008 • Children and Families Act 2014 • Fostering Service Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011 • Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) (amendment) Regulations 2021 • Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 • Special Guardianship Guidance 2016 • Family and Friend Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities
Policy Aims	<p>The aim of this policy is to make clear that children and young people who are unable to live with their parents should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare, whether or not they are looked after children in accordance with the Children Act 1989. It sets out what Local Authorities should do to deliver effective services to children and young people who are living with family members or friends in any of the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In an informal arrangement with a close relative. • As part of a private fostering arrangement. • As a looked after child placed with foster carers. • Through a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order, or • Through arrangements which may lead to an Adoption Order.

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Introduction

This policy outlines the different types of arrangements that lead to children being cared for by people from within their wider family and friendship network and the role of the Local Authority in these arrangements. It highlights the key principles underpinning the policy, the assessment, planning and decision-making process and the support services that should be made available for children and their carers. In this context, “family and friends” carers are sometimes referred to as “connected people” who provide “kinship care”, although in practice these terms are often interchangeable.

a. Values and Principles: Harrow is committed to

- Enabling children to remain within the care of their kinship network unless this is not consistent with their welfare.
- Promoting children's permanent care in their kinship network.
- Ensuring that assessment of support for all types of kinship care is based on the needs of the child.

b. Definition of Kinship Care

Kinship Care is when a child or young person is living with a family member, friend or a person of significance to them for a short, long or permanent period of time.

This document refers to Connected Person fostering arrangements, Special Guardianship and Child Arrangement Order (historically known as Residence Order) arrangements, and informal kinship arrangements. Although Private Fostering is considered to be a kinship arrangement please refer to the specific guidance and regulations governing Private Fostering arrangements.

Kinship Care can be separated into 3 main categories for the purpose of Local Authority involvement.

- 1) Connected Persons Foster Care: for children/young people who are “Looked After Children”. Refer to sections 20, 38 or 31 of the Children Act 1989

The Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services defines a connected person as “a relative (defined as section 105 of the 1989 Act as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step parent), friend of or other person connected with the looked after child.”

- 2) Private Fostering- children/young people who are not “Looked After Children” but living with kinship carers who are not relatives as defined by the CA 1989. This is a private arrangement between the Private Foster carer and parent/person who has parental responsibility.

- 3) Private kinship arrangement- for children/young people who are residing with a relative (as defined by the Children Act 1989) and are not “Looked After Children”. This type of arrangement can include informal kinship arrangements, Testamentary Guardianship, Child Arrangement Orders and Special Guardianship.

c. Legal framework

Harrow is committed to informing kinship carers of the different options available to them should they be, or are considering, caring for a child with whom they have a connection. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that members of the public have the necessary information to make informed choices about the most appropriate route for them to follow. Information should be provided about the meaning and implications of different legal situations, the rights of carers and of the children’s parents, and the nature of decisions which kinship carers will be able to make in relation to the child.

Please refer to **Appendix B-** which summarises the legal framework in respect of the different avenues which may apply when caring for somebody else’s child and the entitlement to support services relating to these.

d. Family Group Conference Meetings

A family group conference (FGC) is a decision making and planning forum in which the wider family group makes plans and decisions for children and young people. The aim of the FGC is to explore how the family can address the identified concerns for the child to offer support and / or care to safeguard and promote the child’s welfare. The child is directly involved in the process, and the family plan that is devised must take account of any stipulations made by the referring agency (typically the Local Authority) for it to be agreed.

Every family is unique, with its own culture, personalities, inter-personal dynamics and history. All families come up against problems from time to time. Some family difficulties involving children can be sorted out relatively easily with help from relatives and friends; and some require additional support from statutory and voluntary sector groups, services and organisations. FGC’s are a way of enabling families to work together to make the best plan possible for their children taking account of any identified child welfare concerns.

The primary decision makers at an FGC are the family members rather than the professionals. It is here that the mother, father and other family members get together with the child or young person to talk, make plans and decide how to resolve the situation. FGC’s were originally developed in New Zealand where they are recognised in law as being the key process by which family groups make informed and responsible decisions, recommendations and plans for their children and young people. Crucially, the FGC aims to empower families, within the State’s systems for decision making and planning with a view to:

- Making sure that the child or young person will live in a safe environment and be allowed to develop as an individual;
- Providing an opportunity for the family to develop solutions to their current problems, drawing on their knowledge and experience to decide what is best for the child or young person; and
- Encourage the child or young person to take part in the decisions that directly affect them.

