



Family & Friends Care policy

**Children & Families
Fostering & Adoption Service
253 Preston Road
Brighton
BN1 6SE**

www.fosteringinbrightonandhove.org.uk

Sept 2011

1. Introduction

Children may be brought up by members of their extended families, friends or other people who are connected with them for a variety of reasons and in a variety of different arrangements.

This policy sets out Brighton & Hove's approach towards promoting and supporting the needs of such children and covers the assessments which will be carried out to determine the services required and how such services will be provided.

This policy is in compliance with the requirements of the Family and Friends Statutory Guidance published by the Department for Education in March 2011. This guidance sets out a framework for the provision of support to family and friends carers.

2. Values and principles underpinning the Family and Friends policy

The welfare of the child is the paramount consideration and the best interests of the child will always be at the centre of the work of Children & Families.

It is an underlying principle that children should be enabled to grow up as part of a loving and caring family, which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond. We will work to maintain children within their own family and facilitate services to support any such arrangements wherever this is consistent with the child's safety and well being. This principle applies to all children in need, including those who are looked after by Brighton & Hove.

If a child cannot live with his or her birth parents we will always actively consider the potential for that child to be cared for within the wider family or friendship network with carers able to meet the child's needs. The birth family should be fully involved in the care planning for the child and we would actively consider organising a Family Group Conference to enable the wider family and friendship network to come together to consider the plans for the child and support services that the family might need.

It is the right of every child to have the opportunity to develop secure attachments to carers who are capable of providing safe and effective and loving care for the duration of his/her childhood, so that child can thrive and develop. Brighton & Hove will provide support to arrangements for the care of the child based on the assessed needs of that child. The majority of Family & Friends carers will have had a previous, or ongoing significant relationship with a child for whom they are offering to care and whose needs they can meet, in circumstances where it has been assessed the child cannot live, either temporarily or permanently with his/her birth parent/s. Family & Friends carers are likely to be able to contribute to a child's sense of personal identity in part through their experience of a shared culture.

Family and Friends carers and the children they care for will be supported in the community by universal services as well as by appropriate services from the local authority. Carers will be given advice and support to access these universal and targeted specific support services. Family and Friends approved foster carers will have the same right to access support services as other mainstream foster carers but will also have the opportunity to access dedicated services that reflect their specific role.

3. Consultation and evidence base

Brighton & Hove has had a dedicated Family and Friends team based within the Fostering & Adoption service since 2003. The team has expanded over the years and has developed services for carers that comply with the regulatory requirements but also in response to the information gained from carers directly. The carers group established by the team has been used to consult with about various developments within the service and family and friends carers have spoken about their experiences at training and conferences organised on kinship care by the Fostering & Adoption service.

There has been consultation with a number of Brighton & Hove Family and Friends carers in relation to this policy. The policy will be kept up to date and the process of ongoing consultation with carers, young people, staff and key stakeholders will continue and be led by the Family and Friends team managers.

4. Management accountability

The Family and Friends team based within the Fostering & Adoption Service in Brighton & Hove undertakes the supervision of family and friends foster carers and assessments of prospective carers. The team also offers supports services to a number of existing family and friends carers and is able to signpost carers to other appropriate services within the city.

The Family and Friends team sits within the Adoption & Permanence service managed by Karen Devine, Team Manager. Karen Devine is the senior manager with responsibility for the Family and Friends policy within Brighton & Hove and will ensure the policy is kept updated and implemented consistently and that there is an ongoing process established for stakeholder engagement and input into the policy.

5. Legal Framework

All local authorities have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of 'children in need' living within their area and to promote the upbringing of such children by their families. This duty is fulfilled by providing a range of services appropriate to those children's assessed needs (Section 17, Children Act 1989). This can include financial, practical or other support. A child in need is defined within Section 17(10) of the Children Act 1989 as a child who

is disabled or who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by the local authority.

Brighton & Hove Children & Families has produced a booklet called 'Supporting Families in Brighton & Hove'. This booklet introduces the continuum of need model to identify the needs and corresponding services for children and families requiring support.

