



City of Westminster

WESTMINSTER FOSTERING SERVICE

Family & Friends/Connected Persons Policy

November, 2011

Scope of Policy

This policy addresses the placement of children with family and friends or 'connected persons', and who are also looked after by the local authority. It is intended to guide social workers and managers in managing the processes involved in the assessment, approval, support and supervision of family and friends foster placements in accordance with the 'Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations', 2010 and the Fostering Service Regulations, Guidance and National Minimum Standards, 2011. It includes the procedures for the emergency placement of children under Regulation 24 ('Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations', 2010).

Separate procedures apply in respect of children who, by private arrangement, are living with adults who do not have parental authority and who are not close relatives. For private fostering, please see 'Private Fostering Procedure'.

Contents

1. Values, Principles and Objectives.....	3
2. Definitions.....	4
3. Management Accountability.....	5
4. Legal framework.....	6
5. Decision to Place with F&F/Connected Persons.....	8
6. Emergency Placements Under Regulations 24 & 25.....	10
7. The assessment of Connected Persons as carers.....	12
8. Reviews and Terminations.....	15
9. Support and Finance.....	16
10. Complaints.....	19
11. Anti-Discriminatory Practice.....	20
12. Appendix.....	21

1. Values, Principles and Objectives

Westminster Children's Services places a high value on children being raised within loving families who can meet their overall developmental needs. The key principle underlying this policy is that children should be enabled to live within their birth families unless this is not consistent with their welfare. Where it is detrimental for children to remain with their parents, first consideration will be given to placing them with a relative, friend or person who is connected to them from within their network. This principle applies whether a child is voluntarily accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 or is subject to a care order.

The Children Act 1989 Section 22 and 23 (6) states in relation to connected persons, 'when a child is subject to care proceedings family & friends *must* be the first consideration in the list of placement options', provided this arrangement is reasonably practical and is consistent with promoting and safeguarding their welfare.

This policy takes account of the evidence and research which indicates that children feel more attached, secure and have a better sense of who they are when they live with relatives and friends. Westminster Children's Services also recognise that when children are removed from their birth parents, feelings of separation and loss should be minimised. Hence, the preferred option, wherever possible, would be to place a child with someone with whom they have a pre-existing connection, rather than stranger foster carers. Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, allows for such immediate placements to be agreed by the Head of Service in advance of placement.

The decision to offer a permanent home to a child is not one that is taken lightly. It is essential that F&F/CP coming forward are made fully aware of the role they are taking on in relation to the child, the expectations the department has of them and what support they can expect from the department, so they can make an informed decision about offering permanence.

The objective of this policy is to provide guidance and procedures that will:

- Give first consideration to family, friends or persons with a connection to a child, when a decision is taken to remove that child from his/her birth parents.
- Ensure a consistent standard of comprehensive assessments of F&F/CP carers that are completed within statutory recommended timescales;
- Ensure placement stability and secure permanence for children by identifying potential vulnerabilities and support needs of placements and offering a robust package of support.

2. Definitions

Family and Friends foster care is a formal arrangement where the child is looked after by the Local Authority and placed with a relative, friend or connected person.

'Relative or friend' is defined as: a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership), step-parent or friend of the child.

A 'connected person' is anyone who has a pre-existing connection to a child through their extended network. This may be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as a childminder, a teacher or a youth worker, although these are not exclusive categories.

F&F/CP foster care can therefore be defined as an arrangement where:

- Children are living with a relative, friend or connected person away from the parental home because they cannot live with their parents.
- The placement has in some way been assisted or initiated and/or is supported by Children's Services, often with a view to securing permanency via a Residence Order or a Special Guardianship Order.
- The child would otherwise be in stranger foster care.

3. Management Accountability

The overall responsibility for this policy rests with Janine Rowe, Head of Service for Looked After Children and Specialist Services, who has ensured that the policy meets current statutory requirements, and is responsive to looked after children and carers. The day to day implementation of the policy is delegated to Trudy Eastwood, Deputy Service Manager, Family and Friends Fostering Team.

The accountable managers will ensure that the staff of Westminster City Council understand the policy and that they operate within its framework so that it is applied in a consistent and fair manner across the authority.

