

Directorate for Children and Education

Family and Friends Care: Policy and Guidance

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Family and Friends Care

1.1 Purpose of the guidance

This guidance outlines how the needs of children and young people 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 looked after.

The purpose of this guidance is to set out how Manchester Children's Services will act to promote improve outcomes for children and young people who, because they are unable to live with their parents, are being brought up by member of their extended families, friend's or other people connected to them in any of the following circumstances:

- Informal arrangements with a relative
- Informal arrangements with friends or other family members which last for a period of less than 28 days
- As a Private Fostering arrangement
- As a looked after child placed with foster carers
- Under a residence order or special guardianship order, or in arrangements that may lead to an adoption order.

1.2 The guidance sets out our approach and the support available to family and friend carers who are meeting the needs of children living with family and friends carers including:

- The key principles underpinning the assessment, planning and decision-making processes for family and friends care arrangements
- The legal considerations to be taken into account so that that parents and carers are clear about the status of the arrangements
- The assessment, planning and review procedures for ensuring that such arrangements are safe and suitable for the child, and do not drift.
- The support arrangements for carers so that they can meet the needs of the children they are caring for, in particular for those children who are not looked after and are children in need

2. Related Policies and Guidance

- 2.1 This guidance has been revised to take into account the Department for Education Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2011 that was issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 which requires local authorities to act and Section 10 of the Children Act 2004.

The following policies and guidance should be considered in conjunction with this guidance:

- Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering, DFES 2005.
- Special Guardianship Guidance, DfES 2005
- Adoption Guidance: Adoption and Children Act 2002, (revised February 2011). DfE 2011
- Statutory Guidance on Fostering Services, DfE 2011
- Child in Need Guidance- Section 17 Children Act 1989.
- “Caring for someone else’s child - A policy to promote and support the needs of children living with family and friends carers.” October 2011
- The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review regulations; Statutory Guidance on Care Planning, Placement and Review 2010.
- Fostering Service Regulations, 2011
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- LASPO Guidance for Manchester Children's Services

3. Background and Context

3.1 What do we mean by family and friends care?

Family and friends carers play a unique role in enabling children and young people to remain with people they know and trust if they cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents. A family and friends carer is 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 friend's carer. These children may or may not be looked after by Manchester Children's Services, or even known to us.

The definition of relative in S 105 of the Children Act 1989 is "A grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half-blood) or by marriage or civil partnership or step-parent". The majority of relatives in Manchester who provide care are grandparents, aunts and uncles, but in some circumstances it can be an older sibling.

Children may be cared for by family and friends either under

- A statutory order - section 31 (full care order) or section 38 (interim care order)
- A voluntary accommodation under section 20
- A private arrangement made between the parents with a family member
- A private fostering arrangement

3.2 Why are children cared for by family/friend carers?

The most common reasons for family members and friends taking on the care of children are those related to parental factors such as domestic violence, alcohol or substance misuse, mental or physical illness or incapacity, separation or divorce, imprisonment, or death of a parent. Child related factors such as disability or challenging behaviour may also be reasons. In many instances the characteristics and needs of children living with family and friends carers in informal arrangements are very similar to, or the same as, those of children who have become looked after. It may be the particular circumstances giving rise to an emergency, the willingness of family members to intervene at a particular stage, or the response of the local authority which determines whether the child goes to live with family and friends carers on a private/informal basis or is placed by the local authority as a looked after child.

3.3 It is important to note that many children who live in family and friends care do well in life, but in some circumstances good outcomes for children are not achieved. Family and friends carers both want and need support to enable them to meet the individual needs of the children they care for.

3.4 The most common reason for family members or friends taking on the care of children are those relate to parental factors such as domestic abuse and violence, alcohol or substance misuse, mental or physical incapacity, separation or divorce, imprisonment or parent death. Family and friend carers often start to care for other people's children in a crisis or emergency situation, on an unplanned basis and often on a short-term basis that becomes

open-ended or permanent. The emotional impact on children can be significant and often difficult to manage.

- 3.5 We recognise the impact on the family and friends carer can have a major impact on the lifestyles of carers and it can bring with it pressures relating to accommodation, childcare, education etc.
- 3.6 A social worker will only become involved in these arrangements if there are welfare or protection issues with which the family needs support or intervention, if the arrangement falls within the definition of private fostering, or if the child is or becomes looked after.

4. Definitions

- **“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.
- **“family and friends carer”** means 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;
- **“fostering service”** means a local authority fostering service;
- **“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;
- **“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.

5. Statement of Values and Principles underpinning the policy

We want to provide lifelong families for children and young people in Manchester who may not be able to live within their birth families. Permanence is important as it will give the child or young person a sense of security, continuity, stability, and belonging. It means that they know where they are going to be living for the rest of their childhood and who is going to care for them. This sense of security and stability helps children and young people and gives the best chance in life and of moving toward adulthood and engaging in education, training and employment

Two ways to achieve permanency for children and young people are by carers using Child Arrangement Orders (previously known as Residence Orders) or Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's).

Both of these orders provides the child with the security of a legally defined placement but does not require a change of identity. The carers then hold parental responsibility for the child and is able to make all day to day decisions for the child. This also means that there is no ongoing monitoring by the local authority, although a support package should be put in place. Means tested financial support is available in most circumstances.

Importantly, for many children and young people this involves, they no longer have the stigma of being in care and they no longer have to have LAC reviews, social worker visits and all the meetings that go with being a looked after child or young person.

Manchester's Family and Friends Care Guidance is underpinned by the following key principles:

- The child's welfare and safety is paramount.
- All children will be supported to develop their own identity, including self-confidence and a sense of self-worth.
- Continuity of relationships is regarded as important and attachments will be respected, sustained, and developed.
- Children are best looked after within their families, with their parents playing a full part in their lives, unless it is unavoidable and intervention in family life is required to safeguarding and protect the child is necessary.
- If a child cannot live with his/her birth parents, care by family and friends carers arranged by the parents for children in need or family and friends approved as foster carers for looked after children, is the arrangement/placement of choice where this meets the child's needs.
- Children and young people will become looked after only where this improves their life chances and no child or young person will become looked after or be subject to care orders unnecessarily.