FGC's are now being used in England by many local authorities and partner agencies to address a range of child welfare issues including:

- Safeguarding children at risk of significant harm;
- Permanence planning when a child cannot live at home or leaves care; and
- In the context of Youth offending, anti-social behaviour and truanting.

The detail and support around this can be obtained from the Family Group Conference Coordinator.

Harrow Local Authority fully supports the use of Family Group Conference (FGC) to ensure that family and friends are explored and involved in the care plans for children.

Within Harrow, the allocated child social worker with the FGC co-ordinator will arrange and co-ordinate FGC where there is a clear risk of family breakdown and/or children may already be in care.

Social workers from the Permanency Team are able to attend FGC's when requested in order to assist in explaining assessment processes, permanence options, and support available to the child's friend and family network.

There may be occasions when a FGC is not appropriate, in these circumstances Harrow will work with the family to establish a way in which they are able to contribute to the Local Authority's decision making.

(A) Assessment and Approval Process.

1. Initial Viability assessments.

Prior to a child/ren being placed with a kinship carer an initial viability assessment will be carried out by the child's social worker and where necessary a joint initial viability assessment will be undertaken with the child/ren social worker and a Permanency team social worker.

Harrow is currently using their own designed viability assessment tool for viability assessments of potential kinship carers. This template is based on the recommended viability template used in the "Initial Family and Friends Care Assessment: A good practice guide" published by the Family Rights Group in February 2017. This guide can be found at: <https://www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/family-and-friends-carers/assessment-tool>

This assessment is designed to assist social workers to establish the strengths, risks and support needs of prospective kinship placements. See below Assessment and Checks before Immediate Placement for further details of what information covered in the assessment.

If an emergency placement is required see below for Approval of Immediate Placements under Regulation 24 and Assessment and Checks before Immediate Placement.

2. Connected Person Foster Care.

Kinship carers are considered to be “Connected Person foster carers” when they are caring for a child who is “looked after” by the Local Authority. The below information applies to the assessment and approval of connected persons as foster carers whether on a planned or unplanned basis and is applicable when the following applies:

- A child who cannot remain within his or her birth family is assessed as needing to be Looked after by Harrow Council and is placed with relatives or friends.
- A child who is already living with a relative or friend and subsequently becomes Looked After by Harrow Council.
- A child who is already Looked After is placed with a relative or friend.

3. Approval of Immediate Placements under Regulation 24 (Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010).

Before any placement with a connected person who is not already approved as a foster carer, the approval from the Agency Decision Maker or the nominated officer is required. Such a placement can only be approved for a period of 16 weeks from the date of placement after which time the case needs to be presented to Harrow’s Fostering and Adoption Panel. An extension of up to 8 weeks can be made in exceptional circumstances.

4. Assessment and Checks before Immediate Placement.

In the event that a child is moved to a connected person in an emergency under the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010, an (initial viability) assessment is required to be carried out in order for the connected person to be given temporary approval while the full Connected Person fostering assessment is carried out.

The Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Family and Friends (Kinship) Foster Care states that the Local Authority must ascertain as much of this information as is possible in the circumstances. Where a child is placed with a connected person who is to be temporarily approved, every effort has to be made to maximise the level and quality of information that will be used to decide whether the connected person should be temporarily approved. In particular, the information should focus on:

- An assessment of the quality of the existing relationship between the child and the connected person;
- The child's wishes and feelings about the placement;
- A visit to the connected person's home by the social worker, which should confirm that the physical environment and space available is suitable for the particular child/ren;
- Whether the connected person would require any additional resources in order to meet the particular needs of the child;
- The quality of the relationships between the members of the household, including children and young people, and their views about the proposed caring arrangement, impact of the proposed caring arrangement on other children and young people in the household, based on information about their history and current lifestyle;
- The connected person must be interviewed to consider their ability to provide safe and appropriate care, to promote contact to birth family, to work with the Care Plan and to ensure they understand that should the placement continue, they will need to be fully assessed as foster carer's;
- The accommodation, including sleeping arrangements, must be inspected;
- Information must be obtained about other persons in the household;
- The proposed carer and all members of the household aged 18 and above must give written consent to Police, DBS and other relevant checks;
- PNC and Child Protection checks must be carried out;
- Local Authority Checks must be carried out for current and any previous addresses the applicant/s has lived in for the past 10 years.
- The child's social worker must arrange for police checks on the carers and all household members over the age of 18 prior to a child coming into placement;
- The wishes of those with parental responsibility for the child must also be ascertained.

5. Interim Approval of Placements.

Prior to any placement with a non-approved connected person, the child's social worker must have the approval from the Agency Decision Maker or the nominated officer who is the Head of Service for Quality Assurance. Approval can only be provided with the information from the Viability Assessment template (*Appendix B*).

