

Family and Friends Care Policy

Document last updated: 30th September 2011
Document review due: 31st March 2012



Foreword by Helen Lincoln, Director of Children's Social Care

Essex County Council believes that in the great majority of cases children should live with their parents and where this is not possible their families and friends should be free to make suitable arrangements for their care without the intervention of the local authority.

This policy sets out our approach to supporting family and friends carers. We will work with our partner agencies and the local children safeguarding board to keep it under review and to ensure that we help family and friends carers where our assistance is needed.

Introduction

Family and friends carers play a unique 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. Many children who live in family and friends care do well in life, but others are vulnerable to failing to achieve good outcomes. Many family and friends carers both want and need support to enable them to meet the needs of the children that they care for.

The Family and Friends Care Guidance (2010) makes it clear that children and young people who are unable to live with their parents should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare, whether or not they are looked after by the local authority. Many family and friends carers are grandparents, who may be older, in poorer health and less well off financially than others who may be looking after children and young people. Taking on another child or young person is likely to significantly change family life both for the carers and for the child or young person.

In statutory guidance, a family and friends carer means someone who is a family member or friend of a child, or has some other pre-existing relationship with the child, and with whom the child is living full time. This could be in any of the following circumstances:

- In informal arrangements with a relative (relative is defined by section 105 of the Children Act 1989 as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step parent.
- In informal arrangements with friends or other family members which last for a period of less than 28 days (if the intention is for the arrangement to last more than 28 days, then this may be private fostering)
- As a private fostering arrangement
- As a looked after child placed with foster carers approved by a fostering service provider
- Under a residence order or special guardianship order or
- In arrangements which may lead to an adoption order.

It has been estimated that up to 300 000 children are cared for full time by family and friends carers, of whom over 7000 are looked after children placed with family and friends foster carers.

Values, principles and objectives

A key principle of the Children Act 1989 is that children are best brought up within their families and, for the purposes of the Act, the term 'family' is to be understood broadly and could include relatives, friends and other significant people in the child or young person's life.

The child's welfare is paramount.

The child or young person's family should be involved in the decision making and the planning for the future of that child or young person.

Children should be enabled to live within their families unless this is not consistent with their welfare. The children and their families should be provided with appropriate support based on the individual child or young person's needs.

If the local authority does need to look after a child or young person they have a duty under the Children Act 89 to place with relatives or with people with whom the child or young person is connected, as an alternative to being looked after by strangers, unless this is not consistent with the child or young person's welfare.

Children and young people have the right to have the opportunity to develop secure attachments to carers who are capable of providing safe, effective and loving care for the duration of their childhood.

Evidence base

Most children and young people would prefer their parents to be supported to continue to care for them rather than becoming looked after by the local authority. If this is not possible children and young people say they would prefer to live with members of their extended family. However, children and young people did want there to be some assessment of where they were going to be living, recognising that not all family members would be good at looking after them.

Research has found that family and friends foster placements lasted longer than placements with unrelated carers.

Essex County Council works closely with the children and families who receive services from the local authority to ensure that service provision is responsive to their expressed needs.

Essex County Council has made a pledge to its Children in Care Council which represents not only children in care but also other children who receive

a service from the local authority and sons and daughters of foster carers. This includes always listening to what the child says and actioning their wishes when possible and giving reasons if this is not possible.

Children in care and their parents are encouraged to express their views as part of the Looked After child review process and as part of the review of approval of foster carers and private fostering arrangements.

As part of the assessment of family and friends foster carers the local authority consult with the prospective carers and the family to ensure their voices are heard and the child's needs are met. Initial and core assessments seek the views of children and their family members.

This policy will be reviewed in six months and specific views will be sought from service users and partner agencies as to its effectiveness and what could be improved.

Management accountability

The Director of Local Delivery for Mid Quadrant is the senior manager with responsibility for this policy.

