



North Yorkshire
County Council

FAMILY & FRIENDS CARE POLICY

**NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARE POLICY
TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	Page Number
1. Introduction and Philosophy of the Policy	4
2. The Scope of the Policy	4
3. Context	5
4. Values, Principles and Objectives	6
5. Legal Framework	6
6. Evidence Base	8
7. Management Accountability	8
8. Prevention	8
 Section A: Informal /Private arrangements and children in need	
9. Introduction	10
10. Private Fostering	10
11. Financial Support	11
12. Non-financial Support and Services	11
13. Accommodation Support	12
14. Supporting Contact	12
 Section B: Arrangements for Children who are Looked after Children	
15. Non-financial Support	13
16. Financial Support	13
17. Training	13
18. Accommodation	13
19. Education and Health Section	13
 Section C: Permanence and legal orders	
20. Introduction	15
21. Legal Fees	15
22. Special Guardianship Financial Support	15
23. Child Arrangement Orders and Financial Support	16
24. Adoption Order Financial Support	17
25. Non-financial Support	17
26. Supporting Contact	18
27. Advice and Enquiries	18
28. Appeals	18
28. Feedback and Complaints	19

Appendices

Appendix A	Glossary of terms
Appendix B	Research and evidence base
Appendix C	The legislative framework
Appendix D	Entitlement to support by family and friends carers under Children Act 1989 section 17 and section 20, (reproduced from the DfES Family and Friends Statutory Guidance 2011)
Appendix E	Support arrangements – family & friends foster Care
Appendix F	Details of a range of local and national organisations providing helpful support and information to family and friends carers

Revised March 2018

1. INTRODUCTION AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE POLICY

North Yorkshire County Council has produced this policy to provide clear information and guidance to family and friends caring for children whose own parents are unable to care for them. The key principle of the policy is that, wherever it is safe, appropriate and in the child's best interests to do so, children and young people should be enabled and supported to live within their families or with close friends. The needs of the child will be paramount to the council when facilitating or supporting caring arrangements.

A 'family and friends carer' is a relative, friend or other person known to the child or young person who is caring for that child full time. A full glossary of terms used is set out at Appendix A to assist with technical or legalistic words. This policy has been produced by the council having had regard to all of the reported law and statutory guidance. Appendix C sets out all of the legislation and guidance that has been considered.

While every effort has been made to ensure that all of this information is correct as at the date of publication namely June 2012, it shouldn't be used as a substitute for obtaining your own legal advice. It is intended that this policy will be reviewed and updated in September 2014 and every two years after.

The council intends that this policy be as clear as possible, but wherever you require further clarification then the council will be happy to respond to requests for further information, by email to: Vicky.Metherinham@northyorks.gov.uk or by post to: Room SB008, North Yorkshire County Council, Racecourse Lane, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 8AE

North Yorkshire County Council will promote permanence for children by working to enable family and friends caring arrangements wherever that is a better alternative than local authority care. Permanent arrangements with family or friends may need to be strengthened by the granting of a residence, special guardianship or adoption order and the council policy is intended to ensure that the best order should be sought for the children concerned rather than decisions be made by friends and family because one order will afford them more financial support than an other for example.

The wishes and views of the child will always be taken into account and the welfare of the child will be the paramount consideration when caring arrangements are being made or facilitated. The wishes and views of Special Guardians and family friends carers will also be taken into account to ensure they receive the support they require to ensure the welfare of children is met.

2. THE SCOPE OF THE POLICY

A child who is cared for by a family and friends carer may or may not be looked after by the local authority. This document is divided into two main sections , Section A - which sets out the support and services for children who are looked after by friends and family carers under informal or private arrangements between the carers and the parents which may or may not be known about by the council, and a separate Section B - which sets out the support financial and non-financial and services provided for children who are 'looked after' by the council or who are living in a placement which has been brokered or

arranged by the council as an alternative to the children having to be placed in stranger foster care.

3. CONTEXT

Family and friends carers play a unique and often vital role in enabling children and young people to remain with people they know and trust if they cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents. These children may or may not be looked after by the local authority, or even known to it. The majority of the relatives who provide care are grandparents, aunts and uncles, but the group includes others such as older siblings, cousins and family friends. Research shows that many children who cannot live with their own parents can do well in friends and family placements but that the carers may want and need support to enable them to meet the needs of the child or children that they care for.

Often children go to live with family and friends carers because their own parents are unable to cope or for example need to go into hospital. This may be in an emergency or planned and may be a short or a long term situation. Taking on the care of a friend or relatives child will often mean huge upheaval for the carer and can impact upon the carers own family and financial circumstances significantly. The council aim to ensure that all children who have to live apart from their birth family have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond. Wherever possible, and when it is in the child's best interests, this will be achieved without the child becoming looked after by the local authority.

The council aim to ensure that they and their partner agencies ensure that family and friends carers are aware of the help and support that can be provided for them. Where support services are identified as necessary to meet the child's needs, these will not be withheld merely because the child is living with a carer under an informal arrangement rather than in a placement with a foster carer or with a person with a residence or special guardianship order or an adopter.

The council aims to provide effective early interventions to meet the needs of children and their families and to stop children becoming 'looked after' wherever it is safe and in their best interests to do so.

For children who do become 'looked after', the council policy is to offer a range of support to ensure that such placements are adequately supported regardless of whether they are classed as friend and family foster carers or the children are placed under a Residence Order/Child Arrangement Order, Special Guardianship Order or an Adoption Order and so that the best permanent solution for each child can be found without there being any financial incentive or disincentive for a particular type of order over another.

4. VALUES, PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

North Yorkshire County Council is committed to ensuring that the needs of children in family and friends care are fully understood and that effective strategies, policies and services are developed and implemented specifically with the needs of these children in mind.

The key principle of the Children Act 1989 is that children should be enabled to live within their families unless this is not consistent with their welfare.

With this principle in mind, North Yorkshire County Council is committed to:

- 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
- 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.
- Working in collaboration with local partners to promote and support the needs of children living with family and friends carers, whether or not they are looked after
- Providing regularly updated information that is made freely and widely available and publicised by relevant means
- Consulting with and listen to the views of children and young people, family and friends carers and parents, as appropriate, when drawing up policies. Consultation to include children and adults with disabilities, using appropriate communication methods.

5. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

There are a number of ways in which children can live with people other than their birth parents - the legislative framework and statutory guidance which underpins this Policy is set out in Appendix D.

The majority of family and friends carers act informally, by agreement with those holding parental responsibility for the children they care for. Providing they are a relative of the child as defined by section 105 of the Children Act 1989 or have parental responsibility for the child, there is no requirement to notify the local authority of the arrangement. Most of these arrangements remain entirely private without the need for the involvement

of North Yorkshire County Council although where a child is assessed as 'being in need'; support may be provided under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

A child shall be taken to be in need if:

- (a) s/he 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 her/him 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; or
- (c) s/he is disabled.

'Family' in relation to such a child, includes any person who has parental responsibility for the child and any other person with whom, s/he has been living.

Additionally consideration should be given to the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011. In performing their duty under paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 of the 1989 Act (1), a local authority must:

- (a) have regard to the needs of those carers who would be unable to continue to provide care unless breaks from caring were given to them; and
- (b) have regard to the needs of those carers who would be able to provide care for their disabled child more effectively if breaks from caring were given to them to allow them to:
 - (i) undertake education, training or any regular leisure activity
 - (ii) meet the needs of other children in the family more effectively, or
 - (iii) carry out day to day tasks which they must perform in order to run their household.

Other legal arrangements include children looked after by the Local Authority under section 31 of Children Act 1989 (courts make these decisions about children being looked after) or accommodated by the Local Authority under section 20 of the Children Act 1989. In both cases children may be cared for by family and friends 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.

Further legal arrangements for children to live with family and friends include Adoption Orders under the Adoption and Children Act 2002; Special Guardianship Orders under Section 14A of the Children Act 1989, Child Arrangement Orders/Residence Orders under the Children Act 1989 and Private Fostering under Section 66 of the Children Act 1989.

6. EVIDENCE BASE

Research and Best Practice

This policy is based on evidence about what works in supporting family and friends' carers. This evidence includes findings from published research and lessons learned from best practice in other local authorities. A summary of this evidence can be found at Appendix B.

7. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

The Head of Looked After Children is accountable, on behalf of the Director of Children's Services, for monitoring the way in which the authority discharges its responsibilities in accordance with the Family and Friends Care Statutory Guidance and this policy.

The Head of Looked After Children will ensure that the partner agencies in the North Yorkshire Children's Trust are aware of their responsibilities towards children and young people living in family and friends care, and are proactive in meeting those needs.

North Yorkshire County Council will implement this policy consistently and fairly, ensuring that services are available regardless of where, within the authority, families live. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken to inform the development of this policy and determine the impact on different groups with a particular focus on the additional impacts of geographic's and deprivation.

North Yorkshire County Council will aim to ensure that there is a strong awareness of family and friends care amongst professionals who work with children and families, an awareness of some of the particular challenges that can face these arrangements, a broad knowledge of services available for family and friends carers, and a sector-wide commitment to promote and support the use of family and friends care where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

8. PREVENTION

It is a priority of North Yorkshire County Council's Children & Young People's Service to reduce the number of children who are in care. As a result, wherever possible, the service will seek to prevent children and young people entering care, provided that to do so is both safe and demonstrably in the best interest of the child or young person.

North Yorkshire County Council will pursue a range of interventions to help families to resolve their difficulties and so avoid or reduce the need for children and young people to be placed in care arrangements.

One of these interventions is called a Family Group Conference (FGC). An FGC may be appropriate for any situation in which there is a possibility that a child or young person

may not be able to live with their parents. The FGC brings together members of the wider family and encourages them to consider the concerns about the child or young person and to work out their own solutions. This process assists the social worker in assessment and planning, by ensuring that all alternatives to care have been considered. FGCs may also identify relatives or friends who can offer respite support to parents.

SECTION A: INFORMAL/PRIVATE ARRANGEMENTS AND CHILDREN IN NEED

9. INTRODUCTION

Many family and friends carers act informally in private arrangements between themselves and the child's parents. The majority of family and friends carers act informally by agreement with those holding parental responsibility for the children and young people they care for. For example, a family member may take early action to help a parent they view as struggling to care for their children. Providing they are a close relative or have parental responsibility for the child, there is no requirement to notify the local authority of the arrangement.

However, in some cases, the local authority will have a number of statutory powers and duties which family and friends carers should be aware of, specifically where the child is identified as a 'child in need'. The aim of the council's policy is to ensure that these children and their carers are provided with the assistance and support that they need. The Council's policy with regard to 'Looked After' children is set out in Section B of this document.

Informal or private arrangements are those made by birth parent(s) for the full time care and protection of their children, living apart from them with their family or friends. Usually formal parental responsibility will remain with the birth parents but with day to day parenting tasks and decisions delegated to the friends and family carers. Many of these informal arrangements work well and will not come to the attention of the Council.

In some cases where the children are cared for by someone other than a close relative these arrangements may fall under private fostering regulations and the council may be involved with providing services to these children and families to support the arrangements, to promote and safeguard the child's welfare and prevent the children becoming looked after.

An explanation of the different legal frameworks which might apply when caring for somebody else's child is set out in Appendix D.

10. PRIVATE FOSTERING

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 arrangement with the private foster carer and is responsible for any financial payments in respect of the child. Child benefit and child tax credits can be claimed by the private foster carer.

North Yorkshire County Council has a duty to assess and monitor the welfare of all privately fostered children and the way in which they carry out these duties is set out in the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005. However, the local authority may also become involved with a child in a private fostering arrangement where the child comes within the definition of a Child in Need.

11. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Informal and private fostering family and friends carers may be eligible for financial support from North Yorkshire County Council. In order to inform decisions about the level of financial support that should be provided to family and friends carers, North Yorkshire County Council will apply the following principles:

Parents will always be expected to make appropriate financial arrangements with the carer to enable the carer to care for the child. However, if a child's needs cannot be met by a family member or friend without financial support in the short term, North Yorkshire County Council may, with the agreement of the parents, provide financial support to the arrangement under section 17 (Children Act 1989) rather than accommodate the child under section 20 (Children Act 1989) so long as this is consistent with the child's welfare and if this deemed appropriate following assessment. In all cases, the carers will be expected to access universal benefits in the first instance as the Local Authority cannot duplicate state benefits. The team manager cannot make any regular ongoing section 17 payments to this set of individuals without agreement from the Family and Friends panel.

