



Slough Children First Friends and Family Policy

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Policy Summary:

Slough Children First Friends and Family policy outlines to Kinship carers, children/young people, parents, and social workers, guidance on how Slough Children First will provide support to Kinship carers.

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1.Introduction

This policy outlines the principles and procedures for supporting friends and family members who provide kinship care for children. The goal is to ensure that children receive stable, loving, and supportive care from their relatives or close family friends. The Family and Friends Policy applies to all children living in kinship (family and friends) arrangements regardless of their legal status.

Kinship arrangements provide children with stability and allow them to remain within their extended family and help to reduce the trauma they experience. It promotes their identity and sense of belonging and allows children to continue with familiar people and routines.

This policy sets out Slough Children First approach towards promoting and supporting the needs of such children and covers the assessments which will be carried out to determine the services required and how such services will then be provided.

2.Values and Principles

Slough Children First will adhere to the key principles of the Children Act 1989 and all subsequent legislation, regulations and statutory guidance. Children's safety, welfare, best interests and views will always be at the Centre of the work we do.

It is a core principle that children should be cared for within their own family unless this is not consistent with their welfare. We will therefore work closely with parents to maintain children within their own families, and facilitate services to support any such arrangements, whenever this is consistent with the child's safety and well-being. This principle applies to all children in need, including those who are looked after by Slough Children First.

Where a child cannot live within his or her parent(s), whether temporarily or permanently the Local Authority will make strenuous efforts to identify potential carers with the child's network of family or friends or connected people who are able and willing to care for the child and provide them with a happy home life.

Children will not remain Looked After for longer than necessary, Parallel planning to consider who else they might live with until they grow up will be considered at the same time as parents are assessed and helped to make changes so their children can go home.

If connected people want to be considered as a potential long term family for a child then they should apply as early as possible and not delay things for the child by leaving it very late to apply if they are assessed as able to provide a safe and happy home for the child then they will be expected to apply for an order which will give them parental responsibility for the child.

3. Legal Framework

It is important to note that local authorities do not have a general duty to assess all arrangements where children are living with their wider family or friends' network rather than their parents, but it does have a duty where it appears that services may be necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a Child in Need.

The majority of family and friends' carers act informally, with the agreement of the parent, but there are a number of different legal options which family and friends' carers can consider to secure care arrangements formally. The advice of a social worker or a solicitor may be helpful when deciding which option is most applicable to your circumstances.

A child placed by Slough Children First with a Connected Carers will be a Looked After Child. A Looked After child can only be placed with a Connected person if that person(s) has been approved as a foster carer under the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 or granted temporary approval under the Care Planning and Case review (England) Regulations 2010.

4. Different Situations whereby Children may be Living with Family and Friends Carer

4.1 Informal Family and Friends Care arrangements

Where a child cannot be cared for within his or her immediate family, the family may make their own arrangements to care for the child within the family and friends' network as defined in the Children Act 1989. This is an informal family and friends arrangement.

The local authority does not have a duty to assess informal family and friends' arrangements unless it appears that the child may be a child in need and services may be required to safeguard and promote his/her welfare.

If this is the case a Children's Social Care Assessment should be undertaken to ascertain whether the informal family and friends' arrangements are appropriate to meet the needs of the child and whether support by the local authority under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 is required. If the person is not a close relative but in the wider network of family and friends and the arrangement lasts longer than 28 days, it becomes a private fostering arrangement.

4.2 Private Fostering arrangements

A privately fostered child is a child under 16 (or 18 if disabled) who is cared for by an adult who is not a parent or close relative, where the child is to be cared for in that home for 28 days or more. Close 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.' It does not include a child who is 'looked after' by a local authority. In a private fostering arrangement, the parent still holds parental

responsibility and agrees the decision-making arrangements with the private foster carer. Private foster care arrangements should be notified to the local authority in the area where the child and carer reside, who will then undertake a private fostering assessment.

Slough Children First will assess, support and review all private foster carers. If the child is also assessed as a child in need the local authority has a responsibility to provide services to meet the assessed needs of the child under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Following assessment, a child in need plan will be drawn up and a package of support will be identified. This can comprise a variety of different types of services and support, including financial support. Privately fostered children are not Looked After children.

The UK government has put into place three different visa routes for Ukrainians who wish to come or remain in the UK since the war in the Ukraine started. These are:

- **Ukraine Family Scheme;**
- **Homes for Ukraine;**
- **Ukraine Extension Scheme.**

Private Fostering

If a child or young person is living with a Homes for Ukraine sponsor, is under 16 and the sponsor is not a close relative, this is a statutory private fostering arrangement. All private fostering responsibilities and procedures must be followed in these cases.