In meeting the above principles we will:

- Assist families in resolving their problems which will enable children to be reunited with their birth families or for them to make arrangements for permanent stable placements with family or friends, if the child is not looked after.
- Enable birth parents to retain their responsibilities and to remain as closely involved as is consistent with the child's welfare, even if that child cannot live at home either temporarily or permanently.
- Be proactive in supporting birth parents to identify appropriate family and friends carers within their network early on in the process.
- Ensure that there are clear agreements and arrangements for support between birth parents and carers where a child who has been referred.
- Ensure that if the child needs to be cared for away from home by family and friends carers, that the child does not become a Looked After Child unless this is necessary to safeguard the welfare of that child. (that is, the child will become looked after only where it will positively improve the child's welfare)
- If children have to live apart from their family, both they, their parents and carers will be given adequate information and support to enable them to make an informed choice about the most appropriate form of care.
- If the child needs to become looked after, we will work with the birth parents to identify family and friends carers where it is possible and safe to do so.
- Support family and friends carers to obtain an appropriate legal order giving them legal responsibility for the child through a Child Arrangements Order, Special Guardianship Order or Adoption order

6. Family and friends care arrangements made by the child's birth parents without Manchester Children's Services involvement

- 6.1 Parents can elect to place their children with relatives for as long as they choose or with friends for a limited period without the involvement of Manchester Children's Services. Please be aware that private fostering procedures will apply if the child meets the legal definition of private fostering that is set out in definitions.

Young people similarly may elect to go to live with relatives, with or without their parents' consent once they have reached the age of 16.

The responsibility for funding these placements rests entirely with the parent(s) and or others with parental responsibility. Under these circumstances, unless there are other reasons, children's services need not become involved and if already involved could choose to withdraw. These arrangements are often referred to as private/informal arrangements.

6.2 Early identification and support

The majority of private/informal arrangements work well and meet the needs of the child with the support of universal agencies such as Health and Education services. It is important, however, that any difficulties are responded to early. Partner agencies have a key role to play in identifying and supporting children who are living with family and friends carers. These agencies need to be aware of and sensitive to the needs of these children and their families.

As is the case for all children and families - help should be made available at the earliest opportunity to reduce the risk of concern escalating and support services should be available when a child is living with a family or friend carer in a private/informal arrangement.

These services are also key to the identification of those children who have a higher level of need e.g. those who are in private fostering arrangements where statutory intervention and the provision of specialist services are required.

As has been stated previously many of these arrangements will not require the involvement of a social worker. However a referral may be received by the MASH team who may judge that, due to potential safeguarding or child protection concerns, an assessment is required by the Locality. In these circumstances, an assessment will be undertaken in line with procedures and the parties will be advised in writing of the outcome.

The outcome of the assessment may be:

- That the arrangements for the child are satisfactory and no further support is required from a social worker. In these circumstances, other services involved with the child and family will be asked to continue to support the arrangements.

- That the arrangements are satisfactory and that no further support is required from a social worker, other than, for example, a one off section 17 payment. In these circumstances, other services involved with the child and family will be asked to continue to support the arrangements.
- That the child needs to be supported via the Child in Need planning process.
- That the arrangements constitute private fostering and private fostering procedures need to be followed.
- That the arrangements are potentially harmful to the child and a strategy discussion is required.

7. Family and friends care arrangements made for a child where children's services' involvement is required

- 7.1 Statutory Guidance for Family and Friends Care 2010 is clear that appropriate assessment and support should be provided for children and their carers whatever their legal status.

Effective implementation of the local authority's duty under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 will ensure that wherever possible children's needs are met through the best use of resources designed to safeguard and promote their welfare. This will help ensure that, subject to meeting the statutory criteria, children do not become looked after by the local authority unless to do so is the most appropriate way to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

Whether or not a child who is cared for by a family and friends carer should be looked after by the local authority will be a matter to be decided by the local authority on a case by case basis. In the context of family and friends care, the key question will be whether the child appears to the local authority to require accommodation for one of the reasons in section 20(1) of the 1989 Act. It may not always be easy to determine whether a child who is cared for by family or friends requires accommodation for the purposes of section 20(1) or whether that child's needs should be met by providing support under section 17 of the 1989 Act. In any event, where the local authority has instigated the arrangement for a child to live with a friend or relative, the local authority should provide an appropriate range and level of support for those arrangements. In situations where children's services are involved with a child and that child needs to be cared for away from home because the child's birth parents are not able to offer safe or adequate care, we will take a proactive approach to considering the suitability of the child being cared for by extended family or friends.

- 7.2 Legal Considerations. The majority of family and friend 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 in the Children Act 1989 or have parental responsibility for the child. In these circumstances there is no need to notify the local authority of the arrangement and most such arrangements remain entirely private without the need for the involvement of children's services. However when a child is assessed as being in need support may be provided under section 17 of the Children Act.

In other circumstances, family and friends care arrangements may be subject to the requirements of legislation such as that which govern private fostering, residence orders, special guardianship orders or children who are looked after by the local authority and placed with local authority foster carers who are relatives, friends or other person connected with the child. See the table in Annex A that outlines these different situations.

- 7.3 Residence Order/ Special Guardianship Order. Where a relative, friend or other connected person proposes to make a long term commitment to caring for a children, they may apply for a residence order or a special guardianship order after one year of caring for them. Either order will give the relative, friend or other connected person parental responsibility for the child and makes them responsible for all aspects of caring for the child and for taking decisions to do with their upbringing.

In the case of a child who was looked after immediately prior to the making of a special guardianship order, the child, special guardian or parent has a right to receive and assessment by children's services of their support needs which may include financial support (See Special Guardianship Order Policy).

