



**Telford & Wrekin
Council**

**Family & Friends
Policy**

April 2012

PREFACE

Welcome to Telford & Wrekin Council's policy on Family and Friends Care. For generations, families and friends have cared for children within their family because birth parents have not been able to do so either on a temporary or long term basis.

Telford & Wrekin believe that in the great majority of cases families and friends will be able to make suitable arrangements for the care of children known to them without any involvement from the Council. However, some families and friends carers may need some additional support. The arrangements which are described in this policy are those arrangements which the Council has a statutory duty to assess and support.

We hope that this policy will enable family and friends carers to know where to go for help, and that it explains what help we can provide. The policy describes the assessment, planning and decision making process which we follow in deciding which services we can offer.

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Interim Director of Children's Services



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Executive summary:

This policy has been produced in response to guidance issued in April 2011 by the Department of Education. The policy outlines both the varied circumstances in which children and young people are cared for by family and friends carers and the local authority's (Council) responsibility in each of these situations.

The policy recognises that family and friends frequently care for children and young people to support birth parents and that the Council does not have a role in such arrangements unless either it is requested, or there are concerns about the child's welfare. There are occasions where a social worker will support parents to ask family members to care for a child.

Where children and young people are cared for by people who are not close relatives for more than 28 days this is considered to be a private fostering arrangement and the Council must be informed. In these circumstances the Council has a number of responsibilities to fulfil in order to assess the private fostering arrangements, by visiting the carer, child or the child's parents. Parental responsibility is retained by the parents who retain financial responsibility.

Where the child becomes "Looked After" by the Council either at the request of parents, or by the direction of the courts due to concerns about the child's welfare, the Council will always seek first to identify carers within the child's existing network of family and friends. When potential carers are identified, an initial viability assessment will take place to establish whether the carers have the potential to meet the child's needs. If the child is placed with the carers the viability study has to take place within 2 weeks of the placement. Where the viability assessment indicates that a full fostering assessment is needed, this has to take place within 16 weeks, if the child is placed with the carers. This assessment will adhere to the usual fostering regulations and will be presented to the fostering panel for consideration and recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker for approval.

Family and friends carers who are approved as foster parents are required to follow all the usual requirements of mainstream foster carers – meeting the national minimum standards, regulations and schedules as well as local policies and procedures.

Children and young people may also be placed with family and friends carers by court orders which may not involve any Council involvement. This includes a Residence Order which requires a child or young person to reside with those prescribed by the court. A Special Guardianship Order may also be made by the court which gives the Special Guardians overall responsibility for decision making, although parental responsibility remains shared.

An Adoption Order transfers all parental responsibility to the adoptive parents. There are some circumstances in which the Council is able to provide financial assistance to family and friends who are caring for children under such orders.

1. Introduction:

In April 2011 guidance was issued by the Department of Education on the care of children by family and friends. A new requirement was placed upon local authorities to outline provision for family and friends carers within their area from October 2011.

This document outlines the provision for family and friends caring for the following groups of children and young people within different arrangements and how Telford & Wrekin Council will respond to the following arrangements:

- Children or young people in informal arrangements with a relative or friend
- Children or young people (up to the age of 16 or 18 if disabled) in informal arrangements with friends or other family members which last for a period of more than 28 days. These are called private fostering arrangements
- Children and young people Looked After by the local authority through Section 20 Children Act 1989 (voluntary accommodation) or Section 31 Children Act 1989 (care order) placed with approved kinship foster carers (grandparents, uncles, aunts, connected person/family friend)
- Children and young people subject to a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order, or in arrangements which may lead to an adoption order.

2. The Policy

2.1 The role of family and friends care and key findings from national research and local consultation

Some children and young people are unable to be brought up by their parents and are cared for by a relative or a friend (this provision was formally known as Kinship Care). Many of these arrangements are informal. Some of these arrangements become more formal as a result of specific private or public law proceedings and the Council is then required to provide statutory services based upon the assessed needs of the child. Family and friends carers looking after a child/ren may require advice and guidance and in more complex cases may require support from the Council.

