

Information for Families about Children Living with Family / Friends

Section 20 placements

If you agree that your child should be placed with family or friends under **section 20**, this is what it means:-

- The local authority will not have parental responsibility for your child. That means that you are still the person who makes decisions about what happens to your child.
- However, the local authority will be 'looking after' your child which means that the law states that they **must** do certain things to make sure your child is safe and well, including, for instance, doing checks on anyone that your child stays overnight with. This also means that the social worker must visit your child and hold regular meetings with you and other professionals including teachers and health workers to discuss how they are getting on. Some children do not like the arrangements that come with being 'looked after'.
- The arrangement is voluntary and you can change your mind at any time. You can also remove your child from the carer(s) if you want to.
- The carer(s) will have to be assessed by a social worker – this will involve asking questions about their physical and mental health, financial situation, personal relationships, school and work history in order to decide whether they are able to properly care for your child.
- The carer(s) will be given their own social worker who will visit them to talk about any support that they need while caring for the children.
- The carer(s) will be paid a weekly amount to help them to care for the children.

Private arrangements where the carer is a 'relative'

If you want to arrange for your child to be cared for by a 'relative' (which means a grandparent, stepparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt) but not under section 20, this will be considered a **private arrangement**. This means:-

- Your child will not be 'looked after' by the local authority so not all of the checks and enquiries will need to happen. The social worker will still have to visit your child, at least to start with, and there may well still be meetings if, for instance, your child is subject to a child protection plan.
- The local authority will still not have parental responsibility for your child – you will still be the person who makes decisions about what happens to your child.
- The arrangement is still voluntary and you can change your mind at any time.
- The social worker will visit the carer(s) to check that the children will be safe and well looked after but there will not need to be a detailed assessment of the carer(s).
- The carer(s) will not have their own social worker and will not receive payments from the local authority. It will be up to you to give the carer(s) money to help them to care for the children.

Private arrangements where the carer is not a 'relative'

If you want to arrange for your child to be cared for by a friend or a more distant relative, like a cousin for example, then this will be considered a **private fostering arrangement**. This means:-

- Your child will not be 'looked after' by the local authority but the social worker will still have to visit your child and there may well still be meetings if, for instance, your child is subject to a child protection plan.
- The local authority will still not have parental responsibility for your child – you will still be the person who makes decisions about what happens to your child.
- The arrangement is still voluntary and you can change your mind at any time.
- A social worker will visit your child regularly to make sure he/she is safe and being well looked after and to ask whether any support is needed.
- The carer(s) will not have their own social worker and will not receive payments from the local authority. It will be up to you to give the carer(s) money to help them to care for the children.