Before considering taking on a commitment to a child, carers can access information about the level of support, including any financial assistance, that they may be offered. This will include how finances have been or will be calculated and how long this support will last.

It is an expectation that any family and friends carers will access universal financial support in the means of entitled benefits in advance of approaching the local authority for financial assistance:

- Child Benefit
- Child Tax credits (or Universal benefit when this applies)
- Welfare benefits (or Universal benefit when this applies).

Decision making about financial support will be made based on a set of objective financial assessment criteria recommended by the Department for Education. Financial support will, in most instances, be means-tested. Decision making will be made consistently with regard to the principles set out in this policy document. Family and friends carers will be signposted to the local authority's policies on family and friends care at key points (i) considering a family and friends arrangement (ii) applying for a Child Arrangement Order, Special Guardianship Order, Adoption Order (iii) applying for financial support.

12. NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND SERVICES

Family and friends carers in informal or private arrangements and for children in need are eligible for the same non-financial support and services provided to other carers by North Yorkshire County Council. 'Looked After' children's health and education needs are afforded priority as set out in paragraph 18 of Section B of this policy.

Where family and friends carers request additional support, North Yorkshire County Council will work with them, partner agencies and voluntary organisations to help find or signpost them to the most appropriate resources to meet that need.

Family and friends carers are able to access the range of universal, targeted and specialist services for children and young people available to all families in the county. Appendix K contains contact details for many of these services.

13. ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT

Where there are physical limitations to the size of a property or its amenities, North Yorkshire County Council will support family and friends carers in any discussions they may require with their local District Council Housing Options Team to ascertain the best way forward for supporting the care and accommodation of a child. However, North Yorkshire County Council will not normally consider financial support for extensions to properties. District Council Housing Options Teams are able to provide advice and might be able to provide financial assistance in the form of grants for adaptations to properties.

14. SUPPORTING CONTACT

North Yorkshire County Council has a duty to promote contact for all children in need, including children who live away from home but are not looked after, where the contact promotes and is consistent with the child's welfare. 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 may be provided.

SECTION B: ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

15. NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Family and friends foster carers of looked after children may be able to access a wide range of support services. A table of these local and national services is set out in Appendix F.

Where family and friends carers request additional support, North Yorkshire County Council will work with them, partner agencies and voluntary organisations to help find and signpost the most appropriate resources to meet that need.

16. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Council wants to ensure that where children are placed with family and friends carers by the council instead of them going into local authority foster care that the carers are always able to meet the basic costs associated with caring for that child or children.

All friends and family foster carers who have 'looked after' children placed with them will be entitled to an allowance per child under the fostering framework.

17. TRAINING

Family and friends foster carers will be able to access training and support through North Yorkshire County Council's Fostering Service.

18. ACCOMMODATION

Where there are physical limitations to the size of a property or its amenities, North Yorkshire County Council will support family and friends carers in any discussions they may require with their local District Council Housing Options Team to ascertain the best way forward for supporting the care and accommodation of a child. However, North Yorkshire County Council will not normally consider financial support for extensions to properties. District Council Housing Options Teams are able to provide advice and might be able to provide financial assistance in the form of grants for adaptations to properties.

19. EDUCATION & HEALTH

The Education for Looked After Children (ELAC) Virtual School is responsible for raising attainment, monitoring progress and removing barriers to learning of all looked after children cared for by North Yorkshire County Council.

This includes those educated within North Yorkshire or elsewhere in the country. There is also a monitoring and intervention role for those looked after children who attend a North Yorkshire School but who are cared for by another Local Authority.

Looked After Children are supported in accessing annual health and dental checks.

SECTION C: PERMANENCE AND LEGAL ORDERS

20. INTRODUCTION

At any stage of the assessment process where it is considered in the child's best interests, will promote their welfare and achieve a permanence arrangement, consideration will be given to supporting the carers to apply for an appropriate legal order giving them parental responsibility. The relevant orders are a Child Arrangement Order, Special Guardianship Order or an Adoption Order.

In 2017, a link was added in the Relevant Legislation and Guidance Section to Family Rights Group - Initial Family and Friends Care Assessment: A Good Practice Guide. Please see attached link.

<https://www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/family-and-friends-carers/assessment-tool>

This addition sets out best practice as to how viability assessments should be conducted. It links what factors social workers conducting the assessment need to consider including when undertaking assessments with family members overseas. It also includes research evidence, a schedule and example template and an information sheet for a family and friends carer.

North Yorkshire County Council will review the child's care plan through the care planning process to ensure that the child does not remain looked after for longer than is needed and where financial support is not the primary reason for maintaining that status. The review will be chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer.

Family and friends foster carers who are offering a potential permanent placement for a child will have access to on-going support services irrespective of the legal status of the child and will be eligible for practical and financial support following an assessment of need, the allowance currently being paid to the carer and the drawing up of a support plan.

21. LEGAL FEES

North Yorkshire County Council will consider the payment of the legal costs of carers to apply for a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement Order where it supports the application and where not doing so would lead to the child/ren remaining looked after unnecessarily or where there are exceptional circumstances.

Decisions about these discretionary payments will be made by the Family and Friends Policy Panel.

22. SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP FINANCIAL SUPPORT

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

A special guardian formally takes on the legal powers and responsibility of parenting a child until their 18th birthday. This includes taking most decisions to do with the child's upbringing, including where the child lives and goes to school, and what medical treatment they receive.

Relatives, friends or foster carers may apply for a Special Guardianship Order after caring for the child for one year, or sooner with the leave of the court. 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 Residence Order/Child Arrangement Order.

Special Guardianship Orders may be made in private family proceedings and the local authority may not be a party to any such arrangements. However, North Yorkshire County Council will be responsible for sending a report to the court regarding whether a Special Guardianship Order is in the child's best interest. A Special Guardianship Order can be made in favour of a relative or foster carer with whom a child is living and may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need or a 'Looked After' child.