Interim fostering approval can be provided to a connected person for a period of up to 16 weeks, during which time a full short term Connected Person fostering assessment should be completed by the Permanency Team, and the carer/s should be formally approved via the Fostering and Permanency Panel process within this timeframe.

In the event that the connected person is not approved as a foster carer within the 16 weeks, then in exceptional circumstances an extension for a further 8 weeks can be requested (Regulation 25). This needs to be made in writing by the 14th week of the placement by the Permanency team social worker to the Agency Decision Maker or nominated officer.

6. Connected Person Fostering Assessment.

Once a referral is received for a Connected Person fostering assessment, the assessment will be booked into the Fostering and Permanency Panel in line with the 16 week timeframe. It is the responsibility of the allocated assessing social worker to discuss any need for extending this timeframe with their manager and also the child's social worker. The following information should be presented to the Fostering and Permanency Panel:

Assessing Social Worker must complete:

A report summarising the prospective carers circumstances, highlighting any issues or concerns that have arisen during these enquiries, a full chronology, an analysis of the implications for the placement and should conclude with an analysis of the risks and benefits of the proposed care arrangements, including what actions need to be taken to minimise any identified risks.

Assessing Social Worker submits the following documents with their assessment report:-

- Feedback of any medical reports (applicants only);
- Details of enhanced DBS checks for all household members over 18;
- Details of Local Authority and agency checks;
- Record of interviews with referees;
- Record of interviews with adult children and ex-partners;
- Health and safety report, including any pet questionnaires;
- Safe caring report.

Child's Social Worker must complete:

- Child profile on the child

The child's social worker and assessing social worker must both attend the Panel meeting when the report is considered.

Panel will be requested to consider either short term or long term approval of the carers at this time. The Panel's recommendation will be presented to the Agency Decision Maker for a decision to be made.

The **Agency Decision Maker** will notify the carers in writing of the decision, and the terms of their approval within 7 working days. Verbal feedback will be given to the applicants by

their assessing social worker or the Team Manager within 48 hours of a decision being ratified.

7. Action required by the Child's Social Worker and Assessing Social Worker immediately following the Child's Placement

Immediately following the child's placement, the child's social worker must:

- Provide the carers with the following documents relating to the child:
Copy of child and young person's care plan.
Copy of Initial Assessment and Core Assessment.
Details of out of hours contacts, e.g. EDT.
- Record the details of the child's admission to Local Authority care on Mosaic.
- Arrange a Placement Agreement Meeting.
- Visit the placement and see the child weekly for the sixteen-week period from the immediate placement under Fostering Regulations.

The assessing social worker must:

- Arrange for the kinship allowance to be paid to the carers.
- Provide support to the placement.
- Complete the assessment, including referee interviews, birth children interviews, ex-partner references, health and safety and safe caring policies.
- Initiate all statutory checks including Local Authority checks, Medicals, NPS and DBS checks.

8. Court directed assessments of family and friends during care proceedings

It may be that the court requires an assessment of a prospective kinship carer to be undertaken prior to placement in which case they should be assessed and approved whilst the child is with birth parents or with Local Authority foster carers. Planned placements of children with relative or connected person should enable sufficient time for the full assessment of the proposed carers. The Assessment and Approvals of Foster Carers Procedure should be followed.

Where the relatives of children who are the subjects of court proceedings are to be assessed it is the responsibility of the child's social worker to make the necessary referral for an initial viability assessment. However, this assessment may be carried out jointly by the child social worker and a Permanency team social worker.

If the court directs a full assessment of identified family members a referral for a full assessment should be made to the Service Manager for Corporate Parenting and the Permanency Team Manager.

In all assessments involving a connected person, consideration should be given to specific practice issues, including working with black and minority ethnic families and grandparents. BAAF Practice Guide "Relative Benefits" offers useful guidance and practice principles.

(B) Kinship Support

1. Social Work /Practical Support

a. Looked after Children

Each connected person looking after a child/ren that is "looked after" by the Local Authority will have access to the child's social worker and also a Permanency assessing/supervising social worker. They will receive support via telephone and home visits.

Supervising social workers have a minimum statutory responsibility to visit Connected Person foster carers every 4-6 weeks once they are approved foster carers. During a Connected Person fostering assessment, visits will be more frequent due to the assessment process and safeguarding responsibilities. Connected Person foster carers can also expect that some of these statutory visits will be unannounced visits in line with regulations.

Children's social workers also have a minimum statutory responsibility to visit the child in placement every 4 weeks.