Statutory guidance makes clear that children who were not looked after should not be unfairly disadvantaged as in many cases the only reason that the child was not looked after is that a relative stepped in.

When a child has previously been in foster care and the foster carer is appointed as special Guardian the authority will consider the financial support needs and take into account what would have been paid to them as a foster carer for up to two years.

A residence order does not have a similar right to support but the authority may decide to pay a residence order allowance where this is the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

7.4 Private Fostering

Private fostering procedures apply to a child under the age of 16 (or under 18, if disabled) who is cared for, or proposed to be cared for, and provided with accommodation by someone other than:

- A parent
- A person who is not a parent but has Parental Responsibility
- A close relative, i.e. aunt/uncle/step-parent/grand-parent/sibling but not a cousin or great aunt/uncle.

and is

- Cared for and accommodated by that person for 28 days or more, or the period of actual fostering is less than 28 days but the private foster carer intends to foster him/her for more than 28 days.

7.5 Section 20 or Section 17. Section 20(1) of the Children Act (CA) 1989 states: "Every Local Authority shall provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who appears to them to require accommodation as a result of:

- (a) There being no person who has parental responsibility for him; or
- (b) The child being lost or having been abandoned or
- (c) The person who has been caring for him being prevented (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason) from providing him with suitable accommodation or care."

The third reason is the one most commonly encountered in practice and encompasses children whose usual carers cannot, due to their limitations, or the risk they pose, provide

satisfactory care. If any of the triggers in section 20(1) of the Act are met, there is a duty on the Local Authority to accommodate.

However, the Act also provides an element of discretion. Section 20(4) states that the Local Authorities may provide accommodation for any child within their area (even though a person who has parental responsibility for him is able to provide him with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child's welfare. So this is a discretionary power.

Section 20 (7) then states that a local authority may not provide accommodation under this section for any child if any person who -

- Has parental responsibility for him; and
- Is willing and able to
- Provide accommodation for him arrange for accommodation to be provided for him

It is important that we are able to differentiate between the following possible situations:-

- (a) Cases where the duty to accommodate has arisen under section 20(1), no objection is received from any person under section 20(7) and the Local Authority places the child under section 20 with a relative/friend carer and thus the child becomes looked after;
- (b) Cases where a duty to accommodate under section 20(1) arises but the Local Authority is prevented from fulfilling that duty because of an objection under section 20 (7) and the child is instead placed with family/friend carers. These children will be children in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.
- (c) Cases where there is a discretion to accommodate under section 20(4) and an assessment concludes that the child's welfare requires him/her to be looked after and therefore the child is placed by the LA under section 20 with a relative/friend carer;
- (d) Cases where there is a discretion to accommodate under section 20(4) but assessments conclude that there is no need for the child to be looked after and so assistance is provided in order to enable parents to make arrangements for children to be cared for with family or friends carers. These children would be children in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

7.6 Legal status. Making sure the child's legal status is understood is vital. From the outset that all parties, including the parents and the carers, are clear about the legal status of the child and its implications. Southwark and Kent make it clear that it is not merely sufficient for the social worker to know what he or she is doing or intending to do. Such information MUST be shared with and understood by the lay persons (particularly the potential carer involved) and it MUST be done at the time.

If the child is not going to be looked after under section 20 Children Act 1989 and is to be a child in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, parents and carers must understand

clearly the nature of the arrangement and it MUST be made plain to the proposed carer that she/he must look to the parent(s) for financial support.

- 7.7 Case law. In March 2007, the Court of Appeal gave judgment in a case called *Southwark v D*, which has been considered and applied subsequently in numerous cases, including cases involving Judicial Review. For local authorities everywhere these are very significant decisions. The outcome of these cases must now inform the decision making in every case where arrangements are made for a child to be cared for by family or friends. It is therefore vital that staff, parents and (prospective) carers are clear about the legal status of the arrangements and the implications of this legal status, in particular about whether the child needs to be accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 or can be supported in the arrangements as a child in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Private fostering procedures may apply in some cases and in some circumstances the child's safety may need to be secured by a legal order.

Arrangements which are not clear will only damage the working relationships with the child and/or his/her/their parents and carers and leave all involved, including Children's Services, vulnerable to further conflict. This is because whether the child is looked after or not and the arrangements under which the child(ren) came to live with the carers is vital in determining a whole variety of issues, including where the carer makes an application for Special Guardianship assessment and associated application for financial support (*Suffolk v Nottinghamshire CC [2012] EWCA Civ 1640*)

- 7.8 Financial Assistance. It MUST be explained that any financial assistance from the local authority would be merely discretionary and that there is no right to the same.

Clearly, in many situations this is achievable. In other instances, a duty worker may come across a case which he/she knows little about which comes to their attention at a time of crisis. Here, it will be less easy to be clear about the nature of the arrangement. In this situation, it is VITAL that the worker clearly conveys that what is being put in place is an arrangement to deal only with the immediate crisis as an emergency measure and that on the next full working day, someone will be in touch to re-assess the situation. It is equally vital that there is such follow up and the worker then explains the position with the degree of clarity indicated above.

- 7.9 Written Agreements. It is essential that all parties are given written information, reinforced verbally about their rights and responsibilities under the different legal statuses. There are template written agreements for carers and parents where private arrangements are made between parents and carers and the children are therefore children in need. These agreements need to be given to both parents and carers. It is acknowledged that a pro forma agreement will not always adequately cover all the situations which could arise. It is therefore recommended that workers compare their letter against the following extract from the judgment (slightly amended so correct terminology used) to ensure it meets the necessary requirements:-

"If an authority wishes to play some role in making a private arrangement, it must make the nature of the arrangement understandable to those involved. If the authority is

facilitating a private arrangement, it must make it plain to the proposed carer that s/he must look to the parents or person with parental responsibility for financial support. The authority must explain that any financial assistance from public funds would be entirely a matter for the discretion of the local authority for the area in which the carer parent is living. Only on receipt of such information could the carer give informed consent to acceptance of the child under a private [fostering] agreement. If such matters are left unclear, there is a danger that the carer (and subsequently the court) will conclude that the local authority was acting under its statutory powers and duties and that the arrangement was not a private one at all."