The accountable managers will ensure that local partners are aware of their responsibilities towards children living in family and friends care and are proactive in meeting those needs. The manager must also ensure that the policy is publicised sufficiently to ensure that anyone who may be considering becoming a family and friends carer can be aware of its content and be clear about how to contact the local authority and other agencies for further information about relevant services.

Staff of the Family and Friends Fostering Team who are responsible for implementing the policy are provided with appropriate training and have an sound understanding of the issues which family and friends carers face, and of their obligations, powers and responsibilities, including the contents of the local policy.

4. Legal Framework

The Local Authority's powers and duties in relation to children in need and looked after children

Westminster Children's Service has a duty, under the Children Act 1989, to safeguard and promote the safety and welfare of the children of Westminster who are in need and have suffered significant harm or are at risk of significant harm. These duties and responsibilities in respect of placement with family and friends, as outlined in the Children Act, 1989 include:

- Section 17, providing a range of support and/or financial services to children in need, including those who live with family or friends.
- Section 20, providing suitable accommodation to those deemed to require it because their parents or those with parental responsibility are unable or unwilling to do so.
- Section 22, determining the most appropriate placement for looked after children, and "giving preference to" a placement with a relative, friends or connected person, and who is also an approved Family & Friends foster carer.

These requirements are reinforced in the Public Law Outline, 2008 which requires authorities to demonstrate that they have considered family members and friends as potential carers at each stage of the decision-making process, before initiating care proceedings or making an application under Section 31 of the 1989 Act. It is therefore important that any discussions held with family, friends and connected persons are recorded effectively, as details will be required by the Court.

Legal Options for Family and Friends arrangements

Family and friends foster placements that have been approved by the local authority, involve an on-going partnership between the carer and the local authority who holds overall responsibility for the looked after child and share parental responsibility with the parent. Foster Carers will receive support (outlined in section 10 below) and be supervised by the department via monthly statutory visits and be subject to annual fostering reviews to re-approve their fostering status. The looked after child will also be subject to similar statutory visits and reviews. Some family and friends carers and looked after children appreciate this level of input from the local authority, though many find it an unnecessary intrusion and stigmatising.

Where family and friends carers are able to manage successfully without the input of the department and it is deemed to be in the child's best interest, they are encouraged to consider alternative legal options which will allow them to offer permanence to a child without the on-going involvement of the local authority. Each arrangement offers a different degree of responsibility to the carer, permanence and security to the child and entitlement to support from the local authority. A summary of these arrangements are:

1. Residence Order

A Residence Order is a court order which allows the person in whose favour it is made, to share parental responsibility with the birth parents. The order usually lasts until the child is 18.

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. A Residence Order may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need or a looked after child placed with a family and friends foster carer.

2. Special Guardianship Order

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. Special guardians share parental responsibility with parents and may exercise PR to the exclusion of others with PR. Special Guardians have overall authority for decisions about caring for the child and clear responsibility for his/her upbringing. They will have access to support services, and may have access to financial support subject to means testing as per the Special Guardianship policy.

Special Guardianship Orders may be made in private family proceedings and the local authority may not be a party to any such arrangements.

A Special Guardianship Order may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need or a 'looked after' child placed with a family and friends foster carer.

(Please see *Special Guardianship Policy*)

3. Adoption Order

Adoption is the process by which all parental rights and responsibilities for a child are permanently transferred to an adoptive parent by the court. As a result, the child legally becomes part of the adoptive family, and all legal ties with the birth parents are severed. The child usually takes on the adopters' surname and is issued with a new birth certificate. Adoption may involve a plan for some continuing though restricted contact with the child's birth parent(s), siblings and or other relatives. In special cases adopters may be offered financial help in the form of an adoption allowance which is subject to means testing. While adoption is generally considered the best option for babies and very young children, the dynamics of familial relationships and the implications for the child will need to be carefully considered where prospective adopters are relatives or friends of the child.

Further information is available to prospective adoptive parents from the New Families Team.

5. Decision to Place with Family and Friends or Connected Persons

Before any child can be looked after, an Initial Assessment and/or Core Assessment must be completed, with exception in the case of children accommodated under Police powers of protection or Emergency Protection Orders.

Care Panel decision to accommodate

Where a child has not been accommodated in an emergency via EPO or Police powers of protection, the decision to remove a child from his/her birth parents must be made by the Westminster Care Panel or Head of Service to ensure that thresholds have been met for accommodating a child in care. Once this decision is taken, a child can be accommodated either by means of an interim care order, a care order or Section 20 agreement with parents. When considering placement options, preference must first be given to whether an appropriate family and friends /connected person placement is available.