As approved foster carers for the Local Authority, Connected Person foster carers can expect to receive financial support via the kinship allowance, support groups and training. They will be expected to complete their Training, Support and Development Standards workbook within the first 18 months following approval.

All supervising social workers are qualified practitioners and registered with the Social Work England.

b. Post SGO/CAO support

Social work support will be dependent upon the needs of the child/ren and the support plan devised before the granting of the Court Order.

Children will continue to receive social work support from the Permanency Team following the granting of a Special Guardianship Order if they were looked after prior to the order being granted, in line with Special Guardianship Regulations and Guidance.

c. Private Fostering

A private fostering assessment will be carried out by the Local Authority once a private fostering referral has been received. Private Fostering arrangements will be monitored by a social worker from the Permanency Team with 4-6 weekly visits and an annual review of the placement.

d. Private Family Arrangements

Under these arrangements Local Authority involvement should be based on the needs of the child.

The Permanency Team is able to provide information and advice to all private kinship carers either in person or via telephone, or signpost them to a service that can assist.

2. Training and Support groups

Connect Person foster carers will be encouraged to attend training to enhance their skills and assist them to meet the needs of the child/ren they are caring for. This is a specific expectation of those carers who are approved as Harrow Connected Person Foster Carers.

Training is offered to Connected Person foster carers, Special Guardians and Child Arrangement Order holders via the Northwest London Fostering Consortium. Connected Person Foster Carers are also able to access relevant Harrow Fostering Training.

The Local Authority encourages kinship carers to meet with other kinship carers as an opportunity to network and seek support, and encourages all kinship care applicants to attend the Induction Training day during the process of assessment, or soon after approval.

Harrow are in the process of reinstating the support group for kinship and SGO carers several times a year. Details of this group can be provided by the Permanency Team.

3. Contact

Contact between young people and their families is supported by the Local Authority where it is seen to be in the best interests of the child/ren.

Contact is often a difficult area for kinship carers, and the Local Authority recognises that there may be situations when carers are not able to manage the contact between the child/ren in their care and their birth parents.

a. Looked After Children

In these situations, Harrow can assist the approved Connected Person foster carer by supervising contact and providing transport in situations where this is necessary. Contact support provided to Connected Person foster carers will be reviewed on a regular basis.

b. SGO/CAO

Where possible, any contact needs for children in SGO or CAO placements will be identified as part of the assessment and support plan prior to a Court Order being made. Financial commitments required of the Local Authority will require agreement by the Assistant Director, Corporate Parenting Service and will need to be presented at the Access to Resources Panel.

While some families require assistance with contact, other families will be able to manage contact between children and their parents and extended families with minimal intervention from social services and it is felt that children benefit from this type of arrangement where possible. It is an expectation that all carers will work with the Local Authority where possible towards a situation where they are able to manage contact for the child/ren in a safe and suitable environment.

4. Therapeutic / Behavioural Support

Children in kinship placements may have experienced abuse and neglect and consequently often have emotional and behavioural needs which require therapeutic intervention. The Local Authority is committed to making sure that each child has the appropriate emotional and psychological support that they need in order to assist them with any emotional or behavioural needs. The specifics of this support will be discussed as part of a social work assessment, LAC Care Plan or in a Special Guardianship Support Plan.

If the assessed support need requires a service which requires funding, agreement needs to be sought prior to the service commencing.

Support can include the following: -

- Advocacy service from Coram Voice Advocacy
- Input from the Clinical Psychology Service within Harrow Virtual School.
- Horizons/Anna Freud - Mental Health Early Intervention and Prevention Service.
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Training for carers.

Connected persons will be provided with a comprehensive list of supports available and a list of contacts. See **Appendix A** for a list of community organisations.

Local Organisations include:

Harrow Permanency Team: Harrow Council Hub, Forward Drive, Harrow, HA3 8NT

Phone: 020 8736 6971

Harrow Virtual School (educational support for CLA): Mellina Williamson-Taylor, Headteacher,
Harrow Virtual School for Children Looked After, Harrow Council Hub, Forward Drive, Harrow, HA3 8NT

Email: virtualschool@harrow.gov.uk, **Website:** www.harrow.gov.uk/virtualschool

Harrow CAMHS: 322-326 Northolt Road, Harrow, HA2 8EQ, 020 8869 4500

5. Financial Support

a. Kinship Allowances for Looked After Children:

Kinship carers who are caring for Looked After Children are considered to be (Connected Person) foster carers for the Local Authority and as such will receive a kinship allowance for each looked after child in their care.

b. CAO/SGO allowance:

Harrow approved Connected Person foster carers who go on to apply for Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Orders for the children in their care will continue to receive the kinship allowance until the court orders are granted.

