



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

St Helens Borough Council Connected Carers Policy 2023

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Introduction

It is St Helens Borough Council's vision that our town is a great place for children and young people to grow up. This means we want every child in our city to be safe, happy, healthy and loved. We know that family and friends have a unique and often vital role in caring for many of our children and young people whose own parents are unable to care for them.

However, taking on the care of a friend or relatives' child will often mean significant change for the carer and can impact upon the carer's own family and financial circumstances.

This policy sets out how the needs of children who are unable to live with their parents should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare, whether or not they are children in care. The central principle of our policy is that, wherever it is safe, appropriate and in the child's best interests to do so, children should be enabled and supported to live with their families or with close friends. Ultimately the needs and welfare of the child are paramount to us when facilitating or supporting any caring arrangements.

We are guided in all of our decision making by our working principles:

- **Child Centred:** We are all about supporting children and young people. Children and young people are our priority.
- **Working Together:** We work with children, young people and their families to achieve positive change.
- **Family Solutions:** We value a family's ability to solve their own problems. We help families to do this and only intervene when needed.
- **Safely at Home:** Our aim is to keep children safely at home. Where this is not possible, we will find somewhere safe for them to live for as long as needed.
- **Balanced Response:** We manage risk by working together. We are evidence based and balanced.
- **Challenge and Support:** We challenge ourselves and support each other. We welcome challenge and support from others.

1. What is a 'Connected' Carer?

In short a 'Connected Carer' is a relative, friend or any other person who has a positive and pre-existing relationship with the child or young person, who cares for that child full time. Throughout the policy the term Family and Friends care is used as well as Connected care. The two phrases are interchangeable, but Connected Carers is the preferred terminology in St Helens.

A full glossary of terms used in this policy is also set out at Appendix A to assist with technical or legalistic words. In preparing this policy we have had regard to relevant law and statutory guidance.

It is intended that this policy will be reviewed and updated in 2025.

The terms "we" and "our" are references to St Helens Borough Council. The term 'children' used throughout the document refers to both children and young people under the age of 18.

1.1 Values and Principles

We are committed to ensuring that the needs of children in connected care are fully understood and that effective strategies, policies and services are developed and implemented specifically with the needs of these children in mind.

The key principle of the Children Act 1989 is that children should be enabled to live within their families unless this is not consistent with their welfare. With this principle in mind, as well as our guiding 'working principles' we are committed to:

- Promoting permanence for children, by seeking to enable those children who cannot live with their parents to remain with their extended family or friends, in conditions that provide for their emotional and physical needs and are legally secure.
- Providing a clear framework for connected care, which is supported by a robust needs analysis which will prioritise the needs of the child and not be driven by financial considerations.
- Working in collaboration with local partners to promote and support the needs of children living with connected carers, whether or not they are looked after.
- Providing regularly updated information that is made freely and widely available and appropriately publicised.
- Consulting with and listening to the views of children, connected carers and parents, as appropriate, when drawing up policies. Consultation to include children and adults with disabilities, using appropriate communication methods.

1.2 Evidence Base

Most children would prefer their parents to be supported to continue to care for them rather than becoming looked after by the local authority. If this is not possible children say they would prefer to live with members of their extended family. Research has found that connected foster placements last longer than placements with unrelated carers. It also shows that many children who cannot live with their own parents can do well in family and friends arrangements, but some carers may want and need support to enable them to meet the needs of the child(ren) that they care for.

This policy has been based on evidence about what works in supporting Connected' carers. The evidence includes findings from published research and lessons learned from best practice in other local authorities. A summary of this evidence can be found at Appendix B.

1.3 Management accountability

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care is accountable, on behalf of the Director of Children's Services, for monitoring the way in which we discharge our responsibilities in accordance with the Family and Friends Care Statutory Guidance https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/288483/family-and-friends-care.pdf and this policy.

The Assistant Director will ensure that there is a strong awareness of connected care amongst professionals who work with children and families, appropriate training and that they operate within the policy framework so that it is applied in a consistent and fair manner, ensuring that services are available regardless of where, within the authority, families live.