Family Group Conference

Family Group Conferences can be a particularly effective tool to enable families to identify alternative family members, friends or connected persons who may be able to provide permanent care for a child (Please see *Family Group Conference Procedures*). A Family Group Conference should therefore be convened at the earliest opportunity, preferably following Care Panel.

Involvement of Child and Carers in Care Planning

Section 31 of the FNMS 2011 sets out the expectation that the views of the child and the foster carer will be canvassed as part of the placement planning process and that the carer will be given a copy of the Care Plan. The Foster carer is to be supported to assist the child to understand their Care Plan, to contribute to their reviews, advocate on their behalf and help ensure that they get access to external advocacy services where appropriate.

Assessment and Approval of F&F carer

Children Looked After may only be placed with a relative, friend or connected person if they have been approved as foster carers under the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, or have been temporarily approved as foster carers under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. These Regulations,

together with the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011 (FNMS 2011), set out the requirements in relation to the assessment, approval, support and supervision of all foster carers, including those who are family members, friends or other connected persons. The assessment, approval and support of family and friends carers is detailed in sections below.

Placement Agreement meeting

A Placement Agreement Meeting must be held before any placement is made, or within 72 hours, if an unplanned placement. A Child in Need Planning Meeting (see **Child in Need Plans and Reviews Procedure**), Family Group Conference (see **Family Group Conferences Procedure**) and/or Legal Planning Meeting (see **Legal Planning Meetings Procedure**) must be considered before any placement is made, or within 10 working days of an unplanned placement.

The process of referring a connected person for an assessment, through to their approval by panel is outlined in Appendix 1: Family & Friends Referral Process

6. Emergency Placements Under Regulations 24 & 25

It is preferable that placements should be planned as early as possible. Provisions relating to temporary approval are intended to be used exceptionally and in circumstances which could not easily have been foreseen, when it is not possible to undertake a full foster carer assessment prior to placement.

Regulation 24 – Temporary Approval

Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 replaces Regulation 38 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. It has extended the temporary approval period for family and friends/connected person placements from 6 to 16 weeks. This time period has been set to allow sufficient time for the full foster care approval process to be undertaken, including the return of all statutory checks.

Before a child may be placed with a family and friends /connected person foster carer under temporary approval, the minimum requirements for assessing the potential carer must be met. An initial assessment should:

- a) Identify the relationship between the proposed carer and child and the carer's motivation for offering care.
- b) Consider the carer's understanding of the child's background and why the child need to be accommodated.
- c) Outline the proposed carer's circumstances including, family, work, accommodation and responsibility for other dependents and how these will impact on their care of the child.
- d) Consider how the proposed carer will meet the identified needs of the child as outlined in the care plan, and safeguard and promote his/her welfare.
- e) Give a clear indication of the potential strengths and vulnerabilities of the care arrangement
- f) Identify what immediate support and/or services should be provided.

S30 of the FNMS 2011 specifically requires that the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account and this information be provided to the person delegated to make a decision on the proposed placement.

This information will form the basis of the interim or temporary approval for an immediate placement. The decision to approve such placements is made by Westminster's delegated agency decision maker, the Head of Service.

A written Placement Agreement must be signed by both the Head of Service and approved carer prior to the child being placed. This document must be kept on the carer's file.

Please see Appendix 2: *Placement Agreement form*

Where possible there should be a plan for introductions, and contact arrangements should be set up before the placement is made, taking into account the views of those involved (S30 FNMS 2011).

Where a child is placed with Connected Person carers on the basis of temporary approval under Regulation 24 the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations require that a representative of the Local Authority must visit the child at least once a week until the first Looked After Review. Thereafter the regulation requires that visits are made at intervals of not more than 4 weeks until the Carer is fully approved as a foster carer.

Regulation 25 – Extended Temporary Approval

Regulation 25 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 sets out the circumstances in which, exceptionally, the period of temporary approval may be extended beyond 16 weeks. These circumstances are where either:

- the approval process has taken longer than anticipated for reasons beyond control. In these circumstances the temporary approval may be extended for a further 8 weeks, or
- the carer has not been approved following the assessment process and seeks a review of the decision through the **Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)**. In these circumstances the temporary approval will continue until the outcome of the review is known.