All payments are means tested using the DFES model. A Financial assessment form will need to be completed and sent to the Head of Service Corporate Parenting.

Foster carers who take an Adoption order, Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement Order will also be subject to a means test assessment but may receive a full fostering allowance for two years post order if they meet the means test criteria.

Child Arrangement Order payments are discretionary.

All Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangement Order and Adoption Order allowances will be time limited and subject to regular review and annual financial assessments, which will require you to provide evidence of all financial income and outgoings.

Generally, the Local Authority will only consider financially assessing and paying a SGO/CAO allowance in situations where children were “looked after” by the Local Authority prior to the making of the court order. However, there may be some private application cases where the family’s circumstances are considered to be exceptional. These cases will be dealt with on a case by case basis, and if deemed exceptional a financial assessment can be completed as part of the support plan. In these situations, the applicants will be provided with the Local Authority’s rationale for why this is an exceptional case in writing.

All SGO/CAO allowances are reviewed annually.

All Special Guardians and Child Arrangement Order carers may also be eligible for Child Benefit and Child/Working Tax Credits. Prospective carers should speak to their assessing social worker for more information about benefits which may be applicable and speak to their local DWP office.

Local DWP office to Harrow:

Harrow Jobcentre Plus: Kings House, Clarendon Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 1YJ

Telephone: 0800 169 0190

To enquire about Child Tax Credit call 0845 3003900 for information.

To see what benefits you may be entitled:

[Benefits and financial support for families - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

If a carer is in receipt of state benefits, in order to avoid any unintended breach of the law related to benefits, please be aware that Special Guardianship Allowances may be classed as income and should be declared to your local benefit office. Please refer to www.direct.gov.uk.

- c. **Private Fostering:** Financial support may be offered under Section 17 of the Children's Act and is considered on a case by case basis.
- d. **Private Family Arrangements:** Financial support may be offered under Section 17 of the Children's Act in exceptional circumstances and this is considered on a case by case basis.

Advice on financial support to kinship carers caring for children under private family arrangements/private fostering arrangements can also be sought from a Local DWP office and the Family Rights Group, please refer to appendix A for details of national organisations.

6. Accommodation

Kinship placements must comfortably accommodate all who live there and are expected to be warm, adequately furnished and decorated, and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene. The home and immediate environment must be free of avoidable hazards that might expose a child to risk of injury or harm and contain safety barriers and equipment appropriate to the child's age, development and level of ability.

The Initial Viability Assessment must clearly state the appropriate sleeping arrangement for each child. Each child must have his or her own bed and accommodation arrangements must reflect the child's assessed need for privacy and space or for any specific need resulting from a disability (please refer to North West London Fostering Consortium

Guidance for working with Kinship Foster Carers and Initial Family and Friends Care Assessment: A good practice guide).

[Initial Family and Friends Care Assessment: A good practice guide - Family Rights Group \(frg.org.uk\)](http://frg.org.uk)

If a child is required to share a bedroom with other young people/carers, it is imperative that the child's views are sought prior to the placement being made if they are of an age and ability to consult.

It is acknowledged by the Local Authority that space is an issue for many connected person carers whether they are foster carers for the Local Authority, or they have entered into a private kinship arrangement.

The Local Authority is unable to support kinship arrangements by providing financial support for loft conversions, extensions or building works. The only possible exception to this may be placements for children who have a complex disability that requires this type of support or modification.

For carers living in social housing, the Local Authority is able to assist carers with support letters, assistance with meetings with housing officers and possible housing nomination (this is subject to the Local Authority's social care quota).

For approved Harrow Connected Person foster carers living in privately rented accommodation the Local Authority may be able to support with rental deposits and time limited rent "top ups" in order to obtain housing which will meet the needs of their own family including the Looked After Child/ren. Carers would be required to manage the rent on their own in these circumstances.

7. Child Care / Nursery Provision

Harrow believes that looked after children benefit from being able to grow up in families with good role models in relation to work, and benefit from living in families who are able to provide for them financially, and demonstrate a willingness and desire to work. It is acknowledged that prospective kinship carers do not come to the caring task because they have made a conscious decision or career choice to foster, and therefore this Local Authority understands that there is a need to support kinship carers if and when they are working.

This needs to be balanced with the need for looked after children and children in private kinship placements to have stable and consistent care, with adults that they can develop good, secure attachments.

We would generally not support a young child being cared for within formal childcare provision between the hours of 8am-6pm, 5 days a week.

The Local Authority can support kinship foster carers with applications for social care nursery places in Harrow or reasonable financial requests for childcare provision.

