

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET

23 FEBRUARY 2012

FAMILY AND FRIENDS POLICY

REPORT OF INTERIM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

This policy relates to the care of children by family and friends where birth parents are unable to provide care temporarily or in the longer term. It recognises that in most situations children are best cared for by family and friends, and that often this is an informal arrangement in which the Local Authority has no role. The policy covers also those situations where the child becomes looked after by the Local Authority, and the actions which the Local Authority will take to determine whether the family and friends carers are able to care for the child. The policy also includes details of other legal arrangements which the court can make to determine where a child lives, eg adoption, residence orders and Special Guardianship orders.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the family and friends policy be endorsed.
- 2.2 That members note it will be launched from April 1st 2012 to enable appropriate training for staff.

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Priority Plan objective(s)?	
	Yes	Keep children safe from maltreatment neglect and sexual exploitation.
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	This policy will impact on children who are unable to live with their birth families. It will also impact on the families and friends of those children, as they are considered as potential carers.
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE	Projects will be delivered during the financial year 2012/13	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	No	The endorsement of this policy does not have any additional financial implications for the Council. The type of placements, support and responsibilities detailed within this policy are already undertaken by the Council and are funded from within existing resources. The arrangements detailed for Looked after children within this policy can generally be provided at a lower cost than other types of placement options available to the Council. (TS 26/01/12)

LEGAL ISSUES	No	“Family and Friends care; Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities” was published by the Department for Education in March 2011. The guidance requires that, in collaboration with local partners, each local authority must publish a policy which sets out its approach to supporting the needs of children living with family and friends carers. This policy consolidates a range of existing guidance and local procedures into one policy for the first time
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	This policy will be of significant interest to key interest groups who support extended family members who care for children eg Grandparents groups
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	The policy applies to children living anywhere in Telford and Wrekin.

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

- 4.1 This policy has been produced in response to new guidance issued in April 2011 by the Department of Education which came into force in October 2011. The policy outlines the circumstances in which children and young people are cared for by family and friends carers and the local authority responsibility in each of these situations.
- 4.2. The policy recognises that many of these arrangements do not require any involvement from the Council, and are part of the usual arrangements families make where alternative care needs to be provided for children.
- 4.3. It also includes private fostering arrangements where children are cared for, for more than 28 days by adults who are not family as defined by the guidance.
- 4.4. Where children become “looked after” by the Council either at the direction of the court or by the request of the family, family and friends are considered as potential carers for the child. An initial viability assessment of the family or friends is undertaken which establishes whether the council should undertake a full fostering assessment to determine their suitability to care for the child. Fostering assessments are considered by the Council panel in accordance with fostering regulations.
- 4.5. Where the Council agrees the suitability of the family and friends to become foster parents, they become entitled to the usual range of support and are subject to the usual regulations which the Council provides to foster parents. This includes training, supervision, regular review and financial support to care for the child.
- 4.6. The policy also references other court orders which enable children to be cared for outside their birth family. The Council is not always involved in such arrangements which include Residence orders, Special Guardianship orders and Adoption.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 5.1 This policy will be of significant interest to key interest groups who support extended family members who care for children e.g. Grandparents groups. Accordingly whilst it represents a consolidation of existing guidance and procedures, training will be provided to staff to ensure the policy is implemented effectively in an integrated way.

6. PREVIOUS MINUTES

N/A

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

**Report prepared by Angela Yapp Sevice Delivery Manager Fostering and Children in Care 01952 385885 and Amanda Wollam Professional Lead Social Work
Telephone: 01952 831201**