A special guardian (or someone who has applied for a Special Guardianship Order) may ask the local authority to assess their need for support including financial support and, if the child was looked after by the local authority immediately before the Special Guardianship Order was made, the local authority must carry out an assessment and give a copy of the report to the special guardian. When the local authority carries out an assessment it must decide what support, if any, it will offer.

Special guardians can seek therapeutic financial support through the Adoption Support Fund (ASF). A Child in Need assessment will be undertaken to assess and identify the child's therapeutic needs and this will be set out in the SGO Support Plan. Applications to the ASF will be completed by the allocated social worker.

23. CHILD ARRANGEMENT ORDERS FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Child Arrangement Orders were introduced in April 2014, by the Children and Families Act 2014. They replace Contact orders and Residence orders.

A Child Arrangement Order (CAO) gives parental responsibility to the person to whom the order is made, parental responsibility remains shared with the parents following the making of a Child Arrangement Order.

In the case of a child who was looked after by the same carer immediately prior to the making of a Child Arrangements Order, there is currently no specific statutory guidance regarding any assessment which should be undertaken by the council for support services, which may include financial support.

The Council wants however to ensure that the most appropriate order for each child is made and that the choice of such order should not be motivated by financial reasons alone. The Council will pay a Child Arrangement Order Allowance where this is the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. The Council has in place a discretionary scheme whereby family and friends carers who have applied for a Child Arrangement Order with regard to formerly Looked After children can apply to the

Council in writing to be assessed for financial and non-financial support. The maximum allowance – subject to an assessment that the council can pay to the holder of a Child Arrangement Order is set at the same maximum rate as it is for the holders of Special Guardianship Orders.

The Child Arrangements Order Allowance rates are subject to the Department of Education suggested means-test model. Child benefit that would be received by the Child Arrangement Order holder in relation to the child or children concerned will always be deducted from the financial support that the council provides unless the holder of the order is in receipt of income support.

In exceptional circumstances, the Council may also consider paying a Child Arrangement Order allowance where the caring arrangement leading to the making of the Child Arrangement Order was an alternative to the child becoming Looked After. Payments may not be made to parents with Residence Orders/Child Arrangement Orders. Requests for an allowance in these or any other exceptional circumstances may only be determined by a core assessment.

24. ADOPTION ORDER FINANCIAL SUPPORT

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 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.

North Yorkshire County Council's Adoption Service provides a range of adoption support services in conjunction with partner agencies. An assessment for adoption support services can be requested by 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 a range of support and advice and also financial support in some cases.

Adopted families can seek therapeutic financial support through the Adoption Support Fund (ASF). The adoption support assessment will assess and identify therapeutic needs and will be set this out in the Adoption Support Plan. Applications to the ASF will be completed by the adoption social worker.

The maximum allowance that the council can pay to the holder of an Adoption Order is set at the same maximum rate as it is for the holders of Special Guardianship Orders and Residence/Child Arrangement Orders. The Adoption Order Allowance Rates are also subject to the Department of Education's suggested means test model.

25. NON FINANCIAL SUPPORT

North Yorkshire County Council's aim is to ensure Special Guardian carers receive the support they need to meet the needs of the children they care for. This is to ensure that

the non-financial support identified in the Special Guardian Regulations is available if required.

As required by the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005, North Yorkshire County Council provides support groups for adopters, adopted children and birth parents.

There is no statutory duty for local authorities to provide specific support groups for other family and friends carers, but North Yorkshire County Council recognises the value of such support. Family and friends carers are welcome and supported to access the existing support groups listed above.

26. SUPPORTING CONTACT

In relation to looked after children, North Yorkshire County Council has a duty to promote contact between the child and their parents, any other person with parental responsibility for the child, and any relative, friend or other person connected with the child, unless it is not reasonably practical or consistent with the child's welfare.

Where required, North Yorkshire County Council will provide support and guidance to assist family and friends carers in meeting the child's needs in relation to contact with parents and other family members.

North Yorkshire County Council will provide information and advice to family and friends carers about local contact centres and family mediation services, and how to make use of these services.

In some cases there will be a court order in place which defines the contact arrangements, including supervision requirements.

27. ADVICE AND ENQUIRIES

Vicky Metheringham
Head of Looked After Children
SB005, North Yorkshire County Council, County Hall, Northallerton, DL7 8AE
Telephone: 01609 534900
E-mail: Vicky.Metheringham@northyorks.gov.uk

28. APPEALS

Where family and friends carers are not satisfied with the level of financial or non-financial support provided, the local authority operates a two-stage appeal process.

Stage 1

If the level of financial support is contested on arithmetic or calculation reasons, the appeal will be considered by the Assistant Director for Children and Families, in the first

instance. If the level of financial support is contested on grounds that the financial assessment outcome insufficiently addresses the needs of a child or young person (or for any other reason), then the appeal will be considered by the Family and Friends Panel. This will be chaired by a senior social care practitioner (usually Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care, Head of Safeguarding or Head of Effective Practice and Quality Assurance). Decision-making will be transparent and informed by evidence-based practice and reference to this policy, other NYCC policy documents, legislation and regulations. Decision will be communicated to the appellant.

Stage 2

If an appellant is not satisfied with the Family and Friends Panel decision, an appeal may be made to the Family and Friends (Independent) Panel. This comprises 3 Panel members who are independent of the local authority. Both the appellant and the local authority will be afforded the opportunity to state their case/ position. The Panel will make their decision with reference to this Policy, regulations and legislation. The Panel do not, however, have the power or discretion to change or alter the scope or intention of the Policy. Decisions made by the Family and Friends (Independent) Panel will be considered binding – appellants will have exhausted their appeal at the end of Stage 2.

