

Newcastle City Council Draft Family and Friends Carers Policy: Summary

This is a short summary of our Draft Family and Friends Carers Policy. Our vision is that Newcastle is a great place for children and young people to grow up, and 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 them¹. However, taking on the care of a friend or relative's child (being a 'family and friends carer') will often mean significant change for the carer, and can affect their family and financial circumstances. The policy sets out how children who are unable to live with their parents should receive the support that they and their carers need to look after their welfare.

The central principle of the 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 most important to us when setting up or supporting caring arrangements. We are guided in all of our decision-making by these principles:

- **Child-Centred:** We are all about supporting children and young people, and they 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 this is 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 is needed.
- **Balanced Response:** We manage risk by working together and make balanced decisions based on the evidence.
- **Challenge and Support:** We challenge ourselves and support each other, and welcome challenge and support from others.

The person responsible for monitoring the way in which we meet our responsibilities in line with the Family and Friends Care Statutory Guidance and this policy is the Assistant Director Children's Social Care, on behalf of the Director of Children, Education and Skills.

If you want to find out more about the legal framework behind our policy, the details of who is responsible for ensuring we meet our responsibilities to children and their carers and how, and the evidence about what works for supporting family and friends carers which we used to help put together this policy, you can read this in the full draft Policy, which also contains full definitions of all the terms used in this summary.

1. Values and Principles

We are committed to making sure that the needs of children in family and friends care are fully understood and that effective strategies, policies and services are developed and put into place 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

¹ The terms 'we' and 'our' are references to Newcastle City Council. The term 'children' used throughout the document refers to both children and young people.

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 working to enable 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 family and friends 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 with local **partners** to promote and support the needs of children living with family and friends carers, whether or not they are looked after.
- Providing regularly updated information that is freely and widely available and appropriately publicised.
- **Listening** to the views of children, family and friends carers and parents, as appropriate, when drawing up policies. Our listening process will include children and adults with disabilities, using appropriate ways of communicating.

2. Different Types of Family and Friends Carers

In most cases families and friends will be able to make suitable arrangements without any intervention by the council. Family and friends care can be defined in a number of ways; the types of care which this policy covers are: informal family care (private family arrangements), private fostering, family and friends foster carer "connected persons", carers with a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), carers with Child Arrangement Orders (CAOs), and carers with an Adoption Order. For more details about what each of these descriptions mean, please read the full policy.

3. Support Available

The types of support that are available to different family and friends carers includes: general support, accommodation support, supporting family time, financial support, support with legal fees, and advice. More details about these different forms of support and how they can be accessed can be found in the full policy.

4. Appeals and Complaints

Where family and friends carers are not satisfied with the level of financial or non- financial support provided, they can make an appeal through the Community Arrangements Appeal Pan, who can be contacted at: CorporateParentingAdmin@newcastle.gov.uk. Any family and friends carer, or child or young person, who feels they have grounds for a complaint can make one by calling 0191 277 7427 (weekdays 9am to 5pm) or emailing: complaintspeople@newcastle.gov.uk. We have made arrangements for an independent advocacy service called NYAS to provide support, advocacy and legal advice for children and young people who wish to make a complaint about the services they use, who can be contacted here: telephone: 08088 081 001 (free helpline) or email: main@nyas.net.