Research shows that children and young people who are looked after by the Council, and who live with family or friend carers have greater access to extended family members. They are more likely to stay with their relative or friend carer for longer and experience less placement moves.

2.2 How this policy has been developed and how it will be reviewed

The information provided in this policy was produced in consultation with a group of family and friends representatives. There will be ongoing monitoring and consultation in respect of the policy, and it will be formally reviewed after 6 months and then annually. The findings of the review will be shared in an annual report to the lead member of Children's Services, the Director of Children's Services, Assistant Directors, operational Service Managers, Team Leaders, frontline staff, family and friends carers and children living with family and friends carers in specific settings.

2.3 Philosophy of the policy

- The Council recognises the vital contribution family members and friends make in providing care for children. The great majority of children living with families and friends do so without the need for statutory intervention from the Council.
- Families themselves are often best placed to find their own solutions and to make safe arrangements for children within the family and we would expect families to care for their kin without the intervention and involvement of the Council
- Consideration of children's welfare and best interest will always be at the centre of the work we do.
- Intervention from the Council should be at the minimum needed to safeguard the welfare of those children for whom it has a duty of care.
- The provision of support is based on the assessed needs of the child/ren, not simply on his or her legal status, and will seek to ensure that family and friends carers are provided with support to ensure that children do not become Looked After, or do not have to remain Looked After longer than is necessary.
- Where a child cannot live with his or her immediate family and the Council is considering the need to look after the child, care by family and friends is the placement of first choice, provided that this meets the needs of the child and provides safety for the child.

- Children are active participants, and their wishes and feelings must be taken into account in all relevant processes and decision about them.

2.4 Diversity statement

The Council recognises that many of the children and those who apply to become family and friends carers will come from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, and/or may have particular disabilities, and that these factors must be taken into consideration when establishing the best arrangements for the child/ren.

2.5 Scope of the policy

It is important to note that the Council does not have a general duty to assess all arrangements where children are living with their wider family or friends network rather than their parents, but the Council does have a duty where it appears that services may be necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a 'Child in Need'. This policy is in relation to children cared for on a full-time basis in a 'family and friends arrangement' known to, brokered by or supported by the Council, but does not include private arrangements, except to the extent that such children are 'Children In Need' (as defined by the Children Act 1989).

For a detailed summary of the different arrangements and legal implications and what family and friend carers can expect from parents and the Council please see Appendices A & B. For details about what statutory duties the Council has for a child/ren classified as 'in need' and those Looked After, see Appendix C which outlines the difference between Section 17 children in need services, and Section 20 provision for children Looked After by the Council.

3 Informal Arrangements

3.1 Informal Arrangements

Many parents enter into informal arrangements with their own parents, aunts, uncles and direct family members to look after their children. These arrangements are part of normal family life where children and young people will go to stay with their grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends.

Family units have provided support to children and young people within their immediate and extended family and with friends for many years. The local authority does not have a role in these informal arrangements unless to provide general advice or where children appear to be in need or require safeguarding.

If a child cannot live at home, their parents will be expected and enabled to retain their family responsibilities and remain closely involved, as far as is consistent with their children's welfare. Birth parent/s still retains full parental responsibility for their child/ren even when the child is placed by the parent to live with another family member or friend. Parents will need to make direct arrangements with family and friends in relation to supporting the child/ren's needs.

If a child has to live apart from their family, both they and their parents will be given sufficient information and assistance to help them identify alternative arrangements.

Telford & Wrekin Council do not have a duty to assess any informal family and friends care arrangements, unless it appears to the Council that services may be necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

3.2 General Advice

Informal arrangements between parents and immediate family members and friends are normal, however, family or friends carers may require advice or may have concerns about the child/ren that they are caring for. Family and friends carers can contact the Council to seek information depending on their particular need. Needs can range from, general advice about what is available, to supporting a child/ren's needs, for example, a list of resources available in a locality, including play groups, mother and toddler groups, child minders, nurseries, library facilities, youth clubs, leisure and fun events for children.