This period of extension must be agreed by the Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker. When these time periods expire and the carer has not been approved by the authority in accordance with the 2011 Regulations, the responsible authority must arrange for an alternative placement and remove the child from the carer in accordance with Regulation 25 (6).

7. The Assessment of Family & Friends or Connected Person Carers

Standard 30 of the Fostering National Minimum Standard (FNMS 2011) clarifies that when a foster carer is being assessed for approval for a specific child or children only, there is no need to consider their suitability to care for other children.

The assessment process is completed in 2 or 3 phases, involving:

- a) *An initial assessment* – outlined in Section 5 above. An Initial viability assessment is completed by the child's Social worker for the purpose of either a) seeking temporary approval by the Head of Service prior to placing the child with F&F/CP or b) making a referral to the Family & Friends Team for a full permanence assessment.

- b) *A Viability assessment* - may follow an initial assessment and is generally undertaken by the Family & Friends Fostering team. These are completed in 6 weeks and are particularly useful in giving consideration to multiple family members who have been proposed and deemed suitable for assessment, in order to identify the most suitable.

- c) *Full permanence Fostering Assessment* – outlined in this section below. These are undertaken by the Family & Friends Fostering Team within 16 weeks when it follows an initial assessment where the child is placed under Regulation 24. It can also follow a viability assessment where more information is known about the prospective carer and in these instances, should be completed within 12 weeks. Westminster Fostering Services uses the BAAF Form C for this purpose.

Westminster has produced initial and viability assessment templates and guidance for assessing connected person carers and writing reports. (Please see Appendix 3 and 4).

Schedule Four of the Care Planning, Placement and Review (England) Regulations 2010 sets out the areas which must be addressed in the assessment of prospective Connected Person Carers as follows:

In respect of the connected person:

- a. the nature and quality of any existing relationship with the child,
- b. their capacity to care for children and in particular in relation to the child to-
 - i. provide for the child's physical needs and appropriate medical and dental care,
 - ii. protect the child adequately from harm or danger including from any person who presents a risk of harm to the child,

- iii. ensure that the accommodation and home environment is suitable with regard to the age and developmental stage of the child,
 - iv. promote the child's learning and development, and
 - v. provide a stable family environment which will promote secure attachments for the child including promoting positive contact with the parents and other connected persons, unless to do this is not consistent with the duty to safeguard and promote the child's welfare,
- c. their state of health including their physical, emotional and mental health and medical history including any current or past issues of domestic violence, substance misuse or mental health problems,
- d. their family relationships and the composition of their household, including particulars of-
- i. the identity of all other members of the household, including their age and the nature of their relationship with the connected person and with each other, including any sexual relationship,
 - ii. any relationship with any person who is a parent of the child,
 - iii. any relationship between the child and other members of the household
 - iv. other adults not being members of the household who are likely to have regular contact with the child and
 - v. any current or previous domestic violence between members of the household, including the connected person,
- e. their family history, including-
- i. particulars of their childhood and upbringing including the strengths and difficulties of their parents or other persons who cared for them,
 - ii. their relationships with their parents and siblings, and their relationships with each other,
 - iii. their educational achievement and any specific learning difficulty or disability,
 - iv. a chronology of significant life events, and
 - v. particulars of other relatives and their relationships with the child and the connected person,
- f. particulars of any criminal offences of which they have been convicted or in respect of which they have been cautioned. Any other information relating to investigations or enquiries into involvement in identity/benefit fraud, including any other information which may be pertinent to an assessment of the suitability of their character must be shared.

- g. their past and present employment and other sources of income, outgoings, debts and savings, and
- h. the nature of the neighbourhood in which their home is situated and resources available in the community to support the child and the connected person.

S30 also sets out the following regarding the carer assessment:

1. That carers should be provided with information and support about the assessment process and the potential placement.
2. That carers should be asked about their knowledge and understanding of the child's background and behaviour, and to be provided with information about this.
3. The assessment should recognise the likely length of placement and the family's ability to continue to meet the child's needs (where appropriate) on a long term basis.

Confidentiality

Westminster Fostering Service fully appreciates the confidential and sensitive nature of information it receives about foster carers from the carer's own account and from partner agencies where statutory checks are sought. We will take reasonable and proportionate steps to ensure there is no concerning information about prospective foster carers and adopters publicly available.

