

Family and Friends Options for Being Cared for Away from Home – Comparison of Issues

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Child arrangement order	Special guardianship order (SGO)	Adoption
Route into the caring arrangement	This is a private arrangement whereby the child is being cared for 28 days or more (or the intention is that the arrangement will last for 28 days or more) by anyone who does not have parental responsibility, and who is not a close relative. Relative means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (by full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or a step parent. The child is not a Child Looked After.	The relative has chosen to take on the care of the child but does not have parental responsibility, and the arrangement was not made by/or involved the Local Authority. The child is not a Child Looked After. Relative may perceive the parents to be unable to care for the child; or The parents may be dead or otherwise not available (e.g. in prison); or There may be an agreement between relatives due to difficult family circumstances.	The child has been placed with the relative or friend by the Local Authority, because the person who had been caring for the child was deemed not to be providing suitable care. The child is a Child Looked After and so the Local Authority must approve the relative or friend as a Local Authority foster carer. The child may be accommodated voluntarily with the agreement of the parents or may be subject to a Care Order.	The child is a Child Looked After being accommodated by the Local Authority under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 or because the child is subject to a Care Order; but has been placed with a foster carer by the Local Authority. (Alternatively, the Local Authority may choose to place a child into residential care where this is considered to best meet the child's needs).	The child may be at risk of becoming 'Looked After' and a friend or relative applies for an order, or The child may have been 'Looked After' and their foster carer or other relative/friend applies for an order. In either circumstance, application can be made without the support of the parents or the Local Authority. Relatives may apply for an order after the child has lived with them for one year; or There can be other reasons, e.g. after parents' death and in line with a prior agreement between the birth parents and the carer.	The child may be at risk of becoming 'Looked After' and a friend or relative applies for an order, or the child may have been 'Looked After' and their foster carer or other relative/friend applies for an order. In either circumstance, application can be made without the support of the parents or the Local Authority. Relatives may apply for an order after the child has lived with them for one year; or There can be other reasons, e.g. after parents' death and in line with a prior agreement between the birth parents and the carer.	Children Looked After: the Local Authority may decide that the child should be placed for Adoption. They can only do so with the consent of the birth parent or under a placement order made by a Court. The Agency Decision Maker must decide that Adoption is in the best interests of the child. An approved foster carer can apply for an Adoption Order after a year of caring for the child. Other informal carers could apply for an Adoption Order if the child has lived with them for a period of 3 years.
Parental responsibility (PR)	Remains with birth parents.	Remains with birth parents but the person who cares for the child may do what is reasonable to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.	Remains with birth parents if child accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. If the child is subject to a Care Order or Emergency Protection Order parents retain parental responsibility but the Local Authority will have overriding parental responsibility and determines the extent to which it may be exercised by others.	Remains with birth parents if child accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. If the child is subject to a Care Order or Emergency Protection Order parents retain parental responsibility but the Local Authority will have overriding parental responsibility and determines the extent to which it may be exercised by others.	Shared by parents and holder of Child Arrangement Order.	Parental responsibility shared with parents and anyone else with parental responsibility for the child. The special guardian has overriding parental responsibility.	A transfer to Adopters and parental responsibility is removed from birth parents.