This Director will ensure that council staff understand the policy, have appropriate training and operate within the policy framework so that it is applied in a consistent and fair manner across the county. The Director will ensure that local partners are aware of their responsibilities towards children living in these arrangements and are proactive in meeting their needs.

The Director will also ensure that the policy is publicised so that anyone considering becoming a family and friends carer can be aware of its contents and clear about how to contact the council and other agencies for further information.

The Legal Framework

There are many options for caring for somebody else's child and they all have their own legal framework. Some of the differences between the different options are summarised in Annex A of this document.

If the local authority becomes involved an assessment will be undertaken as to how best to meet the child or young person's needs. A decision will be made as to the support that will be required and whether or not the child or young person would need to become looked after.

The Family and Friends Care guidance 2.12 states:

“Local authorities and their partners should make sure that family and friends carers are aware of relevant support services, and that these can be readily accessed by those caring for children whether or not these are looked after by the local authority. Whilst recognising the requirements which may go with a

particular legal status, it is essential that services are not allocated solely on the basis of the child's legal status, and that commissioners and providers of services are aware that many children in family and friends care have experienced multiple adversities similar to those of children who are looked after by local authorities. Where support services are identified as necessary to meet the child's needs, these should 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 local authority has a duty to provide support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to children in need, which will ensure that wherever possible children's needs are met through the best use of resources designed to safeguard and promote their welfare. This will help to ensure that, subject to meeting the statutory criteria, children do not become looked after by the local authority unless that is the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote the child or young person's welfare. Support services are available to families without the child or young person becoming looked after and therefore children should not become looked after if the only reason for so doing is to access these services. Local authorities should make the decision of whether or not a child or young person becomes looked after (or ceases to be looked after), based on an assessment of the individual child or young person's needs and circumstances.

There are some differences between the entitlement to different forms of support by informal family and friends carers and by those who are foster carers to a child or young person accommodated by the local authority. These are summarised in Annex B of this document.

Financial support

Parents retain their responsibility for maintenance of their children if they live with informal family and friends carers. However, it can be a significant burden to informal family and friends carers who may not have the financial resources to maintain a child. Some family and friends carers will need to give up work in order to provide care for the child.

Informal family and friends carers should access benefits advice to ensure that they claim all the benefits and tax credits to which they are entitled. However, there may still be financial difficulties. Local authorities have the power to make payments to children in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Payments can be made as a one off payment which, for example, could help with equipping a bedroom for the child or young person or the local authority could provide financial help on a regular basis.

The child's social worker will discuss with the parents and those caring for the child the need for financial support and if this is considered necessary to meet the child's needs the social worker will make an application to the local resource panel for a decision. The Panel process is used to ensure consistent, appropriate and equitable resource allocation. Payment will only

be made in line with the local authority's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

If the child or young person does require to be looked after by the local authority and placed in foster care then the fostering allowances and fees would be paid to the carer at the appropriate rate.

Accommodation

Sometimes family and friends carers will find that taking a child or children into their home places undue pressure on their accommodation.

This local authority will work with local district and borough councils to ensure that whenever possible family and friends carers living in social housing are given appropriate priority to move to suitable accommodation. In exceptional circumstances the local authority may be able to assist by offering a loan to cover a deposit for privately rented accommodation.

Supporting contact

The local authority has a duty to promote contact for all children in need with their families. However, depending on the legal status this duty is different. Schedule 2 (Children Act 89) paragraph 10 states that "Every local authority shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable where any child within their area who is in need and whom they are not looking after is living apart from their family – a) to enable him to live with his family and b) to promote contact between him and his family, if in their opinion it is necessary to do so in order to safeguard or promote his welfare".

If the child or young person is looked after by the local authority paragraph 15 of Schedule 2 of the Children Act states that "the authority shall unless it is not reasonably practicable or consistent with his welfare, endeavour to promote contact between the child and – a) his parents; b) any person who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him; and c) any relative, friend or other person connected with him.