The Assistant Director Children's Social Care will ensure that the partner agencies in the St Helens Safeguarding Children Partnership Board are aware of their responsibilities towards children living in connected care and are proactive in meeting those needs.

2. Legal Framework

There are a number of ways in which children can live with people other than their birth parents - The majority of connected carers act informally, by agreement with those holding parental responsibility for the children they care for. Providing they are a relative of the child as defined by section 105 of the Children Act 1989 or have parental responsibility for the child, there is no requirement to notify the local authority of the arrangement.

Most of these arrangements remain entirely private without the need for our involvement. However, where a child is assessed as being "in need"; support may be provided under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. A child shall be taken to be in need if: (a) s/he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for her/him of services by a local authority (b) her/his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or (c) s/he is disabled. 'Family' in relation to such a child, includes any person who has parental responsibility for the child and any other person with whom, s/he has been living.

Additionally, consideration should be given to the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011. In performing their duty under paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 of the 1989 Act (1), a local authority must:

- a) have regard to the needs of those carers who would be unable to continue to provide care unless breaks from caring were given to them; and
- b) have regard to the needs of those carers who would be able to provide care for their disabled child more effectively if breaks from caring were given to them to allow them to:
 - undertake education, training or any regular leisure activity
 - meet the needs of other children in the family more effectively, or
 - carry out day to day tasks which they must perform in order to run their household.

Other legal arrangements include children looked after by the Local Authority under Section 31 of Children Act 1989 (courts make these decisions about children being in care) or accommodated by the Local Authority under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

In both cases children may be cared for by family and friends only if the carers have been approved as Local Authority Foster Carers under the Care Planning Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, Fostering Regulations (England) 2011 and where they meet the requirements of the National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011.

Further legal arrangements for children to live with family and friends include Adoption or Placement Orders under the Adoption and Children Act 2002;

Special Guardianship Orders under Section 14A of the Children Act 1989,

Child Arrangement Orders/Residence Orders under the Children Act 1989 and

Private Fostering under Section 66 of the Children Act 1989.

3. Types of Connected Carers

In the great majority of cases families and friends will be able to make suitable arrangements without any intervention by the council. Connected care can be defined in a number of ways. The types of family and friends care detailed in this policy are set out below.

3.1 Informal Family Care (Private family arrangements)

Many families make informal care arrangements for children to live with close relatives, on a temporary or permanent basis, without the involvement of the local authority. Usually, formal parental responsibility will remain with the birth parents but with day to day parenting tasks and decisions delegated to the friends and family carers. The parent (or other holder of parental responsibility) is responsible for the financial support of the child. The carer can claim child benefit and other benefits if these are not being paid to the parent. However, in some cases, the local authority will have a number of statutory powers and duties which Connected carers should be aware of, specifically where the child is identified as a 'child in need'.

3.2 Private Fostering In some cases where the children are cared for by someone other than a close relative these arrangements may fall under private fostering regulations and we may be involved with providing services to these children and families to support the arrangements, to promote and safeguard the child's welfare and prevent the children becoming "looked after". A privately fostered child is a child under 16 (or 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 of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent'. It does not include a child who is in local authority care. In a private fostering arrangement, the parent still holds parental responsibility and agrees the arrangement with the private foster carer and is responsible for any financial payments in respect of the child. Child benefit and child tax credits can be claimed by the private foster carer. We have 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. The local authority may also become involved with a child in a private fostering arrangement where the child comes within the definition of a Child in Need. If you need further information on Private Fostering lease use the link on the St Helens Council website: [Is someone else looking after your child? - St Helens Borough Council](#)

3.3 Connected (family and friends) Carers.

When a child becomes looked after, often the best plan is for them to live with a family member or someone else the child knows well. This person is often described as a 'connected person'. However, a looked after child can only be placed with a connected person if that person has been formally approved as a foster carer. This applies whether the child is accommodated voluntarily with the agreement of the parents (Section 20) or subject to a care order (Section 31) or interim care order (Section 38) Children Act 1989. This type of foster carer is known as a Regulation 24 carer. Following an initial assessment, a