3.3 Children in Need and Safeguarding

Where family and friends carers have concerns about a child/ren that they are caring for, they may contact our Family Connect service where advice will be provided. This may result in an assessment being undertaken to establish whether the child/ren that they are caring for is/are in need. An assessment of need will be undertaken (Common Assessment Framework - CAF) in order to ascertain whether any specific support needs and or safeguarding measures are required for the child/ren, to promote the child/ren's development and wellbeing. If the child/ren are assessed as being in need – an appropriate plan will be developed to meet the children's needs and support the parents, the carers and the child (in accordance with the local authority's Section 17 powers).

4. Formal Arrangements: Private fostering

A privately fostered child is a child under 16 (or under 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 full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent' where the child is to be cared for in that home for 28 days or more. If the carer is an extended family member i.e. great-aunt, cousin, it is a private fostering arrangement. 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 is fully responsible for agreeing the financial support and details of the arrangement with the private foster carer.

The local authority may become involved with a child in a private fostering arrangement where the child comes within the definition of a Child in Need. In such cases, the local authority has a responsibility to provide services to meet the assessed needs of the child under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Following assessment, a Child in Need Plan will be drawn up and a package of support will be identified. The local authority 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.

Telford & Wrekin Council provide a full range of support for carers who are private foster carers which includes:

- assessments of carers,
- assessments of the child/ren cared for by the private foster carer,
- visits to the child as prescribed in statutory guidance,
- agreements with parents,
- supervision of private foster carers,
- advice and support to carers,
- support groups,
- assistance with benefit claims,
- Section 17 support,
- advice and support from other agencies,
- common assessment

If you are currently caring for a child/ren informally through a private arrangement for more than 28 days and you are not a close relative - please contact us to clarify your status and establish whether you are eligible for assistance as a private carer.

5 Formal Arrangements: Court Orders

5.1 Residence Order

A Residence Order is a Court Order which gives parental responsibility to the person in whose favour it is made, usually lasting until the child is 16 unless they are in education in which case it lasts until the age to 18. Parental responsibility is shared with the parents.

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

Telford & Wrekin Council may pay Residence Order Allowances to relatives or friends, unless they are a spouse or civil partner of a parent, with whom a child is living under a Residence Order. This is set out in paragraph 15 of Schedule 1 of the Children Act 1989, however this is discretionary.

Residence Order payments are subject to means testing. Family and friends wishing to pursue this option please contact us for advice and information and a copy of our current policy.

5.2 Special Guardianship Order

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.

Family and friends may apply for a Special Guardianship Order after caring for the child for one year. As Special Guardians, the family or friend carer 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.

Special Guardianship can be applied for by:

- Any guardian of the child.
- A local authority foster carer with whom the child has lived for one year immediately preceding the application.
- Anyone who holds a Residence Order with respect to the child, or who has the consent of all those in whose favour a Residence Order is in force.
- Anyone with whom the child has lived for three out of the last five years.
- Where the child is in the care of a local authority, anyone who has the consent of the local authority.
- Anyone who has the consent of all those with parental responsibility for the child.
- Anyone, including the child, who has the permission of the court to apply

Special Guardianship Orders may be made in private family proceedings and the local authority may not be a party to any such arrangements. However, a Special Guardianship Order in favour of a relative or foster carer (who was a 'Connected Person') with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need or a 'Looked After' child. Where the child was Looked After immediately prior to the making of the Special Guardianship Order, the local authority has a responsibility to assess the support needs of the child, parents and Special Guardians, including the need for financial support.

Telford & Wrekin Council has a separate policy on Special Guardianship Orders and depending upon the prior circumstances of the carer and the child, and the outcome of the special guardianship assessment the Council may provide a support plan which may include discretionary funding.