Any statutory checks will only be carried out with the signed consent and full understanding of the applicant.

Fostering Approval

The completed BAAF Form C assessment report is presented to the fostering panel for approval by the 16th week of placement in the case of Regulation 24 placements, or within 12 weeks where a full assessment was preceded by a viability assessment.

8. Reviews and Termination of Approval

Westminster Children's Service reviews the approval of each foster parent within a year of the original approval and annually thereafter.

When undertaking a review, the fostering service will:

- a) make such enquiries and obtain such information as they consider necessary in order to review whether the foster parent continues to be suitable to be a foster parent and the foster parent's household continues to be suitable
- b) seek and take into account the views of:
 - the foster parent,
 - any child placed with the foster parent (subject to the child's age and understanding),
 - any placing authority which has, within the preceding year, placed a child with the foster parent.

At the conclusion of the review, the Independent Reviewing Officer will prepare a written report, setting out whether:

- a) the foster parent continues to be suitable to be a foster parent and the foster parent's household continues to be suitable, and
- b) the terms of the foster parent's approval continue to be appropriate.

Following the first review and every third review thereafter, the Fostering service will present the review reports to the fostering panel for consideration.

An annual review may be brought forward if there are significant changes in the carer's circumstances or following the Department's Serious Concerns procedure.

9. Support

Where it is assessed that the family and friends carer could meet the needs of the child but will require some support or services to be able to do so, these should be specified in the assessment report required under Regulation 26 of the 2011 Regulations.

The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them.

Statutory Supervisory Visits

All Family and Friends carers are allocated a supervising social worker to offer support and supervision. Where a decision is taken to place a child with a F&F/CP in an emergency, a referral must immediately be made the F&F team so that a supervising social worker can be allocated. As noted in Section 5 above, once the child is placed, the placement should be visited weekly until the first LAC review. Subsequent visits should be carried out on a 4 weekly basis until the first annual foster carer's review at Fostering Panel. Thereafter, visits will be carried out at a minimum of 6 to 12 weekly, subject to the needs of the placement.

Training and Information

Training that addresses the specific issues relating to Family and Friends carers, including CWDC, is provided by the North West London Consortium, which Westminster is a member of. All approved foster carers, including kinship carers have access to the Westminster Fostering Service's comprehensive programme of Foster Carers training provided through the year.

The "*Family and Friends Info Pack*" is provided to potential carers before the assessment process begins. Approved carers are provided with a copy of the "*Family and Friends Policy, Oct 2011*" and "*Allowances and Support Policy*". The Fostering Service takes all reasonable steps to ensure that foster parents are familiar with, and act in accordance with the policies established in accordance with regulations 12(1) and 13(1) and (3).

The Fostering Service ensure that, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child, and in particular that each foster parent is provided with a copy of the most recent version of the child's care plan provided to the fostering service provider under regulation 6(3)(d) of the Care Planning Regulations.

Specialist "looked after children" education & health services

All Westminster foster carers will have access to the Children and Adolescent

Mental Health (CAMHS), LAC nurses and Education of Pupils in Care (EPiC) services. They can offer advice, assistance and direct work around managing a child or young person's behaviour and supporting them in education.

24 hour telephone support

All Westminster carers have access to 24 hour telephone support from a professional. This service provides immediate support to carers particularly during crisis and emergencies.

Support groups

From discussion with our family and friends carers, we have found that while some carers find it useful to meet regularly and share their experiences with other kinship carers, many do not welcome this forum nor do they prioritise attendance at such support groups. The North-West London Adoption and Permanence Consortium, which Westminster is a member of, co-ordinates regular support groups and relevant training specifically for those family and friends carers who request it.

The Fostering Network

All approved Westminster foster carers are automatically registered by the Fostering Service with the Fostering Network. This membership entitles carers to a 24-hour telephone line for advice and as well as further support.

Financial support

All approved family and friends carers are entitled to and receive upon placement of the child, a weekly fostering allowance. This is a weekly maintenance payment that varies according to the age of the child and is the same rate given to stranger or mainstream foster carers. The allowance is not taxable and is to be used to cover the cost of caring for a child such as clothing, transport, pocket money, recreation, food, household costs e.g. utility bills etc.

