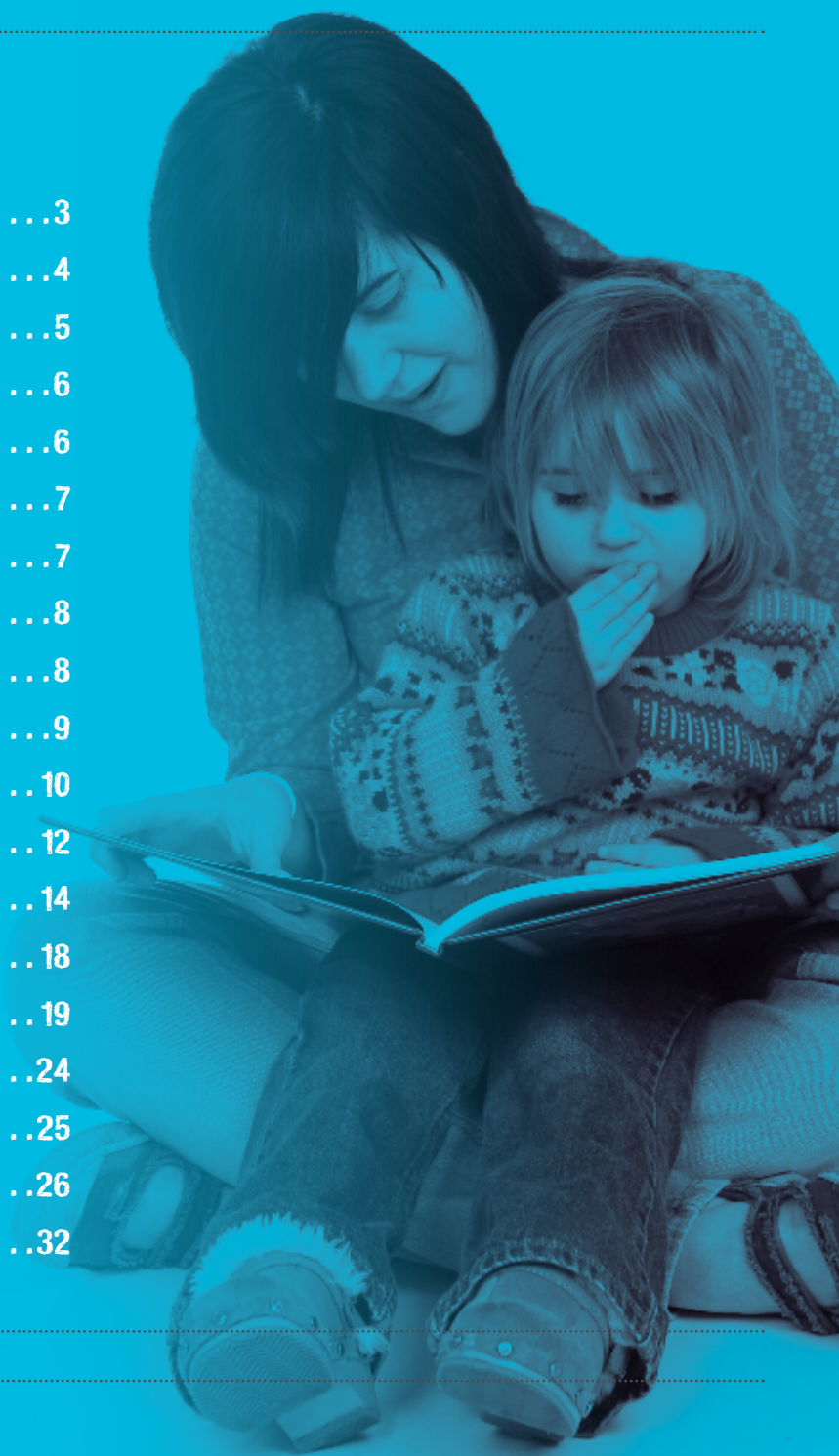


Family and Friends Policy 2019-2022



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Introduction

In North Yorkshire County Council, we are committed to supporting children and young people to live in safe and loving homes. In the vast majority of cases, the child's birth parents are best placed to provide this. However, for a small number of children that are unable to remain with their birth parents, when it is safe, appropriate and in the child's welfare interests to do so, we believe that children and young people should be given the opportunity to live with other family members or close friends. In such cases a child may be brought up by members of their extended family, close friends or other connected persons through a variety of different arrangements. All these arrangements have one thing in common - they can offer the child an excellent opportunity to maintain contact with their family and allow the child to maintain a sense of identity, stability and security.

This policy, developed in conjunction with our Permanency Strategy and our Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy: 'We Care Because You Matter', sets out North Yorkshire County Council's Children and Young People's Services' approach to promoting and supporting the needs of children through 'Family and Friends care'. The policy will cover the legal framework that 'Family and Friends care' is based upon, how North Yorkshire County Council promotes it and the different arrangements through which a child might be brought up by relatives or friends.

Context

In North Yorkshire County Council ('NYCC'), we understand the importance of the family, as identified in our Children and Young People's Plan: 'Young and Yorkshire 2', we want every child in North Yorkshire to experience a happy family life. We know that sometimes children are not able to remain with their immediate birth family and, where it is safe, appropriate and in the child's welfare interests, we believe children are best cared for by extended family members or close friends. We also recognise that identity forms a huge part of who we are, and our family links are a key part of this. These placements allow children to maintain links with their immediate birth family and enable children to live with people they already have a relationship with.

When a safeguarding or welfare risk for the child is identified, additional support will be given to the child/young person and their family. There are a number of formal and informal arrangements which enable children and young people to be raised by relatives or friends, we will explore these opportunities to prevent children becoming looked after.

Where a child has been brought into care, placements with 'Family and Friends' carers can provide stability and security in a familiar environment which enables children to maintain links to their birth family. Supporting children to live with relatives and friends is just one of a range of options through which we are able to provide permanency for looked after children (as outlined in our [Permanency Strategy](#)).

Evidence base

There has been an increasing amount of research into 'Family and Friends' care which supports it as a viable option for many children and young people. Our model of practice highlights that we value the long term relationships that our workers have with families and we know that families often have the solutions to their needs. We know that working alongside and with families enables them to feel valued and listened to. Where it is not possible to support the child to remain with their birth parents, we will look at supporting children to live within their wider family network, regardless of whether this is through a private/informal arrangement, a Special Guardianship Order, a Child Arrangement Order or as a Family and Friend foster carer.

Research that has looked at the stability of placements for children placed with 'Family and Friends' carers suggests a complex picture but the weight of evidence still supports the conclusion that children placed with family and friends remain in placement longer and have fewer moves than children placed with non-related foster carers. Children placed with family and friends appear to do as well as those placed with unrelated foster carers in terms of their health, education, emotional and behavioural development. Few children or young people want to be looked after by the Local Authority; most would prefer to live with their parents with support and when this is not possible they would wish to live with members of their extended family. Our practice model, where we can, is to enable Family and Friends foster carers to be supported to look after these children in other arrangements which enable the child not to be looked after by the Local Authority.

We use Signs of Safety as the core of our practice model and have a wide range of 'tools' such as family finding, Family Group Conferencing and Restorative Practice that we will use to support children to remain within the family network. The diagram below outlines our model of practice: 'Strengthening Relationships'.



‘Strength in relationship’ Practice Model



Values and Principles

One of the key principles under the Children Act 1989 is that children should be enabled to live within their families unless this is not consistent with their welfare. In NYCC, this is a principle we take to heart. We recognise the contribution that relatives and friends can make to the care of a child, and the permanency opportunities they offer.

We have a core set of principles that underpin everything we do relating to permanency these are that:

- We will do our very best to ensure all children grow up in stable and secure arrangements
- All planning, service delivery and evaluation will start with the needs of the child/young person
- We will aim high to help children and young people overcome gaps in their early care and strive to achieve the standard that any parent would expect for their child
- We will work with looked after children and young people, along with their parents and carers, to shape their assessment, planning, resourcing and services that support and care for them.
- We will ensure that provision reflects a child's individual need, including age.
- Where it is safe to do so, the views, opinions, needs and priorities of looked after children will inform everything we do.
- We will identify what needs to change in North Yorkshire to make a real and sustainable change to outcomes for all children and young people who are looked after.