- 7.10 Determining the relevant legislation. If the proposal is for the arrangement to be a "private" one as opposed to an accommodation under section 20 then one of the first tasks for the workers involved is to establish the nature of the relationship between the child and the carer i.e. does the carer fall within the definition of a relative under the Children Act 1989? If the carer is not a relative then this is a private fostering arrangement and must be dealt with in accordance with the relevant legislation and children's services procedures.

Copies of all agreements/letters sent and accurate case notes must be kept.

8. Assessment and planning for family and friends care arrangements

8.1 It is not possible to prescribe the many types of situation the social work teams may be presented with but it is important that staff follow the assessment and planning processes in place to ensure that the plans and arrangements for the child are appropriate and meet their individual needs. This will ensure that all involved are clear about the arrangements and their responsibilities, and that the needs of the child are the focus of decision-making.

8.2 Where it is safe and in the child's interest every effort will be made to keep children with their families. However if the child needs to be cared for away from home, an assessment must be undertaken which will explore whether care for the child can be safely provided by a relative or friend, the suitability of these arrangements and what is the most appropriate legal status for these arrangements i.e. Child in Need or Looked After Child.

8.3 Does the child need to become looked after?

One of the first decisions to be made is whether the child needs to become looked after or whether parents can be supported to make their own arrangements for family /friends to care for their child meaning the child is therefore a child in need. Professional judgement is required to assess a child's safeguarding needs.

If the judgement is that the child may need to become looked after, it will be necessary to seek legal advice to assist with the decision, including whether there should in fact be a voluntary accommodation under Section 20 or whether care proceedings should be commenced.

9. Assessment and planning for family and friends care arrangements for children in need under section 17 Children Act 1989

9.1 Family and Friends Care arrangements made by birth parents that are supported by Children's Services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (i.e. where the assessment is that the child does not need to become looked after) may need to be made in an emergency, e.g. following a section 47 enquiry, or may be agreed and planned as a result of contingency planning with the birth parents.

9.2 Emergency Arrangements

In these circumstances:

- An agreement is reached with the birth parents that the children need to be cared for elsewhere due to the known or potential risk factors;
- The birth parents are asked to identify any potential family or friend carers;
- Basic checks will be undertaken on all of the adults in the family or friend carer's household which will include LA and PNC checks. The accommodation will be seen to ensure it is adequate to meet the child's needs;
- If the arrangement is with a friend not a relative as defined under Children Act 1989, private fostering procedures will need to be followed if it appears that the arrangement will continue for more than 28 days;
- Initial arrangements will be made between the parties for contact with the birth family and for health and education needs to be met;
- The child will need to be consulted as appropriate (depending on age) and their views sought on the arrangement;
- Agreement for the arrangements will be required from the team manager/locality manager. They can also agree to immediate or any ongoing financial assistance under section 17 (only after a financial assessment has been first carried out);
- A written agreement (see template) will be made between the birth parents and the carers which details the expectations of the carers and the parents and that the arrangements will be supported by MCC under child in need or child protection planning. The agreement will make it clear that the child is not looked after.

9.3 Planned Arrangements

In many cases the child will be open to a social worker under child in need or child protection planning, and there may be an opportunity to plan with the birth parents the arrangements for the child to be cared for by family / friend carers if the need arises. It is therefore best practice, as part of the assessment and planning process, to identify with birth parents any family and friends from their support network who may potentially be able to care for the child in the future. This will be an expectation if the Public Law Outline (PLO) pre-proceedings processes are being followed. The genogram facility on MiCare will assist this process.

If the need arises for the child to be cared for elsewhere and the need is not immediate:

- The assessment concludes that the child does not need to become looked after. An agreement is reached with the birth parents that the child(ren) may or will need to be cared for elsewhere due to the known or potential risk factors. The birth parents are asked to identify any potential family or friend carers.
- Consideration will be given to convening a family meeting/family group conference within 7 working days so that an agreement can be reached by the parents and family for the arrangements for the child to be cared for.

If a carer is identified and parents are in agreement, do the following:

- Family and friends carers are often motivated by the wish to help a child already known to them, who might otherwise enter the care system. It is important therefore to consider and record the potential carer's motivation to care for the child and the impact of taking on a caring role on with wider family relationships;
- Basic checks will be undertaken on all of the adults in the family or friend carers household which will include Local Authority and Police National Checks. The accommodation will be seen to ensure it is adequate to meet the child's needs;
- If the arrangement is with a friend not a relative as defined under Children Act 1989, Private Fostering procedures will need to be followed if it appears that the arrangement will continue for more than 28 days;
- Initial arrangements will be made between the parties for contact with the birth family and for health and education needs to be met;
- The child will need to be consulted as appropriate (depending on age) and their views sought on the arrangements;
- Agreement for the arrangements will be required from the team manager/ locality manager. They can also agree to immediate or any ongoing financial assistance under section 17 (only after a financial assessment has been first carried out);
- A written agreement (see template) will be made between the birth parents and the carers which details the expectations of the carers and the parents and that the arrangements will be supported by child in need or child protection planning. The agreement will make it clear that the child is not looked after.

9.4 Decision making.

- The decision as to where the child should live remains with the birth Parents;
- Offer advice to the birth parents as to the most appropriate arrangements/ which family member will meet child's needs.

9.5 Planning for the child

When the social worker supports arrangements made by parents and the child is not

looked after, the child will be treated as a child in need and appropriate assessments if required will be made under the Framework for Assessment for Children in Need and their Families to inform a Child in Need plan or Child Protection plan if required. If the child is subject to a Child Protection plan, the Child Protection planning and core group process will continue. The Child Protection review conference will decide if a Child Protection plan is still required.