5.3 Adoption Order

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, and all legal ties with the birth parents are severed.

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

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

Where adoption support is required, Telford & Wrekin Council assess carers to determine what financial assistance may be available to holders of Adoption Orders (see separate policy).

6 Family and Friends carers: formal arrangements (Connected person's and family and friends foster carers)

There are children who are referred to Children's Social Care Services who are assessed through an Initial Assessment as being Children in Need of accommodation. If the child/ren is/are assessed as being 'In Need' of accommodation the Council will assist the family in discussing the care options for the child/ren. If the Council is approached for assistance because a child/ren cannot remain at home, all possible arrangements for the child/ren to live with family and friends will be explored before other forms of living arrangements are considered.

If the Council makes an arrangement or requires that a child/ren should be placed with a relative or friend, then this will become a formalised arrangement. The Council may support a range of options which the Initial Assessment of the child/ren indicates. In looking for a placement for the child/ren, the Council will consider whether it is in the child/ren's best interest to be placed with family, friends or another 'connected person'. In these circumstances, Telford & Wrekin Council will undertake an initial assessment of the proposed family or friend - connected person carer to establish that the carer can meet the child's needs. This will be undertaken by a member of the Family Placements Team. An information pack will be available to potential family and friends foster carers about the process and they will be given the name and contact details of the social worker from the Fostering Service allocated to carry out the assessment.

This initial assessment will involve the following checks of the proposed carer and members of their household (including frequent regular visitors):

- Criminal Record Bureau checks,
- Medical checks,
- Employment checks,
- Checks with schools if the proposed carers have children of their own of school age,
- Checks to identify involvement with any other agencies statutory, voluntary or independent;
- References,
- Financial checks,
- An assessment of the health and safety and suitability of the proposed carers accommodation will be made in relation to meeting the needs of the child/ren.

The parenting experience and skills of the proposed carers to support the safety, physical, emotional, educational, health and recreational activities needs of the child/ren to be placed with them will be considered. Also the ability of the proposed carers to work in partnership with support workers, social workers, health professionals, schools/colleges/birth parents where appropriate to meet the needs of the child will be assessed.

This initial assessment of the prospective carer/s will take place within 2 weeks if the child/ren has/have been placed in an emergency. The initial carers assessment report will be presented to the Local Authority Decision Maker to determine the initial suitability of the carer and grant temporary approval as formal carers, subject to the outcome of the full assessment to determine whether permanent approval should be recommended by the Telford & Wrekin Fostering Panel within 16 weeks (Reg 24 of the Care Planning, Placements and Case Review Regulations (England) Regulations 2010)

If the initial carer assessment report considers the carer suitable for temporary approval, this initial assessment report will, together with information concerning the child's proposed care plan, be used to determine what is the best option to meet the child/ren's needs. This may be a full Regulation 24 Kinship Carer assessment, a Residence Order assessment, or a Special Guardianship assessment. The assessment reports will be completed within prescribed timescales and, where appropriate, be presented to Court to determine the proposed carers suitability and to Telford & Wrekin Fostering Panel for Family and Friends approval as registered carers.

Where the Local Authority Decision Maker has initially approved the suitability of a carer and the proposed carer is to be assessed as a family and friends foster carer, they will be offered the opportunity to attend 'skills to foster training' alongside the continued full assessment.

If family and friends carers are approved as foster carers, they will be allocated a supervising social worker from the fostering service to provide them with support and supervision; and they will receive fostering allowances for as long as they care for the child as a foster carer.

While the child remains a Looked Child, foster carers will be expected to co-operate with all the processes that are in place to ensure that the child receives appropriate care and support. This includes, contributing to reviews of the child's Care Plan, co-operating with the child's social worker and promoting the child's education and health needs.

If the Local Authority Decision Maker determines that the prospective carers are unsuitable, the proposed carers and the child's social worker will be informed and an alternative placement sought by the Council for the child/ren. Prospective family and friends foster carers whose initial assessment has determined that they are unsuitable may request that their assessment continue. However, there is no right to become a foster carer.

