

## Family and Friends Care Consultation

Family and friends have a unique and vital role in caring for children and young people whose own parents are unable to care for them. In Newcastle we want to improve our support to family and friends carers and we have been reviewing our arrangements to support this important group of carers.



### Phase 1 of Public Consultation

Phase 1 of the public consultation ran from 29 June to 19 July on Let's Talk and we had 30 respondents.

The survey asked specific questions around the type of information carers would find helpful, the most challenging thing about being a family and friends carer and how Newcastle could improve its support of Family and Friends Carers.

A thematic review of the consultation feedback was completed. The key themes from the feedback were:

- **The importance of support and information and guidance was a powerful theme.** There were many comments about the importance of support / advice in this role, and the need for more information about support available.
- **Financial support was a common theme.** A number of respondents referred to the financial challenges posed by caring for children. A couple of respondents commented on the disparity between foster carer payments and family and friends carers payments.
- **The importance of a clear and accessible policy.** There were comments made about Newcastle not having a clear and transparent policy
- **The challenge of still having relationships with birth family.** A few respondents referred to the challenging scenario of still seeing / being involved with them (as part of their family) and how this can be challenging

Following review of this feedback Children's Social Care decided to establish a new Family and Friends Carers team within our Fostering Service to provide information and advice to Family and Friends Carers when required.

### Phase 2 of Public Consultation

Phase 2 of the public consultation ran from 3 August to 23 August on Let's Talk and we had 5 respondents. The Phase 2 survey focused on the draft Family and Friends Care policy which was updated following the feedback received in Phase 1 and in light of the creation of the Family and Friends Carers Team. The full draft policy was shared alongside the survey, along with an abridged summary.

This phase of the consultation sought feedback on the clarity of the policy and any items felt to be missing from the policy, suggestions on how it could be improved or any general comments.

A review of the feedback received told us that:

- 3 out of 5 respondents believed the policy was 'quite clear' or 'very clear'.
- In regards to feedback received about anything missing from the policy feedback:
  - Individual respondents felt that the policy lacked:
    - Reference to support post 18 for Family and Friends Carers
    - Specific training for connected person
    - Acknowledgement of the difference care packages needed for children who are placed with family and friends carers
  - It was also clear from the comments that the Family and Friends Care Policy must be visible and accessible.

### **Outcome of the Consultation**

Following review of the feedback received through Phase two of the Let's Talk consultation the draft Family and Friends Care Policy was updated again to strengthen information about the non-financial support available locally to family and friends carers.

The final Family and Friends Care Policy was published on Monday 25 September 2020 and is available in Newcastle's Children's Social Care Procedures. [Read the new policy.](#) It is also available on the Newcastle City Council website.

In addition to the new policy Children's Social Care has established the Family and Friends Carers Team and is strengthening all information available to family and friends carers.