Objectives

With these principles at the heart of our Family and Friends policy, we are committed to:

- Supporting children to live with their birth families when possible to do so. If this is not possible we are committed to support children to live with family or friends where it is safe, appropriate and in the welfare interests of the child to do so.
- Promoting permanence for children, by seeking to enable those children who cannot live with their parents to remain with their extended family or friends, in conditions that provide for their emotional and physical needs and are legally secure.
- Ensuring children, parents, family members and family friends are involved in decision making and planning about the child's placement as collaboratively as possible. Children's views should be listened to and, to every extent possible, taken into account when adults make arrangements.
- Providing a clear framework for Family and Friends care, which is supported by a robust needs analysis which will prioritise the needs of the child and not be driven by financial considerations.
- Respecting that some families can make their own arrangements and the local authority may not need to be involved.
- Working in collaboration with local partners to promote and support the needs of children living with Family and Friends carers, regardless of whether they are looked after.

Legal Framework

As mentioned above, there are many reasons why a child might be cared for by someone who is not the child's birth parent. In the case of a child becoming cared for by Family and Friends carers, there is a broad legal framework covering the various legal situations that can lead to a child being cared for in such arrangements. These legal frameworks are set out in **Appendix A**.

In a majority of cases, Family and Friends care is based on an informal arrangement, by agreement with those holding parental responsibility for the child. Providing the carer is a relative of the child (as defined by Section 105 of the Children Act 1989) or has parental responsibility for the child, there is no requirement to notify the local authority of the arrangement. Whilst most of these arrangements remain entirely private without any involvement from North Yorkshire County Council, where a child is assessed as being 'in need'; support may be provided under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

If a child is in the care of the Local Authority, under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (where the court has made a decision about the child being looked after) or under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, Family and Friends may care for the child only if the carers have been approved as Local Authority Foster Carers (under the Fostering Regulations

2011 and where they meet the requirements of the National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011).

Children can also live with family and friends through a number of further legal arrangements, including:

- Private Fostering under Section 66 of the Children Act 1989
- Child Arrangement Orders (previously Residence Orders) under the Children Act 1989
- Special Guardianship Orders under Section 14A of the Children Act 1989
- Adoption Orders under the Adoption and Children Act 2002

A Child shall be taken to be in need if:

- a. s/he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him/her of services by a local authority**
- b. her/his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services**
- c. s/he is disabled**

Early identification and support

NYCC is committed to supporting children to remain with their birth families or, where this is not possible, enabling them to live with their extended family or friends (providing it is safe to do so and in the welfare interests of the child). In part, this is to prevent children from entering care as this may lead to further disruption, instability and stigma for the child. Entry to care can be avoided through supporting the child and family (both immediate and extended) outside of the care system. When a child is assessed and found to be 'in need', North Yorkshire has several intervention models that can be put in place to develop support networks to prevent local authority care from becoming a necessity.

Family Finding

The Family Finding model seeks to build or maintain a child/young person's family support network. The model identifies relatives and other supportive adults who could provide permanency, sustainable relationships and support to a child, extending through the transition to adulthood and beyond. With a focus on the child's safety, families are empowered to formulate realistic and sustainable plans to meet their long-term needs. Plans might be focused on keeping the child/young person safe at home, or on improving the long term outcomes for the child. This could include:

- Increasing the likelihood of a child returning home after a period of care
- Finding a family member or friend who will care for the child if the child is unable to remain at home
- Improving well-being for the child
- Improving placement stability and the child's support network

- Reducing the likelihood of re-entry into care
- Increasing a child's sense of belonging.

The Family Finding process is carried out by the child's social worker. The model works on the principle that relatives should be located and consulted regardless of where they may live. The model considers that parents may be seeking assistance in planning and providing for the basic and future needs of their children that relatives may be best placed to provide.

The aim of Family Finding is to overcome the limitation of traditional case work which may isolate children and parents, by incorporating 'kinship' (family and friends) groups and seeing the child in the context of the family.

Family Group Conferencing

Family Group Conferencing (FGC) is a child-centred, family focused approach to building relationships and support networks. FGC focuses on bringing together members of the family to take part in voluntary sessions (or 'conferences') to find their own solutions and formulate a 'family plan' to resolve issues.

Unlike Family Finding (which is led by the Social Worker) families are referred to the Family Group Conferencing Service. Family members will be supported by a Family Group Conferencing co-ordinator who will help the family plan the voluntary meeting and act as a chair. The co-ordinator will also address any worries or concerns they might have.

The 'conference' allows information to be shared with and by the family and gives the family 'private family time' to talk among themselves with the aim of creating a plan that addresses the concerns raised. FGC also gives the family the opportunity to identify resources and support that will be required from agencies and the family to make the plan work.

The family plan should then be reviewed through a review 'conference' to consider how the plan is working and make any adjustment necessary.

FGC, similar to Family Finding, places planning and decision making in the hands of the family. When used effectively, Family Group Conferencing can improve outcomes for children by:

- Enabling families to plan and take control of their lives
- Putting the child at the heart of the decision and giving them a voice
- Supporting the sharing of honest information and concerns with the family
- Making the family aware of the 'non-negotiable' and the 'bottom line'
- Clarifying the role and responsibilities of all involved
- Identifying resources and shortfalls in resources
- Focusing on solutions rather than problems.

Informal/Private Arrangements and Children in Need

Many Family and Friends carers provide care for children through informal, private arrangements made between themselves and the parents of the child they care for. This could include a family member taking early action to help a parent they view as struggling to care for a child/children. Private/informal arrangements may also be made if parents are unable to care for their children due to illness etc. or where arrangements have been made in a will etc. Parental responsibility, in most cases, will remain with the parents of the child, although day-to-day parenting tasks and decision making responsibilities will be delegated to the carer.

Children who are cared for under these arrangements will not become looked after. Informal/Private Arrangements can be made in the following circumstances:

- Children living with close relatives (as defined by Children Act 1989) as agreed by parents and with the support of the council, e.g. as an agreed safeguarding measure.
- Young people aged 16+ who are living with a relative of their own volition.
- Children and young people living with friends or non-close relatives (as defined by Children Act 1989) as agreed by parents for a period of less than 28 days
- Parents have made an arrangement with friends or non-close relatives for over 28 days under the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005. (N.B. in such cases the LA has a role to play in safeguarding these placements under the Private Fostering Regulations 2005). It is the parents' responsibility to inform the Local Authority of the arrangements they have made for their child.
- Children living with close relatives (as defined by Children Act 1989) as agreed by parents at parents' own initiative.



Private Fostering

If there are no close relatives available to care for a child through an informal agreement, there is an option for Private Fostering for periods of care that are expected to last for more than 28 days for children under the age of 16 (or 18 if they are disabled). In a private fostering arrangement, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the local authority of the arrangement.

Upon notification of the arrangement, North Yorkshire's Children and Families' service will carry out an assessment of the care to be provided and will monitor the welfare of the child. Due to the involvement of the authority in Private Fostering, children involved in these arrangements automatically become 'Children in Need' as they are in receipt of support from the Children and Families' service. The child will be visited by a social worker at least every 6 weeks during the first year of the arrangements, then every 12 weeks after that.

The parent(s) of children living in Private Fostering Arrangements continue to hold parental responsibility for the child, but agreements will usually give the responsibility for day-to-day parenting and decision making to the carer. The parent(s) remain responsible for any financial payments in respect of the child. Child benefit and child tax credit, however, can be claimed by the private foster carer.

If a child is cared for by a close relative ('a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of full or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent'), the arrangement will not be classed as Private Fostering and the authority will not need to be informed. Similarly, if it is certain that the arrangement will not last for more than 28 days it will not be classified as Private Fostering and the authority does not need to be notified.

Financial support for informal/private arrangements

In a majority of cases, particularly those where there are informal arrangements and agreements between parents and relatives for the care of a child, there should be financial agreements made within the family to support the child and to enable the carer to care for the child. Carers are expected to access all of the state benefits they may be entitled to claim in respect of their care of the child. The local authority is not usually involved in those arrangements. If a child's needs cannot be met by a Family and Friend carer without financial support, in the short-term NYCC may provide discretionary financial support to the carers based on a "Child and Family Assessment" which has identified that the child is "In Need".

Financial support may be provided under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 rather than providing accommodation under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, so long as this is consistent with the child's welfare and if this is deemed appropriate following the assessment.