If a Child Protection plan is not in place, it is recommended that child in need meeting will need to be convened by the social worker to agree a child in need plan. Private Fostering procedures will apply if the child is cared for over 28 days by someone who is not a relative as defined by Children Act 1989.

The child in need plan will agree the practical and other support, including any financial support (see below), to be provided for the child or to the child's carer and the role and responsibility of the child's parents. This is particularly important as neither the carer nor MCC has parental responsibility for the child in these circumstances, since no court orders have been made conferring it.

The carer may do what is reasonable to safeguard and promote the child's welfare (s.3 (5) Children Act 1989) but should be supported to refer back to the parent or other person with parental responsibility about significant decisions.

If, at any point, the child becomes looked after, Looked After Children procedures will apply.

9.6 Financial support under Section 17

Parents will always be expected to make appropriate financial arrangements with the carer to enable the carer to care for the child. However, if a child's needs cannot be met by a family member or friend without financial support in the short term, children's services may, with the agreement of the parents, provide financial support to the placement under Section 17 (Children Act 1989) rather than accommodate the child under Section 20 so long as this is consistent with the child's welfare.

Under these circumstances, a financial assessment will be first carried out, financial support under Section 17 could range from a one off payment to the provision of an agreed level of financial support which will be regularly monitored and reviewed. A review date for updating the assessment should be fixed.

One-off payments under Section 17 - one-off payments made in respect of costs arising during the course of a child's private placement with family/relatives and friends will be made in accordance with the criteria outlined in the policy on financial support under Section 17.

Provision of funding for child maintenance costs subject to monitoring and review - payment for the child maintenance costs may be made, at the department's discretion, under Section 17, where an assessment has concluded that:

- Financial assistance is required to meet the child or young person's needs and to promote and safeguard his/her welfare.
- The child's needs can be best met without the provision of accommodation under section 20 and the assessment indicates the need for financial support for the arrangements.
- A financial assessment indicates that no person(s) with parental authority is able to fund the placement and the placement cannot be funded by recourse to the national benefits system

The level of any allowance payable will be based upon current benefit rates for the child, excluding child benefit as there is an expectation that the person in receipt of child benefit will pass these funds on to the carer.

Parents and carers will be informed in writing (there is a template agreement which covers this though be careful to delete those sections which do not apply) of any arrangements for financial support and will be advised that these are discretionary, made under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, and will be monitored and reviewed with the expectation that parents will fund the arrangements.

9.7 Accommodation

Family and friend carers may need support with accommodation, as their homes may not be of sufficient capacity to care for a child or possibly a sibling group. Housing authorities and registered social landlords recognise their responsibilities to support and wherever possible appropriate priority should be given to family and friends carers. Children's services may under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 give financial support towards accommodation costs where this is assessment as the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote a child's welfare.

9.8 Supporting contact for children in need

Parents and carers will make contact arrangements that meet the needs of the child. It is acknowledged that management of contact can be a source of considerable anxiety and sometimes conflict for family and friends carers. Contact arrangements may therefore need to be explicit and can be set out in the child's plan. If necessary, information will be made available to family and friends carers about local contact centres and how to make use of them. Contact will need to be monitored to ensure it does not become unsettling or harmful to the child.

Children's service have a duty to promote contact for all children in need, although there are differences in the way that duty is expressed depending on whether or not the child is looked after unless it is not practically possible or consistent with the child's welfare. Contact arrangements should meet the needs of the child and where there are safeguarding there may be a need for the involvement of children's social care to support safe contact arrangements or such arrangements may be defined or limited through a court order.

Children's services will promote contact between a child who is not looked after but who is living away from home and his family where it is necessary to do so in order to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

9.9 Family Group Conferencing

Family Group Conferencing is an effective method of engaging the support of wider family and friends at an early stage of concern about a child living at home with their parents. A Family Group Conference may be considered an appropriate way of involving wider family and friends in a process to achieve a resolution to difficulties, and offer a way of ensuring all resources within the families' wider social networks have been engaged always for the benefit of the child.

If a child has become looked after, perhaps following an emergency, without a Family Group Conference having been held this may be used as a means of engaging the wider family and friends who may be able to offer a placement for the child as a foster carer, to provide a safe route out of care to those children who are unable to return to the care of their parents or to support parents to identify solutions to difficulties. See information about Family Group Conferences in Annex D.

9.10 Avoiding drift and achieving permanence

In all circumstances consideration should always be given to the child's need for permanence which offers emotional, physical and legal conditions that gives the child a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity.

It is acknowledged that many of the arrangements with family and friend carers will be temporary and that for most children, permanence will be achieved through a successful return to their birth parents when it is safe to do so and the issue that led to them needing alternative care is resolved. However, if the arrangement continues, plans need to be made to secure permanence for the child and prevent drift.

Each case will need to be assessed in line with its individual circumstances. It is however, recommended that if the arrangements are going to continue and are meeting the child's needs, consideration is given to ending social work involvement and transferring the lead professional functions and package of support

At the three month review of the plan if the child is placed out of the authority. The Local Authority in which the child resides will be informed. At a maximum at the six month review of the plan if the child resides in Manchester

Carers may be given advice and guidance on applying for Child Arrangements Orders or Special Guardianship Orders under Private Law. Carers may qualify for public funding if the child was assessed by a social services department as being, or at risk of being, a victim of child abuse and/or a child protection plan was put in place to protect the child from abuse or risk of abuse. Carers should be provided with a LASPO letter by the social worker or via one of the alternative providers e.g. Health Visitor (see MCC LASPO guidance).

In the event that LASPO provisions do not apply, after assessment of the carer's circumstances, consideration may be given by a Locality Manager to funding a one-off legal consultation (see guidance/framework agreements). When any funding agreement is being considered it must also be established whether or not the carer qualifies for all or any part of the Court Fees to be remitted. If the carer makes their own application for a Child Arrangements Order, the court is likely to direct the social worker to provide a written assessment, in the form of a s7 Report.

