

The Connected Persons Support Team

**The Connected Person's Support Team,
Looked After Children and Care Leavers Service**

 01484 221000



CPT.Duty@kirklees.gov.uk



Kirklees Connected Persons Support Group



**Promoting Permanency
for Children
within their Family and
Friendship Network**

If you have any Safeguarding concerns out of office hours
please contact:

Kirklees Emergency Duty Service on 01484 414933

Connected Persons Carers

This leaflet has been designed by Kirklees Council's Connected Persons Support Team to give a brief overview of alternative care arrangements available within a child's family network.



A family and friends carer is a grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother, sister or family friend who is looking after a child who cannot be cared for by their birth parents. As a carer, you are providing a vital role to a child who cannot live with their parents, giving them love, support and a sense of belonging.

You may have become a carer at a time of crisis without any notice and may yourself have been deeply affected by the events which have led to the child coming to live with you. Some children are unable to live with their parents for a variety of reasons, these could include:

- Family Breakdown
- Death of a parent
- Parental physical or mental health difficulties
- Parental substance misuse
- Parent in prison
- Parental inappropriate lifestyle

In such instances it may be necessary for Children's Services to become involved.

There is a duty on the Local Authority to look at potential Connected Persons Carers, this might involve a family meeting which would assist in identifying suitable arrangements for the child.

Useful Contacts

BAAF

A registered voluntary fostering and adoption agency which offers training, information and research to professionals and carers.

Tel: 020 7421 2600

www.baaf.org.uk/

Citizens Advice Bureau

Provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities on a wide range of issues including benefits, debt, employment, housing, relationships, immigration and much more.

Tel: 0844 848 7970

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Contact Centres

Knowle House Contact Tel: 01924 732 174

Walpole Contact Tel: 01484 222173

National Children's Centre, C/O Brian Jackson House

Tel: 01484 519988

Coram Children's Legal Centre

Provides free independent legal advice and factsheets to children, parents, carers and professionals.

www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Child Law Advice Line: 08088 020 008

Family Rights Group (FRG)

Provides advice to parents and other family members whose children are involved with or require children's social care services because of welfare needs or concerns.

Advice line: 0808 801 0366

www.frg.org.uk

Grandparent Plus

Grandparents Plus is the national charity that offers a free peer Support Network and an advice and information service for grandparents and family members who have stepped in to raise a child.

Tel: 0300 123 7015 10am-3pm Mon – Fri

Email: advice@grandparentsplus.org.uk

www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/

What is the Adoption Support Fund?

The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was established to help pay for essential therapy services for adoptive families as and when they need it. It has been set up because many families need some kind of support during and following adoption and too many have struggled to get the help they need in the past. The ASF will enable adoptive families to access the services they need more easily in future.

Who is eligible for support from the Adoption Support Fund?

The ASF is available for children up to and including the age of 21 (or 25 with an SEN Statement/EHC Plan) who have been adopted from Local Authority care in England or adopted from Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland but living in England. From 1st April 2016, the Fund became available for Intercountry adoptions (once the placement has been made and the child is in England) and for **Special Guardians who care for children who were looked after immediately prior to the Special Guardianship Order.**

How can I access funding from the Adoption Support Fund?

To access the ASF, you will need to have an assessment of your families' support needs by the Local Authority. You have the right to request an assessment and your Local Authority is required by law to conduct one. The Local Authority that places the child with you is responsible for assessing your support needs for three years after the SGO is complete. After three years it becomes the responsibility of the Local Authority where you live (if different). Where the social worker identifies that therapeutic services would be beneficial to your family, they will be able to apply to the ASF on your behalf. The social worker would be expected to talk to you about who can provide the types of service that you need and which provider you would prefer. This could be the Local Authority itself, a neighbouring Local Authority, an independent provider, or an NHS provider. In the case of a successful application, funding will be released to the Local Authority to commission the approved services.

<http://www.adoptionsupportfund.co.uk/About-Us>

Key Facts

If a child comes to live with you at the request of the Local Authority then the child is 'looked after'. In this case you must be approved as a Friends and Family Foster Carer.

All Foster Carers are entitled to an allowance to meet the costs of caring for the child as well as access to a wide range of services and support for the child.

Children who come to stay with you without the Local Authority being involved are not 'looked after'. This may be under the auspices of a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order or under a private arrangement with the child's parents.

For children who are not looked after, you may be eligible for support for the child you care for as a 'Child In Need' from your Local Authority (under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989) to help a child to be cared for in their wider families. This could include financial support and guidance on parenting a child, signposting to therapeutic services for those children with emotional or behavioural difficulties etc.



Long Term Arrangements

You may wish to make a longer term commitment to the child in your care. You can apply for a Child Arrangements Order (formally a Residence Order) or a Special Guardianship Order. These orders will mean that you share parental responsibility with the child's parents and the child would no longer be 'looked after' if they were previously.