Management of contact arrangements can cause some conflict for both informal and formal family and friends carers. This is often due to family dynamics and how the parents of the child or young person may be viewing the arrangement.

Information about local contact centres and family mediation services can be found by using the following website:

<http://essexlife.org/kb5/essex/essexlife/home.page>

If there are any concerns regarding safeguarding the child or young person's welfare then there will be a need for children's services to be involved and ensure that safe contact arrangements are made.

Essex Family Group Conference Service

A Family Group Conference is a decision-making meeting in which a child's parents/carers and or wider family and friendship network makes a plan about future arrangements for the child, which ensures that his/her safety and wellbeing is promoted. Family Group Conferences are intended as respectful, empowering processes. The aim is to enable those present to understand the concerns in relation to the care of the child and how their needs can be met and for those present to produce a plan which will safeguard the child and meet their needs. The expectation is that the 'Family Plan' will be agreed by the local authority provided it adequately addresses the concerns and it safeguards the child/ren.

This model places the child and family at the centre of planning processes and provides them with an opportunity to have their voices heard. It is a major strength of Family Group Conferences that children are supported by facilitators to participate in the conferences wherever possible and appropriate to do so.

Family Group Conferencing should be considered at an early stage in assessing and planning how the child's needs can be met.

Other Support - Family and Friends Foster Carers

Services which are offered to family and friend foster carers as appropriate include:

- A wide range of training including online training programmes.
- Membership of foster carers support groups including specific support groups for family and friends foster carers.
- Referral to welfare benefits advice.
- Referral to Children's Education and Health Services - e.g. speech therapy
- Referral to CAMHS -Child Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Referral to therapeutic support for the child and the carers from Lionmede.
- Access to 'Out of hours' advice.
- Ongoing support from a supervising social worker and annual review.
- The child will also have their own social worker

This is not an exhaustive list and assistance required will vary from case to case.

Other Support - All Carers

The need for support services from the Local Authority may be assessed as part of the initial and core assessment process. Other community based services, including CAMHS, can be accessed via other professionals such as a health visitor, GP or the child's school. Special educational needs assessments can be requested by the carer directly to Essex County Council or through the child's school.

Essex County Council have a number of Children's Centres that can be used by family and friends carers. Details can be found on Essex County Council's website which is www.essex.gov.uk

In addition Annex C contains a list of organisations that may be of assistance to any family and friends carers.

Private Fostering Arrangements

A private fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. Private foster carers may be from the extended family, such as a cousin or great aunt. However, a person who is a relative under the Children Act 1989 i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent will not be a private foster carer.

The period for which the child lives with the private foster carer should be continuous, but that continuity is not broken by the occasional short break.

If a child or young person is living in a private fostering arrangement the private foster carer becomes responsible for providing the day to day care of the child or young person in a way which will promote and safeguard his or her welfare. Overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the privately fostered child remains with the parent or other person with parental responsibility. Local authorities do not formally approve or register private foster carers. However, it is the duty of local authorities to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are, or will be, privately fostered within their area is being, or will be, satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. It is the local authority in whose area the privately fostered child resides which has legal duties in respect of that child.

Where a child is to live with private foster carers, it is a legal requirement for the local authority to be notified about the proposed arrangement, in writing, at least 6 weeks before an arrangement begins (or immediately where the arrangement is to begin within 6 weeks. There is also a notification requirement on any person (including parents) who is involved in arranging for a child to be privately fostered, or who becomes aware of such an arrangement.

Essex has a service which deals with private fostering arrangements. The service is located within the centralised fostering service and initial contact can be made via the free phone fostering and adoption recruitment line which also includes the Private Fostering Notification Line.

Contact details for the Central Fostering Recruitment Line are:

Essex House, 200 The Crescent, Colchester Business Park,
Colchester. CO4 9YQ
Telephone: 0800 801 530

After a notification is received about a private fostering arrangement a member of the Private Fostering team will visit the private foster carer to gather information and also to inform them of what support is available to them and the child.