In relation to all requests under section 17, NYCC will expect that the carer(s) will have sought / accessed universal benefits in respect of the child. Universal benefits cover a range of benefits that families are able to access, including:

- Child Benefit
- Child Tax Credits (or universal credit where applicable)
- Welfare benefits (or universal credit where applicable)
- Disability Living Allowance

It is expected that before considering taking on the commitment to a child, carers will have discussed financial resources within the family and to have accessed information about any support, including financial assistance, which may be available. This should include how such support will be calculated and how long this support will last.

In relation to financial support requests under section 17 Children Act 1989, any requests for support for a period of up to 6 weeks up to an accumulative maximum of £600 and/or one off payments up to the value of £600 will be considered by a Group Manager. Requests for financial support under section 17 which would potentially exceed these limits will be referred to the NYCC Family and Friends Panel for consideration (see further below). All such requests should be supported by a Children and Families assessment which will identify the support requested, the child's welfare needs and will include full information about the family's financial circumstances including all income and outgoings and savings / capital. It is the expectation of NYCC that typically, financial support under section 17 will be short term to enable carers to make adjustments while permanent arrangements are made within the family. Any regular / continuing payments considered by the Family and Friends Panel may be subject to conditions, subject to review and will be regularly monitored.

Non-financial support for informal/private arrangements

NYCC offers a range of non-financial support to adults/families that are caring for children through these informal/private arrangements. These include support for universal services provided by NYCC, such as; Children's Centres, Schools, Youth Services etc. In addition to services provided by NYCC, Family and Friends carers can access services provided by a broad range of partner agencies and voluntary/ third sector organisations that can provide advice/ support. A list of key services has been provided in **Appendix D**. Where Family and Friend carers do feel they require additional, more targeted support, NYCC's Early Help service is well placed to provide advice and support where needed.

NYCC is committed to working with Family and Friend carers, as with any other family, to find, provide or signpost them to the support that families might need to ensure the best outcomes possible for children.

This support can include supporting Family and Friend carers in any discussions with their local District Council Housing Options Team to find the best way forward for support in relation to accommodation needs of a child. This support will not normally include financial support for extensions to properties, although District Council Housing Teams are able to provide advice, and might be able to provide financial assistance in the form of grants, for adaptations to properties.

Along with signposting and providing other non-financial support, NYCC has a duty to promote and support family time or 'contact' between children and their birth families subject to the child's welfare interests. For children assessed as being 'in need', the Child in Need Plan will identify the support that maybe required to manage contact arrangements and how this is to be provided.



Formal Arrangements

Family and Friends (connected person) foster care for children who are looked after

If it is necessary and in the welfare interest of the child, for a child to become looked after by North Yorkshire County Council, we are required (under Section 22 of the Children Act 1989) to prioritise placements with a 'connected person' who is also an approved foster carer. Unlike informal or private arrangements, once a child becomes looked after the local authority also acquire and share parental responsibility for the child alongside those who already have parental responsibility for the child. Much like with informal or private arrangements however, it is the connected persons (Family and Friends) foster carer who will have responsibility for the day-to-day care of the child.

A 'connected person' or Family and Friend foster carer is an individual who is a relative, friend, or other person connected to a child who the local authority has approved as a foster carer. A 'connected person' may be someone who knows the child in a professional capacity such as a child-minder, teacher or youth worker. Whilst connected persons are not strictly relatives or friends, they may in some circumstances, be the best people to look after a child because of this pre-existing connection/ relationship. Regardless of whether

they are a relative, friend or connected person, NYCC refers to these carers as 'Family and Friends carers'.

Before becoming Family and Friends carers, it is important that prospective carers understand the implications of becoming approved carers including any financial implications and support available. They will be required to undertake a fostering assessment which can be lengthy and will involve comprehensive enquiries into the carer's background and ability to meet the child's needs, along with checks undertaken by police and other agencies and a medical report will be required. Family and Friends carers are expected to co-operate fully with the assessment process and will be required to consent to the required checks.

Approved Family and Friends foster carers in North Yorkshire will receive the same level of individual, peer-to-peer and group support that any other foster carer would receive from NYCC. Approved Family and Friend carers will also receive training and supervision to ensure that the care provided remains child-focused and proportionate. Details of the care and support available can be found in the [Fostering North Yorkshire 2018-2021 Strategy](#).

Children placed with Family and Friend foster carers by the local authority, as looked after children, are eligible to all the support that children placed with other foster carers are eligible to. This includes the equivalent fostering allowance, the allocation of a social worker and the educational support of the Virtual School. More details of our offer to children in care (including those placed with 'Family and Friend' foster carers) can be found in our new [Looked After Children Strategy 2018-2021: 'We Care because You Matter'](#).

As is the case with informal arrangements, support for formal arrangements can extend to supporting Family and Friend carers in any discussions with their local District Council Housing Options Team to find the best way forward in relation to accommodation needs of the child. This support will not normally include financial support for extensions to properties, although District Council Housing Teams are able to provide advice, and might be able to provide financial assistance in the form of grants, for adaptations to properties.

Temporary approval of a Family and Friends carer as a temporary foster carer

In some circumstances a child may be placed with a Family and Friends carer as a 'temporary foster carer' whilst a full assessment is being undertaken.

Section 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 states that:

“Where the responsible authority is satisfied that - a) the most appropriate placement for the child is with a connected person, notwithstanding that the connected person is not approved as a local authority foster parent, and b) it is necessary for the child to be placed with the connected person before the connected person's suitability to be a local authority foster parent has been assessed in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations, they may approve that person as a local authority foster parent for a temporary period not exceeding 16 weeks (“temporary approval”) provided that they ... assess the suitability of the connected person to care for the child including the suitability of ... the proposed accommodation, and all other persons aged 18 and over who are members of the household and taking into account the matters in schedule 4.”

Subject to the completion of the initial assessment, the carer(s) may be immediately approved as temporary foster carers for an initial period of up

to 16 weeks (which can be extended in limited circumstances by a further 8 weeks). This period allows for the full foster carer approval process to be undertaken without being detrimental to the consistency and stability of the child. Upon successful completion of the full assessment process and provided approval is recommended, the temporary connected person will become a fully-approved Family and Friends foster carer as outlined above.

Children placed with 'temporary foster carers' in this situation will be eligible for the same support that any other child in a foster placement is entitled to, including the equivalent fostering allowance subject to any deductions that are made to take into account any benefits they receive. The child will be allocated a Social Worker who will visit at a minimum of weekly until the first statutory review, then a minimum of every four weeks pending full approval of the carer through the Fostering Panel. On each visit, the child should be seen and spoken with alone, having regards to their age and level of understanding.

Other long-term legal options

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for a child to remain in local authority care and / or away from their family for longer periods of time or permanently. On these occasions, where it is in the child's welfare interests, we will look to promote the child's welfare and to achieve permanency through supporting carers to apply for the appropriate legal

order to transfer parental responsibility to them. Such legal orders can include Child Arrangement (previously Residence) Orders, Special Guardianship Orders and in some circumstances, adoption. These orders are discussed in more detail in the [NYCC Permanency Strategy](#) (section 8 and appendix A).

Child Arrangements and Special Guardianship orders are usually applied for through private family proceedings in which case the local authority is unlikely to be a party to the proceedings. In such cases the local authority may be required however, to submit a report to court. However, if the child is currently living with a Carer as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need or as a looked after child, then the local authority will be party to proceedings. Where a child is 'looked after' immediately prior to the making of an order, the local authority has a responsibility to assess the support needs of the child, parents, and guardian, including the need for financial support.

Where there are exceptional circumstances, or where not doing so would lead to a child remaining in care, and NYCC support the application, North Yorkshire County Council may consider a contribution towards the costs associated with applying for the appropriate private law order (Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement Order). One off legal consultations up to the value of £300 plus VAT and the cost of the court application fee may be considered by a NYCC Team manager. Any legal costs in excess of this will be referred for consideration by the NYCC Family and Friends Panel (see further below).

Support (including financial support) for long-term orders (See Appendix E)

Important considerations

Carers should ensure that they understand what support services, including financial support, they may be offered by NYCC if they are caring for or intend to care for a child under a long term order. The paragraphs below are intended as a guide as to the kind of support that may be available but circumstances may change / vary in individual cases and carers should always discuss the detail of any support plan with their allocated social worker and any relevant conditions / limitations that may apply at that time. Government guidance, law and NYCC policies and procedures may also be subject to changes / review and the information below cannot be taken as any guarantee therefore, as to any future support that may be available or as to the continuation of support.