Children in need may live with members of their family and friends in a variety of different legal arrangements, some formal some informal and different court orders are available to formalise these arrangements.

It is important to note that local authorities do 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 it does have a duty where it appears that services may be necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a Child in Need.

Looked after children will always come within the definition of Children in Need, whether they are accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (with parental consent) or in care subject to a Court Order whereby the local authority shares parental responsibility for the child. The local authority has a responsibility wherever possible to make arrangements for a looked after child to live with a member of the family (Section 22 of the Children Act 1989).

For a detailed summary of the meaning and implications of different legal situations, the rights of carers and parents, and the nature of decisions which family and friends carers will be able to make in relation to the child, please see Appendix A 'Caring for Somebody Else's Child – Options' from the Department for Education statutory guidance. The following sections give an outline of the legal framework for the range of different situations whereby children may be living with family and friends carers.

Brighton & Hove also have a leaflet entitled 'A Parent's guide to the various options for children who cannot live with their birth parents'. This leaflet was produced in consultation with birth parents and contains information to explain the legal framework.

5.1 Informal family and friends care arrangements

Where a child cannot be cared for within his or her immediate family, the family may make their own arrangements to care for the child within the family and friends network.

The local authority does not have a duty to assess any such informal family and friends care arrangements, unless it appears that services may be necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a Child in Need. In such cases, the local authority has a responsibility under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to assess the child's needs and provide services to meet any assessed needs of the child. Following assessment, a Child in Need Plan will be drawn up and a package of support will be identified. This can

comprise a variety of different types of services and support, including financial support.

5.2 Private Fostering arrangements

A privately fostered child is a child under 16 years (or 18 if disabled) who is cared for by an adult who is not a parent or close relative and where the child is to be cared for in that home for 28 days or more. A close relative is defined as 'a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent.' It does not include a child who is Looked After by a local authority. In a private fostering arrangement, the parent still holds parental responsibility and agrees the arrangement with the private foster carer.

It is a requirement that the local authority is notified of private fostering arrangements and checks are undertaken in relation to the carers. It is the responsibility of the local authority to monitor the welfare of the child and continue to assess the suitability of the private fostering arrangement. A child in a private fostering arrangement may come 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. As in 4.1 above, this can comprise a variety of different types of services and support, including financial support.

5.3 Family and Friends foster carers

Where a child is looked after by the local authority, we have a responsibility wherever possible to make arrangements for the child to live with a member of the family who is approved as a foster carer (Section 22 of the Children Act 1989). The child can be placed with the family members prior to such approval, subject to an assessment of the placement, for up to 16 weeks. This temporary approval can only be extended for a maximum of a further 8 weeks in exceptional circumstances. The procedures for the assessment of prospective family and friends foster carers is set out in the assessment section within this policy.

It is the responsibility of the social worker for the looked after child to develop a care plan which is kept under regular review. In addition the child will have a placement plan which sets out the specific arrangements surrounding the child and the carers and the expectations of the foster carers and the support they can receive to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities for the child.

Information about the Fostering service in Brighton & Hove can be found in the Fostering Service statement of purpose on the dedicated website www.fosteringinbrightonandhove.org.uk

Once carers are approved they will be allocated a supervising social worker from the Family and Friends team to provide them with support and supervision and they will receive fostering allowances for as long as they are caring for the child as a foster child.

While the child remains looked after, as a foster carer, they will be expected to co-operate with all the processes that are in place to ensure that the child receives appropriate care and support, for example contributing to reviews of the child's care plan, co-operating with the child's social worker and promoting the child's health and education needs. All foster carers are required to sign a written foster carer agreement and their approval as foster carers is subject to regular annual review. There is also now an expectation that carers work towards completing the Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards for Family and Friends (Kinship) Foster Carers within the first 18 months of approval. This is something that the carers' supervising social worker will provide support with.

Detailed procedures in relation to all aspects of the fostering task can be found in Brighton & Hove's Fostering & Adoption service online foster carers' handbook www.brightonandhove.fosteringhandbook.org.uk

5.4 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 18. Parental responsibility is shared with the parents.