Family and Friends Care Foster Carers

If, following assessment, the plan for the child or young person is to come into care they must be placed with an approved foster carer. If the placement is needed quickly, family and friends carers can be temporarily approved for 16 weeks (this can be extended for a further 8 weeks in exceptional circumstances). During this time a foster carer assessment will be completed which also includes a number of agency checks e.g CRB, schools, health.

The legal framework for formal placements of family and friends carers (or connected persons as it is called in the legislation) is Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. Essex County Council has separate guidance about placements made in this way which is available on request.

Residence Order

A Residence Order may be helpful in cases where family or friends are caring long-term for children. Residence Order holders acquire shared parental responsibility for the child and have to consult with everyone who has parental responsibility for that child about decisions affecting the child.

Although the parent, family member or friend will share parental responsibility a Residence Order determines with whom the child is to live, and will prevent the parent from removing the child from the carer.

Essex County Council has a separate policy on residence orders which sets out further information including about the financial support which may be offered in certain circumstances.

Special Guardianship

Special guardianship is an order made by a court whereby a child or a young person lives with someone permanently. The special guardian acquires parental responsibility for the child and takes day to day decisions about the child's care. Parental responsibility is shared with the child's parents but the special guardian has the primary role as they care for the child.

Essex County Council has a separate policy on special guardianship which sets out the financial and other support which may be offered in certain circumstances to those who wish to become special guardians.

Adoption

In some circumstances it may be appropriate for a child to be adopted by family or friends. When a child is adopted, the child's parents lose all parental responsibility and the adoptive parent acquires parental responsibility for the child. The adoptive parents become the legal parents and the birth parents cease to be the legal parents although the child in most cases maintains some form of contact with the birth parents, often indirect but sometimes face to face contact.

It is acknowledged that adoption has life long implications and Essex County Council offers adoption support services for adopted people, their birth families and their adoptive families.

Further information on adoption is available through the Essex Adoption Service on 0800 801 530 or at www.adoptessex.org.uk.

How to contact Essex County Council Schools, Children and Families

Office hours call: 0845 603 7634
Out of hours call: 0845 606 1212

Further information can be found at www.essex.gov.uk.

Complaints

If a family and friends carers wishes to make a complaint or comment about the way that Essex County Council have carried out its powers and duties they can access make a complaint procedure. This is accessible online through the Essex County Council website or leaflets are available in all the local offices.

The website address is www.essex.gov.uk and to access the complaints, comments and compliments page click the 'tell us what you think' link.

