

Placements with Family or Friend Carers

SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

This procedure applies to any placement of a **Looked After** Child with family and friend carers, who are not already approved as a foster carer at the time of the placement. This could include following a court remanding a child to local authority accommodation - see **Remands to Local Authority Accommodation or to Youth Detention Accommodation**.

The procedure sets out the checks that need to be made before such a placement can be made.

It also covers the procedure to be followed to carry out the required assessment and approval of the family or friend carers as foster carers if the placement is to last longer than 16 weeks.

A family or friend carer is defined as "A relative, friend or other person connected with a child". The latter is someone who would not fit the term 'relative or friend', but who has a pre-existing relationship with the child. It could be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as (for example) a child-minder, a teacher or a youth worker."

Relative is defined as "a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent."

NOTE

Where any placement of a Looked After Child with a family or friend carer is proposed for a continuous period of sixteen weeks or more, in addition to the assessment and checks set out in **Section 1, Assessment and Checks before Placement**, the relative or friend will have to be assessed as a foster carer and the child's social worker should start this process as soon as practicable after the placement is made - see **Section 5, Assessment of Family and Friend Carers as Foster Carers**.

AMENDMENT

This chapter was updated in June 2013 to reflect changes in terminology and job titles. This chapters was previously called Placements with Connected Persons.

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1. Assessment and Checks before Placement

Before any placement with a family or friend carer is made, the child's social worker must assess its suitability including the level of support likely to be required and the effect of the proposed placement upon the child's contact with parents, siblings and other relatives and friends who are significant to the child.

Matters to be taken into account when assessing the suitability of a family or friend Carer to care for the child are:

- a. The nature and quality of any existing relationship with the child;
- b. Their capacity to care for children and, in particular in relation to the child (or children) concerned, to provide for his/her physical needs and appropriate medical and dental care; to protect the child adequately from harm or danger including from any person who presents a risk of harm to the child; to ensure that the accommodation and home environment is suitable; in relation to the child's age and developmental stage, to promote his/her learning and development; to provide a stable family environment which will promote secure attachments for the child, including promoting positive contact with parents and other family and friend persons, unless this is not consistent with the child's welfare;
- c. State of health (physical, emotional and mental), and medical history including current or past issues of domestic violence, substance misuse or mental health problems;
- d. Family relationships and the composition of the household, including particulars of all other members of the household, their age and the nature of any relationship with the family and friend carer and each other including any sexual relationship; any relationship with the parents; any relationship between the child and other members of the household; other adults (not members of the household) likely to have regular contact with the child; any current or previous domestic violence between members of the household, including the family or friend carer;
- e. Their family history, including their childhood and upbringing, and the strengths and difficulties of their parents or others who cared for them; their relationship with parents and siblings and each other; educational achievement and any learning difficulty/disability; chronology of significant life events; particulars of other relatives and their relationships with the child and the family or friend carer;
- f. Any criminal offences;
- g. Past and present employment and other sources of income;
- h. Nature of the neighbourhood and resources available in the community to support the child and the family or friend carer.

The child's wishes and feelings (subject to age and understanding) must be ascertained and recorded and wherever possible, an opportunity must be provided for the child to visit the home before the decision.

The views of parents/ those with Parental Responsibility must also be obtained.

In making such an assessment of suitability as set out above:

- The proposed carer must be interviewed;
- The accommodation must be inspected; and
- Information must be obtained about other persons in the household;
- The proposed carer and all members of the household aged 16 and above must be checked with the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team, the family's GP and Children and Young People's Services records.

The social worker must arrange for the carers to complete applications for **Disclosure and Barring Service** checks and arrange for them to be sent as soon as practicable for checks to be made.

The proposed carer should be given information about the assessment process which will follow if the placement is to last longer than 16 weeks, including the need for additional checks and other agency enquiries on all members of the household aged 16 and over, as well as interviews with referees, adult children and ex-partners, which will be part of any such fostering assessment.

Where the social worker is in any doubt as to the suitability of the placement, s/he should consult the Fostering Service for advice before the placement is agreed.

The placement may only continue after sixteen weeks if the relative or friend is approved as a family or friend carer - see **Section 5, Assessment of Family and Friend Carers as Foster Carers**.

2. Relevant Plans

The child's placement with a relative or friend must be part of the **Care Plan**, which should be drawn up before the placement begins or, in exceptional circumstances, within a maximum of ten working days.

For the required documentation, see **Decision to Look After, Care and Permanence Planning Procedure**.

3. Approval of Placements

Before any placement with a family or friend carer who is not already approved as a foster carer is made, the approval of the Agency Decision Maker is required.

Any such approval can only be given for 16 weeks from the date of the placement unless there are exceptional circumstances and the Agency Decision Maker grants an extension of up to 8 weeks.