Relatives may apply for a Residence Order after caring for the child for one year or earlier if the child is the care of the local authority and the local authority consent to that application or if the child is not in care if there is consent of each person with parental responsibility.

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 family and friend's foster carer 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.

The local authority may pay a Residence Order Allowance 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. Section 7 of this policy deals with financial support.

5.4 Special Guardianship Order

A Special Guardianship Order offers a further option for children needing permanence outside of their birth family. This order confers parental responsibility on the special guardian to the exclusion of any others with parental responsibility so that the special guardian has responsibility for all the day to day decisions in relation to that child. This order provides legal stability for the child whilst the parents remain the child's legal parents.

The Special Guardianship Order remains in force until the child is 18 years old and should provide for a strong foundation for a lifelong relationship between the child and the special guardian.

Special Guardianship applications may be made in private law proceedings but the court may also make a special guardianship order in any family proceedings concerning the welfare of the child if they consider an order should be made. When considering whether to make a Special Guardianship Order the welfare of the child will be the court's paramount consideration and the welfare checklist in Section 1 of the Children Act 1989 is applied.

A Special Guardianship Order in favour of a family and friends foster carer with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a child in care.

Where the child was looked after immediately prior to the making of a 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. See section 7 for further information on financial support.

5.5 Adoption

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. This order is final and cannot be undone and the child is treated in law as if he or she had been born to the adopter. The adoptive parents have full parental rights and responsibilities.

An Adoption Order in favour of a relative or a family and friends foster carer with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a child in care or a child in need. However in most family and friends arrangements special guardianship is considered a more appropriate legal order as this provides security for the child without severing that legal relationship with the birth parent.

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 support required is then set out in an Adoption Support Plan and this may include financial support.

6. The role of the Family & Friends team

The Family and Friends team within Brighton & Hove is part of the Fostering & Adoption service. The team is made up of two part time Practice Managers,

three full time social workers and three part time social workers and one full time social work resource officer.

The core work of the team is to undertake assessments with families for children that are looked after or subject to care proceedings. The carers are supervised and supported by workers from the team in line with fostering regulations.

The team also provides advice and support to carers with whom we have a pre-existing relationship. These are usually carers that have gone on to offer a permanent placement to the child in their care via Residence Order or Special Guardianship.

The team runs a monthly support group for carers, a duty and advice service to carers as well as consultation to other social work staff on aspects of care planning for children in family and friends placements. Family and Friends foster carers have access to the foster carer training programme and also to the range of other support services provided to approved foster carers.

7. Financial Support

7.1 Section 17 financial support to Family & Friends carers

When social work teams have been instrumental in setting up a placement of a child with carers who are family and friends carers, consideration has to be given to financial support that may be required to sustain the placement. Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 gives local authorities a general duty to promote the upbringing of children in need by their families and if required provide resources or support to the family to enable this to happen. The social worker will have to undertake certain checks as part of an assessment about any such plan to support such an arrangement financially. If the placement has been made at short notice consideration will be given to a discretionary payment to support the carers with meeting the needs of the child. Factors that are taken into account when determining the level of Section 17 financial payments are:

- The extent to which the parents are financially supporting the placement.
- Whether the carers have to provide clothes and other key items for the child.
- Whether there are particular expenses that carers are seeking a contribution towards.
- Any special and essential needs of the child.

Under certain circumstances Section 17 payments can be made to family and friends carers that are providing a longer term placement. The social worker will need to complete a fuller assessment about the needs of the child and the capacity of the carers to meet those needs. The carers will also be asked to complete a financial assessment as any regular allowance is means tested

and at the same level as a Residence Order allowance. If a child is not in care and subject to regular looked after child reviews the child will be seen as a child in need and subject to a child in need plan which is also kept under regular review. The social worker for the child will discuss the plan to secure legal permanence for the child with the carer acquiring parental responsibility via a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order and the carers would be assessed for ongoing financial support with the appropriate Residence Order or Special Guardianship Allowance.