4.3 Looked After Friends and Family arrangements

Whenever a child needs to be looked after by Slough Children First, Children Services will first try and identify a relative or family friend who is able to care for them. If the care arrangement is likely to continue past 16 weeks, the law states that the carer must be formally assessed and approved as a Slough Children First Connected Carer. The assessment process will involve a number of visits to complete the assessment and will also involve undertaking background checks, medical histories etc.

It should be noted that temporary approval does not mean that the Kinship Carer is formally approved as a short-term Foster Carer, as fully qualified Foster Carers must pass an enhanced assessment process which commits them to ongoing training and ensures they keep detailed records about the children they are caring for. Short term approval is also achieved by attendance at fostering panel after the assessment has been completed and the Agency Decision Maker endorsing the panel's recommendation with regards to this.

4.4 Immediate placements

A parent may ask for a child to be accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 because they feel unable to care for them or a social work team may feel the

parent is unsuitable to care for the child and initiate care proceedings under section 31 of the Children Act 1989.

Where a child needs to be immediately placed in an emergency under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 with a relative or Connected Person a viability assessment will need to be completed, and the placement will need to be approved by the head of Regulated Services.

A referral needs to be completed on ICS under the child's file for a joint viability assessment to be undertaken by the child's social worker and an assessing social worker from the Connected Persons Team. Once the referral has been accepted by the Connected Persons Team manager this will be allocated.

No child should be placed without a viability assessment being completed and approved by the head of Regulated Services. If a child is placed out of hours a referral should be made the next working day for a viability assessment to be completed.

The Local Authority must be satisfied that any placement is the most suitable one to safeguard and promote the child's welfare, until the full assessment for approval be completed under the 2011 Fostering Regulations.

Once the placement has been temporarily approved you will start to receive fostering allowances, and you will be allocated a supervising social worker from the Connected Persons Team who will provide supervision and support. You will also have access to training.

4.5 Unregulated placements:

There might be situations whereby the viability assessment identifies that the prospective kinship carer cannot be temporarily approved as a foster carer under Regulation 24 having considered key areas as set out in Schedule 4 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations. However, it might be concluded that the care arrangement is still in the child's best interests.

Consideration will need to be given to the options available to the Council in such circumstances. Carers who fail to meet the fostering standards and/or cannot be approved as short-term foster carers can no longer be paid a fostering allowance. In these circumstances, the carer, the child's parents and the allocated social worker will work to establish whether it is appropriate for the child to remain with the carer and agree a long-term care plan for the child. If it is subsequently concluded that it is still appropriate for the child to remain with the carer, this will need oversight from the Agency Decision Maker. If the child remains in placement the Connected Carer will still receive supervision and support, and the Child social work team will visit the placement weekly until the placement is regulated.

4.6 Court directed placements:

There will be occasions whereby court directs s38(6) Children Act 1989 placement stating that a child should live with a specified carer for a period of assessment. The court can direct that the child lives with a parent, relative or connected person.

Where a child is in a court directed placement, this will always be a temporary position pending assessment outcomes or change of circumstances.

If a child is subject to a S38(6) direction and is in the care of a parent, there is no requirement to obtain approval from the Director of Children's social care as required by Regulation 17 or 19 of the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010.

If a child is subject to S38(6) direction and is in the care of a connected person carer, there is no requirement to obtain approval from the Director of Children social care as required by regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010.

The child is a child in care and will need statutory visits, reviews, peeps etc. In Slough Children First where is child is placed in a court directed placement with a Connected Care or an unregulated placement the Child social work team will visit the child weekly. The carer will be allocated a supervising social worker who will provide supervision and support. Slough Child First recognise that caring for a child can be costly and it may therefore be appropriate for discretionary financial support to be paid needed this can be provided under the section 17 Child in need budget and is considered on a case-by-case basis. Section 17 Children Act 1989 / Family Support Payments

4.7 Fully approved carers:

If the care plan is for a child to remain living with a relative or Connected Carer, then a full assessment must be completed within the 16 weeks and presented to the fostering panel for consideration of approval.

If the full assessment cannot be completed within the 16 weeks due to delays such as medical checks or DBS checks an 8 -week extension can be applied for bringing the total assessment period up to 24 weeks. No further extensions can be applied for once the 8-week extension expires. The assessment should be presented to the fostering panel for consideration of approval.