Telford & Wrekin Council funds the assessment and approval process for prospective family and friends carers.

7 Other considerations for Assessment & Planning

7.1 Supporting contact with parents

The Council is under a duty to promote contact for all Children in Need, although this differs depending on whether or not the child is Looked After.

Where the child is not Looked After, we are required to promote contact between the child and his/her family 'where it is necessary to do so in order to safeguard and promote his or her welfare'. As part of the support arrangements, it may be identified that specific assistance is required to ensure that any such contact can be managed safely. Where assessed as appropriate, information will be made available to family and friends carers about local contact centres and family mediation services, and how to make use of their services.

Where a child is Looked After, the Council is required to endeavour to promote contact between the child and his or her family 'unless it is not practicable or consistent with the child's welfare'. The overall objective of the contact arrangements will be included in the child's Care Plan and the specific arrangements will be set out in the child's Placement Plan – see Contact with Parents and Siblings Procedure.

7.2 Adult Services and Children's Services Liaison.

There are some family and friends carers who are affected by birth parents involvement with adult social care e.g. such as mental health, substance misuse or have older relatives involved with adults social care. Where there is a direct impact on family and friends carers and the children they are looking after, children's social care will exchange appropriate information and meet where appropriate to ensure that children are safeguarded and their needs are met and not compromised by specific plans or activities affecting their parents.

8 General and Financial Support

8.1 Accommodation

The Council works with landlords to ensure that family and friends carers living in unsuitable accommodation are given advice and assistance and, where possible, appropriate priority to move to more suitable accommodation if this will prevent the need for a child to become Looked After.

8.2 Family Group Conferences

Family Group Conferences are meetings held between professionals and family members, which aim to achieve the best outcomes for children. They promote the involvement of the wider family to achieve a resolution of difficulties for Children in Need, and may help to identify short-term and/or permanent solutions for children within the family network.

We will offer a Family Group Conference or other form of family meeting at an early stage. If a child becomes Looked After, perhaps following an emergency, without a Family Group Conference having been held, then (where appropriate) we will arrange one as soon as possible.

Family and Friends carers may request a copy of our policy on Family Group conferencing.

8.3 Provision of financial support – general principles

There are three categories of payment, which may be considered. One or more of these may be applicable, depending on the particular circumstances of each case:

a) Subsistence crisis payments

Financial payments, Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989 will be used to overcome specific crisis determined by assessment and provided for a specific defined period. However, payments made should not replace legitimate funding which may be obtained from other agencies i.e. benefit claim/support.

b) Setting-up payments

These are for such items as clothing, furniture, or bedding. The social worker must be satisfied that the carers' financial position justifies the payment through a financial assessment. Assistance may be given subject to conditions, including repayment in certain situations. Social workers may support families and friends to obtain funding from other sources where it would be legitimate to apply for funding.

c) Weekly living contribution

It is possible for the Council to make regular payments where family members or friends care for a child, whether or not the child is Looked After. Where regular payments are to be made, relative carers should be assisted to maximise their Income/Benefit as regular payments may adversely affect an individual's claim to income support.

In all cases where regular financial support is agreed, a written agreement will be drawn up detailing the level and duration of the financial support that is to be provided, and the mechanism for review and appeal (in respect of discretionary payments).

8.4 The following criteria will be applied to all such payments:

- The purpose of the payments must be to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child
- As part of the assessment, a view should be taken as to whether the carers need financial support based on their reasonable requirements in taking on the care of the child
- Carers must pursue and develop arrangements with birth parents to contribute to the maintenance of their child/ren in respect of specific circumstances - private fostering arrangements, Special Guardianship Orders, Residence Orders. As part of the financial assessment - this will be assessed and advice and guidance provided to carers.
- Carers must apply for benefits which they may be eligible for, as the local authority will not provide funding where a carer may legitimately gain finances from an appropriate agency
- There are no other legitimate sources of finance

- Payments will be paid to the carer, not the parents.
- The payment would not place any person in a fraudulent position.
- The carer must notify the local authority of any change in circumstance which may result in an increase or decrease in household income which directly impacts upon core care needs of the child/ren. Payments are made to carers to meet core care needs.