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Approval basis	The arrangement is assessed by the Local Authority, but the carer is not 'approved' as a Local Authority foster carer. The arrangement may be prohibited if assessed by the Local Authority as unsuitable.	None.	Approved as Local Authority foster carers in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations. (If child is Looked After, carers must be approved as foster carers even if close relative.)	Approved as Local Authority foster carers in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations. (If child is Looked After, carers must be approved as foster carers even if close relative.)	Appointed by Court following application.	Appointed by Court, following application from the potential special guardian. Local Authority must assess the potential carers and prepare a report for the Court dealing with the suitability of the applicant to be a special guardian.	Adoption Agency assesses and approves prospective adopters, Court makes order regarding specific child. If the child is not Looked After then notice of intention to adopt must be given to the Local Authority who then carries out an assessment/report for the Court.
Duration	Subject to discretion of person with parental responsibility and readiness of private foster carer.	Subject to discretion of person with parental responsibility.	So long as placement remains in line with child's Care Plan, as determined by Local Authority.	So long as placement remains in line with child's Care Plan, as determined by Local Authority.	Age 18, unless varied or discharged by the Court before the child reaches 18 years.	Age 18, unless varied or discharged by the Court before the child reaches 18 years.	Permanent lifelong relationship.
Placement supervision	It is not a placement, but there are statutory visits to child by social worker (minimum 6 weekly in first year, then 12 weekly).	None.	Statutory visits to child by social worker and supervision of foster carers by supervising social worker.	Statutory visits to child by social worker and supervision of foster carers by supervising social worker.	None.	None.	When child is placed for Adoption by the Local Authority, the placement is supervised and there are statutory reviews. Once the Adoption Order is made – none.
Review of placement	It is not a placement, but the Local Authority may complete formal reviews in addition to ongoing assessment during visits.	None.	Statutory reviews of child's Care Plan (minimum 6 monthly) and annual reviews of Local Authority foster carers' approval.	Statutory reviews of child's Care Plan (minimum 6 monthly) and annual reviews of Local Authority foster carers' approval.	None.	None.	See above.
Support services	Provision of advice and support as determined necessary by the Local Authority, which may assess the child as a Child in Need, with a Child in Need Plan, and provide services/support for child/family under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.	No entitlement, but the Local Authority may assess the child as Child in Need, with a Child in Need Plan, and provide services/support for child/family under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.	Support to meet child's needs including Health Plan and Personal Education Plan. Training and practical support to foster carers in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards. Young person will be entitled to Leaving Care support services, unless they return to parents before the age of 16.	Support to meet child's needs including Health Plan and Personal Education Plan. Training and practical support to foster carers in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards. Young person will be entitled to Leaving Care support services, unless they return to parents before the age of 16.	No entitlement. (But Local Authority has discretion to provide services/support for child/family under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.)	If child was Looked After prior to making the SGO, Local Authority must assess for need for special guardianship support services. Local Authority has discretion whether to provide support. Young person may be entitled to Leaving Care support services if was a Child Looked After prior to making of the SGO.	Entitlement to assessment for Adoption support services, which may be provided at discretion of Local Authority.

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Financial support – entitlement	Can agree with parent to transfer Child Benefit. Financial responsibility to maintain the child remains with holders of parental responsibility.	Can agree with parent to transfer Child Benefit. Financial responsibility to maintain the child remains with holders of parental responsibility. Guardians Allowance (Government benefit) payable if both parents have died or the only surviving parent cannot be found.	Child Benefit not payable. Weekly allowance to meet the costs of caring for the child. This should meet at least the National Minimum rate set by DfE.	Child Benefit not payable. Weekly allowance to meet the costs of caring for the child. This should meet at least the National Minimum rate set by Department for Education (DfE).	Can claim Child Benefit if not being paid to parent.	Can claim Child Benefit.	Can claim Child Benefit once Adoption Order is made. Entitlement to assessment for financial support (part of Adoption support) if child Looked After prior to Order.
Financial support – discretionary	Local Authority has discretion to make one off or regular payments under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.	Local Authority has discretion to make one off or regular payments under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.	Foster carers will receive financial payments from Norfolk Fostering Service along with set fees in accordance with current policy.	Foster carers will receive financial payments from Norfolk Fostering Service along with set fees in accordance with current policy.	Local Authority has discretion to pay Child Arrangement Order Allowance – usually if child was previously fostered by the carers, or exceptionally if making Child Arrangement Order prevents child becoming Looked After. Any allowance is reviewed annually.	Entitled to an assessment for financial support under the Special Guardianship Regulations 2017 if child Looked After prior to Order, and meets the criteria in the regulations. Regular or one off payments. Any allowances are reviewed annually and are means tested.	Subject to assessment, one off payments or regular Adoption Allowance may be paid.