When Children's Service is given Notice of Intention to Apply for a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) the social worker must, before agreeing to start any assessment, establish the circumstances in which the child came to live with the carer(s) and in doing so determine whether the child is in fact looked after by any local authority.

Points to remember for children in need:

- No arrangements can be made for the child to be cared for by the family or friend carer until the child's parent and the identified family and friend carer has given permission for the arrangements to happen.
- The family and friend carer and the child's parents should be informed as soon as possible of the legal status of the child and of how the local authority intends to support the living arrangement (e.g. under Section 17, Children Act 1989). The child's parents and the identified family and friend carer must be informed that whilst support under Section 17 is being provided the child's parent(s) are to provide the primary means of financial support to care for the child. This includes the signing over of any state benefit (such as child benefit, income support payments, and disability living allowance) that is available for the child's maintenance.
- The family/friend carer should also be advised to seek their own advice regarding their entitlement to any state benefits with respect to the child living with them, including any entitlement to child tax credits if they are working and in low paid employment.
- The family/friend carer must be informed, in writing, that any section 17 financial support provided by the local authority is discretionary and will be subject to regular review.
- Where financial support is offered, the written agreement will detail the level and duration of the support that is to be provided, and the mechanism for review, to ensure that all parties remain clear about the arrangements.
- The social worker should encourage the family / friend carers to work with the child's parents / those with parental responsibility as long as this does not impact on the welfare and safety of the child.
- The birth parents retain parental responsibility and the social worker must be respectful of the legal authority of the child's parent(s)/ those with parental responsibility when becoming involved in decision making with respect to the child.
- The arrangements need to be kept under review to prevent drift and achieve permanence for the child.

10. Assessment and planning for family and friends care arrangements for children who are looked after

10.1 Immediate placements

Where the assessment concludes that the child needs to be looked after AND that the child needs placing other connected person (where that person has not been previously approved as a foster carer for this child prior to the placement), the temporary approval of connected persons procedures under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 will apply.

Those regulations state that the authority must be satisfied that the placement is the most suitable means to safeguard and promote the child's welfare, and that the placement cannot wait until the full approval process can be completed.

To enable them to care for a looked after child; relatives, friends or other persons who are connected with the child must be approved as foster carers under the 2011 Regulations or temporarily approved as foster carers under the 2010 Regulations. The National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Fostering Services apply, and standard 30 relates specifically to family and friends foster carers.

Whilst many of the issues that go with being a family and friends carer are likely to be the same whether or not the carers are approved as foster carers, being a foster carer brings with it additional responsibilities and obligations which have to be met. The local authority will be responsible for the child's care plan and for supervising the family and friends foster carer, whilst the family and friends foster carer will exercise delegated authority within the overall framework of the care plan and the placement plan and will be expected to demonstrate they are meeting the child's needs as set out in the care plan and engage in appropriate learning and development.

Regulation 24 defines an emergency placement as being dictated by the child's circumstances. It can include placements which are required immediately on the same day but also includes any placement where the timetable for the child dictates that the child should be placed before a full fostering assessment can be completed. Examples are:

- A need to place a child immediately due a family crisis or child protection concerns which necessitates the child becoming looked after.
- A change in the child's legal status e.g. from Child in Need to Looked After Child which requires the placement to be regulated.
- Looked After Children placement breakdown.
- A Looked After Child votes with their feet and chooses to live with a relative or Friend.
- Imminent LAC placement breakdown and a connected person comes forward to care for the child where the child's timescale dictates that there is insufficient time to complete a full fostering assessment.

10.2 Considerations prior to placing children/pre-placement planning

The 2010 Regulations emphasise that pre-placement assessment and planning must take place prior to a child becoming looked after and if this is not possible (for example, when there is a need for an emergency placement) that this assessment and planning must be carried out as soon as possible afterwards in order to inform the Care Plan.

The 2015 Regulations also require that the carer(s) must be included in decision-making for the child and their views must be sought and taken into account prior to placement and at each subsequent review.

10.3 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010

Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 require arrangements to be made for the Temporary Approval of a Connected Person.

The Regulations state:

- Emergency/immediate placements with a connected person can be made only after an urgent assessment of the suitability of the connected person to care for the child has been undertaken, the requirements of which are set out in Schedule 4 of the 2010 Regulations.
- Before making such a placement, the local authority must be satisfied that there are no obvious barriers to undertaking a full foster carer assessment under Foster Service Regulations. If there are indications that the carer or the carer's home will not meet Fostering Service Regulations (for example, the child will not have adequate sleeping arrangements) and these cannot be rectified in the longer term, then the carer should not be assessed as this will delay a child achieving permanence.
- Although the approval is temporary, a connected person approved under these Regulations is in all respects a local authority foster carer.
- It is acknowledged that for some children it is in their best interests for these immediate arrangements to be made. The guidance states, however, that if immediate checks cannot be undertaken and the requirements of the Schedule 4 cannot be substantially satisfied as much as possible in the circumstances of the case, then the child cannot be placed with the proposed connected person.
- If there are any doubts about the suitability of the placement, consideration must be given to using an approved short term foster placement which facilitates contact between the carer and the child, pending the completion of the full foster carer approval process. Prior consideration must also therefore be given to the prospect of the foster carer not being approved at 16 weeks and the need to move the child from a placement in which they have become settled.
- If approved, the temporary approval lasts for 16 weeks. Exceptionally, the period of temporary approval may be extended by one period of 8 weeks if the fostering assessment takes longer than expected.

The process for obtaining a Temporary Approval of a Connected Carer assessment is set out within the "Practice Guidance for completing a Screening Assessment of Temporary Approval of a Connected Person" February 2015. The assessment form is completed by the assessing supervising social worker but with input from the locality social worker on the sections relating to the child, the birth parents and the special guardianship support plan.

10.4 Planned placements

Where the timetable for the child does not require the placement to be effected immediately, a screening assessment will be completed followed by, if appropriate, a full connected persons' assessment.