7.2 Foster care allowances

When a child is looked after by the local authority either on a voluntary basis or as a result of court proceedings and placed with family and friends carers these carers will receive a fostering allowance. Such fostering allowances will be paid to carers if a child is looked after and placed in an immediate placement with family and friends carers under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 or placed as part of a care plan following a full assessment and approval of the family and friends carers as foster carers. Full information about fostering allowances in Brighton and Hove can be found on the dedicated website

7.3 Residence Order Allowances

Schedule 1 of the Children Act 1989 enables the local authority to make a contribution to the cost of the maintenance of a child where that child lives or is to live with that person as a result of a Residence Order. The power to pay a Residence Order allowance is discretionary and not intended to remove responsibility from the birth parents to make adequate financial provision for their child. The Residence Order carers by virtue of obtaining parental responsibility for the child in their care also have a responsibility to financially support that child.

Within Brighton and Hove payments are normally only made in the following circumstances:

- to enable a child who is being looked after by the local authority to be securely placed with a family and friends carer thus enabling the child to achieve a stable placement outside of the care system.
- the payment of an allowance is necessary to avoid the need for the child to be looked after and to secure a family placement that best meets the child's needs.

Recommendations in relation to the payments of Residence Order allowances are based on a comprehensive assessment of the carer's capacity to meet the child's needs and a financial assessment of the carer's circumstances.

Within Brighton & Hove there is a Family and Friends Allowance Panel that meets regularly to consider requests for Residence Order or Special

Guardianship Order allowances. The Payments Team within Brighton & Hove undertake assessments in relation to Residence Order or Special Guardianship allowances once they receive the completed financial assessment form. It is a requirement that this is submitted with supporting documentation evidencing the income received and regular outgoings. The assessment is means tested and based on the standard care element of the fostering allowance. The Payments Team notify the carer of their assessed rate and organise for regular weekly payments to be made. The level of allowance is re-assessed annually and carers are required to complete a new financial statement. Carers are also required to inform the Payments team of any significant change in their circumstances or if the child leaves their care.

7.4 Special Guardianship Allowances

Special Guardianship Orders were introduced in December 2005 and confer additional legal security to the carers of a child but do not legally sever the links with the child's birth parents as with adoption. Parents remain financially liable for a child who is subject to a Special Guardianship Order although as with Residence Orders the carers also gain responsibility to financially support the child by virtue of gaining parental responsibility. If the child was looked after by the local authority before the making of the SGO an assessment must be carried out in relation to support services including the detail of any agreed financial support. A draft support plan will be fully discussed with the carer before the order is made. If the child was not looked after the local authority may carry out such an assessment if requested.

A financial assessment is carried out in the same way as for Residence Order allowances and the decision about the level of allowance is made at the family and Friends allowance panel described in the section above.

7.5 Key Principles in relation to Residence Order Allowances and Special Guardianship Order allowances for Family and Friends carers.

- No allowance will be paid until the Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order is made.
- Residence Order allowances will only be paid in relation to Residence Orders that are part of a permanent care plan not Residence Orders that are made as an interim measure whilst further assessment work is undertaken. Such arrangements may be considered for a discretionary Section 17 payment.
- Residence Order allowances or Special Guardianship Order allowances cannot be backdated and will only be paid from the start of the order if this is a plan that the local authority have been supporting or from the completion of an assessment if the local authority is asked by a Residence Order carer or Special Guardian to undertake an assessment for support services.
- Payment will normally be made until a young person is 18 years of age
- Both allowances will be subject to annual financial reviews and evidence of the financial circumstances is required at each review. If carers refuse to give full information as part of the financial statement a Residence Order or Special Guardianship allowance cannot be paid.

- It will be the responsibility of the carer to inform the Payments Team at Brighton & Hove if there are any significant changes to their circumstances or if the child lives permanently elsewhere.
- All family and friends carers are advised to ensure that they are receiving all the welfare benefits to which they are entitled and the Brighton & Hove welfare rights team or other welfare rights advice services should be contacted. Child benefit can be claimed in relation to children that are subject to a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order but cannot be claimed by family and friends foster carers in relation to a child in care.