For Special Guardians and Child Arrangement Order carers, funding for nursery provision will be considered within their support plan, or prior to any Court Orders being granted.

Where there is one carer at home full time with the child, there will be no funding agreed for nursery provision.

Carers should be aware that for 2, 3 and 4 year olds, most London Local Authorities provide a certain number of free hours of nursery time and this will be factored in when determining the level of support the Local Authority may provide.

After School Club

There may also be a need for carers to use before and after school provisions for childcare purposes. Carers will generally be asked to pay for these activities out of the kinship allowance, SGO allowance or CAO allowance paid to them by the Local Authority.

8. Loss of Earnings / Income

In exceptional circumstances some children will require the prospective carer to consider time off from work in order to settle the child/ren into a new placement and home. If this is the case, the Local Authority will consider requests to compensate carers for loss of earnings or income. These requests will be considered when the time off is specifically for settling children into a permanent placement and will be for a time limited period, not exceeding a period of 1 month.

9. Vehicles and Transport

The Local Authority does not provide vehicles for foster carers, Special Guardians or Child Arrangement Order carers.

10. Education and Health Support

a. Looked After Children

Children in Connected Person fostering placements are able to access specific support offered to Looked after Children for education and health.

Harrow has a Virtual School who is responsible for supporting all CLA with their academic progression and identifying educational provision.

Harrow also offers specific health support for children who are looked after, and our CLA nurses.

Carers should speak to their assessing or supervising social workers if they would like support with these areas.

b. Post SGO / CAO

Children in SGO or CAO arrangements should receive education and health support from their schools and local health provisions. If carers are having difficulty in accessing support in these areas, Harrow Social Care is available to advocate and support families to be able to access the universal community supports which should be available to them. Please contact the Permanency Team for this support/information.

Special Guardians and Child Arrangement Order carers should also be aware that children in their care may very well be entitled to additional funding via a Pupil Premium (for educational purposes). If you think that the child that you are caring requires additional support which could be funded via the Pupil Premium, please speak to the child's school in the first instance or if the child is looked after contact the Virtual Head teacher for Children Looked After.

11. Legal Costs

Before agreement is given to provide financial support for legal purposes, carers are requested to establish whether they are eligible for legal aid through their solicitors. Social workers can provide carers with details of appropriate child care solicitors/firms on request.

Looked After Children:

Harrow will assist carers with legal costs associated with proceedings when they are applying for either Child Arrangement Orders or Special Guardianship Orders for the looked after child in their care and the Local Authority is in support of this application.

Legal costs can be provided up to an amount of £500 (inclusive of VAT). For applications being made in relation to children who are currently looked after, agreement for legal funding is given by the Service Manager and Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting Services.

For those (potential) carers who are being assessed within care proceedings, and the recommended outcome is that the child/ren will be placed permanently with these carers, Harrow is able to fund a one off legal consultation prior to the conclusion of the proceedings. This funding should not exceed £500.00 (inclusive of VAT) for one consultation. It is recommended that these (potential) carers have their one off consultation once a draft support plan is made available to them.

Private kinship arrangements/SGO/CAO:

For carers who are caring for children in a private kinship arrangement who wish to apply for either Special Guardianship or Residency, support for financial assistance will need to be arranged and agreed by the relevant Assistant Director via section 17 financial support.

12. Overseas Kinship Placements

It is acknowledged that kinship placements outside the UK may have specific and unique needs which need consideration as part of a kinship support plan or a SGO/CAO support plan for Harrow looked after children.

Each of these cases should be considered in light of this policy, but also with consideration to the specific needs of the children in the context of their proposed permanent placement.

Areas of additional support may include:

1. Education - carers may require support with school fees, uniforms, books.
2. Health - there may be situations where carers have to purchase private health insurance/cover due to the health system in their specific country.
3. Contact with birth parents and siblings in the UK- this is often an additional cost associated with placing children outside of the UK. It is important to consider these costs as part of the support plan prior to placement being finalised. Birth parents should also be included in these discussions so that all parties are clear about the support being offered and the expectations of the Local Authority in relation to this contact.
4. Legal advice and costs for prospective carers in relation to how the legalities of the placement will translate in their country of origin.

Living costs in the particular country of placement should also be taken into account when planning additional support. It is expected that any allowance provided to the carers will be calculated in the context of that specific country's cost of living index and used to contribute to the additional expenses listed above.

There may also be situations when the prospective carers require support from the Local Authority prior to the children being placed in order to attend court hearings, establish contact with the children in the UK etc. In these situations, it is not the responsibility of the Local Authority to assist the prospective carers with their passport, visa and immigration needs in respect of coming to the UK.