Child Arrangement Orders

There is no statutory guidance regarding any assessment that should be undertaken to understand the need for support (including financial support) for Child Arrangement Orders. NYCC, however, wants to ensure that children achieve permanency through the option that best suits their welfare needs and believes that the choice of a Child Arrangement Order

should not be ruled out due to financial reasons alone. NYCC may consider paying a Child Arrangement Order allowance where this is the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote a child's welfare interests. Such support is discretionary. Where it appears that a Child Arrangement Order is being supported and an allowance is being requested, NYCC will complete a Children and Families assessment and the request will be submitted to the NYCC Family and Friends Panel for consideration.

Special Guardianship Orders

Where carers are applying for a Special Guardianship Order as an alternative to the child remaining on or being placed on a Care Order, the Children and Families service will undertake a means-tested assessment using the Department for Education's recommended means test calculation. The means test ensures that a carer may continue to receive financial support subject to any benefits they are eligible for being taken into account. When the 'guardian' is a former foster carer, the fostering allowance will be 'protected' for a two-year period to support the transition period.

Financial support payable by NYCC will be subject to conditions, will be reviewed at least annually and in

the case of any change in circumstances, the child will also need to be seen by the allocated social worker. Carers will be required to notify NYCC of any relevant changes in their circumstances including financial circumstances, which may affect financial support payable under the means test. Financial support ceases to be payable to a special guardian or prospective special guardian when a child reaches 18 and:

- the child ceases to have a home with him/her;
- the child ceases full-time education or training and commences employment;
- the child qualifies for [universal credit,] income support [jobseeker's allowance or employment and support allowance] in his/her own right; or
- the child attains the AGE OF 18 unless he/she continues in full-time education or training, when it may continue until the end of the course or training he/she is then undertaking.*

(*such support is discretionary, requires referral to the Family and Friends Panel, and is not guaranteed).

A Special guardianship carer may be provided with or sign-posted to a range of support services. These should be identified within the child's support plan and could include:

- Access to the Adoption Support Fund: Children who were in care (looked after) immediately before a Special Guardianship Order was made are eligible to apply for specialist support / services funded as a result of an application to the Adoption Support Fund (subject to eligibility criteria and continued Government funding);

- Pupil Premium Grant: Separate to funding available for those in receipt of free school meals and Service Children, the Pupil Premium Grant for Previously Looked After Children (Adopted, Special Guardianship Order and Child Arrangement Order) is available for schools per Previously Looked After Child per annum. Parents/Guardians with a child who is previously looked after (Adopted, Special Guardianship Order and Child Arrangement Order) should contact their school in time for the school to record the child's status on the January School Census, which funding needs are based. Upon verification, the school will receive funding to use to bridge the gap between Previously Looked After Children and their peers via the use of additional interventions and learning resources. May we ask that, for any pupil where these circumstances are relevant (Adopted, Special Guardianship Order and Child Arrangement Order), you provide school with the appropriate supporting evidence.

Further information is available in the 'Special Guardianship Guidance (2017)' and **NYCC Special Guardianship policy**. Details of all support to be offered including financial support will be set out in

the carers Special Guardianship Support Plan and any carers should check the contents of their plan.

Adoption Orders

Adoption differs from Special Guardianship Orders and Child Arrangement Orders as all parental legal rights and responsibilities are permanently severed with the birth family and are transferred to the adoptive parent(s) by the making of a final adoption order. In some circumstances, the best way for a child to achieve permanence, and a meaningful sense of belonging, may be through adoption by the Family and Friends carer with whom they have been living or by being placed away from the family / connected persons with approved adopters who have no connection to the family. All prospective adopters will need to complete a thorough adoption assessment process and court proceedings may need to be issued in order to pursue a plan of adoption for a child (subject to eligibility criteria and minimum periods the child must have lived with the person(s) wishing to apply to adopt). Family and Friends carers wishing to consider adoption or to obtain further information about this should discuss this in further detail with any allocated social worker or by contacting the Adoption Duty Team on **01609 534032**. Adopters may be provided with or signposted to a range of support services including, in some circumstances, financial support. Adoption support services may be provided by NYCC or partner agencies / third parties. Examples of the kind of support that may be available include:

1. Counselling advice and information in relation to adoption.
2. Adoption leave and pay from employers. See "adoption pay and leave" on www.gov.uk website for more information.
3. Priority access to social housing.
4. Priority admission for school places, including academies and free schools.
5. The role of the designated teacher in offering support to previously looked after children and to their new school.
6. Services to enable groups of adoptive children, adoptive parents and birth parents to discuss matters relating to adoption.
7. Assistance, including mediation, with contact arrangements between adopted children and their birth parents or others with whom they share a significant relationship.
8. Therapeutic services for adopted children.
9. Specialist support / services funded as a result of an application to The Adoption Support Fund (subject to eligibility criteria and continued Government funding).
10. Assistance to adoptive parents and children to support the adoptive placement and enable it to continue, including training for adoptive parents for the purposes of meeting any special needs of the child and respite care.

11. Assistance to adoptive parents and children where a placement disrupts or is at risk of disruption including making arrangements for the provision of mediation services and meetings to discuss disruptions.
12. A range of adoption support services, including access to counselling, information and advice for both adoptive parents and their children, who may have complex needs.
13. Peer mentoring can be provided via the Regional Adoption Agency.
14. Assistance and intermediary services with regards to Access to Adoption Records.
15. Discretionary financial support (subject to criteria and eligibility).

Any request for financial support will require a detailed assessment of the adopters and child's circumstances / welfare / support needs. Up-dated assessments may also be regularly required as part of any reviews of financial support services. Any regular financial support agreed by NYCC is currently assessed using the Department of Education's recommended means testing calculation. Financial support payable by NYCC will be subject to conditions, will be reviewed **at least** annually and whenever there is any relevant change in circumstances and may require the carers and child to be seen by a social worker. Carers will be required to notify NYCC of any relevant changes in theirs or the child's circumstances, including financial circumstances, which may affect any financial support payable.

Financial support usually ceases to adopters when the child reaches 18 i.e.

- a. the child ceases to have a home with the adopter(s);
- b. the child ceases full-time education or training and commences employment;
- c. the child qualifies for universal credit, income support, employment and support allowance, or jobseeker's allowance in his own right; or
- d. the child attains the AGE OF 18 unless he continues in full-time education or training, when it may continue until the end of the course or training he is then undertaking.*

(*such support is discretionary, requires referral to the Family and Friends Panel, and is not guaranteed).

Requests for adoption support services, including financial support, may require referral to the Family and Friends Panel for consideration or third party agencies (such as the Regional Adoption Agency "One Adoption North and Humber" and the Adoption Support Fund).

The adoption support services available in individual cases should always be discussed with the allocated social worker / adoption social worker. Not all support listed above will be available to every child or adopter(s) and eligibility criteria may apply. In most instances detailed assessments of need for support services will be required (unless the request is for counselling or information only) and any support agreed by NYCC will be set out in the Adoption

Support Plan. Further information can be found in the **NYCC Adoption Support Services policy**.

As stated above, Government guidance, the law, NYCC policies and procedures and means testing models used may be subject to changes / review. The information set out above cannot be taken as any guarantee therefore, as to any future support that may be available or as to the continuation of such support.

Family Rights Group

As explained above, at any stage of the assessment or permanence process where it is in the child's welfare interest, NYCC will consider supporting carers to apply for an appropriate legal order. The Family Rights Group has produced '**Initial Family and Friends Care Assessments: A good practice guide**', which sets out best practice regarding these viability assessments and links what factors social workers conducting the assessments need to consider including when undertaking assessments (including assessments with family members overseas).

The Family Rights Group's '**Initial Family and Friends Care Assessments: A good practice guide**' can be found here: www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/family-and-friends-carers/assessment-tool

Family Time

North Yorkshire County Council is committed to ensuring that where children do not live with their birth families, that family time (contact) is considered. The way we promote and support this varies depending on the needs of the child and whether or not they are looked after. Schedule 2 of the Children Act 1989 outlines the statutory requirements of local authorities for promoting contact depending on the child's circumstances.

We know that contact with a child's immediate family is generally a positive experience, helping child maintain a sense of belonging and identity. It is important, however, that in arranging such contact the child's views and welfare interest are taken into account. This being said, in most cases where a child is living with a relative or friend, they are likely to be in contact with one or both parents and, potentially, other relatives who will help to promote positive relationships.