connected carer can be temporarily approved as a Regulation 24 foster carer. This temporary approval is valid for a maximum of 16 weeks. The local authority must immediately refer the carer for a full fostering assessment. If this assessment cannot be concluded before the temporary approval expires, an extension of up to eight weeks can be given following agreement by the Fostering Panel and endorsed by the Agency Decision Maker. At any time during the 16 weeks (24 weeks if an extension is granted), the local authority can decide not to progress with the assessment and must remove the child from the placement. Once approved, connected persons' foster carers will have a supervising social worker, whose job it is to support them and ensure they have access to ongoing training for foster carers. Some connected carers who are intending to adopt the child may be approved temporarily as a foster carer by the panel under Regulation 25, (known as Foster to Adopt). This allows the child to be placed with the intended adopters at an earlier stage, and gives some flexibility, should it be decided that the child may after all remain with their birth parents after a change of circumstance.

Connected persons foster carers are paid the same fostering allowance (money given to foster carers to meet the costs of caring for the child) as any other foster carer. Whether they are also paid a fostering fee (a 'reward' paid to foster carers in recognition of their skills and experience) depends on whether they meet the criteria for these payments which includes them undertaking a specific amount of training. In common with other foster carers, connected persons foster carers cannot claim child benefit or other benefits for the child (other than Disability Living Allowance, which can be claimed on behalf of the child and must be used to meet the child's needs).

Placements of children under section 38 (6) of the Children's Act 1989

When a child is subject to an Interim Care Order, the court may decide to make a direction for the child to be assessed under Section 38(6) Children Act 1989. This enables the court to direct where the child should live, for a period of assessment. Directions under Section 38(6) CA 1989 can result in a child being placed with a parent, relative or other connected person. If the placement is with a connected person, they do not need to be assessed under Regulation 24 as a foster carer, but the child is still subject to the normal looked after child interventions such as regular visits by their social worker and a LAC review.

3.4 Special Guardianship Order (SGO)

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. A special guardian formally takes on the legal powers and responsibility of parenting a child until their 18th birthday. This includes taking most decisions to do with the child's upbringing, including where the child lives and goes to school, and what medical treatment they receive. Relatives, friends or foster carers may apply for an SGO after living with the child for one year, or sooner with the leave of the court. As Special Guardians, they 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/Child Arrangement Order.

SGOs may be made in private family proceedings, and we may not be a party to any such arrangements. However, the local authority must be given three months' notice of intention to apply for a Special Guardianship Order and we will be responsible for sending a report to the court regarding whether a SGO is in the child's best interest. A Special Guardianship Order can be made in favour of a relative or foster carer with whom a child is living and may

be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need or a 'Looked After' child. A Special Guardianship Order can also be granted as the outcome of care proceedings for a child.

A Special Guardian (or someone who has applied for a Special Guardianship Order) may ask us to assess their need for support including financial support and, if the child was looked after by us, or another local authority, immediately before the Special Guardianship Order was made, the appropriate local authority must carry out an assessment and give a copy of the report to the Special Guardian. When the local authority carries out an assessment it must decide what support, if any, it will offer. Special Guardians can seek therapeutic financial support through the Adoption Support Fund (ASF). Applications to the ASF will be completed by the allocated social worker. The majority of carers with an SGO will receive Child Benefits; carers are also expected to claim all other benefits and tax credits they may be entitled to when they assume parental responsibility for a child.

3.5 Child Arrangement Order (CAO)

Child Arrangement Orders were introduced in April 2014, by the Children and Families Act 2014. They replace Contact Orders and Residence Orders. A Child Arrangement Order gives parental responsibility to the person named in the order as the person with whom a child is to live, parental responsibility remains shared with the parents following the making of a Child Arrangement Order. In the case of a child who was looked after by the same carer immediately prior to the making of a Child Arrangements Order, there is currently no specific statutory guidance regarding any assessment which should be undertaken by us for support services, which may include financial support.

3.6 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. An Adoption Order in favour of a relative or foster carer with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need or a Child in Care. Children who have been adopted and their families are eligible to receive adoption support services.

Together For Adoption (TFA) is the Regional Adoption Agency for St Helens that provides a range of adoption support services on behalf of Local Authorities in the region. Families who adopt children can request an assessment for adoption support services at any time. Together For Adoption will carry out this assessment and will work with families to provide the adoption support that they need. If it is agreed that support is needed, an Adoption Support Plan will highlight what this support will be and how it will be delivered.