8. Local Financial Advice services

Brighton & Hove Welfare Rights team

The Brighton & Hove city council's Welfare Rights Team is a small team who primarily train other advisers on welfare benefits. They also offer advice to people who have been turned down for benefits and run a public advice line every Wednesday morning on (01273) 291116 from 10am until 1pm.

The Team also produces a range of factsheets that deal with different welfare benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, Benefits for Carers and a general benefit rates factsheet.

If you need basic information about benefits, the Department of Work and Pensions has a range of helpful leaflets that you can pick up from the Post Offices, or by visiting one or the local Jobcentre plus offices which for Brighton is in Edward Street, or for people in Hove it is in Boundary Road, or by visiting the [Directgov website](#).

Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project Welfare Rights Service

This centre offers independent advice and support about benefits and welfare rights. It is open Monday - Thursday 10.30am - 1pm and 2pm-4pm , Friday 2pm - 4pm

Address: 6 Tilbury Place
Brighton
East Sussex

Tel: 01273 676171 or 676471

www.bucfp.org

CAB

The Citizens Advice Bureau offers free, confidential advice on a wide range of issues including legal and financial and welfare rights matters

Tel :0845 1203710

Hove Town Hall, Tisbury Road, Hove

- **Drop-in enquiries** Monday-Friday 9.15am-11.15am

- **Phone advice line** Monday-Friday 9.30am-noon, Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 1pm-3.30pm

East Sussex Credit Union

The Credit Union provides secure savings accounts and low cost flexible loans when most needed

(01273) 234858

Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton

- **Drop-in enquiries** Monday-Friday 10am-3pm
- **Phone enquiries** Monday-Friday 9.30am-4pm

9. Accommodation

Family and friends carers may need support with accommodation, as their homes may not be of sufficient capacity to suddenly take on the care of a child or possibly a sibling group of children. Brighton and Hove Council's Housing Policies recognise the importance of the role performed by family and friends carers. Existing council tenants can be nominated by the children's social worker to move into Band A, which gives the highest priority to tenants, enabling them to bid for a transfer to larger accommodation. There are set terms and conditions to this process which must be adhered to and cannot be varied. Families who are existing tenants, or eligible for re-housing, are also able to apply for privately rented housing, made available to the council by social landlords.

In Brighton and Hove, a Housing Options group made up of social care services and housing staff meets regularly to ensure that the departments work in partnership to support the housing needs which may face family and friends carers across a range of legal circumstances. The child's social worker or a family's supervising social worker can refer to this group. Families can be nominated to a priority allocation system of housing.

Brighton and Hove has the authority under section 17 of the 1989 Children Act to financial support towards accommodation costs where they assess this as the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote a child's welfare.

For housing advice at Brighton & Hove city council you can either email housing.advice@brighton-hove.gov.uk or telephone: (01273) 294400

Advice on housing issues can also be provided by the Brighton Housing Trust.

Brighton Housing Trust
10 Ditchling Rise
Brighton, East Sussex BN1 4QL
01273 684 741

10. Contact

All local authorities are under a duty to promote contact for all children in need, although this differs depending on whether or not the child is looked after.

When a child is not in the care the local authority is under a duty to promote contact between the child and his/her family 'where it is necessary to do so to 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 is managed safely. If necessary, information will be made available to carers about local contact centres and family mediations services and how to make use of those services.

Where a child is in the care of the local authority we are 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 placement plan and kept under regular review.

It is acknowledged that contact in family and friend's care placements can be particularly complex and a source of potential strain and conflict within the family. It can place emotional and practical strains on all parties involved. Family dynamics and relationships may be fundamentally changed, particularly for grandparents and others who are becoming 'second time around carers'. Children may not fully understand why they are being brought up by relatives whilst parents may resent the fact that their children do not live with them. When a plan for special guardianship is being considered the contact plan and any support services relating to contact will be detailed within the special guardianship support plan.