The department also provides an annual payment for a child's birthday, holiday and any religious or cultural festivities, for example, Christmas, Divali, Eid.

In addition, the department will provide any essential equipment needed when a child is first placed e.g. bed, wardrobe, safety equipment etc.

The detailed breakdown of Westminster's Family and Friends weekly allowances for 2011-12 are outlined in Appendix 4.

For the full range of financial entitlements and support available to family & friends carers and looked after children, please refer to document, "*Allowances for Family & Friends Carers, 2009/10*"

10. Complaints

Where a family or friends carer is not satisfied with the assessment and approval process or level of support provided to enable them to care for the child, then they have access to the Westminster Council's Complaints process and/or the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for Fostering.

Applying the Complaints Policy, Westminster Children's Services aims 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. Full details on complaints processes are set out on the Council website comments, complaints and compliments page

The IRM for Fostering, introduced in the Children and Young Person Act, 2008, provides an independent panel to review anew all the documents and information relating to a "qualifying determination" and make a recommendation to the Westminster Fostering Service about whether or not a person is suitable to act as a "local authority foster parent", and/or a recommendation about the terms of approval, as the case may be. The final decision about the individual's approval/terms of approval will continue to rest with Westminster's Agency Decision Maker.

(Please see *Complaints Policy and IRM Procedure*)

11. Anti-Discriminatory Practice

We recognise that there is an imbalance of power within our society, which results in specific acts of discrimination against certain individuals and groups. We believe that we have a duty and responsibility to counter this discrimination. *We believe in people's right to respect in relation to their age, disability, ethnicity, gender, health, religious beliefs, and sexuality.*

Family Placements Service recognises the uniqueness of each child/ young person and will promote their wishes, feelings and rights when planning and providing placements for them. We will provide a polite, courteous, positive and encouraging response to all callers. We will provide relevant information to the public. Materials that seek to include rather than exclude potential carers. The assessment process will take full account of people's individuality, differences and life experiences and will be based on objective criteria. This will be balanced by a decision about how applicants can best meet the needs of children/young people. We will be looking for carers who will similarly value others and respect differences. Training, support and supervision of carers will aim to develop awareness, knowledge and skills in anti-discriminatory practice. This will be done via individual and group meetings and in formal sessions.

We will be clear about why information is being requested and recorded. Language used in records and reports will be sensitive, non-stereotypical and non-judgmental. We will differentiate between fact and opinion in recording and report writing. We will be open about and encourage people to view records and reports written about them. In our working relationships with children, young people, their relatives, carers, colleagues and other agencies we will work collaboratively and in partnership. We recognise that each individual has a contribution to make. We aim to empower people to participate and to make informed decisions. We will work to make explicit our mutual expectations. We will promote the integration of anti-discriminatory perspective in all aspects of our working relationships.

Family Placements Service has a commitment to create a climate where high quality services can be developed and where discrimination can be challenged. Service users and staff will be encouraged to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of anti-discriminatory practice. We are keen to stress that you will not be excluded automatically on grounds of age, health or other factors except in the case of serious criminal convictions. You can be single, married, divorced, living with a partner, gay or lesbian or have a disability that doesn't affect your ability to care for a child or a young person. You can be working or unemployed, living in your own home or rented accommodation. You will need to be prepared to work in partnership with the Social Worker who will undertake your assessment. Your assessment will help you reflect on the strengths and challenges within yourself, your family and in your background. You need to be able to be sure you have the emotional and physical space for a child or a sibling group to become a permanent part of your life.

Appendix 1: Westminster Family and Friends Referral, Assessment and Approval Process