ANNEX A: CARING FOR SOMEBODY ELSE'S CHILD – OPTIONS

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence order	Special guardianship order (SGO)	Adoption	
Route into the caring arrangement	<p>This is a private arrangement whereby the child is being cared for for 28 days or more (or the intention is that the arrangement will last for 28 days or more) by anyone who does not have parental responsibility, and who is not a close relative.</p> <p>Relative means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (by full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or a step parent.</p> <p>The child is not a looked after child.</p>	<p>The relative has chosen to take on the care of the child but does not have parental responsibility, and the arrangement was not made by the local authority.</p> <p>The child is not a looked after child.</p> <p>Relative may perceive the parents to be unable to care for the child;</p> <p>or the parents may be dead or otherwise not available (e.g. in prison);</p> <p>or there may be an agreement between relatives due to difficult family circumstances.</p>	<p>The child has been placed with the relative or friend by the local authority, because the person who had been caring for the child was deemed not to be providing suitable care.</p> <p>The child is a looked after child and so the local authority must approve the relative or friend as a local authority foster carer.</p> <p>The child may be accommodated voluntarily with the agreement of the parents or may be subject to a care order.</p>	<p>The child is a looked after child being accommodated by the local authority under section 20 Children Act 1989 or because the child is subject to a care order; but has been placed with a foster carer by the local authority.</p> <p>(Alternatively, the local authority may choose to place a child into residential care where this is considered to best meet the child's needs).</p>	<p>The child may be at risk of becoming 'looked after' and a friend or relative applies for an order, or</p> <p>The child may have been '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.</p> <p>Relatives may apply for an order after the child has lived with them for one year.</p> <p>Or, there can be benign reasons, e.g. after parents' death and in line with a prior agreement between the birth parents and the carer.</p>	<p>Looked after children: the LA may decide that the child should be placed for adoption. They can only do so with the consent of the birth parent or under a placement order made by a court.</p> <p>An approved foster carer can apply for an adoption order after a year of caring for the child.</p> <p>Other informal carers could apply for an adoption order if the child has lived with them for a period of 3 years.</p>		
Parental Responsibility (PR)	Remains with birth parents	Remains with birth parents but the person who cares for the child may do what is reasonable to safeguard or promote the child's welfare	Remains with birth parents if child accommodated under section 20 CA, or if the child is subject to a care order or emergency protection order the local authority will have parental responsibility and determines the extent to which it may be exercised by others.		Shared by parents and holder of residence order.	PR shared with parents and any one else with parental responsibility for the child. The special guardian may exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of all others with PR, apart from another special guardian.	Transfers to adopters and relationship with birth parents is severed.	
Approval basis	The arrangement is assessed by LA, but the carer is not 'approved' as a local authority foster carer is. The arrangement may be prohibited if assessed by the local authority as unsuitable.	None	Approved as local authority foster carers in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations. (If child is looked after, carers must be approved as foster carers even if close relative.)		Appointed by court following application.	Appointed by court, following application from the applicant. LA must investigate the matter and prepare a report for the court dealing with the suitability of the applicant to be a special guardian.	Adoption agency assesses and approves prospective adopters, court makes order regarding specific child. If the child is not looked after then notice of intention to adopt must be given to the LA who then carry out an assessment / report for the court.	

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence order	Special guardianship order (SGO)	Adoption
Duration	Subject to discretion of person with PR and readiness of private foster carer.	Subject to discretion of person with PR	So long as placement remains in line with child's care plan, as determined by LA		Age 18.	Age 18 unless varied or discharged by the court before the child reaches 18 years.	Permanent lifelong relationship
Placement supervision	It is not a placement, but there are statutory visits to child by social worker (minimum 6 weekly in first year, then 12 weekly)	None	Statutory: visits to child by social worker and supervision of foster carers by supervising social worker			None	When child is placed for adoption by the LA, the placement is supervised and there are statutory reviews. Once the adoption order is made, none.
Review of placement	It is not a placement, but the LA may do formal reviews in addition to ongoing assessment during visits.	None	Statutory reviews of child's care plan (minimum 6 monthly) and annual reviews of local authority foster carers' approval		None	None	See above
Support services	Provision of advice and support as determined necessary by the LA, which may assess the child as a child in need plan, and provide services / support for child/family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989	No entitlement but the LA may assess the child as a child in need, with a child in need plan, and provide services / support for child/family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989	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 child/family under section 17 of the CA)	If 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. Young person may be entitled to leaving care support services if was a looked after child prior to making of the SGO.	Entitlement to assessment for adoption support services, which may be provided at discretion of LA in accordance with Regulations and NMS.