Where there are safeguarding concerns for the child, Children's Social Care may need to be involved to support safe contact arrangements. In addition to this, contact may be limited through a court order.

Family and Friends Panel

As referred to above, the NYCC Family and Friends Panel (FFP) will consider cases involving requests for discretionary financial payments which group managers or team managers are unable to approve. The FFP endeavours to ensure that there is consistent and fair decision making undertaken in NYCC with regards to discretionary financial support for Family and Friends care arrangements. The panel is comprised of the Heads of Service for looked after children, Safeguarding, Child Placement and Early Help. The Chair of the panel is the appointed officer in relation to decision making and such decisions are taken in consultation with the other panel members. Requests for discretionary financial support must be supported by an up to date Child and Families assessment, FFP Request Form and up to date financial information. The FFP will require full disclosure of the Family and Friends carer's financial circumstances and this may be in addition to any information previously provided to the NYCC finance department or to the social worker. The Family and Friends carer will also be expected to have applied for any relevant benefits / grants / awards they may be entitled to receive in their own right or on behalf of the child. The panel may refuse to consider, or may defer the request for further information, if the required information has not been provided. Family and Friends carers will be notified in writing of the outcome of the decision by the relevant team manager.

The decision of the Family and Friends Panel is final. In the event you consider there has been an inaccuracy in terms of arithmetical calculation you should contact the Finance Department. A finance officer will perform a thorough check of all calculations and supporting documentation to ensure the accuracy of the outcome of the means tested assessment.

Feedback and Complaints and referrals to the Local Government Ombudsman

In accordance with the Children Act 1989 and Representations Procedure Regulations 2006, North Yorkshire County Council operates a complaints procedure. Any Family and Friends carer, Family and Friends foster carer, or child or young person who feels they have grounds, may make a complaint in accordance with this procedure. Adopters and special guardians also have the right to make complaints about support offered to them.

Telephone: **01609 534193**

Freephone: **0808 168 2785**

Email: cyps.contactus@northyorks.gov.uk

A leaflet about making complaints about children's social care can be found on the North Yorkshire County Council website:

northyorks.gov.uk/childrens-social-care-complaints

North Yorkshire County Council has made arrangements for an independent advocacy service called NYAS to provide support, advocacy and legal advice for children and young people who wish to make a complaint about the services they use. NYAS can be accessed as follows:

Free: Helpline **0800 616101**

Text: **077733455**

Email: help@nyas.net

Advice and Enquiries

Martin Kelly

Assistant Director Children and Families Service

SB208

North Yorkshire County Council,

County Hall

Northallerton

DL7 8AE

Telephone: **01609 536425**

E-mail: martin.kelly@northyorks.gov.uk

Once a Family and Friends carer has exhausted all avenues for pursuing a request for financial support in accordance with NYCC policies and procedures in some circumstances Family and Friends carers can consider a complaint to the Local government Ombudsman Service and further information about the circumstances in which you can make such a complaint can be found on their website lgo.org.uk/.

Appendix A: Arrangements for Care

	Private Fostering	Family Care (informal)	Family and Friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Child Arrangement Order (CAO)	Special Guardianship Order (SGO)	Adoption
Route into the caring arrangement	<p>Private arrangement where the child is cared for by anyone who does not have parental responsibility, who is not a close relative, for the child for a period of 28 days or more (or it is intended that the arrangement will last for 28 days or more).</p> <p>The child will not be a looked after child</p>	<p>An informal arrangement with a relative or close friend who does not have parental responsibility for the child and the arrangement was not made by the LA.</p> <p>The arrangement is made between the parent and the carer with no involvement from the LA.</p> <p>The relative may perceive that the parent is unable to care for the child(ren) or there may be an agreement between relatives due to difficult family circumstances</p>	<p>The local authority will, where safe and in the child's welfare interest, place a child with a relative or friend if the child was deemed not to be providing suitable care.</p> <p>The child is looked after and the LA must approve the relative or friend as a LA foster carer.</p> <p>The child may be accommodated voluntarily with the agreement of the parents (under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or may be subject to a care order.</p>	<p>The child is a looked after child by the local authority under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 or a care order and has been placed with a foster carer by the local authority.</p> <p>(Alternatively the local authority may choose to place a child into residential care where this is in the welfare interest of the child)</p>	<p>If a child is at risk of becoming 'looked after', a friend or relative may apply for an order, or"</p> <p>If the child is 'looked after' and their foster carer or other relative/ friend applies for an order.</p> <p>In either circumstance, application can be made without the support of the parents or the local authority. Relatives may apply for the order after the child has lived with them for one year or more.</p> <p>There may be benign reasons, e.g. after parents' death and in line with a prior agreement between the birth parents and the carer.</p>		<p>If a child is 'looked after' by the LA, the LA may decide that the child should be placed for adoption. This can only be done with consent of the birth parent or with a Placement Order made by a court.</p> <p>An approved foster carer can apply for an adoption order after a year of caring for the child.</p> <p>Other informal carer may apply for an adoption order if the child has lived with them for 3 years or more.</p>

	Private Fostering	Family Care (informal)	Family and Friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Child Arrangement Order (CAO)	Special Guardianship Order (SGO)	Adoption
Parental Responsibility	Birth parent(s) retain parental responsibility	Birth parent(s) retain parental responsibility, but the carer(s) may do what is reasonable to safeguard the child or promote their welfare	<p>If the child is accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, then the birth family retains parental responsibility.</p> <p>If the child is subject to a care order or emergency protection, the local authority has parental responsibility and determines the extent to which it may be exercised by others.</p>		The parents and the holder of the child arrangement order share parental responsibility.	Parents and anyone else with parental responsibility (such as the LA) share parental responsibility with the Special Guardian. The Special Guardian may exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of all others with PR (apart from another Special Guardian) except when changing a child's name and taking them outside of the county for more than 3 months.	Parental Responsibility entirely transfers to the adopters.
Approval Basis	<p>The parents are responsible for reporting the arrangement to the LA, and the LA will assess the arrangement. The carer is not 'approved' as a local authority foster carer.</p> <p>The LA may prohibit the arrangement if it is assessed as unsuitable.</p>	This is an informal arrangement and there is no approval process	<p>Carers will be approved as local authority foster carers in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations.</p> <p>Relatives, friends or connected persons can be temporarily approved following an assessment of the accommodation and other adults in the household for a maximum of 16 weeks pending full approval.</p>		Appointed by court following application.	<p>Appointed by court following application.</p> <p>LA must investigate the matter and prepare a report for the court dealing with the suitability of the applicant to be a Special Guardian.</p>	<p>Regional adoption Agency assess and approves prospective adopters, court makes the order regarding specific child.</p> <p>If the child is not looked after, then notice of the intent to adopt must be given to the LA who then carry out an assessment/report for the court.</p>

	Private Fostering	Family Care (informal)	Family and Friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Child Arrangement Order (CAO)	Special Guardianship Order (SGO)	Adoption
Duration	The length of a Private Fostering arrangement is subject to the discretion of the person with parental responsibility and readiness of the carer	Subject to the discretion of the person with parental responsibility	The duration of any foster placement is determined by the Local Authority through the Child's Care Plan		Until the child reaches the age of 18	Until the child reaches the age of 18, unless varied or discharged by the court before the child reaches 18	Permanent lifelong relationship.
Placement Supervision	There is no placement supervision, but there are statutory visits to the child by a social worker (minimum of every 6 weeks in the first year, the 12 every 12 weeks).	None	Statutory: visits to a child by a social work and supervision of foster carers by a supervising social worker		None	None	When a child is placed for adoption by the LA, the placement is supervised and there are statutory reviews. Once the adoption order is made, there is no supervision or statutory visits.
Review of Placement	The LA may do formal reviews in addition to ongoing assessments during visits.	None	Statutory reviews of the child's care plan (minimum of every 6 months) and annual reviews of local authority foster carers' approval		None	None	

	Private Fostering	Family Care (informal)	Family and Friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Child Arrangement Order (CAO)	Special Guardianship Order (SGO)	Adoption
Support Services	Provision of Advice and support as determined by the LA. This may be based on an assessment of the child as a child in need, with a child in need plan, and provide services/ support for the child/family under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989	No entitlement The LA may assess the child as a child in need, with a child in need plan, and provide services/ support for the 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, NMS and CWDC standards. Young person may be entitled to leaving care support services.		No entitlement (But LA has discretion to provide services/ support for the child/family under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989).	If the child was looked after prior to making the SGO, LA must assess for need for Special Guardianship support services. LA has discretion whether to provide support. The young person may be entitled to leaving care support services if they were 'looked after' prior to making of the SGO.	Entitlement to assessment for adoption support services, which may be provided at discretion of the LA in accordance with Regulations and National Minimum Standards.
Financial Support - Entitlement	Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if these are not being paid to the parent Financial responsibility for supporting and caring for the child remains with whoever has parental responsibility	Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to the parent Financial responsibility for supporting and caring for the child remains with whoever has parental responsibility Guardians Allowance payable if both parents have died, or the only surviving parent cannot be found or is serving a prison sentence longer than 2 years.	Child benefit and child tax credit not payable Weekly allowance to meet the costs of caring for the child. This should at least meet the national minimum rate set by the Department for Education. Foster carers are entitled to the same allowances, regardless of whether or not they are Family and Friends carers.		Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if these are not being paid to the parent	Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if these are not being paid to the parent	Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if these are not being paid to the parent Entitlement to assessment for financial support (part of adoption support) if child looked after prior to order.