The Local Authority will assist the prospective carers with flights, accommodation and maintenance/travel allowance while they are in the UK for the purposes of the proposed placement. This will be for a time limited period.

There may also be occasions where it is felt that a social worker should accompany the carer and child on their journey home. This will be considered on a case by case basis and will be specifically related to the social workers assessment and the specific needs of the child/ren.

Contact with the local social services in the carer's country of origin should be made as soon as possible and should be an essential element of the kinship assessment

undertaken. It is imperative to identify the scope of support on offer by the carer's local services, how these services work, and how the carer is to access them if required. This information should be built into the support plan for the identified placement. Where local services are willing to work collaboratively with the assessing social worker, this should be encouraged due to local knowledge and also the opportunity for carers to build a local support system.

Situations Where These Procedures do not apply

This Procedure does not apply when child goes to live with a close relative, and this is a **Private Family Arrangement** between the parent with Parental Responsibility and the relative. In these situations, it is not necessary for Harrow Council to become involved unless there are concerns for the child's welfare or the family request help.

These procedures do not apply where a child goes to live with a less immediate relative or friend and this is a **Private Fostering arrangement** between the parent with Parental responsibility and the carer. If this placement continues for 28 days or more the situation must be assessed under the Private Fostering Regulations.

Please refer to the Private Fostering Procedure Tri-x and Appendix B below for options of caring for someone else's child.

Complaints/compliments

We always try to provide excellent services. But things sometimes go wrong and, when they do, we want to know so that we can put things right, and learn from our mistakes.

Before making your complaint please read the information in Appendix C as it gives you contact details, advice on what you can expect, what we need to know from you and other information that you may find useful.

APPENDICES

Appendix A –List of National Organisations.

Appendix B - Friend and Family Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities.

Appendix C –Complaints information

Appendix: A

NATIONAL And LOCAL USEFUL ORGANISATIONS AND INFORMATION FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARERS

Action for Prisoners' Families- www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk

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

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

Tel: 020 8812 3600

E-mail: info@actionpf.org.uk

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

Addaction- www.addaction.org.uk

Offers a range of support developed for families and carers affected by substance misuse.

Address: 67-69 Cowcross Street London EC1M 6PU

Tel. 020 7251 5860

Email: info@addaction.org.uk

Adfam- www.adfam.org.uk

Works with families affected by drugs and alcohol and supports carers of children whose parents have drug and alcohol problems. Address: 25 Corsham Street, London N1 6DR

Tel: 020 7553 7640

Email: admin@adfam.org.uk

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)- www.ace-ed.org.uk

Offers free independent advice and information for parents and carers on a range of state education and schooling issues, including admissions, exclusion, attendance, special educational needs and bullying.

Address: 1c Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2DQ

General advice line: 0808 800 5793

Exclusion advice line: 0808 800 0327

Exclusion information line: 020 7704 9822 (24hr answer phone)

BeGrand.net- www.begrand.net

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

Helpline: 0845 434 6835

Children's Legal Centre- www.childrenslegalcentre.com

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

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

Tel: 01206 877 910

E-mail: clc@essex.ac.uk

Child Law Advice Line: 0808 802 0008

Community Legal Advice - Education: 0845 345 4345

Citizens Advice Bureaux- www.citizensadvice.org.uk

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

Compass Harrow

If you are experiencing difficulties associated with your own or another person's drug or alcohol use, Compass Harrow offers a range of free, professional support services to help you tackle these tough situations.

Address: The Twenty One Building, Ground Floor, 21 Pinner Road, Harrow, London HA1 4ES

Tel: 020 8861 2787

Fax: 020 8863 3139 **Mobile:**
07860 438 473

Email: adminharrow@compass-uk.org

CoramBAAF

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

Address: Coram Campus, 41 Brunswick Square, London, WC1N

1AZ **Tel:** 020 7520 0300

E-mail: advice@corambaaf.org.uk

Coram Voice Advocacy

Web: www.coramvoice.org.uk

Email: info@coramvoice.org.uk

Tel: 0808 800 5792

Department for Education- www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families Lists details of telephone help lines and online services to provide information, advice and support on a range of issues that parents and families may face in bringing up children and young people.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Address:

44 Bessborough Road, Harrow, HA1 3DJ.

Tel: 0300 303 2868.

Email: harrow@wdp.org.uk.

Family Fund Trust- www.familyfund.org.uk

Helps families with severely disabled or seriously ill children to have choices and the opportunity to enjoy ordinary life. Gives grants for things that make life easier and more enjoyable for the disabled child and their family.