29 FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

In accordance with the Children Act 1989 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 a 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:

<http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=9593&p=0>

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 0800616101
Text 077733455
Email help@nyas.net

APPENDIX A: 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 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 of services by a local authority under this Part; (b) his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or (c) he 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 residence 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 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 B: RESEARCH EVIDENCE

KEY FINDINGS

General

- Grandparents and aunts and uncles (usually on the maternal side) are the principle providers of family and friends care in the UK (DfE, 2010).
- Family / friends carers are more likely to persevere with a difficult placement than non related carers, even when under stress (Broad, 2007).
- Children placed with grandparents are most likely to remain in the family (86%) with those placed with aunts and uncles next (65%) (Broad, 2007).
- Family and friends care makes a positive and undervalued contribution to placement stability (Broad, 2007) and maintaining contact with birth parents and children's connections with siblings and wider family (Aldgate, 2006, Hunt et al 2008).
- Children in family / friends care living arrangements had far less contact with birth fathers than mothers (Aldgate, 2006, Hunt et al 2008).
- Grandparents are especially committed carers, but this can impact on their health, well being and financial situation (Broad, 2007).
- Where the local authority does need to become involved, robust assessments focusing on risk and resilience, and the provision of appropriate support are vital for family / friend care living arrangements to succeed (Broad, 2007).
- Two studies suggest that between 66% and 85% of family and friend care arrangements are initiated by local authorities (Farmer and Moyers 2006, Hunt et al, 2008).
- Family and friends carers can make a strong contribution to sustaining children's identity, positive self image and Cultural continuity (Broad, 2007).
- Family Group Conferences have an important role in helping families to clarify plans, roles and responsibilities for children living with a family and friends carer (Aldgate, 2006, Hunt et al, 2008).
- Unlike looked after children in non-related placements, social workers were more peripheral in the lives of children living with a family / friend carer (Aldgate, 2006, Hunt et al, 2008).
- One study suggests that children in family and friends care appear to maintain a wider set of relationships and connections to their family and community than those

in non-related foster care (Nixon, 2007). A different study suggests that this network is smaller than those children living with a parent (especially if the family / friend care is a sole grandparent) (Hunt et al 2008).

- Children in a family and friend living arrangement are more likely to report that they are satisfied with their care than those in non-related care– including reporting feeling safe and trusting their carers (Hunt et al 2008).
- Farmer and Moyers found that family and friends foster placements lasted on average 4 years 9 months compared to 3 years 11 months for placements with unrelated foster carers. They judged that family and friends carers sometimes persisted with children beyond the point at which unrelated carers gave up, and showed higher levels of commitment to the children.
- Farmer and Moyers reported that significantly more family and friends carers had little or no social work support compared with unrelated foster carers, and that placements were significantly more likely to survive if the child had an allocated social worker. Hunt et al reported gaps in provision of support services even when the local authority was still involved, and that better provision could have prevented some placements from ending prematurely.
- Hunt J and Waterhouse S (2012) Understanding family and friends care: the relationship between need, support and legal status – Carers’ experiences (FRG/Oxford University Centre for Family Law and Policy)
In depth interviews with 95 households.
- Aziz R and Roth D (2012) Understanding family and friends care: analysis of the social and economic circumstances of family and friends carers (FRG)
Analysis of Government’s “Understanding Society” carers survey of 77 kinship care children living in 68 households, contrasting them with other families from the same study.
- Ashley C Ed. Authors Aziz R, Roth D and Lindley B (2012) Understanding family and friends care: The largest UK survey (FRG)
Survey of 493 carers raising 762 kinship children.

Maximising the Appropriate Use of Family and Friends Care

The research evidence, although not conclusive, is broadly supportive of family and friends care as a viable option and suggests scope for greater use. Farmer and Moyers found that 86% of the placements made with family and friends foster carers came about because relatives or friends offered to care for the children or were already doing so, whilst only 4% were initiated by the social worker. The Campbell Collaborative concluded that family and friend’s care can enhance the behavioural development, mental health functioning, and placement stability of children, but attention must be paid to increasing levels of support.

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APPENDIX C: THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

This policy should be considered in the context of the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Family and Friends Care-Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities , published March 2011
- The Children Act 1989 Regulations and associated statutory guidance
- The Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (England) and statutory guidance 2010
- The Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011
- The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and associated guidance
- Adoption and Children Act 2002 and associated guidance
- 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
- Family and Friends Care: A Guide to Good Practice for Local Authorities - Family Rights Group 2009

The following section provides further information about different caring arrangements including (i) children in need, and (ii) Looked After Children

(i) CHILDREN IN NEED

Definition of Children in Need

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 sets out the definition for ‘children in need’ as: “... children and young people who need local authority services to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development; or children and young people who need local authority services to prevent significant or further harm to their health or development; or children and young people who are disabled”.

Functions of the Local Authority in Respect of Children in Need

Under Section 17 of the Children’s Act 1989, the local authority has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in the city, and to promote wherever possible the upbringing of these children by their families by providing an appropriate range of services. This means that North Yorkshire County Council has a legal duty to assist families who need help in bringing up their children, and to provide family support services to reduce the need for children to be looked after.

'Family' in relation to such a child includes not only a person who has parental responsibility for the child but also any other person with whom the child has been living with. Parental responsibility refers to all the rights, duties and responsibilities which by law a parent has in relation to a child.

Where it appears that a child or young person and their family are in need of local authority support, Children's Social Care Service is responsible for carrying out a Child in Need Assessment. A range of targeted and specialist support services may be provided by the local authority under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 if it is appropriate. Family and friends carers who are caring for a 'child in need' may also be eligible for these services, which can include:

- specialist advice, guidance and counselling
- parenting support and training programmes
- child and adolescent mental health services
- assistance to organise family holidays and days out
- domiciliary care
- respite care
- overnight short breaks for young disabled people aged 8 to 18
- accommodation services
- referral to other agencies where appropriate

Financial Assistance

There is no strict obligation on the Council to provide financial support under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, however, North Yorkshire County Council has the discretion to provide financial assistance where this is assessed to be the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. This can take the form of a loan, regular or one-off cash payment, or payment in kind (e.g. vouchers), as well as financial support towards accommodation costs.

(ii) LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Meaning of 'Looked After'

A child is 'looked after' when he/she is in the care of the local authority under a care order or emergency protection order, or when he/she is provided with accommodation by the local authority.

Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (Accommodation)

Under this section, children and young people can be looked after by a local authority by a voluntary agreement with the parents (or the young person if he/she is aged over 16). The local authority has a duty to provide accommodation for any child in need if:

- there is no person with parental responsibility for the child
- the child is lost or abandoned; or

- the person who has been caring for the child is prevented from providing suitable accommodation or care, for whatever reason.