Adoption support can include a range of services such as advice and guidance, additional training, support groups, therapeutic support, and financial support. If therapeutic support is needed, Together For Adoption can make an application to the Government's Adoption Support Fund on behalf of the family. Once a child is adopted, adopters can also claim child benefit and child tax credit.

4. Support

Before considering taking on a commitment to a child, carers should access information about the level of support, including any financial assistance, that they may be offered. The types of support that are available to different connected carers is set out in this section.

4.1 General Support

Connected carers may be caring for a child for the first time, or it may be some time since they cared for their own children – in either case they may not be familiar with the services on offer locally. When working with family and friends carers we will assist and signpost to appropriate services and organisations that may provide additional support, advice or guidance to connected carers. These may include voluntary organisations, health and education services and welfare benefit services or other local authority services such as:

- St Helens Family Information Service provides general information and advice about local childcare and community services for children and their families. You can access the St Helens Family Information Service at:
<https://familyinfoservice.sthelens.gov.uk/fisofrontpage/AboutFIS.aspx>
- Early Help in St Helens can be accessed by connected carers.

We are able, with our partners, to offer a range of support services to ensure that all caring arrangements are adequately supported regardless of whether they are classed as family and friend foster carers or the children are placed under a Residence Order/Child Arrangement Order, Special Guardianship Order or an Adoption Order. The need for support services from the Council may be identified during an assessment process. Other community based services, including child and young people mental health services, can be accessed via other professionals such as a health visitor, GP or the child's school.

As required by the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005, Together For Adoption provides support groups for adopters, adopted children and birth parents.

Connected carers can also access information, advice, and support by contacting:

SGO Support
St Helens Borough Council,
PO Box 512
St Helens
WA10 9JX
01744 671869

sgosupport@sthelens.gov.uk

Our team of professionals will be able to offer advice and guidance to help connected carers in their caring role.

4.2 Accommodation support

Where there are physical limitations to the size of a property or its amenities, we will support connected carers in any discussions they may require with St Helens Housing Services to ascertain the best way forward for supporting the care and accommodation of a child.

However, we will not consider financial support for extensions to properties or the purchase of larger properties except in the most exceptional circumstances.

4.3 Supporting Family Time

Even if they cannot live with their parents, children often benefit from regularly spending good quality time with them. Where there is a pre-existing close relationship between connected carers and the parents this can often be arranged between the carers and the parents with little difficulty. However, this is not always the case. Even those parents who have asked family or friends to care for their child can find it difficult once a child is placed, as it can be very hard for parents to see their children being cared for by someone else. As well as this, any difficulties (for example mental health difficulties, or substance misuse) which led to the parents being unable to care for the children may not change just because the children are no longer with them. This can mean that Family Time sessions can be a tense time for carers, parents and, most importantly, children.

Family Time should be a safe and natural part of children's lives. In most cases we would want family time to move to an arrangement that is not supervised or otherwise supported by people outside the family within a relatively short period of time. If the need for supervision/support continues for more than a few months, there should be a review which looks at the reasons for this and a decision made about whether family time should continue. When children are in care, the local authority is responsible for making sure there are safe and suitable contact arrangements in place. These will be reviewed regularly as part of reviewing the child's care plan. For children who are subject to special guardianship orders or adoption orders, the arrangements for family time – and any support that is needed with this – will be described in the support plan that is written and agreed before the order is made by the court and reviewed in the annual reviews of these support plans. However, given the long term commitment that carers are entering into St Helens would wish to see carers taking the lead in supervising family time.

4.4 Financial Support

(This section does not cover information about financial supported for connected foster carers which is dealt with in section 3.3)

Financial support that may be available to connected carers is subject to the different types of connected care as outlined in Section 3. Additional benefits and tax credits alongside any existing resources available to carers should be sufficient to sustain the vast majority of care arrangements. In exceptional circumstances, we may offer additional discretionary financial support subject to our financial support principles.

