

POLICY ON FAMILY AND FRIENDS AS CARERS



Introduction

Although Foster Care Link does not have the authority to make immediate placements with family and friends (see below), there may be occasions when Foster Care Link are asked to carry out assessments of such carers, take on responsibility for supervising such carers, or find that we are asked to place a child who is a relative or friend of one of our existing carers.

This policy has been produced to make clear the principles and standards to be applied by both staff and carers in such circumstances.

Statutory Framework

The activities of both foster carers and fostering services are governed by the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 allows local authorities to place a child for a period of up to sixteen weeks with someone who is not an existing foster carer, providing that an immediate placement is needed, the person is a relative or friend of the child, the person enters into a written agreement with the local authority and basic checks are carried out.

The placement cannot continue beyond sixteen weeks unless the relative or friend has by this time been approved as a foster carer by a fostering service in the usual manner.

Requests for Foster Care Link to Assess Family and Friends

While it is unlikely that Foster Care Link would be asked to carry out an assessment of a relative and friend who has had a child placed under Regulation 24, it is nonetheless possible.

If a local authority are unable to complete the assessment within the required sixteen weeks, Foster Care Link could be asked to complete the assessment on their behalf.

Such requests must be referred to the Registered Manager who will need to consider the following:

- Is the request only to carry out the assessment for approval by the referring agency or are Foster Care Link also being asked to approve the prospective carer?
- Is there sufficient capacity within the organisation to take on the work without compromising standards in other areas?
- Have the local authority instigated the necessary checks and reference and are they prepared to follow these up?
- On the basis of the evidence available, how likely is it that an assessment can be completed, considered by the relevant Panel and approved within six weeks of the child being placed?
- Does the placement appear to be in the best interests of the child?

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If the Registered Manager is satisfied that Foster Care Link should take on the work, then (s)he must first seek the agreement of the Managing Director before agreeing to do so.

Requests for Foster Care Link to Supervise Family and Friends

Once again this is unlikely to be a common request and any such request must be referred to the Registered Manager who will need to consider the following:

- Is the request only to carry out a supervisory role with approval being retained by the referring agency?
- Is the request for Foster Care Link to re-assess the carer and approve as one of our own carers?
- Is there sufficient capacity within the organisation to take on the work without compromising standards in other areas?
- Does the placement appear to be in the best interests of the child?

If the Registered Manager is satisfied that Foster Care Link should take on the work, then (s)he must first seek the agreement of the Managing Director before agreeing to do so.

Referral for Placements with Existing Foster Care Link Carers who are known to the Child

It is much more likely that the issue of the use of family and friends as carers will arise where it is known that Foster Care Link has an approved carer who is known to a child needing placement.

For example, a birth parent requesting that a child be accommodated may know a relative or friend who is an approved Foster Care Link carer and ask the local authority to approach us to place the child with that carer.

Such placements maybe in the best interests of the child and can lead to better outcomes than placement with strangers.

Requests for such placements should be dealt with as for any other referral, but particular care will need to be taken in respect of matching and the following issues will need to be considered:

- Does the carer have a vacancy?
- What will be the impact on other children in placement of having another child placed who may be a close relative of the carer?
- What are the views of the social workers of other children in placement?
- What will be the impact of the placement of the carer?
- Will the carer be able to divorce themselves from their role as a family member or friend if necessary and put their role as a carer first?
- How will issues of confidentiality be addressed?

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If the answers to these questions are positive, and the placement can be demonstrated to be the best match available and in the best interests of the child, the placement should be allowed to proceed in the normal way.

General principles on the use of Family and Friend as Carers

While there is a recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friends as carers, Foster Care Link will always seek to apply the same standards as apply to other carers.

In practice this means:

- The support and training needs as family and friend carers will be assessed and met in the same way as for any other carers
- Family and friend carers will receive the same relevant payments as any other carers
- The relevant requirements of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 will be applied.