Once presented to the fostering panel and approved by the Agency Decision Maker as a Friends and Family carer you will transfer from the Connected Persons team over to the Fostering Service. You will be allocated a new supervising social worker who will provide supervision and support to you. You will continue to receive fostering allowances for as long as you are caring for the child as a foster carer.

Training:

Connected Foster Carers are expected to complete mandatory training for Family and Friends Foster Carers

Carers must complete seven core mandatory training topics:

1. Paediatric First Aid –This has to be done as a face-to-face training and is repeated every three years.

The following courses must be repeated every two years:

2. Safeguarding
3. Safer Foster Care
4. Managing Behaviors
5. Managing Allegations
6. Record Keeping
7. Prevent

As such, we offer a rolling program of mandatory training so that carers can access any course which must be completed/refreshed, as and when needed throughout the year. Connected Carers have 18 months to complete the Standards portfolio. **Training, Support and Development Standards**

Authority for day-to-day decision making about the child should be delegated to the carer(s), unless there is a valid reason not to do so.

In the event that the full assessment is not approved, then the placement will become an unregulated placement, and the unregulated placement process mentioned earlier will apply.

4.8 Special Guardianship

Special Guardianship can be considered for children needing permanent care outside their birth family. It can offer greater security without absolute severance from the birth family as in adoption.

Relatives may apply for a Special Guardianship Order after caring for the child for one year. As Special Guardians, they will have Parental Responsibility for the child which, while it is still shared with the parents, can be exercised with greater autonomy on day-to-day matters than where there is a Child Arrangements Order. Special Guardianship Orders may be made in private family proceedings, and the local authority may not be a party to any such arrangements. Or, for a looked after child, a Special Guardianship Order in favor of a relative or foster carer (who was a 'Connected Person') with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a 'Looked After' child.

In either case, whether the child was a looked after child or not, the local authority is required to undertake an assessment and report to court in respect of all Special Guardianship applications.

As part of the Special Guardianship assessment a support plan will also be completed which will detail the support available should a Special Guardianship Order be granted.

Payments to Special Guardians may be made when connected foster carers are granted a Special Guardianship Order in respect of a looked after child that they are caring for.

4.9 Child arrangement orders

A Child Arrangements Order is a Court Order which sets out the arrangements as to when and with whom a child is to live, spend time or otherwise have contact.

A Child Arrangements Order may give parental responsibility to the person in whose favour it is made. Parental responsibility is shared with the parents. Authority for day-to-day decision making about the child should be delegated to the carer(s), unless there is a valid reason not to do so.

Child Arrangements Orders may be made in private family proceedings in which the local authority is not a party nor involved in any way in the arrangements. However, a Child Arrangements Order in favor of a relative or foster carer (who was a 'Connected Person') with whom a child is placed may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need or a 'Looked After' child.

The local authority may pay Child Arrangements Order Allowances to relatives or friends, unless they are a spouse or civil partner of a parent, with whom a child is living under a Child Arrangements Order. This is set out in paragraph 15 of Schedule 1 of the Children Act 1989; however, this is discretionary.

4.10 Adoption:

Adoption is the process by which all parental rights and responsibilities for a child are permanently transferred to an adoptive parent by a court. As a result, the child legally becomes part of the adoptive family.

An Adoption Order in favour of a relative or foster carer (who was a Connected Person) with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need or a Looked After Child.

Local authorities must make arrangements, as part of their adoption service, for the provision of a range of adoption support services. They then have to undertake assessments of the need for adoption support services at the request of the adopted child, adoptive parents and their families, as well as birth relatives. The support required is then set out in an Adoption Support Plan and this may include financial support.

Non-Agency Adoption Assessments:

From the 1st April 2021, the Connected Person's Team is responsible for completing all non-agency adoption assessments such as step-parent adoptions. The Connected Person's Team provides information to prospective adopters on the adoption process, as well as other options available to them, such as SGO assessment of prospective adopters whilst guiding them through the application process.

5 Financial Support

5.1 Financial support for temporary and fully approved carers

Once approved as a temporary foster carer to a specific child by the head of Regulated Services you will receive fostering allowances at tier 1. Fully approved foster carers have an opportunity to progress to tier 2 fostering allowances if the criteria for additional training has been met. Please refer to the finance policy for further details.

5.2 Setting up allowances

These are items such as clothing, furniture, or bedding to support the placement. The child's social worker must seek approval from their manager for this payment.