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence order	Special guardianship order (SGO)	Adoption
Financial support – entitlement	<p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p> <p>Financial responsibility to maintain the child remains with holders of PR</p>	<p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p> <p>Financial responsibility to maintain the child remains with holders of PR.</p> <p>Guardians Allowance payable if both parents have died, or the only surviving parent cannot be found or serving 2 years or more prison sentence.</p>	<p>Child benefit and child tax credit not payable.</p> <p>Weekly allowance to meet the costs of caring for the child. This should meet at least the national minimum rate set by DCSF.</p> <p>The Manchester City Council judgment ruled that allowances must be the same for all foster carers, whether or not family & friends.</p>		<p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p>	<p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p>	<p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p> <p>Entitlement to assessment for financial support (part of adoption support) if child looked after prior to order.</p>
Financial support – discretionary	<p>LA has discretion to make one-off or regular payments under section 17 Children Act</p>	<p>LA has discretion to make one-off or regular payments under section 17 Children Act</p>	<p>Some fostering providers pay their foster carers a fee to recognise the carers' skill, experience and commitment.</p> <p>The Manchester City Council judgement (which requires allowances to be paid on the same basis regardless of the relationship of the carer to the child) did not consider fees. However, Statutory Guidance for Fostering Services requires that any policy in relation to the payment of fees must be applied to all foster carers who meet the criteria in the same way and must not discriminate on the grounds of a pre-existing relationship with the child.</p>		<p>LA has discretion to pay residence order allowance – usually if child was previously fostered by the carers, or exceptionally if making residence order prevents child becoming looked after. Any allowance reviewed annually.</p>	<p>Entitled to an assessment for financial support under the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 if child looked after prior to order and meets the criteria in the regulations.</p> <p>Subject to assessment as above and for former foster carers can include an element of remuneration.</p> <p>Regular or one off payments.</p> <p>Any allowances reviewed annually.</p>	<p>Subject to assessment, one off payments or regular adoption allowance may be paid.</p>

Annex B - Entitlement to support by family and friends carers under Children Act 1989 Section 17 and Section 20

Child in need supported under section 17 (in an informal arrangement)	Child accommodated under section 20
The child is not looked after by the local authority.	The child is looked after by the local authority.
The child will not have a care plan but there may be a child in need plan or child protection plan.	The child must have a care plan (including health plan, personal education plan and placement plan) which will be reviewed by an independent reviewing officer.
If there is a child in need plan or a child protection plan a social worker or other worker may visit the child and carers.	A social worker will visit the child and carers and oversee the child's welfare.
The child must be offered access to an advocacy service where they make or intend to make representations under section 26 of the 1989 Act.	The child must be offered access to an advocacy service where they make or intend to make representations under section 26 of the 1989 Act.
The carers will not usually have a separate social worker.	A supervising social worker will be appointed for the foster carers.
The local authority has discretion to give financial assistance (which can be on the basis of regular payments) 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) of the 1989 Act.	A weekly fostering allowance will be paid.
Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit may be payable.	There is no entitlement to Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit.
Support may be offered to the carers and/or child but is discretionary.	Training and support must be offered to the foster carers.
There is no entitlement to leaving care support.	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).
Any support offered will cease when the young person becomes 18, unless criteria are met for support from adult services.	The local authority is able to offer continuing support (including financial support) to the carers until the young person is 21, and to support the young person in respect of education and

	training until they become 25.
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Annex C: Useful organisations and information for family and friends carers

Action for Prisoners' Families Works to reduce the negative impact of imprisonment on prisoners' families. Produces publications and resources, and provides advice, information and training as well as networking opportunities. www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk Address: Unit 21, Carlson Court 116 Putney Bridge Road London, SW15 2NQ Tel: 020 8812 3600 E-mail: info@actionpf.org.uk Advice line: 0808 808 2003 info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk

Addaction Offers a range of support developed for families and carers affected by substance misuse. www.addaction.org.uk Address: 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. www.adfam.org.uk Address: 25 Corsham Street, London N1 6DR Tel: 020 7553 7640 Email: admin@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. www.ace-ed.org.uk Address: 1c Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2DQ General advice line: 0808 800 5793 Exclusion advice line: 0808 800 0327 Exclusion information line: 020 7704 9822 (24hr answer phone)

BeGrand.net Website offering information and advice to grandparents, plus online and telephone advice. www.begrand.net Helpline: 0845 434 6835

British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Provides information and advice about adoption and fostering and publishes resources. www.baaf.org.uk Address: Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS Tel: 020 7421 2600 Email: mail@baaf.org.uk