9 Management Overview of this Policy

Managerial accountability for Telford & Wrekin's Family and Friends policy resides with the Service Delivery Manager – Fostering and Children in Care.

Telford & Wrekin Council have existing established strategic focus groups for Special Guardianship Orders and Residence Orders, Private Fostering and a Foster Carers information and consultation group which includes family and friends carers. Separate family and friends carers support groups exist within Telford and Wrekin for those carers who wish to receive group support. These groups are co-ordinated by lead officers responsible for assessment and support of family and friends carers. An annual report detailing operation of the Family and Friends Policy will be presented to the Senior Management group covering:

- Statistical information in respect of different service uptake by family and friends carers – sufficiency duty.
- Identified Needs.
- Consultation with family and friends carers and children in their care.
- Recommended action plan.
- Update of this policy annually.

Appendix A Caring for someone 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 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 <i>not</i> a close relative. 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, or the parents may be dead or otherwise not available (e.g. in prison); 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, as a suitable placement to meet the child's needs, whether permanently or temporarily, and for a range of reasons. The child is a looked after child and so the local authority must assess the relative or friend as a local authority foster carer. Timescale is 16 weeks.</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 and has been placed with a foster carer by the local authority.</p>	<p>The child may be unable to live with his or her parent/s and, under a family arrangement is living with a family member, who decides to apply for an order which will provide legal certainty about the child's residence and the exercise of Parental Responsibility.</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>Special Guardianship Application and Application for Residence Orders are private law applications which do not necessarily involve the Local Authority.</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>	

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence order	Special Guardianship Order (SGO)	Adoption
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 is under section 20 CA. 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	<p>The arrangement may be assessed by LA, but the carer is not 'approved' in the same way as an LA foster carer.</p> <p>The arrangement may be prohibited if assessed by the local authority as unsuitable.</p>	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. The 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 carries 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. This applies to a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled).	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.	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 Placements	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.
The relevant SW team ensures that families are linked into services local to them. Further information on support is provided by the Family Information Service							

<p>No entitlement. Provision of advice and support as determined necessary by the LA, which 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.</p>	<p>No entitlement but the LA may assess and provide services / support for child/family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.</p> <p>Where concerns arise in relation to the care of children in private arrangements, normal processes for referral and assessment under Section 17 or Section 47 CA 1989 apply.</p>	<p>Support Services which may be offered to a Friend and Family Foster Carer may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to meet child’s needs including health plan and personal education plan. • Training and practical support in accordance with the Fostering Services, NMS and CWDC standards. • Young person may be entitled to leaving care support services. • Referral to welfare benefits advice. • Membership of specific support groups for friend and family foster carers. • Referral to CAMHS – Child Adolescent Mental Health Services. • Access to ‘Out of hours’ advice in case of emergencies. • Ongoing support and annual review. <p>This is not an exhaustive list, and support services will be assessed based on the child’s needs.</p>	<p>No entitlement. The child may have an allocated SW from the Assessment and Kinship Team.</p> <p>This SW will visit the child and the carers at least annually to review the arrangements for the child’s care and the appropriateness of continuing with any allowance which may be paid. The allocated SW will record the Child in Need Review. Reviews may take place more frequently where there has been a</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Support may include adoption support workshops and support from a special guardianship support worker, along with support to meet the child/ren’s specific needs.</p>	<p>Telford & Wrekin Council undertakes assessments for adoption support services, which may be provided at discretion of LA in accordance with Regulations and National Minimum Standards.</p> <p>Any support required is then set out in an Adoption Support Plan.</p>
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	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence order	Special Guardianship Order (SGO)	Adoption
Telford & Wrekin Council Support Services			<p>Family and friends foster carers are supported by the Assessment & Kinship team.</p> <p>Foster carers are supported by the Business Strategy, Fostering, Placements and Procurement Service.</p>		Significant change in the child's circumstances or where the circumstances otherwise require it.		