The process for completing a screening assessment is set out within the "Practice Guidance for completing a Screening Assessment of Temporary Approval of a Connected Person" February 2015.

Special guardianship/child arrangements orders. Where the plan is for Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order, the carer will be temporarily approved as a foster carer for 16 weeks and assessed as a foster carer for approval under the 2011 Fostering Regulations. The assessment will be recorded on the assessment form which will assist with clarifying whether a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order is an appropriate route to permanence for this child. If this is deemed appropriate a further assessment will not be required. Depending on a number of factors which must first be identified and established by the social worker (as set out in s14 of the Children Act 1989) including whether the child was or was not previously LAC, a support plan, including arrangements for payment of allowances, and a social history report on the child and family may be required if a Special Guardianship Order is recommended.

10.5 Ceasing to be Looked After

When a family and friends care arrangement under section 20 (i.e. where the child is looked after) is to come to an end, the 2015 Regulations place obligations on the local authority to assess the suitability of where the child will live, how they will be cared for and what support they might need after they cease to be looked after. Where the child is returning home, this includes assessing the support that their parents might need if reunification is to be successful. The decision for a child to cease to be looked after must be made by a nominated officer who must be satisfied that the proposed arrangements will safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

ANNEX A: CARING FOR SOMEBODY ELSE'S CHILD - OPTIONS

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence Order	Special Guardianship Order	Adoption
Route into the caring arrangement	<p>This is a private arrangement whereby the child is being cared for 28 days or more (or the intention is that the arrangement will last for 28 days or more) by anyone who does not have parental responsibility, and who is not a close relative.</p> <p>Relative means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, or aunt (by full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or a step parent.</p> <p>This child is not a looked after child.</p>	<p>The relative has chosen to take on the care of the child but does not have parental responsibility and the arrangement was not made by the local authority.</p> <p>The child is not a look after child.</p> <p>Relatives may perceive the parents to be unable to care for the child.</p> <p>Or the parents may be dead or otherwise not available(e.g. in prison);</p> <p>Or there may be an agreement between relatives due to difficult family circumstances.</p>	<p>The child has been placed with the relative or friend by the local authority, because the person who had been caring for the child was deemed not to be providing suitable care.</p> <p>The child is a looked after child and so the local authority must approve the relative or friend as a local authority foster carer.</p> <p>The child may be accommodated voluntarily with the agreement of the parents or may be subject to a care order.</p>	<p>The child is a looked after child being accommodated by the local authority under section 20 Children Act 1989 or because the child is subject to a care order; but has been placed with a foster carer by the local authority.</p> <p>(Alternatively, the local authority may choose to place a child into residential care where this is considered to best meet the child's need).</p>	<p>The child may be at risk of becoming 'looked after' and a friend or relative applies for an order, or The child may have been 'looked after' and their foster carer or other relative/friend applies for an order. In either circumstance, application can be made without the support of the parents or the local authority. Relatives may apply for an order after the child has lived with them for one year. Or, there can be benign reasons, e.g. after parents' death and in line with a prior agreement between the birth parents and the carer.</p>	<p>Looked after children: the local authority may decide that the child should be placed for adoption. They can only do so with the consent of the birth parent or under a placement order made by a court. An approved foster carer can apply for an adoption order after a year of caring for the child. Other informal carers could apply for an adoption order if the child has lived with them for a period of 3 years.</p>	

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence Order	Special Guardianship Order	Adoption
Parental Responsibility (PR)	Remains with birth parents.	Remains with birth parents but the person who cares for the child may do what is reasonable to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.	Remains with birth parents if child accommodated under section 20 CA, or if the child is subject to a care order or emergency protection order the local authority will have parental responsibility and determines the extent to which it may be exercised by others.		Shared by parents and holder of residence order.	PR shared with parents and any one else with parental responsibility for the child. The special guardian may exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of all others with PR, apart from another special guardian.	Transfers to adopters and relationship with birth parents is severed.
Duration	Subject to discretion of person with PR and readiness of private foster carer.	Subject to discretion of person with PR.	So long as placement remains in line with child's care plan, as determined by LA.		Age 18.	Age 18 unless varied or discharged by the court before the child reaches 18 years.	Permanent lifelong relationship.

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence Order	Special Guardianship Order	Adoption
Placement Supervision	It is not a placement, but there are statutory visits to child by social worker (minimum 6 weekly in first year, then 12 weekly).	None	Statutory: visits to child by social worker and supervision of foster carers by supervising social worker.			None.	When child is placed for adoption by the LA, the placement is supervised and there are statutory reviews. Once the adoption order is made, none.
Review of placement	It is not a placement, but the LA may do formal reviews In addition to ongoing assessment during visits.	None	Statutory reviews of child's care plan (minimum 6 monthly) and annual reviews of local authority foster carers approval.		None.	None.	See above.
Support Services	Provision of advice and support as determined necessary by the LA , which may assess the child as a child in need , with a child in need plan, and provide services/ support for child/ family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.	No entitlement but the LA may assess the child as a child in need, with a child in need plan, and provide services/ support for child/family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.	Support to meet child's needs including health plan and personal education plan. Training and practical support to foster carers in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations, NMS and CWDC standards. Young person may be entitled to leaving care support services.	No entitlement (But LA has discretion to provide services / support for child/family under section 17 of the CA)	If child was looked after prior to making the SGO, LA must assess for need for special guardianship support services. LA has discretion whether to provide support. Young person may be	Entitlement to assessment for adoption support services, which may be provided at discretion of LA in accordance with Regulations and NMS.	