Relatives caring for a child in these long term arrangements are entitled to Child Benefit and any other benefits such as Tax Credits available to parents, subject to the usual eligibility criteria.



If you are considering this type of long term arrangement you should check with your Local Authority what support you will receive and, where possible, with an independent advice service before you decide whether this type of arrangement is suitable for you.

Definitions

Parental Responsibility (PR)

A person with parental responsibility is able to make a range of decisions about a child's daily life, as well as their future. They are responsible for the care and well being of the child including decisions regarding health and education.

Assessment

A process which requires a person to work in partnership with Children's Social Care in order to determine their suitability to care for a child.

Foster Carer

An individual or couple who have been assessed by the Local Authority to be suitable to care for a child who is not their own.

Connected Person

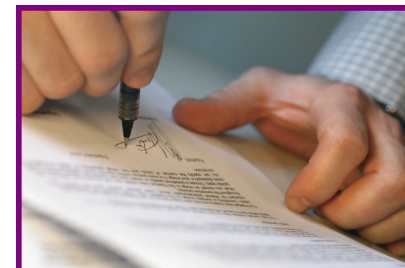
A relative, friend or person within the child's network who has a pre-existing relationship with the child and or family.

Fostering Panel

A group of professionals and lay people who meet on a regular basis to make recommendations as to whether a person should be approved as a Foster Carer.

Child In Need

The Local Authorities responsibility to provide services to children and families in need of support in a formalised manner through regular meetings and planned outcomes.



Role of the Contact Officer

There are Contact Officers within the Connected Persons team who are able to offer a consistent service to families who require support in managing contact. These workers will become involved with your family if it is agreed as part of the court proceedings, or at a point when contact causes difficulties with is agreed as requiring additional support by the team manager.

- ◆ Your family will be allocated a named Contact Officer.
- ◆ They will work closely with Connected Carers and parents to plan moving forward. The aim will always be to look at unsupervised contact as a long term plan where appropriate.
- ◆ The aim is for contact sessions to be less formal and more enjoyable for all concerned.
- ◆ Contact Officers will listen to and address families' worries and concerns regarding the welfare of the children in respect of the contact.
- ◆ Parents attending contact will have contracts of expectations to sign before contact takes place.
- ◆ Contact Officers will mediate and offer support to ensure contact is a positive experience for children and their parents.
- ◆ Contact officers will assess risks and health & safety issues at all times, and will report back to the allocated social worker and/or team manager where necessary.
- ◆ Contact Officers will work closely with social workers to ensure pre-agreed strategies and plans are adhered to.
- ◆ Contact officers can provide information to carers of services available if required.

Special Guardianship Order (SGO) Child Arrangements Order (CAO)

Assessment Process

Should you make an application for these orders, the court will request that a Social Worker completes an assessment of the prospective carer which will include criminal history, parenting capacity, references and life experiences. The Social Worker will write a report making a recommendation. It is the decision of the Court as to whether such an order is made.

Legal Basis

Children Act 1989

Children and Families Act 2014

Support

A Worker can be allocated from the Connected Persons Support Team upon request at any time during the child's upbringing if it is agreed that intense support it required. Carers are also able to attend various support groups available and can join the closed Facebook group.

Financial Support

You may be entitled to a means tested financial assessment which could offer an allowance paid on a 2 weekly basis, this will be reviewed annually. You can also claim Child Benefit, Child Maintenance, Child Tax and Working Tax Credits.

Duration

Until the child is 18 years of age, unless the order is discharged in court prior to this.

Parental Responsibility (PR)

SGO-The carer holds enhanced Parental Responsibility and the parents retain their parental responsibility.

CAO- The PR is shared equally between the carer and the birth parents.

Family and Friend Foster Carer

Assessment Process

If a decision is made based on assessment by the Local Authority that a Fostering Assessment is required, a Social Worker from the Connected Persons Assessment Team will be allocated to carry out this assessment. This assessment includes looking at areas such as life experiences, parenting capacity and would require a criminal and medical checks. This is then considered by Fostering Panel where a recommendation will be made on your suitability to become a Foster Carer. The final decision rests with the Agency Decision Maker within the Local Authority

Legal Basis

The placement needs to meet the requirements of Fostering Regulations and the Children Act 1989

Support

You will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker who will undertake home visits at a minimum of 4-6 weekly. The child will have their own Social Worker who will visit in accordance to the child's Care Plan. You will be invited to attend a variety of support groups.

Financial Support

You would receive a weekly allowance to meet the costs of the child. Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits are not payable.

Duration

For as long as the placement meets the child's needs, as determined by the Care Plan for the child. .

Parental Responsibility (PR)

As a Foster Carer, you won't have parental responsibility for the child in your care.