Where the placement appears suitable and is approved by the Agency Decision Maker the Carers must be provided with the Care Plan or Pathway Plan, Sec 20 Agreement or Court Order, Delegated Authority Agreement, and record of the 72 Hour Placement Meeting. The prospective carers need to be made aware that any approval is only temporary and does not imply continued approval beyond the 16 (sixteen) weeks.

The placement may only continue after sixteen weeks if the carer is approved as a foster carer - see [Section 5, Approval of a Family and Friend Carers as Foster Carers](#) - or in exceptional circumstances where the temporary approval is extended, it may continue for a total of 24 weeks.

This temporary approval can be extended for a further period of up to 8 weeks with the approval of the Agency Decision Maker (if it is likely to expire before the assessment is completed) or until the outcome of the Independent Review (if the outcome of the assessment is that the family or friend carer is not approved and seeks a review of the decision - see [Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers Procedure](#)).

Before deciding whether to extend the approval, the Local Authority must consider if the placement is still the most appropriate placement available, and it must be considered by the Fostering Panel before the above approval is given.

4. Notification of Placements

In order to ensure the appropriate arrangements to pay carers are in place, the child's social worker must notify the [PAMS \(Placements Assessment Monitoring Service\)](#) of all new family or friend carers placements within one working day, by e-mailing the following information:

- The child's name;
- The date of the placement;
- Reason for placement (e.g. risk of significant harm, breakdown of previous placement);
- The child's legal status;
- Name and address of new carer.

In addition, the child's social worker must provide the necessary information to the relevant administrative staff so that **Azeus** can be updated.

The PAMS (Placements Assessment Monitoring Service) will enter the placement details, CLA episode and carer fees onto **Azeus**.

Notification of the placement must also be sent to all those consulted and involved in the decision-making process. The notification must advise of the placement decision, the name and address of the

new carers, details relating to the child's contact with parents and the arrangements related to the care and welfare of the child.

If the placement is outside the borough, the Safeguarding Business Hub will notify the local authority for the area where the child is placed.

The social worker must also ensure that the child is registered with a GP, Dentist and Optician; and that a **Health Care Assessment** takes place.

5. Assessment of Family and Friend Carers as Foster Carers

A Viability Assessment must be completed and approved by the Agency Decision Maker within 72 hours of the placement being made or in advance of the child being placed. If the family or friend carers are given temporary approval by the Agency Decision Maker, a referral needs to be sent to the Carer Recruitment Manager, who will make arrangements for a full fostering assessment to be undertaken. The Carer Recruitment Manager will inform the fostering Panel Administrator of the assessment timescale. As for all foster carers, the assessment will proceed on the basis of the Newham Carer assessment Form. It is desirable for the carers to attend Preparation Groups prior to their approval; the Carer Recruitment Manager will have details of these groups. The assessing social worker should also, as part of the assessment interview the child's parents and other significant family members, as well as reading the child's file and discussing the case with the child's social worker. During the assessment the relationship between the kinship carers and the child's parents should be explored. When the assessment is presented to the Fostering Panel, a report in relation to the child should also be presented by the child's social worker. Otherwise, the procedure for approving the assessment via the Fostering Panel is the same as the procedure for the approval of all local authority approved foster carers. See **Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers Procedure**.

If consideration is being given to seeking a Child Arrangement Order or a Special Guardianship Order it is important that the Carer Recruitment Team is made aware of this at the earliest opportunity so assessments can be co-ordinated.

6. Support and Monitoring of Placement

The child's social worker must visit the child in the placement at least once each week during the first 4 weeks of the placement or until the first Looked After Review is held and thereafter at intervals of no more than 4 weeks during the period of the temporary approval.

In the second year of the placement and subsequent years, the child should be visited at least every six weeks and whenever reasonably requested by the child or the carer - see **Social Work Visits Procedure**.

Wherever possible, the child must be seen with the carer and alone. If this is not possible, a further visit must be made at short notice in order that the child can be seen alone and observed with the carer.

The social worker must ensure that Placement Plan Reviews are conducted as set out in [Placement Plan Reviews Procedure](#).

A supervising social worker will also be allocated to provide support and supervision to the family or friend carers. Supervising social workers will ensure 6 weekly visits to the foster carer and arrange the Annual Foster Carer Review.

7. Ending of Placements

If the family or friend carers are not given approval by the Agency Decision Maker following the viability assessment the child cannot be placed or must be moved as soon as arrangements can be made as this is then considered to be an unlawful placement.

If the viability assessment is approved but the Fostering Panel do not approve the carers, new placements need to be arranged. Carers have the opportunity to request an independent review of the fostering panel's decision and, in this circumstance, the child may remain in the placement pending the decision of the review.

The Commissioning and Brokerage Team must be notified within one working day if the placement ends. They will then update placement details and CLA episode on Azeus. The Safeguarding Business Hub will send out notice to the relevant local authority if the placement is outside of Newham. All those notified of the placement should be notified also when a placement is ended and the child's record must be updated.

End