When a child is accommodated under Section 20, no court proceedings are involved, and the parents retain parental responsibility. This means that no action can be taken in relation to the child without the consent of the parents, and the parents may remove their children from such accommodation at any time, without notice.

Section 20(1) of the 1989 Act provides that every local authority must provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who appears to them to require accommodation as a result of:

- a) there being no person with parental responsibility for the child;
- b) their being lost or having been abandoned; or
- c) the person who has been caring for him being prevented (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason) from providing them with suitable accommodation or care.

When a local authority is considering whether a child cared for by family and friends “requires accommodation”, the question at (c) will be particularly relevant: does the child appear to the authority to require accommodation because the person who has been caring for the child is prevented from providing the child with suitable accommodation or care? If it appears to the authority that the child does require accommodation, then it must provide that accommodation. Under section 20(4) the local authority may also provide accommodation for any child in their area (even though a person who has parental responsibility for the child is able to provide them with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child's welfare. Short breaks are frequently provided under this provision.

Before providing accommodation under section 20, the local authority must, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child's welfare, ascertain and give due consideration to the child's wishes and feelings regarding the provision of accommodation. If a person with parental responsibility for the child, who is willing and able to provide accommodation or arrange for accommodation to be provided to them, objects to the local authority providing accommodation, the authority should consider whether the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm unless he or she becomes looked after by the authority, and if so seek a care order under Part 4 of the 1989 Act (section 20 (7)). Further information on this can be found in Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 1: Court Orders.5 and in Appendix E : The legislative Framework

Where a child is provided with accommodation under section 20, or is subject to a care order, the child is looked after and the duties in Part 3 of the 1989 Act, particularly sections 22 to 22D, and the 2010 Regulations will apply.

Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (Care Order)

The local authority may decide to seek a court order if it considers that a child is not receiving or is not likely to receive the sort of care that is reasonable to expect from a

parent, and this lack of care is causing the child significant harm. A care order is a court order made under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 which places a child in the care of the local authority. Only a local authority or the NSPCC can apply for care orders.

The court may only make a care order if it is certain that:

- the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and
- the harm would be caused because of insufficient care being given to the child by the parents/carers in the future, or
- the child is likely to suffer harm because he/she is beyond parental control.

When a child is subject to a care order, the parent still retains parental responsibility but the local authority shares parental responsibility and is entitled to override the wishes of the parents if it believes this would be in the child's best interest.

Functions of the Local Authority in Respect of Looked after Children

The local authority has a duty to consider placing a child with an appropriate relative, friend or other person connected with the child (i.e. someone who would not fit the term 'relative or friend' but who has a pre-existing relationship with the child) before considering a placement with unrelated foster carers. If a relative, friend or other connected person is able and willing to care for the child, that person must then be approved as a local authority foster carer (see page 18).

The local authority also has a number of responsibilities towards looked after children (either by care order or voluntarily accommodation). The local authority must ensure that:

- the child or young person is allocated a social worker;
- the child or young person is provided with accommodation which meets his/her needs;
- the child or young person receives the best possible education – this includes making sure that young children access high quality nursery provision and that children and young people are supported to do as well as they possibly can in education;
- when making any decision about the child, the local authority consults the child, the parents or others with parental responsibility, and anyone else whose wishes and feelings are considered to be relevant, unless declared otherwise by the court;
- a care plan is drawn up for the child which sets out the placement plan, how the child's health, education and welfare will be supported, how contact with family and friends will be maintained, and the long term 'permanent' plan for the child (which might be returning to the family home, being looked after by foster carers or adoption). Wherever possible, plans must be drawn up in agreement with the child and key family members.
- the care plan is reviewed every six months by an Independent Reviewing Officer;
- a personal education plan in place if the child is of school age;
- the child receives regular medical assessments;

- contact is promoted between the child, parents, relatives, friends and any other person connected with the child unless such contact is not reasonably practicable or consistent with the child's welfare;
- the local authority assesses and meets the needs of children and young people aged 16 and 17 who are in care or care leavers, and keeps in touch with care leavers until they are at least 21 years of age.

Placement under fostering services regulations and accommodation and maintenance of looked after children under new sections 22A to 22F

Sections 22 A to 22F of the 1989 Act were inserted by section 8 of the 2008 Act and make provision in relation to the accommodation and maintenance of children who are looked after. The new section 22C is the key provision and replaces the provisions set out in section 23 of the 1989 Act. Section 22C sets out the ways in which looked after children are to be accommodated and maintained. Section 22C (2) to (4) provides that a local authority must make arrangements for a child who is looked after to live with their parents, a person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or, in a case where the child is in the care of the local authority and there was a residence order in force with respect to the child immediately before the care order was made, the person in whose favour the residence order was made. This "rehabilitative" duty is subject to the proviso that the arrangements must be both consistent with the child's welfare and reasonably practicable, and reflects the principle that state intervention in family life should be to keep children safe and ensure that families have the necessary support to bring up their children. For children subject to a care order the placement back with their parents must be in accordance with the 2010 Regulations.

Where a local authority is unable to make arrangements under section 22C(2) to (4) then section 22C(5) requires the authority to place the child in the most appropriate placement available. Section 22C(6) to (9) sets out what those placement options are and how the local authority must determine the most appropriate placement. In so doing the authority must "give preference to" a placement with a person who is a relative, friend or other person connected with the child and who is also a local authority foster parent. They must have been approved as a local authority foster carer in accordance with the 2011 Regulations or have been temporarily approved as a foster carer under the 2010 Regulations. These Regulations, together with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, set out requirements in relation to support and supervision of all foster carers including those who are family members, friends or other connected persons.