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence order	Special Guardianship (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 hold or holders of PR.</p>	<p>Can claim child benefit child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p> <p>Financial responsibility to maintain the child remains with holder or 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>There is a scheme of allowances which set out the rates payable from time to time.</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>

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence order	Special Guardianship (SGO)	Adoption
Telford & Wrekin discretionary financial support	<p>Parents are expected to provide fully for their children's care, including ensuring that relevant welfare benefits are transferred to the private foster carer.</p> <p>Where Section 17 is applied, children are made subject of a Child in Need plan which aims to ensure that parents take full responsibility for the child's care.</p>	<p>Parents are expected to provide fully for their children's care, including ensuring that relevant welfare benefits are transferred to the informal family carer.</p> <p>Where Section 17 is applied, children are made subject of a Child in Need plan which aims to ensure that parents take full responsibility for their child's care.</p>	<p>Telford & Wrekin Council provides a core allowance to all foster carers.</p> <p>Discretionary payments are made in accordance with Statutory Guidance for Fostering Services.</p> <p>Where temporary approval is given to Connected Persons, carers will receive financial support based on the full Telford & Wrekin Fostering Kinship Allowance.</p>	<p>Telford & Wrekin Council accepts no assumption of entitlement to financial or other support under an RO. This is a matter of assessment. Any allowance is reviewed annually.</p> <p>The decision to pay a Residence Order Allowance must be informed by one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Core Assessment • The child's Looked After Review. • The child's Care Plan. • A request by a person holding a Residence Order. 	<p>Telford & Wrekin Council accepts no assumption of entitlement to financial or other support under an SGO. This is a matter of assessment. Any allowance is reviewed annually in line with Special Guardianship Regulations. Financial Support for Special Guardians is provided under Telford & Wrekin's Adoption Support and Special Guardianship Finance Scheme.</p> <p>Financial support is provided according to assessment of need and means testing.</p>	<p>Telford & Wrekin Council accepts no assumption of entitlement to financial or other support in respect of adoption. This is a matter of assessment. Any allowance is reviewed annually.</p> <p>Entitlement to assessment for financial support (part of adoption support) if child looked after prior to order.</p> <p>Where financial support is assessed as necessary to ensure the needs of the child are met, this calculation will be made in line with the national minimum rate as set by DWP.</p>	

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence order	Special Guardianship (SGO)	Adoption
Telford & Wrekin discretionary financial support	A decision to pay a Residence Order Allowance will be made by the Family Support and Intervention Service Manager following a financial assessment.				<p>A decision to pay a Residence Order Allowance will be made by the Family Support and Intervention Service Manager following a financial assessment.</p> <p>Financial Support is provided according to assessment of need and means testing. Any financial support that is agreed is documented in a written agreement.</p> <p>Where financial support is assessed as necessary to ensure the child's care needs are met, this calculation will be based on the specific needs of the</p>	<p>Any financial support that is agreed is documented in a written agreement.</p> <p>In cases where the applicant does receive an income and this is less than the means tested level, they will still receive an allowance, but Child Benefit will be deducted from that amount.</p> <p>In cases where the applicant relies solely on benefits and has no other income, they will receive an allowance and child benefits will not be deducted.</p> <p>The person who holds the SGO is</p>	Foster carers who go on to adopt children in their care will receive 2 years continued remuneration in line with the fostering allowance minus state benefits plus the reward element.

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence order	Special Guardianship (SGO)	Adoption
Telford & Wrekin discretionary financial support					<p>child and no reward element is payable. The calculation will be made in line with the national minimum rate as set by the DWP.</p> <p>The person who holds the RO is responsible for providing information to the LA in respect of any changes in circumstance which may affect payments.</p>	responsible for providing information to the LA in respect of any changes in circumstance which may affect payments.	