	Private Fostering	Family Care (informal)	Family and Friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Child Arrangement Order (CAO)	Special Guardianship Order (SGO)	Adoption
Financial support - discretionary	LA has discretion to make one-off or regular payments under section 17 of the Children Act 1989		All foster carers in North Yorkshire receive allowances, premiums and fees in accordance with North Yorkshire County Council's Fostering Framework, laid out in our 'Guide to Fostering' northyorks.gov.uk/sites/default/files/fileroot/Health%20and%20social%20care/Children's%20social%20care/A_guide_to_fostering.pdf		The LA has the discretion to pay Child Arrangement Order Allowances. These are usually paid if the child was previously fostered, or (by exception) if making a Child Arrangement Order prevents a child becoming looked after. Allowances, where granted, will be means tested. Any allowance will be reviewed annually	Entitled to an assessment for financial support under the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 if the child looked after prior to the order meets the criteria in the regulations. Allowance, where paid subject to assessment, will be means-tested. Former foster carers' allowances can include an element of remuneration. Payments may be a combination of regular and one-off payments Any allowances will be reviewed annually	Subject to assessment, support allowances may be paid in either one-off or regular payments, or a combination of both.

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

“care plan” means the plan for the future care of a looked after child prepared in accordance with Part 2 of the 2010 Regulations;

“a child in need” is defined in section 17(10) of the 1989 Act, which provides that a child shall be taken to be in need if (a) he/she is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him/her of services by a local authority under this Part; (b) his/her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him/her of such services; or (c) he/she is disabled;

“child” means a person under the age of 18. Where the context particularly refers to older children the term “young person” is used;

“connected person” means a relative, friend, or other person connected with a looked after child. A person in the last category may be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as a childminder, a teacher or a youth worker although there are not exclusive categories;

“Family and Friends carer” means a relative, friend or other person with a prior connection with somebody else’s child who is caring for that child full time. An individual who is a “connected person” to a looked after child may also be a Family and Friends carer. A child who is cared for by a Family and Friends carer may or may not be looked after by the local authority;

“foster carer” means a person who is approved as a local authority foster parent (by a local authority or an independent fostering provider) in accordance with regulation 27 of the Regulations 2011, or temporarily approved under regulation 24 of the 2010 Regulations;

“informal arrangement” means an arrangement where a child is living with a Family and Friends carer who does not have parental responsibility for the child. References to “informal arrangements” in this guidance do not include arrangements where the child is looked after by the local authority or where the child is privately fostered, placed for adoption, or subject to a Child Arrangement Order or a special guardianship order. The legislation which governs these arrangements does not apply to an informal arrangement;

“looked after child” means a person under 18 who is subject to a care order under section 31 of the 1989 Act (including an interim care order), or is accommodated under section 20 of that Act;

“parent”, in relation to a child, includes any person who has parental responsibility for that child;

“parental responsibility” has the meaning given by section 3 of the 1989 Act, being all the rights, duties, powers responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property;

“private fostering arrangement” means an arrangement where a child who is under 16 (or 18 if disabled) and who has not been provided with accommodation by the local authority, is cared for and accommodated by someone who does not have parental responsibility for him/her and is not a relative, and the arrangement continues for a period of 28 days or more or is intended to do so;

“relative” means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent, as defined in section 105 of the 1989 Act;

“responsible authority” means, in relation to a looked after child, the local authority or voluntary organisation as the case may be, responsible for the child’s placement.

Appendix C: The Legislative Framework

This policy should be considered in the context of relevant legislation and statutory guidance including (list is not exhaustive):

- Family and Friends Care Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities
- The Children Act 1989 Regulations and associated statutory guidance
- Children Act 2004
- The Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Care Standards Act 2000
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (England) 2010 and associated statutory guidance
- The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and associated statutory guidance
- The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and associated statutory guidance
- Adoption and Children Act 2002 and associated statutory guidance
- Adoption National Minimum standards
- Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (as amended)
- Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 (as amended)
- The Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 and associated guidance
- Family and Friends Care: A Guide to Good Practice for Local Authorities - Family Rights Group 2009
- Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 and Special Guardianship (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- Working together to Safeguard Children Guidance.

Copies of the most recent statutory guidance can be accessed on www.gov.uk. Enter search term “*statutory guidance*” select topic “*parenting, childcare and children’s services*”.

Copies of legislation and regulations can be found at www.legislation.gov.uk



Appendix D: Useful Contacts and Support Groups

North Yorkshire County Council Website

The County Council website contains a wealth of information about local services. It includes an 'A to Z' facility to help people find the information they need quickly. The website can be accessed at the following address:

www.northyorks.gov.uk

Customer Service Centre

The Customer Service Centre provides the main doorway for people to access North Yorkshire County Council services by telephone and email. Staff will find an answer or deliver a service for a customer at first point of contact. On any occasions when they don't have the answer immediately staff will take ownership for a customer until they find a colleague who can help.

Telephone: **01609 780780**

Email: customer.services@northyorks.gov.uk

Family Information Service

Address: County Hall, Northallerton DL7 8AE

Internet: northyorks.gov.uk/nyfamilies Telephone: **01609 533483**

Email: FIS.information@northyorks.gov.uk

Early Help

Early Help is North Yorkshire's new approach to ensure children, young people and their families receive the right support at the right time to stop problems escalating.

In North Yorkshire we believe Early Help is a collaborative approach, not a provision. All children and young people will receive universal services; however some children and young people because of their needs or circumstances will require extra support to achieve their potential. Therefore the purpose of Early Help is to work together to resolve problems before they become overwhelming, long term and costly to the child, young person, family and the wider community. Early Help enables children, young people and their families that have become overwhelmed by difficulties to make better choices, learn new skills and have aspirations to turn their lives around.

Contact us

If you would like to speak to someone in your area about support from the Children and Families – Early Help Teams, please contact:

- **Central** (Selby, Hambleton, Richmondshire) – 01609 534829
- **West** (Harrogate, Knaresborough, Ripon, Craven) – 01609 534842

- **East** (Scarborough, Filey, Ryedale, Whitby) – 01609 534852

Children and family hubs.

Our children and family hubs are located across the county and provide services for children and young people aged 0-19 and their families.

Some of our activities are free for you to drop in, others need to be booked in advance, and some are by invitation or referral only. Just select your area below to download the full programme with details of what's on near you.

Feel free to contact your local children and family hub to find out more, ask any questions, or to register to join in.