11. Family Group Conferences

Family Group Conferences (FGC) are meetings held between professionals and family members facilitated by an independent chair. The aim of the meeting is to promote the involvement of the wider family and friendship network in the decision making process to achieve a resolution of difficulties and provide a way for them to play a part in considering the plan for the child.

Brighton & Hove has a contract with a voluntary organisation called Daybreak to run Family Group Conferences. The Brighton & Hove Daybreak project also places a big emphasis on the children and young people having their views heard at the meeting that is planning for them. Children having an FGC in Brighton & Hove have the option of having an independent advocate and a significant proportion of children over 5 choose this option, other children present their views themselves or with the support of family friends or particular professionals that they feel familiar with.

More information about Daybreak can be found on their website <http://www.daybreakfgc.org.uk/>

12. Assessments of prospective carers

When children become looked after by the local authority, Fostering Regulations require that they are placed with carers who have been assessed and approved as foster carers. This applies to children placed with relatives, friends or a person connected to the child.

In circumstances where the most appropriate placement for a looked after child is with a relative, friend or connected person and the need for the placement is urgent and therefore it is not possible to fully assess and approve the person as foster carer before placing the child, a senior manager within the local authority can temporarily grant approval of the carers for a period of 16 weeks. In order to do this the local authority has to assess the suitability of the connected person; the accommodation where the child would live; and any persons over 18yrs in the household for capacity to safeguard and promote the child's welfare and meet the needs identified in the child's care plan. The assessment will look at the carer's relationship with the child and knowledge of the concerns resulting in them being looked after. Assessment includes police, social services, and health checks and two verbal references. The local authority must make immediate arrangements for full assessment of the carers before the temporary approval period expires.

Family and Friends or connected persons wishing to be approved as foster carers for a particular child need to engage with the local authority in a comprehensive assessment of their capacity to meet the child's needs for as long as the placement is required. In some cases children will be unable to return to their parents care and so require a permanent home elsewhere. Prospective carers may be assessed as foster carers or special guardians or residence order carers for the child. The court will decide which option is most appropriate for the child bearing in mind the wishes and feelings of the child, parents and prospective carers.

A qualified social worker will undertake a full assessment of prospective carers for the child. Assessment visits will usually be in the carer's home but some may be in local authority premises. Prospective carers will be asked about their own history, their experiences of being parented and their understanding of how they have become the people they are. They will be asked to share information about their current and past relationships; their relationships with friends and neighbours, and the parents of the foster child. They will be asked about their experience of caring for children generally and their existing knowledge of the foster child's behaviour and background. They will be given an opportunity to share any concerns they may have about the child as well as receiving information about the child from the local authority. Prospective carers will be asked to consider what impact caring for the child will have on their lifestyle and family; how they will manage financially; and how they will manage contact arrangements between the child and their parents or other family members. They will be asked to consider how they will promote the child's healthy development, keep them safe and promote secure attachments for the child. Their ability to work in partnership with

professionals will be assessed; and full criminal records bureau checks will be undertaken alongside medical and local authority checks. A minimum of two referees will be visited and their names will be local authority checked.

The Family & Friends team is staffed by social workers who understand the issues facing family and friends carers and will undertake the assessment in a spirit of partnership with prospective carers and seek to support carers in working their way through issues. Social workers will detail the assessment process to prospective carers in full during their first visit. They will provide feedback throughout the assessment process and identify any areas they are concerned about. Not all assessments result in approval as foster carer or special guardian but this does not reflect on the prospective carers as parents it just means they have been assessed as not being able to meet the specific needs of the foster child.

Once the assessment has been completed the social worker will produce a report for either court and/or Fostering Panel to obtain approval as Family & Friends Foster Carer or Special Guardian or Residence Order holder for the child. The social worker will advise the prospective carers of the processes entailed in Fostering Panel and court and will share the contents of the assessment report with the prospective carers. They will be invited to provide their comments on the assessment process and report which will be included in the final report for Fostering Panel.