4.4.1 Financial Support Principles

In order to inform decisions about the level of financial support that should be provided to family and friends carers, we will apply the following principles:

- a) Connected carers will be signposted to our policies on family and friends care at key points including:
 - (i) considering a family and friends arrangement

(ii) applying for a Child Arrangement Order, Special Guardianship Order, or Adoption Order

(iii) applying for financial support.

- b) We want to ensure the best permanent solution for each child can be found without there being any financial incentive or disincentive for a particular type of arrangement or order over another. Therefore, we base all allowances on the allowances paid to foster carers (including Adoption Orders, Special Guardianship and Child Arrangements Orders). This is the amount which the council agrees is the sum required to bring up a child and is regularly reviewed and revised and is based on national guidance.
- c) In all cases, the carers will be expected to access universal welfare benefits in the first instance as the Local Authority cannot duplicate state benefits. It is an expectation that any connected carers will be claiming all benefits to which they are entitled before approaching us for financial assistance.
- d) Whenever financial support is being considered, a formal assessment of the child's needs must be carried out by a Social Worker, the assessment will look at the child's needs, will incorporate a detailed assessment of the resources available to the carers to meet those needs and will set-out what any funding will be used for.
- e) Decision making about financial support will be made based on a set of objective financial assessment criteria recommended by the Department for Education and will be means-tested.
- f) Decision making will be made consistently with regard to the principles set out in this policy document.
- g) In order to ensure offers of additional financial support complement support available via benefits Universal Credit and tax credits (all people claiming tax credits will be transferred to Universal Credit by 2024 at the latest) any Child Tax Credits and Child Benefits carers receive will typically be taken into consideration when determining the level of support.
- h) Decisions about these discretionary payments, including the appropriate level of payment will be made the Head of Fostering and Adoption based on the needs of the child set out in their assessment.

4.4.2 Situations where discretionary financial support may be paid.

Discretionary financial support may be paid in some circumstances for example:

- a) Cases where it is necessary to ensure special guardians have the means to look after the child.
- b) Cases where a child is assessed to have significant needs (physical, emotional, health or educational), including cases resulting from past experience of abuse or trauma, where the child's needs cannot be addressed via funding and support available via universal services.
- c) Cases where we have agreed that pre-school age children need child care or nursery provision, and the costs of this provision cannot be funded from the resources available to the carer or other grants available.
- d) Carers who have had to temporarily cease employment (or cease seeking employment) or take unpaid leave from employment in order to care for a child or to settle into his/her new situation which presents an alternative to the child being looked after. In these cases, the Council may consider providing support for a temporary period.

4.4.3 Financial Support Arrangements

If it is assessed that there is a case that requires financial support completed assessments will be considered a relevant Head of Service (Head of Children We Look After, Head of Social Work Assessment or Head of Fostering and Adoption) who will determine what (if any) financial support is needed to meet the child's needs. Any payments that are agreed will:

- a) Be clearly set out in the child's support plan so that all parties are clear about what is being provided, why and the duration of the support.
- b) Unless the child has a significant long term condition, be for a transitional period of up to and no more than two years in order to meet any needs arising from the child's move into the household.
- c) Be reviewed on an annual basis (or sooner if the circumstances warrant) so that we can determine whether the payment remains necessary in order to support the child. We are typically unable to give any long term guarantee around payments.

4.5 Legal fees

We may provide funding for legal advice for connected carers who wish to apply for a Child Arrangements Order, Special Guardianship Order, or an Adoption Order. Where a family member is put forward as a carer in the course of care proceedings, we will consider funding independent legal advice on the appropriate order to be sought. Funding will only be agreed for a solicitor on the Law Society Children Panel, at legal aid rates and up to an agreed limit. Where a child is already living with a connected carer, or placement is planned with a connected carer, we may consider funding legal advice where the local authority supports the application, where the child would otherwise be looked after by the local authority or in other exceptional circumstances. We will not fund representation in court for a carer against an unrepresented parent unless there are exceptional circumstances which justify local authority involvement in that way. Carers will be expected to apply for funding from the Legal Aid Agency if eligible, and for waiver of court fees if on a low income, before local authority funding support is considered. Legal advice funding as part of an adoption support or special guardianship support package will not be subject to means testing. Decisions on legal funding will be made a relevant Head of Service see 4.4.3 after taking legal advice on appropriate levels and availability of alternative sources of legal support.