5.3 Payments in exceptional circumstances

Request for such payments need to be presented to Slough Children First Access to Resource panel and is presented by a social worker for consideration of approval.

5.4 Financial Support for Special Guardians

Local authorities are required to make arrangements for the provision of special guardianship support services. These include counselling, advice, information and such other services (including financial support) as are prescribed in the Regulations.

The Regulations also provide for the assessment of needs for special guardianship support services, and the planning and the reviewing of those support services. 18. Children who were looked after by a local authority immediately before the making of a special guardianship order may qualify for advice and assistance under the Children 10 Act 1989, as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

In the context of special guardianship, to qualify for advice and assistance, section 24(1A) of the Children Act 1989 provides that the child must: • have reached the age of 16, but not the age of 21 • if less than eighteen years old, have a special guardianship order in force • if eighteen years old or above, have had a special guardianship order in force when they reached that age, and • have been looked after by a local authority immediately before the making of the special guardianship order 19. The relevant local authority should make arrangements for children who meet these criteria to receive advice and assistance in the same way as for any other child who qualifies for advice and assistance under the Act, as amended. Regulation 22 provides that the relevant local authority is the one that last looked after the child.

The assessment and provision of such financial support will remain the responsibility of the local authority who originally agreed it for as long as the family in question qualify for payments. This distinction has been made because financial support can be paid without direct contact.

5.5 Reviews of Services:

Regular reviews enable the local authority and the service user to review the effectiveness of any services provided and consider whether it is appropriate to continue that service or change the provision in some way.

Regulation 17 requires that where the local authority provides special guardianship support services for a person, other than financial support payable periodically, it must review the provision of such services.

Slough Children First has reviewed their SG financial policy and from January 2025 the annual assessment process was removed, for new SGO and adoption arrangements undergoing such an assessment to determine the financial allowance in place until the child is aged 18.

Carers who experienced any significant change in their financial circumstances could request a financial assessment. We would also expect carers to inform SCF of any significant changes to their financial circumstances which may affect their allowance so a new assessment could take place.

Spot means assessments could be undertaken by SCF, and if it was felt that a carer had experienced a change in financial circumstances that would have led to a new means assessment outcome of lower financial support, the onus would be on the carer to request a means assessment, or repay any overpaid amounts. SCF would reserve the right to carry out ad hoc assessments and amend the allowance based on the outcome.

5.6 Remuneration for former foster parent

Financial support cannot normally include the payment of remuneration to the special guardian or prospective special guardian for care of the child. Regulation 7 provides, however, that where the special guardian or prospective special guardian previously fostered the child and they received an element of remuneration in the financial support paid to them as the child's foster parent that the local authority may continue to pay that element of remuneration for two years from the date of the special guardianship order.

These payments can continue for longer than two years if the local authority considers this appropriate. The purpose of the two year transitional provision is to enable local authorities to maintain payments to foster carers who become special guardians, at the same rate as they received when they were fostering the child. This should give the family time to adjust to their new circumstances.

5.7 Services for persons outside the area:

The local authority where the special guardian lives is responsible for undertaking an assessment of need and provision of any special guardianship support services in response to that assessment. The only exception to this is where a child was looked after before the special guardianship order was made. First three years after an order is made when the child was previously looked after

5.8 Adoption allowances

The Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 stipulate that financial support can be paid to an adoptive parent for the purpose of “supporting a placement or the continuation of adoption arrangements after an adoption is made”. These ongoing payments are referred to as an adoption allowance. Slough Children First has an Adoption Support Policy which outlines the circumstances when an adoption allowance can be paid.

5.9 Legal costs

Once a positive assessment has been completed a connected carer will be able to receive one off legal advice. A letter and list of solicitors will be provided by the Childrens Social Team.

Where a parent makes an application to discharge a Special Guardianship Order the Special Guardianship Carer can contact the Connected Persons team for advice and support and will be entitled to legal advice.

6 Support Services

6.1 Special Guardianships forums

Slough Children First run forums for which Special Guardians and Connected Carers can attend. These forums are held every 6 weeks and operate as a hybrid model face to face and online to meet the needs of carers that are not able to attend in person

6.2 Training:

Slough Children First offer a hybrid form of training that includes remote and or face to face training. The remote training is usually via Microsoft Teams or Zoom

We continued with our learning and development program of mandatory and supplementary training for carers. All mandatory training (with the exception of pediatric first aid) is provided through online learning courses.

Slough Children First has a dedicated training officer who delivers some of the training courses and can advise on bespoke training.