Address: 4 Alpha Court Monks Cross Drive York YO32

9WN Tel: 0845 130 4542

Email: info@familyfund.org.uk

Family Rights Group (FRG)- www.frg.org.uk

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

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

Tel: 020 7923 2628

Advice line: 0800 801 0366

Email: advice@frg.org.uk

The Fostering Network- www.fostering.net

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

Address: 87 Blackfriars Road London SE1

8HA Email: info@fostering.net

Tel: 020 7620 6400 Fosterline:

0800 040 7675 Email:

fosterline@fostering.net

The Grandparents' Association- www.grandparents-association.org.uk

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

Address: Moot House The Stow Harlow Essex CM20

3AG Tel: 01279 428040

Helpline: 0845 434 9585

Welfare benefits advice and information: 0844 357 1033

Email: info@grandparents-association.org.uk

Grandparents Plus

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

Address: Grandparents Plus 18 Victoria Park Square Bethnal Green London E2

9PF

Tel: 020 8981 8001

Email: info@grandparentsplus.org.uk

Harrow Horizons/Anna Freud - Mental Health Early Intervention and Prevention Service

Email: harrowhorizons@annafreud.org

Phone: 0300 030 2313.

HOPE Harrow Offering Parents Encouragement

Harrow Offering Parents Encouragement (Harrow) believes that every family is unique and special. Every family has the right to determine and achieve goals in life.

Address: 64 Pinner Road, Harrow HA1 4HZ. Telephone: 020 8863 7319

Email: info@hopeharrow.org.uk

Mentor UK- www.mentoruk.org.uk

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

Address: Fourth Floor 74 Great Eastern Street London EC2A

3JG Tel: 020 7739 8494

Email: admin@mentoruk.org

Family Mediation Helpline- www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk

Provides information and advice about family mediation services and eligibility for public funding. Telephone: 08456 026627

National Family Mediation (NFM)- www.nfm.org.uk

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

Address: 4 Barnfield Hill, Exeter EX1 1SR.

Telephone: 0300 4000 636

Email: general@nfm.org.uk

Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group- www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk

Operates helpline and provides a variety of services to support anyone who has a link with someone in prison, prisoners and other agencies.

Address: Valentine House 1079 Rochdale Road Blackley Manchester M9

8AJ Tel: 0161 702 1000

Offenders' MFamilies

Helpline Tel: 0808 808 2003

Email: info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.co.uk

Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)- www.prisonadvice.org.uk

Provides practical and emotional support to prisoners and to their children and families. The Kinship Care Support Service provides support and advice to family members and friends who care for children whose parents are in HMP Holloway.

Address: Park Place 12 Lawn Lane Vauxhall London SW8 UD

Telephone: 020 77359535 55

Parents Against Drug Abuse (PADA)- www.pada.org.uk

Delivers support and services to the families of substance users, including a national helpline. Address: The Foundry Marcus Street Birkenhead CH41 1EU.

Telephone: 0151 649 1580

National Families Helpline: 08457 023867

Parentline Plus- www.familylives.org.uk

Provides help and support in all aspects of family life, including information, an online chat facility and a 24-hour helpline.

Address: CAN Mezzanine 49-51 East Road London N1 6AH

Telephone: 020 7553 3080

24hr Advice line: 0808 800 2222

Email: parentsupport@familylives.org.uk

TalktoFrank- www.talktofrank.com

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

24-hour advice line: 0800 77 66 00; Text: 82111

Email: frank@talktofrank.com

Voice- www.voiceyp.org

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

Address: 320 City Road London EC1V 2NZ

Telephone: 020 7833 5792

Young person's advice line: 0808 800 5792

Email: info@voiceyp.org

WISH Centre

The WISH Centre is a vibrant and proactive community based model that provides self harm, sexual and domestic violence support and recovery for young people. We do this through a mix of intensive longer term psychotherapy, one-to-one support, peer support group work and early intervention and prevention projects and campaigns, out of hours text based and online support, and capacity building and training of professionals. The WISH Centre is a free for young people.

Address: The WISH Centre Harrow, Unit A4, Livingstone Court, 55

Peel Road, Wealdstone, HA3 7QT

Tel: 020 8416 7277

Email: info@thewishcentre.org.uk

Young Minds- www.youngminds.org.uk

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

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

Telephone: 020 7336 8445

Appendix B

Please see the below link to the Department for Education's Friend and Family Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities. Please refer to **Annex A** of this document for information on different options when caring for someone else's child.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130318181524/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-00025-2011>

Appendix C

Please see the Harrow Council's Complaints' leaflet.