Pre→Care Proceedings	Reg. 24 – Emergency Placements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carers identified 2. FGC – most suitable potential carer agreed by network 3. Referral to F&F Team for Joint Initial OR Viability Assessment 4. Joint Initial Assessment - within 2 weeks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written by child's SW 5. Planning Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree remit of assessment in lieu of Letter of Instruction • Date for filing • Relevant documents/court bundle 6. Viability assessment - within 6 weeks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative → NFA • Positive → full assessment 7. Planning Meeting, if full assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree type of assessment: Fostering or SGO • Date for filing • Which panel 8. Full assessment within 12 weeks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering Form C or SGO report 9. Fostering Panel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering Approval Or Adoption Panel: 10. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanence decision for under 12's Or SGO Panel 11. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse SGO application & approve Financial & Support Plan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carer identified 2. Initial assessment done by child's SW 3. Emergency Interim Approval by HoS – granted for 16 weeks 4. Signed Agreement by approved carer 5. Placement Agreement Meeting and Introductions 6. Child Placed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement visited weekly by child's SW & SSW alternately until 1st LAC review 7. Referral to F&F Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for full assessment: Fostering or SGO • allocate Supervising SW to Foster carer 8. Planning Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree remit of assessment in lieu of Letter of Instruction • Date for filing • Relevant documents/court bundle 9. Fostering Form C or SGO assessment undertaken. 10. Presentation to Fostering Panel within 16 weeks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full approval as F&F carer 11. Agency Decision Maker grants final approval

Appendix 2: Placement Agreement Form

WESTMINSTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Placement Agreement under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning Regulations 2010

This agreement is made between the City of Westminster and

Name of Carer(s):

..... of

Carer's Address:

.....

In respect of:

Name of Child(ren): (d.o.b).....

.....(d.o.b).....

1. I agree to care for the child(ren) as a member of my family.
2. I agree to the child(ren)'s Social Worker and any person authorised by the local authority to visit the child at any time.
3. I agree to keep all information about the child(ren) and their family confidential and only disclose information with the agreement of the local authority.
4. I agree to allow contact as directed by the local authority between the child(ren) and his/her/their parents or other significant people.
5. Where this placement is no longer meeting the child(ren)'s needs, I agree to the Local Authority removing the child(ren).

Date child(ren) placed:

Name of carer (s):

Signature of carer(s):

1.....

1.....

2.....

2.....

Date

Date

Name of Social Worker:

Signature of Social Worker

.....

.....

Name of Head of Service:

Date of decision:

Appendix 3: Initial Assessment Template and Guidance

Westminster Children & Family Services

INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF FRIENDS & FAMILIES CARER, INCLUDING REGULATION 24 PLACEMENTS WITH A CONNECTED PERSON

Date of Visit:		Social Worker:	
Who seen:		Team	
		Ext.	

1. Potential Carer's Details

	Potential Carer 1	Potential Carer 2
Surname		
Previous names		
Forename		
Date of Birth		
Age		
Racial Origin		
Language/s spoken		
Religion		
Occupation		
Working hours		
Address:		
Local Authority		
Telephone (home & mobile)		
Relation to child(ren)		

2. Potential Carer's Family composition

Name	DoB	Relation to carer	School/work	Place of residence
None				

3. Details of child(ren) to be looked after

Name	DoB	Gender	School/work	Current placement	Legal Status

4. Reason Placement Needed :

5. Children's Needs:

- a) Health
- b) Education
- c) Emotional and Behavioural Development

6. Departmental Involvement

- (a) Care Planning –
- (b) FGC –
- (c) Care Proceedings –

7. Potential Carer’s understanding of CP Concerns:

8. Motivation to Care:

9. Potential Carer’s Ability to Meet Needs of the Child(ren)

- a) Caring for child(ren)
- b) Keeping children safe
- c) Promote contact and work with birth parents

Potential Carer’s Background & Current Circumstances:

10. Children in Carer’s Family :

11. Accommodation:

- a) Type of Accommodation:

Owner Occupied		Private Rented		Council/Housing Association	
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- b) Number of bedrooms
- c) Proposed sleeping arrangements for LAC:
- d) Condition of home:
- e) Check undertaken with Housing: (Date)

12. Finance:

13. Expectations of Becoming a Foster Carer and Working with the Department:

14. Statutory Checks:

- (a) Carer’s willingness to undertake statutory checks: YES/NO
- (b) Criminal Offences Disclosed:
- (c) CAIT check: (Date & Outcome)
- (d) LA check: (Date & Outcome)
- (e) Health Self Assessment (attached) date completed:

15. Social Worker’s analysis and recommendation:

- a) Protective Factors
- b) Risk factors

Social Worker: _____

Date: _____

Manager:

Date:

If a Regulation 24 Placement, Name and Date Head of Service approved Connected Person:

PART 2: Guidelines for Interview with Potential Carer

- 1. Potential Carer's Details**
 - Where proposed carer is married/in partnership, partner's details must be given as Carer 2
- 2. Prospective Carer's Family composition**
 - Include all members of household and carer's children not living at home
- 3. Details of child(ren) to be looked after**
- 4. Reason Placement is Needed:**
 - Summary of background and CP concerns/risk factors requiring child to be removed from birth parents.
- 5. Children's Needs:**
 - What are the presenting behaviours and identified needs of the child?
 - What input is there from therapeutic or educational services, if any?
 - What are child's wishes and feelings?
- 6. Departmental Involvement**
 - a) **Care planning:** What is the proposed care plan? What is proposed contact arrangement with birth parents?
 - b) **FGC:** When did FGC occur? Outcome? If did not occur, please give reason.
 - c) **Care proceedings:** Details of CP conference and if in Care proceedings
- 7. Potential Carer's Understanding of CP Concerns:**
 - What is applicant's understanding of CP concerns?
 - Do they accept them?
 - Any role carer played in intervening to protect child
- 8. Motivation to Care:**
 - Why do they wish to be considered as a permanent carer?
 - What is the nature and quality of the relationship between the carer and child?
 - What is their understanding of the role they are taking on?
 - Carer's willingness to look after child until 18 years
 - What is carer's ability to prioritise child's needs over relationship with birth parents?
- 9. Potential Carer's Ability to Meet Needs of the Child(ren)**
 - a) **Caring for child(ren)**
 - Their experience of caring for the named child(ren)

- How will applicant meet named child's developmental needs, managing behaviour etc.?
- Ability to look after child until 18 years
- Any issues arising if applicant is of different race, culture, religion to children

b) Keeping children safe

- Ability to safeguard child from abuse or harm
- Ability adhere to department's Care Plan e.g. restriction around contact with birth parents

c) Promote contact and work with birth parents

- Any issues around contact with birth parents?
- Can carer facilitate contact?
- Is carer able to maintain boundaries with birth parents?

10. Potential Carer's Background & Current Circumstances:

- Identify any significant information in carer's background and current family functioning that is relevant to their ability to care for children
- Carer's day-to-day availability to look after child

11. Children in Carer's Family :

- Brief details of child(ren) in applicant's household i.e. needs, school and views on proposed placement)
- How will placement impact on carer's own children?

12. Accommodation:

a) Type of Accommodation:

Owner Occupied		Private Rented		Council	
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- b) Number of bedrooms
- c) Proposed sleeping arrangements for LAC. Is this suitable?
- d) Condition of home: general hygiene; health and safety Issues - any hazards/risks in the home environment, including pets e.g. dangerous dogs?

13. Finance:

- What is carer's source of income?
- How does carer proposed to financially provide for the child?
- What resources/financial support, if any, would carer need in order to carer for the child?
- Would their employment be affected by taking on the care of a child)

14. Expectations of Becoming a Foster Carer and Working with the Department:

- What is applicant's understanding of expectation to work with the department e.g. work with professionals, adhering to Care Plans, departmental policies and guidance e.g. no physical punishment, no smoking
- Willingness to go through 3-6 month assessment process
- Comply with Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards

15. Statutory Checks:

(a) Carer's willingness to undertake statutory checks YES/NO

(i.e. CRB, Medical, Local Authority, Education, Housing) Record date and outcome of CAIT check, LA check and Housing check. CAIT check must be undertaken before placement can be made.

(b) Criminal Offences:

- List any offences/convictions, especially those that would prevent applicant caring for children that carer has disclosed.

(c) Health:

- Are there any disability/mental health/medical issues for the applicant that would prevent them caring for the child?
- Are they on any medication?
- Applicant should complete medical self assessment form

16. Social Worker's analysis and recommendation:

- Protective factors and strengths of placement
- Risk factors impacting on applicant's ability to care for children.
- Recommendation on carer's suitability to care for child.
- What resources would be needed, if any to enable carer to look after the child

Family & Friends allowances 2011/12

Age Band Of child	Weekly Maintenance	Birthdays	Festivities	Holidays
	£	£	£	£
0 – 2 years	120.00	90.00	90.00	270.00
3 – 4 years	123.00	90.00	90.00	270.00
5 – 10 years	137.00	100.00	100.00	300.00
11 – 15 years	155.00	125.00	125.00	375.00
16 + years	182.00	150.00	150.00	450.00