Ideally all placements will meet all of the placement criteria in section 22C(7) to (9). However, this is unlikely to be the reality and social workers, supervising social workers and other decision makers may find themselves faced with difficult choices. The placement criteria are important because many children and young people benefit by being placed with relatives or friends or others connected to them, near their own homes, continuing to attend the same school, living with their siblings and in accommodation that suits any special needs. However not all these factors are always beneficial for all children, and some will have greater priority than others at different times in children's lives. In weighing up the different options a number of issues need to be considered, the most important of which is how far a placement will meet the

assessed needs of a particular child or young person given their previous history and their current circumstances

APPENDIX D: SUPPORT for FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARERS UNDER CHILDREN ACT 1989 SECTION 17 AND SECTION 20

Child in need supported under section 17 (in an informal arrangement)

- the child is not looked after by the local authority
- the child will not have a care plan but there will be a child in need plan or child protection plan
- if there is a child in need plan or a child protection plan a social worker will visit the child and carers
- the child will be offered access to an advocacy service when they make or intend to make representations under section 26 of the 1989 Act
- the carers will not usually have a separate social worker
- the local authority has discretion to give financial assistance but there is no entitlement and family income may be taken into account since the local authority must have regard to the means of the child and parents under section 17 (8) the 1989 Act)
- Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit may be payable
- support may be offered to the carers and/or child but is discretionary
- there is no entitlement to leaving care support
- any support offered will cease when the young person becomes 18, unless criteria are met for support from adult services

Child accommodated under section 20

1. the child is looked after by the local authority
2. the child will have a care plan (including health plan and personal education plan) which will be reviewed by an independent reviewing officer
3. a social worker will visit the child and carers and oversee the child's welfare
4. the child will be offered access to an advocacy service where they make or intend to make representations under section 26 of the 1989 Act
5. a supervising social worker will be appointed for the foster carers
6. there is no entitlement to Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit
7. training and support must be offered to the foster carers
8. on leaving care the young person may be eligible for ongoing support under the 1989 Act (as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000)

APPENDIX E: SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS – FAMILY & FRIENDS FOSTER CARE

Family and Friends Foster Carers are eligible for the range of non-financial support available to non-related foster carers. This includes the following:

Children’s Workforce Development Training Standards Induction: The National Minimum Standards require that all foster carers complete mandatory training on approval with the support and guidance of their fostering social worker. There is a specially adapted set of induction standards for family and friends carers. North Yorkshire County Council will support family and friends carers to achieve these standards.

Training: Further training provision is planned for family and friends carers according to their needs and the profile of the children they care for.

Personal Development Plan: As part of the National Minimum Standards each family and friends carer has a personal development plan to guide their training and development.

Allocated Fostering Social Worker: to provide support and supervision (via regular visits and telephone contact) for carers of children who are ‘looked after’.

Support worker: These support the Allocated Social Worker, undertaking specific tasks to support family and friends foster carers. Examples of such tasks include transporting children and assisting with the development plan.

Foster Carer handbook: This handbook outlines all key guidance and information required by foster carers, including family and friends foster carers, to function effectively.

Fostering Network or FosterTalk membership: North Yorkshire County Council funds every foster carer to be a member of The Fostering Network or FosterTalk, national advisory bodies for foster carers. This allows them to be registered as a foster carer and receive information and support as part of the children’s workforce. Family and friends carers are eligible to join The Fostering Network or FosterTalk and North Yorkshire County Council will fund them to do so. It is the local Foster Carer Association that chooses which body to join as membership is submitted via locality group.

Out of hours support: This service allows family and friends carers to access support via telephone or, if necessary, through an in-person out of hours visit.

Invitation to support groups and social events: Foster carers benefit from sharing social events with others undertaking the same role, and family and friends carers are welcome to participate in these events.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service consultation: This is available when it has been agreed that the child or young person’s psychological needs or behaviour indicate specialist input is required.

Newsletter: This helps family and friends foster carers feel part of a group of committed volunteers and connect them to North Yorkshire County Council.

Access to foster carer library: Family and friends foster carers are able to access books and publications to help them learn and explore topics that support them in developing positive parenting and addressing any areas of difficulty.

Consultation events: Family and friends foster carers are invited to relevant key consultation events about how to develop the fostering service as appropriate.

Annual conferences: North Yorkshire County Council holds an annual foster carer conference to which family and friends carers are invited. These events provide an opportunity for foster carers to get together and benefit from keynote speakers, presentations and workshops.

Reviews of children's placement: These meetings review how well the child's placement is developing and makes further plans for the care of the child.

Visits from child's social worker: Children who are cared for formally by family and friends foster carers will receive visits from the child's social worker. This will provide an opportunity for the foster carer to report any concerns, take advice and plan around the needs of the child. It also ensures the child's views are shared with someone outside the foster placement

Input from Education Looked After Children (ELAC) team Personal Educational Plan (PEP) and health plan: The ELAC team holds an overview of the child's PEP. The child's health plan lays out clearly any actions required to ensure their health needs are met involving key people from the health service.

Respite care (if required): If required to meet the needs of the child periods of respite foster care may be arranged. This assistance can be very supportive in assisting the foster carer to maintain a particularly demanding placement

Access to children who foster group: Foster caring families sometimes find their birth children benefit from meeting other children who help their families foster. Groups are run within North Yorkshire County Council Fostering Service to bring these children together for mutual support.

APPENDIX F: USEFUL CONTACTS

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: 0845 727374
Email: customer.services@northyorks.gov.uk

FAMILY INFORMATION SERVICE

Address: County Hall
Northallerton
DL7 8AE

Internet: www.nyfamilies.info
Telephone: 0845 6011630
Email: FIS.information@northyorks.gov.uk
Text: Text "info" to 07624 802 425

CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Every family with children up to the age of 5 and prospective parents have access to a range of services through their local children's centre. North Yorkshire has 37 children's centres. Each centre has a hub or base where activities take place but also aims to co-ordinate and deliver services in a range of venues across the local area so as to enable families to access them more easily. All centres provide a range of services including:

- Access to community health services
- Outreach services to vulnerable families
- Information and advice
- Support to childminders
- Activities for children and parents/carers
- Links with JobCentre Plus

Other activities, some of which will be subject to a charge, will reflect the needs of their local communities and might include early learning and childcare, parenting support and opportunities for adult learning. You can find out about your local children's centre by contacting the Families Information Service or at the following website:

<http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6531>

SCHOOLS

<http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2977>

YOUTH SERVICES

<http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=3003>

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

<http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=3199>

SUPPORT FOR PARENTS / CARERS

<http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=11063>

NATIONAL SUPPORT GROUPS

Action for Prisoners' Families (Merged with Family Lives in 2014)

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.