4.6 Advice and enquiries

We have tried to make this policy as clear as possible, but if you require further clarification then we are happy to respond to requests for further information, by email the relevant Head of Service, and if not satisfied to the Complaints Team [Complain about children and young people's services - St Helens Borough Council](#)

4.7 Appeals:

Where family and friends carers are not satisfied with the level of financial or nonfinancial support provided, you are able to make an appeal in the first instance to the assessing social worker.

4.8 Feedback and Complaints

In accordance with the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure Regulations 2006, we operate a Complaints procedure. Any connected carer, or child or young person who feels they have grounds may make a complaint in accordance with this procedure. [Complain about children and young people's services - St Helens Borough Council](#)

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

“care plan” means the plan for the future care of a looked after child prepared in accordance with Part 2 of the 2010 Regulations;

“a child in need” is defined in section 17(10) of the 1989 Act, which provides that a child shall be taken to be in need if (a) he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a local authority under this Part; (b) his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or (c) he is disabled;

“child” means a person under the age of 18. Where the context particularly refers to older children the term “young person” is used;

“connected person” means a relative, friend, or other person connected with a looked after child. A person in the last category may be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as a childminder, a teacher or a youth worker although there are not exclusive categories.

“Connected carer” mean 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;

“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;

“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.

“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;

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

“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; 15

“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; “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;

“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.

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH EVIDENCE KEY FINDINGS

General Grandparents and aunts and uncles (usually on the maternal side) are the principle providers of family and friends care in the UK (DfE, 2010).

Connected carers are more likely to persevere with a difficult placement than non-related carers, even when under stress (Broad, 2007).

Children placed with grandparents are most likely to remain in the family (86%) with those placed with aunts and uncles next (65%) (Broad, 2007).

Family and friends care makes a positive and undervalued contribution to placement stability (Broad, 2007) and maintaining contact with birth parents and children’s connections with siblings and wider family (Aldgate, 2006, Hunt et al 2008).

Children in connected care living arrangements had far less contact with birth fathers than mothers (Aldgate, 2006, Hunt et al 2008).

Grandparents are especially committed carers, but this can impact on their health, well-being and financial situation (Broad, 2007).

Where the local authority does need to become involved, robust assessments focusing on risk and resilience, and the provision of appropriate support are vital for connected care living arrangements to succeed (Broad, 2007).

Two studies suggest that between 66% and 85% of family and friend care arrangements are initiated by local authorities (Farmer and Moyers 2006, Hunt et al, 2008).

Connected carers can make a strong contribution to sustaining children’s identity, positive self-image and Cultural continuity (Broad, 2007).

Family Group Conferences have an important role in helping families to clarify plans, roles and responsibilities for children living with a connected carer (Aldgate, 2006, Hunt et al, 2008).

Unlike looked after children in non-related placements, social workers were more peripheral in the lives of children living with connected carer (Aldgate, 2006, Hunt et al, 2008).

One study suggests that children in family and friends care appear to maintain a wider set of relationships and connections to their family and community than those in non-related foster care (Nixon, 2007).

A different study suggests that this network is smaller than those children living with a parent (especially if the connected carer is a sole grandparent) (Hunt et al 2008).

Children in a family and friend living arrangement are more likely to report that they are satisfied with their care than those in non-related care– including reporting feeling safe and trusting their carers (Hunt et al 2008).

Farmer and Moyers found that connected foster placements lasted on average 4 years 9 months compared to 3 years 11 months for placements with unrelated foster carers. They judged that connected carers sometimes persisted with children beyond the point at which unrelated carers gave up and showed higher levels of commitment to the children. Farmer

and Moyers reported that significantly more connected carers had little, or no social work support compared with unrelated foster carers, and that placements were significantly more likely to survive if the child had an allocated social worker. Hunt et al reported gaps in provision of support services even when the local authority was still involved, and that better provision could have prevented some placements from ending prematurely. Hunt J and Waterhouse S (2012)

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Understanding family and friends care: The largest UK survey (FRG) Survey of 493 carers raising 762 kinship children. Despite their early traumatic experiences, research shows that most children in kinship care have good outcomes (Selwyn, J. & Farmer, E. et al 2013)

Research shows outcomes are positive for most children living in family and friends care, and often better than for children in unrelated foster care. A major study published, by Buttle UK and the University of Bristol in 2013 (The Poor Relations: Children and Informal Kinship Carers Speak Out), shows that kinship arrangements provide stability for the children and the children have strong attachments to their carers and have good levels of academic attainment, particularly when compared to children in the formal care system.