Appendix B

Summary of Informal and Formal Support from Telford & Wrekin Council

	Potential Recipients	Type of Support
Informal	All families and carers.	Advice and information.
	Children in need e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis assistance • Family support • Short breaks • Respite support 	Initial assessment, advice, targeted support and Section 17 funding where this is appropriate to meet the child's assessed needs.
Formal	Specific carers acquiring more formal responsibilities and child not 'Looked After' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Fostering • Residence Orders • SGOs • Adoption 	Assessments for all categories where prescribed in legislation discretionary funding. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to financial means test (for Residence Orders, SGO's, adoption orders with some specific exceptions), and annual review, see policy (Public childcare law proceedings). • Targeted resources where the need has been assessed and defined as part of the child's Care Plan.
	Kinship carers, formal approved foster carers.	Initial assessment temporary approval subject to further assessment and recommendation to Fostering Panel. Not subject to means test. Fostering allowance minus Child Benefit. Supervision, Annual Review of carers approval.

		<p>Specific requirements of the Foster Carer in meeting National Foster Care Standards and Regulations and care planning for the child/ren being Looked After.</p> <p>Supervising Social Worker and Case Manager for child appointed.</p>
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Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities

Support for family and friends carers under Section 17 and Section 20 of the Children's Act 1989 (Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities)

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 may 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 or other worker may visit the child and carers.
- 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.
- 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.

Child accommodated under section 20

- The child is looked after by the local authority.
- The child must have a care plan (including health plan and personal education plan) which will be reviewed by an Independent Reviewing Officer.
- 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.
- A supervising social worker will be appointed for the foster carers.
- A weekly fostering allowance will be paid.

- 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.
- There is no entitlement to Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit.
- Training and support must be offered to the foster carers.
- 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).

- **Who is a family or friend carer?**

“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.

- **Who is a Foster Carer?**

“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.

- **What is meant by Fostering Service?**

“Fostering service” means a local authority fostering service.

- **What is an informal arrangement?**

“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.

- **What is meant by the term, a Looked After Child?**

“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.

- **What is meant by the term, Parent?**

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

- **What is Parental Responsibility?**

“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.

- **What is a Private Fostering arrangement?**

“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.

- **Who is a relative?**

“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;

- **Who is the responsible authority?**

“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.

How to get in touch

Appendix E

1. Informal arrangements – universal service provision all carers may access.
If you require information and advice contact our Family Information Service on:

Family Information Service
Family and Community Services
Civic Offices
TF3 4WF
Tel: 01952 385385
Email: familyinformation@telford.gov.uk

2. For services for children who may be “in need” or specific enquiries in relation to private fostering arrangements please contact the following service below:
Children and Families Helpdesk

The Mount
1 Haygate Road
Wellington
Telford
TF1 1QX
Tel: 01952 385700
Email: childrenandfamilieshelpdesk@telford.gov.uk

3. For specific enquiries in relation to Residence Orders, Special Guardianship and Kinship Care Fostering information please contact:

The Fostering Team
The Mount
1 Haygate Road
Wellington
Telford
TF1 1QX
Tel: 01952 385888

Packs Available: Private Fostering Pack, Special Guardianship Pack, Kinship Carer Booklet, Residence Order packs

4. For information on Adoption Services please contact:

Joint Adoption Service
Safeguarding
Shropshire County Council
Observer House
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6BL
Tel: 01743 241915

Pack Available: Adoption Panel Pack

Complaints Procedure

Where family and friends carers are not satisfied with the level of support provided to care for the child/ren, they should seek to have a discussion with the appropriate Team Manager or Service Manager. If they remain dissatisfied they should approach:

Telford & Wrekin Customer Services,
Civic Offices,
Coach Central,
Telford, TF3 4HD.
Telephone: Telford 01952 382006
Email: customer.quality@telford.gov.uk