Find out about the sessions, courses, activities, services and support our children and family hubs offer to families across North Yorkshire:
northyorks.gov.uk/children-and-family-hubs

Schools

northyorks.gov.uk/education-and-learning

Children's Social Care Services

northyorks.gov.uk/social-care-children

Support For Parents / Carers

northyorks.gov.uk/support-children-young-people-and-their-families

National Support Groups

Name	What they do?	Address	Contact details	Website
Action for Prisoners' Families	Works for the benefit of prisoners' and offenders' families by supporting families who are affected by imprisonment. They are also part of the Health and Care Voluntary Sector Strategic Partner Programme which brings the power of voluntary sector together with the health system, to improve services and promote well-being for all.	15-17 The Broadway Hatfield Hertfordshire AL9 5HZ	Tel: 020 7553 3080 Advice line: 0808 800 2222	www.familylives.org.uk
Addaction	Offers a range of support developed for families and carers affected by substance misuse	67-69 Cowcross Street, London, EC1M 6PU	Tel: 020 7251 5860 Email: info@addaction.org.uk	
Adfam	Works with families affected by drugs and alcohol, and supports carers of children whose parents have drug and alcohol problems	Adfam, 2nd Floor, 120 Cromer Street, London, WC1H 8BS	Tel: 020 3817 9410 Email: admin@adfam.org.uk	www.adfam.org.uk
Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)	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 disabilities (SEND) and bullying.	1c Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London, N5 2DQ ACE Education Advice and training, 72 Dumsford Road, London, N11 2EJ	Tel: 0808 800 5793 (General Advice Line) 0808 800 0327 (Exclusion Advice Line) 020 7704 9822 (Exclusion information line - 24hr answer phone) Tel: 0300 0115 142	www.ace-ed.org.uk

Name	What they do?	Address	Contact details	Website
Children's Legal Centre	Provides free independent legal advice and factsheets to children, parents, carers and professionals.	Coram Children's Legal Centre, Riverside Office Centre, Century House North, North Station Road, Colchester, CO1 1RE	Tel: 01206 714 650 (General enquires only) 0300 330 5480 (Child Law Advice Line) 0300 300 5485 (Community Legal Advice - Education) Email: info@coramclc.org.uk	www.childrenslegalcentre.com
Citizens Advice Bureaux	Helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice through local bureaux and website.			www.citizensadvice.org.uk
Civil Legal Advice	If you are on a low income or benefits, Civil Legal Advice can give you free legal advice on benefit appeals, debt, if your home is at risk, Special Educational Needs, housing, discrimination issues, domestic violence, issues around children being taken into care. They mainly offer advice only but you can also contact them by phone.		Tel: 0845 345 4345 (Mon-Thurs, 9am-8pm; Sat, 9am-12:30 pm)	www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice
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.	CoramBAAF, Coram Campus, 49 Mecklenburgh Square, London, WC1N 1AZ	Tel: 020 7520 0300 Email: advice@corambaaf.org.uk	www.corambaaf.org.uk
Coram Voice	Coram Voice enable and equips children and young people to hold to account the service that are responsible for their care. They uphold the rights of children and young people to actively participate in shaping their own lives.	Coram Voice, Gregory House, Coram Campus, 49 Mecklenburgh Square, London, WC1N 2QA	Tel: 0808 800 5792 (Monday to Friday 9:30am - 6pm and Saturday 10am - 4pm) Email: info@coramvoice.org.uk	www.coramvoice.org.uk

Name	What they do?	Address	Contact details	Website
Department for Education	The Department for Education is responsible for children's service and education, including higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England. They work to provide children's services and education that ensure opportunity is equal for all, no matter what their background or family circumstances.			www.gov.uk/government/organisations/departement-for-education
Family Fund	Helps families with severely disabled or seriously ill children to have choices and the opportunity to enjoy ordinary life. Give grants for things that make life easier and more enjoyable for the disabled child and their family.	4 Alpha Court, Monk Cross Drive, York, YO32 9WN	Tel: 01904 550 055 Email: info@familyfund.org.uk	www.familyfund.org.uk
Family Mediation Council	Provides information and advice about family mediation services and eligibility for public funding.		Tel: 01920 443 834	www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk
Family Rights Group (FRG)	Provides advice to parents and other family members whose children are involved with or require children's service because of welfare needs or concerns. Publishes resources, helps develop support groups for Family and Friends carers, and runs a discussion board.	Second Floor, The Print House, 18 Ashwin Street, London, E8 3DL	Tel: 020 7923 2628 Advice line: 0808 801 0366 Email: office@frg.ork.uk	www.frg.org.uk
The Fostering Network	Supports foster carers and anyone with an interest in fostering to improve the lives of children in care. Publishes resources and runs Fosterline.	87 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8HA	Tel: 020 7620 6400 24 hour legal helpline: 0345 013 5004 Email: info@fosteringnetwork.net	www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk
Fosterline	Confidential advice line for foster carers run by The Fostering Network, which provides independent, impartial advice about fostering issues, including concerns about a child's future, allegations and complaints, changes in legislation and financial matters		Tel: 0800 040 7675 (9am - 5pm Monday to Friday, except Wednesday when the line is open to 8pm). Email: enquiries@fosterline.info	www.fosterline.info

Name	What they do?	Address	Contact details	Website
Grandparents Plus	Grandparents Plus is the only national charity (England and Wales) dedicated to grandparents and their role in the care and development of their grandchildren.	1 Addington Square, London, SE5 0HF	Tel: 020 8981 8001 Email: advice@grandparentsplus.org.uk	www.grandparentsplus.org.uk
Mentor UK	Promotes the health and wellbeing of children and young people to reduce the damage that drugs can do to lives.	Mentor UK, 49-51 East Road, London, N1 6AH	Tel: 020 7553 9920 Email: admin@mentor.org	
National Family Mediation (NFM)	Provides mediation services to support couples who are separated, and their children and others affected by this.	Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter, EX1 1JN	Tel: 0300 4000 636 Email: general@nfm.org.uk	www.nfm.org.uk
Parents Against Drug Abuse (PADA)	PADA give support to any family member, partner or friend of substance misuser. Offer respite to grandparents who are primary carers of their grandchildren due to their son or daughters misuse of drugs.	Ellergreen Community Centre, Ellergreen Road, Liverpool Area, Liverpool, L11 2XY	Tel: 0151 270 2108 National Families Helpline: 08457 023 867	
Parentline Plus (merged with Family Lives)	Provides help and support in all aspects of family life, including information, an online chat facility and a 24 hour helpline.	15-17 The Broadway, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL9 5HZ	Tel: 0808 800 2222 (24hr Advice Line) Email: info@familylives.org.uk	www.familylives.org.uk
Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group	Operates a helpline and provides a variety of services to support anyone who has a link with someone in prison, prisoners and other agencies.	POPS, 1079 Rochdale Road, Blackley, Manchester, M9 8AJ	Tel: 0161 702 1000 Offenders' Families Helpline: 0808 808 2003 Email: mail@partnersofprisoners.co.uk	www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk

Name	What they do?	Address	Contact details	Website
Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)	The Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) is a national charity that provides support to prisoners, people with convictions, and their families. They support people to make a fresh start, and minimise the harm that can be caused by imprisonment on people who have committed offences, on families and on communities.	29 Peckham Road, Camberwell, London, SE5 8UA	Tel: 020 7735 9535	www.prisonadvice.org.uk
TalktoFrank	The government's national drugs helpline which offers free confidential drugs information and advice 24 hours a day. Information and advice is also available via the website.		Tel: 0300 123 6600 (24 hour advice line) Text: 82111 Email: frank@talktofrank.com	www.talktofrank.com
Young Minds	Works to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people and empowering their parents and carers	Baden Place, London, SE1 1YW	Tel: 020 7089 5050 Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544	www.youngminds.org.uk



Appendix E: Financial Support

North Yorkshire County Council Children and Young Peoples Services Means Test for Adoption, Child Arrangement Order and Special Guardianship Financial Support

The calculation of eligibility to weekly payments

The assessment is based on your disposable income, and so provides a thorough analysis of your financial situation. The key principles of the test are set out in this section.

The regulations on adoption, Child Arrangement Order and special guardianship support set out that there must be no reward element in financial payments other than as a transitional provision for foster carers adopting or becoming special guardians for a child for whom they are currently caring.

The overall approach used in the assessment is a “snapshot” of your current circumstances. By this, we mean that if the adopted, Child Arrangement Order or special guardian child is already living with you, then the child should be included in the calculations. If the child is not yet placed with you, then the child should not be included in the figures you provide.

If you are currently in receipt of income support, ESA, JSA or the limited capability for work element of Universal Credit then you automatically qualify for the maximum payment without the need for

assessment. Child benefit will not be deducted from this payment. You should still complete the assessment form for our records and include a copy of any relevant award notices, otherwise your application will not be processed.

Financial support paid to you under the regulations cannot duplicate (or be a substitute for) any payment to which you would be entitled under the tax and benefits system. The income maximisation team can direct you to any benefits you may be eligible to claim for the adopted, Child Arrangement Order or special guardian child. If you subsequently find that you are eligible for any such benefit, then you will be reassessed after three months.

Your allowance will normally be paid weekly. If you are including any amounts that are paid at any other frequency, then please indicate this on the form in the space provided.