Maximising the Appropriate Use of Family and Friends Care The research evidence, although not conclusive, is broadly supportive of family and 18 friends care as a viable option and suggests scope for greater use. Farmer and Moyers found that 86% of the placements made with family and friends foster carers came about because relatives or friends offered to care for the children or were already doing so, whilst only 4% were initiated by the social worker.

The Campbell Collaborative concluded that family and friend’s care can enhance the behavioural development, mental health functioning, and placement stability of children, but attention must be paid to increasing levels of support.

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**APPENDIX C: SUPPORT for CONNECTED CARERS UNDER CHILDREN ACT 1989
SECTION 17 AND SECTIONS 20 AND 31**

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 will 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 will visit the child and carers
- the child will be offered access to an advocacy service when 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 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) the 1989 Act)
- 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
- any support offered will cease when the young person becomes 18, unless criteria are met for support from adult services

Child accommodated under section 20 or section 31.

- the child is looked after by the local authority
- the child will 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 will 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
- 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)

APPENDIX D: SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS – CONNECTED FOSTER CARE

Connected Foster Carers are eligible for the range of non-financial support available to non-related foster carers. This includes the following:

Children's Workforce Development Training Standards Induction: The National Minimum Standards require that all foster carers complete mandatory training on approval with the support and guidance of their fostering social worker. There is a specially adapted set of induction standards for family and friends carers. St Helens will support connected foster carers to achieve these standards.

Training: Further training provision is planned for family and friends carers according to their needs and the profile of the children they care for.

Personal Development Plan: As part of the National Minimum Standards each connected carer has a personal development plan to guide their training and development.

Allocated Supervising Social Worker: to provide support and supervision (via regular visits and telephone contact) for carers of children who are 'looked after'.

Support worker: These support the Allocated Social Worker, undertaking specific tasks to support family and friends foster carers. Examples of such tasks include transporting children and assisting with the development plan.

Foster Carer handbook: This handbook outlines all key guidance and information required by foster carers, including family and friends foster carers, to function effectively.

Fostering Network or Foster Talk membership: St Helens Council funds every foster carer to be a member of The Fostering Network or Foster Talk, national advisory bodies for foster carers. This allows them to be registered as a foster carer and receive information and support as part of the children's workforce. Connected carers are eligible to join The Fostering Network or Foster Talk and St Helens Council will fund them to do so.

Out of hours support: This service allows connected foster carers to access support via telephone or, if necessary, through an in-person out of hours visit.

Invitation to support groups and social events: Foster carers benefit from sharing social events with others undertaking the same role, and connected carers are welcome to participate in these events.

Newsletter: This helps connected foster carers feel part of the fostering service

Consultation events: Connected foster carers are invited to relevant key consultation events about how to develop the fostering service as appropriate.

Looked After Children's Reviews The LAC review is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer and informed by the child's care plan, which is developed by the child's social worker. The Connected carer should attend these meetings, along with the child they care for if appropriate, which are held six monthly, to contribute to the monitoring and planning for the child and their transition to adulthood.

Visits from child's social worker: Children who are cared for formally by connected foster carers will receive visits from the child's social worker. This will provide an opportunity for the foster carer to report any concerns, take advice and plan around the needs of the child. It also ensures the child's views are shared with someone outside the foster placement.

Input from Education Children in Care Team Personal Educational Plan (PEP) and health plan: The Team holds an overview of the child's PEP. The child's Health Plan lays out clearly any actions required to ensure their health needs are met involving key people from the health service.

Respite care (if required): If required to meet the needs of the child periods of respite foster care may be arranged. This assistance can be very supportive in assisting the foster carer to maintain a particularly demanding placement.