Grandparents Plus

We are working in partnership with Grandparents Plus who are currently supporting carers to set up carer led coffee mornings.

First Tuesday of the month - 10am – 12 noon

Join us for a friendly relaxed group, open to all kinship carers – grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends or other family members looking after a friend or family member's child on a full time basis.

You can chat to other families from your area, share stories and find out what support might be available to you and your family.

Call Project Worker Rachael Sherrington on 07931 158313, or join us at:

Bex's Coffee Shop & Café (Upstairs) 72D Westbourne Road, Marsh, Huddersfield, HD1 4LE

- 2nd July 2019
- 6th August 2019
- 3rd September 2019
- 1st October 2019
- 5th November 2019
- 3rd December 2019

Training

There are a variety of different training opportunities available to all Connected Persons Carers.

Kirklees Training

There is a training manual which is published each year by Kirklees Learning & Organisational Development Team, this can be emailed to you on request. Courses are designed to meet the needs of families with a variety of needs.

Some courses available are mandatory for **Family and Friends Foster Carers**, your allocated Social Worker will inform you of the courses which you are required to attend. All training is optional for **Special Guardianship** and **Child Arrangement Order** carers.

Parenting Courses

The Parenting Support Service offer a variety of Parenting Courses focused on various issues related to raising children through different life stages. These courses cover areas such as behaviour, sexual health, community, special educational needs and the home environment.

Facebook Group



Kirklees Connected Persons Support Group

The Facebook Group has been set up for all Kirklees Connected Carers as part of the support network we offer.

This page is used to inform carers of the upcoming Support Group dates and topics, training available and other things which may be of interest. This is also another way of communicating with the team and enables carers to stay in touch with each other.

Carers are invited to post a topics, ask each other for advice & support and share ideas.

This is a closed group, which means no one other than the members in the group are able to see posts and comments. As a closed group members requests will be approved by us providing that they meet the criteria of being a Connected Carer. No birth parent, unless they have a child residing with them on a Child Arrangement Order, will be approved.



*Please be aware that if advice is needed from your named Social Worker, a member of the Connected Persons Support Team, or you have a safeguarding concern you need to do so via the contact details at the back of this booklet as the page is not monitored on a 24 hour basis.

*Please note any disclosures of safeguarding concerns on the page will be reported.

Connected Persons Team

The team comprises of a Manager, Social Workers, a Senior Community Care Officer and Contact Officers.

The Service we offer will be dependent on the arrangements for the child in your care. We have a duty to supervise and regularly review our Friends and Family Foster Carers. Children subject to a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order will be supported in accordance with their support plan as Children in Need.

We offer tailored support to meet the individual needs of the families which could include:

- ◆ Financial Support and help with accessing benefits
- ◆ Practical support, i.e. contact arrangements, parenting advice, family mediation and advocacy
- ◆ Emotional support for all family members
- ◆ Life-story work for children
- ◆ Signposting to relevant agencies
- ◆ Training opportunities
- ◆ Assessments for long-term arrangements
- ◆ Support Groups

Carers of children subject to a SGO or CAO are not obliged to take the offer of support if it is not felt to be required. However, carers are able to self refer to the Connected Persons Support Team at any time whilst the child is under the age of 18 years.

If you would like to receive advice or support please contact our Duty Service, which runs Monday-Friday 9am-4:30pm, to discuss your needs.

We are happy to offer telephone advice or undertake a home visit to assess your needs and where necessary longer term support will be provided.

Connected Persons Support Group

Support Groups are a valuable way of helping carers access practical and emotional support when it is needed. The Connected Persons Team hold a Support Group 10:30am – 12:30pm on the last Wednesday of each calendar month (unless the date clashes with a school holiday)

Venue:

Mirfield Community Centre,
Wateroyd Lane,
Mirfield,
WF14 9SG



The purpose of this Support Group is for the Connected Persons Team to offer practical advice and support. Guest speakers are frequently invited to discuss themed topics and share resources.

It aims to allow carers to meet others in a similar situation to enable them to offer peer support and share ideas.

Children's Peer Support Group

The children's groups have been set up to enable children who live with connected persons carers to come together in their very own space. This group promotes peer support and encourages friendships in a safe environment.

The groups will run on a monthly basis in each venue.

The children will be offered a light tea and will be invited to join in various team building activities and games.

Carers are invited to have a cuppa and a chat with other carers, there will also be members of the team available if you would like to talk about any issues relating to your child/ren.

Huddersfield Group

Each session will run on a
Monday 5pm– 6.30pm

**Venue: No 11 High Street,
Huddersfield, HD1 2NF**



Batley Group

Each session will run on a
Wednesday 5pm– 6.30pm

**Venue: Jo Cox House,
Market Square,
Batley, WF17 5DR**