If Fostering Panel recommends the approval of Family and Friends Foster carers to the Agency Decision Maker (senior manager within the local authority) and he decides the prospective carers should be approved as foster carers they will become fully approved foster carers for the named child. They will receive regular visits from a supervising social worker to support them in caring for the child. They will be required to attend the child's looked after child review meetings and demonstrate that they are meeting the child's needs and promoting their welfare. Carers may chose to apply for a Special Guardianship or Residence Order in respect of the child at a later date if they feel they can offer the child permanence and stability without the direct involvement of the local authority.

Some carers feel clear from the outset that a Special Guardianship or Residence Order is the most appropriate way of caring for the child and this is what is presented to the court. If the court grants one of these orders, the carers obtain parental responsibility for the child and the local authority no longer has a direct role in the child's life. The Family & Friends team can however continue to offer support as agreed with the special guardians and this support will be detailed in a Special Guardianship Support Plan.

13. Comments, Compliments or Complaints

We want to know what you think about the service you receive so that we can build on our successes and make improvements where they are most needed.

Users of the Fostering Services, including children, birth families, prospective and approved carers, are provided with copies of the complaints procedure, advised how to access the procedure and encouraged to invoke it if unhappy with services provided. Foster carers are also advised about the circumstances in which they may have recourse to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) if they are in disagreement with a decision being proposed by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). Service users are advised that independent sources of support are available to help them make a complaint and advocate on their behalf if they feel unconfident making a complaint by themselves. Our aim would be to resolve any such dissatisfaction without the need for a formal investigation but where an informal resolution is not possible, then a formal investigation will be arranged. The timescales and process are set out in the Complaints Procedure.

The Customer Services Manager who oversees the complaints procedure can be contacted at:

Brighton & Hove City Council
Kings House, Grand Ave, Hove
or by writing to:
Standards & Complaints,
Freepost SEA2560, Brighton BN1 1ZW

The Free phone number is 0500 291229

Information about the complaints process can be found by going to the City Council website: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk or the Fostering & Adoption Service website: www.fosteringinbrightonandhove.org.uk
Complaints can also be emailed to complaints@brighton-hove.gov.uk

The Fostering Service is inspected by Ofsted in accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations and the National Minimum Standards. Inspection reports are public documents and a copy of the current report will be available via the website, www.fosteringinbrightonandhove.org.uk.

The local Ofsted office responsible for inspecting fostering services provided by Brighton and Hove City Council can be contacted at:

Ofsted South Region

Freshford House
Radcliffe Way
Bristol
BS1 6NL

Telephone – 08456 404040
Email – enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

14. Local Organisations

This section contains information about organisations and services that may be useful to Family and Friends carers living locally to Brighton & Hove.

Amaze

Amaze gives information, advice and support to parents of children with special needs and disabilities in Brighton & Hove

www.amazebrighton.org.uk

Tel 01273 772289

Brighton & Hove Family Information Service

The Family Information Service (FIS) offers information and advice to families with children aged 0-19

Helpline: (01273) 293545

Drop-in: Brighton Town Hall

The service is open Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

Email: familyinfo@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Support for the families, friends and carers of substance users

PATCHED offers free and confidential advice, information and support for the families, friends and [carers of substance users](#) in Brighton & Hove. PATCHED offers carer's needs assessments, counselling for individuals and for families, 'outreach' and educational groups.

Available 10am-10pm every day.

9, The Drive, Hove BN3 3JE

Helpline on 0800 085 4450

Young Person's Substance Misuse Service in Brighton & Hove

ru-ok? www.areyouok.org.uk is the young person's substance misuse service for Brighton & Hove. ru-ok? provides free, confidential help and advice to young people (and their families) because of problems with drugs, alcohol or legal highs.

Available Monday to Friday 9am-5pm

Tel (01273) 293966

15. National Organisations

A full list of useful national organisations can be found in the Annex D to the statutory guidance on Family & Friends care.

However of particular interest may be:

Family Rights Group (FRG)

Provides advice to parents and other family members whose children are involved with or require children's social care services because of welfare needs or concerns. Publishes resources, helps to develop support groups for family and friends carers, and runs a discussion board.

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

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

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

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