Address: 15-17 The Broadway, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL9 5HZ
Tel: 020 7553 3080
E-mail: Various (depending on location) hadleigh@familylives.org.uk,
hantsinfo@familylives.org.uk, parentssupportherts@familylives.org.uk,
katied@familylives.org.uk, fatimaa@familylives.org.uk
Advice line: 0808 800 2222
Website: <https://www.familylives.org.uk/>

Addaction

Offers a range of support developed for families and carers affected by substance misuse.

Address: 67-69 Cowcross Street London EC1M 6PU
Tel. 020 7251 5860
Email: info@addaction.org.uk

Website: www.addaction.org.uk

Adfam

Works with families affected by drugs and alcohol, and supports carers of children whose parents have drug and alcohol problems.

Address: Adfam, 2nd Floor, 120 Cromer Street, London, WC1H 8BS
Tel: 020 3817 9410
Email: admin@adfam.org.uk
Website: 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 bullying.

Address: 1c Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2DQ
Tel: 0808 800 5793 (General advice line)
0808 800 0327 (Exclusion advice line)
020 7704 9822 (Exclusion information line) (24hr answer phone)

Website: www.ace-ed.org.uk

Address: ACE Education Advice & Training, 72 Durnsford Road, London, N11 2EJ
Tel: 0300 0115 142

Website: www.ace-ed.org.uk

Child Benefit Helpline

HM Revenue and Customs offers general help and advice with Child Benefits

Tel: 0300 200 3100 (Child Benefit Helpline), 0300 200 3103 (Child Benefit Minicom), 0300 200 3101 (Guardian's Allowance Line) (8am - 8pm, Monday to Friday; 8am - 4 pm Saturday)

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/child-benefit>

Children's Legal Centre

Provides free independent legal advice and factsheets to children, parents, carers and professionals.

Address: Coram Children's Legal Centre, Riverside Office Centre, Century House North, North Station Road, Colchester C01 1RE

Tel: 01206 714 650 (General enquires only)
0300 330 5480 (Child Law Advice Line)
0300 300 5485 (Community Legal Advice – Education)

E-mail: info@coramclc.org.uk

Website: 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.

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 online, but you can also contact them by phone

Tel: 0845 345 4345 (Mon-Thurs, 9am-8pm; Sat, 9am-12.30pm)

Website: <https://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.

Address: CoramBAAF, Coram Campus, 41 Brunswick Square, London, WC1N 1AZ

Tel: 020 7520 0300

Email: advice@corambaaf.org.uk

Website: <https://corambaaf.org.uk/>

Coram Voice

Coram Voice enables and equips children and young people to hold to account the services that are responsible for their care. They uphold the rights of children and young people to actively participate in shaping their own lives.

Address: 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

Website: <http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/>

Department for Education

The Department for Education is responsible for children's services and education, including higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England. We work to provide children's services and education that ensure opportunity is equal for all, no matter what their background or family circumstances.

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

Family Fund

Helps families with severely disabled or seriously ill children to have choices and the opportunity to enjoy ordinary life. Gives grants for things that make life easier and more enjoyable for the disabled child and their family.

Address: 4 Alpha Court Monks Cross Drive York YO32 9WN
Tel: 01904 550055
Email: info@familyfund.org.uk
Website: www.familyfund.org.uk

Family Mediation Council

Provides information and advice about family mediation services and eligibility for public funding.

Tel: 01920 443 834
Website: <https://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 social care services because of welfare needs or concerns. Publishes resources, helps to develop support groups for family and friends carers, and runs a discussion board.

Address: Second Floor The Print House 18 Ashwin Street London E8 3DL
Tel: 020 7923 2628
Advice line: 0808 801 0366
Email: office@frg.org.uk
Website: 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, a confidential advice line for foster carers including concerns about a child's future, allegations and complaints, legislation and financial matters.

Address: 87 Blackfriars Road London SE1 8HA
Email: info@fostering.net
Tel: 020 7620 6400
Fosterline: 0800 040 7675 24 hour legal helpline: 0345 013 5004
Website: <https://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.

Phone 0800 040 7675 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday, except Wednesday when the line is open to 8pm
Email: enquires@fosterline.info
Website: <http://www.fosterline.info/>

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

Address: 1 Addington Square, London, SE5 0HF
Tel: 020 8981 8001
Email: Advice: advice@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.

Address: Mentor UK, 49-51 East Road, London N1 6AH
Tel: 020 7553 9920
Email: admin@mentoruk.org
Website: www.mentoruk.org.uk

National Family Mediation (NFM)

Provides mediation services to support couples who are separated, and their children and others affected by this.

Address: Civic Centre, Paris St, Exeter, EX1 1JN
Tel: 0300 4000 636
Email: general@nfm.org.uk
Website: 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.

Address: Ellergreen Road, Ellergreen Community Centre, Liverpool Area, Liverpool L11 2XY
Tel: 0151 270 2108
08457 023867 (National Families Helpline)
Website: <http://www.pada.merseyside.org/>

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.

Address: 15-17 The Broadway, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL9 5HZ
Tel: 0808 800 2222 (24hr Advice line)
Email: info@familylives.org.uk
Website: www.familylives.org.uk

Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group

Operates helpline and provides a variety of services to support anyone who has a link with someone in prison, prisoners and other agencies.

Address: POPS 1079 Rochdale Road, Blackley, Manchester, M9 8AJ
Tel: 0161 702 1000
0808 808 2003 (Offenders' Families Helpline)
Email: mail@partnerofprisoners.co.uk
Website: www.partnerofprisoners.co.uk

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. We 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

Address: 29 Peckham Road, Camberwell, London, SE5 8UA
Telephone: 020 77359535
Website: 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.

Website: www.talktofrank.com
Tel: 0300 123 6600 (24 hour advice line)
Text: 82111
Email: frank@talktofrank.com

Young Minds

Works to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people and empowering their parents and carers.

Address: Baden Place, London, SE1 1YW
Tel: 020 7089 5050
0808 802 5544 (Parents helpline)
Website: www.youngminds.org.uk

Lead Officer	Vicky Metheringham
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