The following details assessable income and outgoings that must be considered in the assessment:



Assessable Income

Type of Income - Pay	Evidence
Salary/Wages	
<p>Basic net monthly pay, before any deduction for savings schemes, social clubs, accommodation/food and loans.</p> <p>The income figure used should exclude any payments into pension funds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 wage slips if paid monthly; • 6 wage slips if paid weekly.
Self-Employment	
<p>Where one (or both if more than one) of you is self-employed, the only income that will be considered is “drawings” as this is the equivalent of your pay from an employer. Any profit from the business sitting in a bank account (and thereby not being reinvested) will be taken into account as capital under other sources of income.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax return prepared for Inland Revenue.
Overtime/Bonus	
<p>If one (or both if more than one) of you receives overtime, fees, bonus/commission and/or gratuities on a regular basis (for example annual bonuses) these should be included as part of your monthly income figure. For example, if the payments are annual, these should be divided by twelve to give a monthly amount to be included in the “basic net monthly pay” section.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wage slips; • Tax return prepared for Inland Revenue.

Benefits and Pensions (for parents and carers)	Evidence
Where you receive individual benefits (i.e. those that are not related to the household these should be included in this section. If the benefit is received weekly, then please indicate this on the form.	
The following benefits and pensions are assessable income:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer's sick pay (after compulsory deductions) • Incapacity Benefit; • Statutory maternity, paternity and/or adoption pay and/or maternity allowance; • Bereavement Benefit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wage slip; • Notification from DWP; • Correspondence from DWP/employer; • Notification from DWP.
All Pension payments received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement from pension provider; • Bank statement.
Working Tax Credit (if paid directly and not as part of pay and excluding any childcare element received).	
If you are employed, you will receive working tax credit within pay from your employer. If this is the case, the amount will be included in the basic net monthly pay section. If you receive working tax credit you will receive an award notice which sets out how much you receive. This will provide the information you need for this section of the form. You should include a copy of the award notice with your application. Where a childcare element is paid as part of the working tax credits, this should be disregarded for the income section of the form. The existence of this type of credit should be considered when completing the expenditure section on childcare.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award notice from DWP.
Other benefits i.e. carer's allowance, PIP, help with the costs associated with disability or mobility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award notice from DWP

Benefits (payable to the family and other children)	Evidence
Where benefits are received by your family or household, as opposed to being paid directly to you as parents, they should be recorded in this section. This is primarily for benefits which are calculated on the basis of household composition. Benefits to be included in this section are:	
Child tax credit per household for each child, at the time that you complete the form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award notice from DWP.
Child Benefit for each child excluding the child/children who are the subject of this assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award notice from DWP; • Bank statement.
Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance. If a member of the household receives any of these then the amount per household should be recorded here.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence with DWP.
Housing benefit should also be included in this section, as it is disregarded for the purposes of the expenditure section below	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award notice from DWP.
Universal Credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP Universal Credit decision letter



Other Sources of Income	Evidence
<p>Capital - Where you receive income from capital, savings and/or investments this will be assessed in terms of net interest received. This is income that is routinely available to you, and should be clearly shown on any statements. Any interest received from Government Child Trust Funds should not be included in this section.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank statements; • Statements of holdings of shares; • Savings accounts.
<p>Income received from boarders/lodgers will be treated as follows. From the total weekly income received from boarders / lodgers, £20 will be disregarded. 50% of the excess over £20 will then be counted as income. This is how income from boarders/lodgers is calculated for income support purposes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from Landlord • Bank Statement
<p>Income from unfurnished rented property</p> <p>Deductions can be made for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest payments on mortgage (but not mortgage capital payments); • Repairs; • Council tax (if paid by family being assessed); • Agents fees; • Insurance (Buildings). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax return prepared for Inland Revenue; • Bank statements.
<p>Income from furnished rented property</p> <p>The same calculation applies as above for unfurnished property, but an extra 10% deduction from the monthly rent received can be made as a “wear and tear allowance”. The approach used above is consistent with that used for calculating income from property for the purposes of income tax. If you have completed a recent tax return you should include a copy of this with your application. The tax return will have the information needed for this section of the assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax return prepared for Inland Revenue; • Bank statements.
<p>Maintenance payments received for any child in the household and existing adoption, Child Arrangement Order or special guardianship allowances paid for any child that may have been adopted previously and whom you are receiving an allowance for.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence; • Bank account.
<p>Adoption and Special Guardianship allowance for a child placed with the family by another local authority</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence; • Bank Account

Income Related to the Adopted or Special Guardianship Child	Evidence
This section relates to the child/children being adopted, who is placed under a Child Arrangement Order or becoming a special guardian child only.	
Any regular interest on capital and/or income in which the child/children has a legal interest or entitlement should be included here. This could be, for example, a savings account, trust fund, property or other legacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank statements; • Statements of holdings of shares; • Savings accounts.
Payments from Criminal Injuries Compensation Awards should not be included. Any interest received from Child Trust Funds or Junior ISA should not be included in this section.	
Other income to which the child/children might be entitled. This section does not record child benefit for the adopted, Child Arrangement Order or special guardian child, which will be deducted from the final payment resulting from this means test.	

Income Calculation

Once the final total for income has been reached, 20% of this will be disregarded.



Assessable Outgoings

Home Expenditure	Evidence
Mortgage payments - capital and interest. This may include endowment payments linked to the mortgage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correspondence/statements from mortgage provider; Correspondence/statements from endowment provider.
Rent - Monthly amount payable after any deductions for Housing Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correspondence from Landlord Bank statement.
Council Tax - amount actually paid after the deduction of any council tax benefit received by the household or discount for single adult households or second homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Tax statement; Bank statement.
Other Outgoings	Evidence
Repayments of loans - If you have regular monthly outgoings on loans for home improvements or transport, you should include them in this section. We will then decide whether the loan repayment can be used as part of your expenditure calculation. If the loan can be directly linked to additional cost as a result of the adoption, special guardianship, Child Arrangement Order then we would normally allow it as legitimate expenditure. You should include a copy of any loan agreement with your application, and a brief explanation of how the loan is directly linked to the additional cost of the adoption, Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correspondence/Statement from loan provider.
Maintenance Payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Court Orders; Correspondence with Child Maintenance Service; Bank statements.
Court Orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Court Order.
Private pension contributions and National Insurance contributions if self-employed or not working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correspondence; Bank statements.
Reasonable Childcare costs - (after any childcare element paid as part of the parents' Working Tax Credit). We will assess your family's circumstances, the hours that you work and local costs for child care services to decide what is reasonable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invoices/receipts from childcare provider.

Additional needs in relation to the child subject to the application	Evidence
This section should be completed where a child needs special care which requires greater expenditure of resources by reason of illness, disability, emotional or behavioural difficulties or the continuing consequences of past abuse or neglect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expenditure must be evidenced in writing and receipts provided. Please enclose this evidence along with your completed application form.

Calculation

Core Regular Family Expenditure

General household expenditure on items such as food, transport, clothes and recreation is missing from the form but will be calculated using the Income Support allowance rates, but increased by 25%. The following shows the current (2020/21) rates:

Personal Allowance	Normal Weekly rate	125% of normal weekly rate (for use in this means test)
Single adult aged 16-17	£58.90	£73.63
Single adult aged 18-24	£58.90	£73.63
Single adult aged 25 or over	£74.35	£92.94
Couples both aged 18 or over	£116.80	£146.00
Lone parent aged 16-17	£58.90	£73.63
Lone parent aged 18 or over	£74.35	£92.94
Dependent children	£68.27	£85.34

We will calculate the appropriate allowance for you based on the makeup of your family. This is why we ask for details of the makeup of your family. For example, for a household with a couple (parents) and two dependent children, the core regular family expenditure should be recorded as £316.68 (made up of couples' allowance of £146.00 and an allowance of £170.68 for dependent children of £85.34 each).

Where your family's disposable income is less than £0, we will pay the maximum allowance which is linked to basic fostering rates.

Where your family's disposable income is higher than £0, the percentage of the maximum payment that you will receive will be tapered at a set rate of 50%. Essentially this means that for every pound of disposable income a family is found to have, we will deduct 50 pence from the weekly maximum payment.

The appropriate amount of child benefit for the child/children who are the subject of the assessment will be deducted from the payment calculation to reflect the fact that this will be additional income which you will be eligible to claim. The final payment will therefore be the calculation of the means test minus child benefit.

Contact us

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You can request this information in another language or format at

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