In addition we encourage our Kinship carers to access some of the specialised training provided through the leading charity Kinship .

6.3 Fun days and events

Slough Children First recognise the importance of keeping connected to our Kinship carers and raising the awareness of Kinship care. 3 times a year we organise fun days for our Kinship carers and children. We also promote Kinship Care at local events and as part of Kinship week.

6.4 Therapeutic support

Slough Children First has a play therapist who is able to offer support and advice to foster carers, as well as SGO carers. The play therapist also offers regular play therapy sessions to a number of foster and SGO children specific to their identified needs.

Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)

Local authorities and regional adoption agencies can apply for therapeutic funding for eligible adoptive, special guardianship orders and child arrangement order families for essential therapeutic services.

6.5 Advice and support

Slough Children First provides a wide range of information and support for Connected carers caring for children and young people in the Borough, information and advice on health, education, contact, parenting issues and life story.

Carers can contact the Connected Persons team duty for ad hoc advice and support as and when needed. The email is adressesconnectedpersons@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk In addition there is a dedicated social worker to support Connected Carers.

The Council also recognises that, in order to provide safe and effective care, family and friends carers may need additional specialist support. If care arrangements are in danger of breaking down or the child has additional needs, examples of advice and support include mediation and counselling services helping children maintain family time with parents, other relatives or important adults, therapeutic support.

It is important to note that where parental responsibility is shared, then parents retain responsibility for financially supporting their children, typically carers can claim child benefits, child tax credits and additional working tax credits where appropriate. Carers should seek advice and support from Welfare Rights and the Money Advice Service to ensure they are claiming all the financial support they may be entitled to.

6.6 Family time

Slough Children First is under a duty to promote family time with paternal and maternal family members for all children who are looked after. Connected Carers will therefore need to be willing to help facilitate family time as agreed with Slough Children First as part of their care plan. This may include transporting children to or from family time and/or supervising family time depending on the circumstances. In any event the child is likely to need you to be supporting the child emotionally with family time which can sometimes be difficult for all concerned.

For children living with family and friends' carers under a legal order that was granted within private law proceedings, or it is an informal family arrangement, the organisation of family time is a matter for the family to manage. However, advice and support can still be accessed from the Council. Where a child is Cared for and placed with a family and friends carer, the person caring for the child will be expected to comply with the family time plan that is agreed between the Local Authority, the parents and the multi-agency team involved with the child.

The Connected Persons Team and the Contacted Manager can offer advice and guidance to carers on supporting family time.

6.7 Family Group Conferences/Family Network Meetings

Family group conferences are held between professionals and the wider family members, which aim to agree a plan which will achieve the best outcome for children. They promote the involvement of the wider family to achieve a resolution of difficulties for children in need and may help to identify short-term and/or permanent solutions for children within the family, friends or connected persons network.

A family group conference is an approach to planning and decision-making which builds on the strengths, skills and experience of the wider family as well as professionals.

6.8 Accommodation

The local authority works with housing services to ensure that, whenever possible, family and friends carers living in social housing are given appropriate priority to move to more suitable accommodation if this will prevent the need for a child to become looked after. Slough Children First can write a supporting letter towards supporting your housing application.

7 Your Views

The Connected Persons team value the views of our connected carers and young people. We work closely with our carers and young people to tailor the support we offer to meet the needs of our carers. Carers contribute to the development of the service.

8. Other Support Services

Slough Children First work closely with the following organisations:

Slough Children First

Happy, Safe & Loved, Thriving

Initials.

Kinship charity

[Kinship: Home | The Kinship care charity | England and Wales](#)

Family Right group

[Helping families Helping children - Family Rights Group](#)

Coram Baaf

[Homepage | CoramBAAF](#)

Fostering Network.

[The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity | The Fostering Network](#)

9. Complaints Procedure

Where a connected person (s) carer is not satisfied with the level of support provided to enable them to care for the child, then they have access to Slough Children's First complaints process. Our aim would be to resolve any such dissatisfaction without the need for a formal investigation but where an informal resolution is not possible, then a formal investigation will be arranged.

Writing to:

Compliments and Complaints
Slough Children First
Observatory House
25 Windsor Road
Slough
SL1 2EL

By emailing:

complaints@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk

By phoning:

01753 875825

Other useful links:

[Championing kinship care: national kinship care strategy - GOV.UK](#)

[Adoption and special guardianship support fund \(ASGSF\) - GOV.UK](#)

[Looking after someone else's child - GOV.UK](#)

