

# Family and friends carers

**A guide to the options available to  
look after a child you know (who is  
looked after or at risk of being looked  
after by Tower Hamlets)**



# Family and friends carers

Many children are unable to live with their parents for a variety of reasons. They may have been neglected or abused, there may have been a family break up or their parents may be unable to manage.

Whatever the reason, it will be a sad situation for everyone involved, but having some familiarity by living with someone the child knows can be reassuring. The Children Act 1989 states that the local council should explore options within the child's family and friends (connected persons) for a safe place for the child to live before any other forms of placement are considered.

A Connected Person is defined as a relative, friend or other person connected with a child; for example, a child-minder, teacher or youth worker and would have a pre-existing relationship with the child.

For these carers, there are a number of caring arrangements available that can be confusing and difficult to understand. This leaflet is designed to give you a simple overview of your options. We advise you to discuss these options with your social worker to help you decide what is best for the child and your family.

This leaflet covers the following three options:

- Family and Friends Foster Carer
- Special Guardianship Order
- Child Arrangement Order

These options all require an assessment that will be carried out by a social worker and would include police and health checks, home visits and interviews with you and significant members of your family.





## Routes into Caring Arrangement

The child has been placed with the relative or friend by the local authority, because the person who had been caring for the child is unable to provide suitable care. The child is a looked after child and so the local authority must approve the relative or friend as a local authority foster carer. The child is staying with the relative or friend on a long term basis, with the permission of the parent or may be subject to a Care Order, which gives the Local Authority parental responsibility.

## Approval Basis

You will need to attend the fostering panel, once your assessment has been successfully completed. At this panel, you will need to be approved as a Local Authority foster carer in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations.

## Support Services

You will be provided with training and practical support from the Fostering Team. Young person may be entitled to leaving care support services.

## Financial support

Weekly allowance to meet the costs of caring for the child. Child benefit and child tax credit are not payable.

# Family and Friends Foster Carer

## Placement Supervision



Statutory: visits to child by social worker and supervision of foster carers by supervising social worker. Statutory reviews of child's care plan (minimum 6 monthly) and annual reviews of local authority foster carers' approval.

## Duration



So long as placement remains in line with child's care plan, as determined by Local Authority.

## Parental Responsibility (PR)

If the child is voluntarily placed into care by the parent, then PR remains with birth parents. If the child is subject to a Care Order, the Local Authority will have parental responsibility and can determine the extent to which it may be exercised by others.

## Routes into Caring Arrangement

The child may be at risk of becoming 'looked after' and a friend or relative applies for an order, or; the child may have been 'looked after' and their foster carer or other relative/ friend applies for an order. In either circumstance, application can be made without the support of the parents or the local authority. Relatives may apply for an order after the child has lived with them for one year. Or, there can be benign reasons, e.g. after parents' death and in line with a prior agreement between the birth parents and the carer.

### Placement Supervision

None

### Approval Basis



Appointed by court, following an SGO application from the applicant. Tower Hamlets will carry out an assessment of your ability to safely care for the child, in line with the Children Act 1989.

## Special Guardianship (SGO)

### Duration

Age 18 unless varied or discharged by the court before the child reaches 18 years.

### Parental Responsibility (PR)



PR shared with parents and anyone else with PR for the child. The special guardian may exercise PR to the exclusion of all others with PR, apart from another special guardian.

### Support Services

If child was looked after prior to making the SGO, Tower Hamlets must assess the need for special guardianship support services and has discretion whether or not to provide support. Young person may be entitled to leaving care support services if they were looked after child prior to making the SGO.

### Financial support



Entitled to an assessment for financial support under the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 if the child was looked after prior to order and meets the regulations criteria. You could be entitled to regular or one off payments. Any allowances given are reviewed annually. Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.



## Routes into Caring Arrangement

The child has been placed with the relative or friend by the local authority, because the person who had been caring for the child is unable to provide suitable care. The child is a looked after child and so the local authority must approve the relative or friend as a local authority foster carer. The child may be accommodated voluntarily with the agreement of the parents or may be subject to a care order.



## Parental Responsibility (PR)

Shared by parents and holder of Child Arrangement Order. However, the holder of the Child Arrangement Order can make decisions without the consent of the parent.

## Approval Basis

Appointed by court following application

# Child Arrangement Order (CAO)

## Placement Supervision

None

## Support Services



No entitlement (but, local authority has discretion to provide services / support for child/family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989)



## Duration

Until the child reaches 18.

## Financial support

Local authority has discretion to pay Child Arrangement Order allowance – as this is means tested. Any allowance will be reviewed annually.

# Contact with birth parents and other important people in the child's life

When children are placed with family and friends carers (connected people), if it is possible and safe, face to face contact should happen between the child and their parents. Where this is not possible, there may be indirect contact such as the exchange of letters, cards and photographs to ensure that there continues to be a relationship between the child and the people who are important to them.

Contact arrangements will form part of the assessment and court processes and it may be agreed that contact needs to be in a supervised contact centre.

Contact arrangements can be revisited at any time depending on what is best for the child. Your social worker will be able to help you facilitate contact arrangements and offer support.



# Useful contacts

## **The Family Rights Group**

0808 801 0366

[Advice Sheets - Family Rights Group \(frg.org.uk\)](https://www.frg.org.uk)

## **Kinship**

0300 123 7015

[advice@kinship.org.uk](mailto:advice@kinship.org.uk)

[www.kinship.org.uk](https://www.kinship.org.uk)

## **Department for Education**

[Special guardianship guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

## **CoramBAAF**

0300 123 1231

[CoramBAAF website](https://www.corambAAF.org.uk)

For more information on Family and Friends Carers please call us on the number below, email us or visit our website.

## **Permanency Assessment and Support Team**

Tower Hamlets Town Hall

160 Whitechapel Road

London, E1 1BJ

0207 364 1246

[fostering@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

[Special guardianship website \(towerhamlets.gov.uk\)](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk)



## **Permanency Assessment and Support Team**

Tower Hamlets Town Hall  
160 Whitechapel Road  
London, E1 1BJ

Duty Phone Number: **0207 364 4282**  
Email: **[kinship@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:kinship@towerhamlets.gov.uk)**

[Special guardianship website \(towerhamlets.gov.uk\)](https://towerhamlets.gov.uk/special-guardianship)