Children's Legal Centre Provides free independent legal advice and factsheets to children, parents, carers and professionals. www.childrenslegalcentre.com Address: University of Essex Wivenhoe Park Colchester Essex CO4 3SQ Tel: 01206 877 910 E-mail: clc@essex.ac.uk Child Law Advice Line: 0808 802 0008 Community Legal Advice - Education: 0845 345 4345

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

Department for Education Lists details of telephone help lines and online services to provide information, advice and support on a range of issues that parents and families may face in bringing up children and young people. www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families

Family Fund Trust 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 www.familyfund.org.uk Tel: 0845 130 4542 Email: info@familyfund.org.uk

Family Rights Group (FGR) 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. www.frg.org.uk Address: Second Floor The Print House 18 Ashwin Street London E8 3DL Tel: 020 7923 2628 Advice line: 0800 801 0366 Email: advice@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. www.fostering.net Address: 87 Blackfriars Road London SE1 8HA Email: info@fostering.net Tel: 020 7620 6400 Fosterline: 0800 040 7675 Email: fosterline@fostering.net

The Grandparents' Association Supports grandparents and their families, especially those who have lost or are losing contact with their grandchildren because of divorce, separation or other family problems, those caring for their grandchildren on a full-time basis, and those with childcare responsibilities for their grandchildren. www.grandparents-association.org.uk Address: Moot House The Stow Harlow Essex CM20 3AG Tel: 01279 428040 Helpline: 0845 434 9585 Welfare benefits advice and information: 0844 357 1033 Email: info@grandparents-association.org.uk

Grandparents Plus Champions the role of grandparents and the wider family in children's lives, especially when they take on the caring role in difficult family circumstances. Address: Grandparents Plus 18 Victoria Park Square Bethnal Green London E2 9PF Tel: 020 8981 8001 Email: info@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. www.mentoruk.org.uk

Address: Fourth Floor 74 Great Eastern Street London EC2A 3JG Tel: 020 7739 8494 Email: admin@mentoruk.org

Family Mediation Helpline Provides information and advice about family mediation services and eligibility for public funding. 08456 026627
www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk

National Family Mediation (NFM) Provides mediation services to support couples who are separated, and their children and others affected by this.
www.nfm.org.uk 4 Barnfield Hill, Exeter EX1 1SR. 0300 4000 636
general@nfm.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. www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk
Address: Valentine House 1079 Rochdale Road Blackley Manchester M9 8AJ
Tel: 0161 702 1000 Offenders' Families Helpline Tel: 0808 808 2003 Email: info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.co.uk

Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) Provides practical and emotional support to prisoners and to their children and families. The Kinship Care Support Service provides support and advice to family members and friends who care for children whose parents are in HMP Holloway.
www.prisonadvice.org.uk Address: Park Place 12 Lawn Lane Vauxhall London SW8 1UD Telephone: 020 77359535 55

Parents Against Drug Abuse (PADA) Delivers support and services to the families of substance users, including a national helpline. www.pada.org.uk
Address: The Foundry Marcus Street Birkenhead CH41 1EU Phone: 0151 649 1580 National Families Helpline: 08457 023867

Parentline Plus Provides help and support in all aspects of family life, including information, an online chat facility and a 24 hour helpline.
www.familylives.org.uk Address: CAN Mezzanine 49-51 East Road London N1 6AH Tel: 020 7553 3080 24hr Advice line: 0808 800 2222 Email: parentsupport@familylives.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. www.talktofrank.com 24 hour advice line: 0800 77 66 00 Text: 82111 Email: frank@talktofrank.com

Voice Advocacy organisation for children living away from home or in need.
www.voiceyp.org Address: 320 City Road London EC1V 2NZ Tel: 020 7833 5792 Young person's advice line: 0808 800 5792 Email: info@voiceyp.org

Young Minds Works to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people and empowering their parents and carers.
www.youngminds.org.uk Address: 48-50 St John Street London EC1M 4DG
Tel: 020 7336 8445 Parents helpline: 0808 802 5544