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence Order	Special Guardianship Order	Adoption
						entitled to leaving care support services if was a looked after child prior to making of the SGO.	
Financial support - entitlement	<p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p> <p>Financial responsibility to maintain the child remains with holders of PR.</p>	<p>Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.</p> <p>Financial responsibility to maintain the child remains with holders of PR.</p> <p>Guardians Allowance payable if both parents have died, or the only surviving parent cannot be found or serving 2 years or more prison sentence.</p>	<p>Child benefit and child tax credit not payable.</p> <p>Weekly allowance to meet the costs of caring for the child. This should meet at least the national minimum rate set by DCSF.</p> <p>The Manchester City Council judgement ruled that allowances must be the same for all foster carers, whether or not family & friends.</p>		Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.	Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent.	Can claim child benefit and child tax credit if not being paid to parent. Entitlement to assessment for financial support (part of adoption support) if child looked after prior to order.
Support - discretionary	LA has discretion to make one-off or regular payments	LA has discretion to make one-off or regular payments	Some fostering providers pay their foster carers a fee to recognise the carer's skill, experience and commitment.		Local authority has discretion to pay residence order	Entitled to an assessment for financial support under	Subject to assessment, one off payments or regular adoption

	Private fostering	Family care (informal)	Family and friends foster care	Unrelated foster care	Residence Order	Special Guardianship Order	Adoption
	under section 17 Children Act.	under section 17 Children Act.	The Manchester City Council judgement (which requires allowances to be paid on the same basis regardless of the relationship of the carer to child) did not consider fees. However, Statutory Guidance for Fostering Services requires that any policy in relation to the payment of fees must be applied to all foster carers who meet the criteria in the same way and must not discriminate on the grounds of a pre-existing relationship with the child.		allowance - usually if child was previously fostered by the carers, or exceptionally if making residence order prevents child becoming looked after. Any allowance reviewed annually.	the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 if child looked after prior to order and meets the criteria in the regulations. Subject to assessment as above and for former foster carers can include an element of remuneration. Regular or one off payments. Any allowances reviewed annually.	allowance may be paid.

Annex B

DRAFT CHILD IN NEED CARER/S AGREEMENT

Name of Child(ren)

DOB

Name of carers

Relationship to child

Address of carers

Name of Parents or person with Parental Responsibility

Name of Parent(s) have arranged for name of child(ren) to be cared for by me/us from date....

The parents will retain parental responsibility and will remain financially responsible for the child for the time the child is cared by me/us.

I understand that these current arrangements mean that name of child(ren)..... will not be a Looked After child whilst in my/our care and I confirm that I have been provided with information explaining what this means for me/us in relation to the level of support (financial and otherwise) which will be provided to me/us.

In order to help me/us care for the child(ren), I/we will agree to the social worker carrying out a child and family assessment to identify whether and what range of services we need to look after the children us under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. I /we will receive a copy of the Child and Family Assessment when completed

This assessment will also help decide if these arrangements are in the best interests of the child.

I have been given a copy of the LASPO letter and advice on how to access the family and friends policy.

I/We agree to care for Name of child(ren) as a Child(ren) in Need

From date

I/We understand that Name of parents..... will continue to have parental responsibility for the child(ren) including financial responsibility.

I/We agree to inform Manchester Children's Services if and when I/we are no longer able to care for the child(ren)

Name of Carer:

Signature:

Date:

Name of Carer:

Signature:

Date:

Note: Copy to Birth Parents+

If you have any queries, please contact name of child's social worker/telephone number:....

Annex C

CHILD IN NEED BIRTH PARENTS AGREEMENT

Name of Child(ren)

DOB

Name of birth parent(s)

Name of identified carer(s)

I/we have arranged for name of child(ren) to be cared for by (Name of carer(s) from date....

I confirm that I do not wish my child (ren) to be Looked After by Manchester City Council because I am able to arrange alternative accommodation for him/her/them with (Name of carer(s)). I confirm that I have been provided with information about what this means for my family in relation to the level of support (financial and otherwise) that will be provided to (Name of carer(s)).

In order to help them care for the child(ren), I/we will agree to the social worker carrying out a child and family assessment to identify whether and what range of services they need to look after the children under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. I /we will receive a copy of the Child and family assessment when completed.

This assessment will also help decide if these arrangements are in the best interests of the child.

As my/our child(ren) are not looked after by Manchester City Council, I/we will retain parental responsibility and will be financially responsible for the child(ren) for the time the child is cared by (name of carer(s))

The Arrangements

Financial

I/We agree to pay £0.00 (from Child Benefit/Income Support) weekly for each child to the above carers

Education

Name of School/Nursery

Head Teacher/Manager

Address

Contact telephone number

Health

Name of GP

Surgery address

Contact telephone number

Contact

Who is/are the children to have contact with?

How often?

Who will make the arrangements?

I/We agree to (name of carer(s) signing consent for routine medical examinations and school trips for name of child (Ren).

I/We agree to for (name of carers) to care for Name of child(ren)..... From date.

I understand that he/she/they will be supported by Manchester City Council as Child(ren) in Need and these arrangements will be reviewed to ensure they are in the best interests of the children.

I/We understand that I/we will continue to have parental Responsibility for the child(ren) including financial responsibility.

I/We agree to inform Manchester Children's Services if and when name of carer(s) are no longer able to care for the child(ren)

Name of Parent:

Signature:

Date:

Name of Parent:

Signature:

Date:

Note: Copy to carers

If you have any queries, please contact name of child's social worker/telephone number:

Appendix D.

Family Group Conference

What is a Family Group Conference?

Family Group Conferences (FGC's) are voluntary decision making meetings to help families find their own solutions to problems. These are sometimes referred to as family meetings.

The FGC process empowers a family and their network to draw on their strengths and resources to make a safe plan for their children. FGC's ensure the family network have a chance to hear and discuss the concerns. They also give an opportunity for everyone to be listened to including the child and young person(s). It can be an opportunity to be informed of any resources that could help them improve family life. You can find out more about how FGCs came about on the **Family Rights Group website**.

What can I expect in a family group conference?

Every family considering having a FGC is given an independent FGC Coordinator who helps the family discuss the concerns and prepare for their meeting.

The FGC process is family led and families get to choose:

- the venue of the meeting
- time of the meeting (including evening and weekends if it suits the family)
- food at the meeting
- who is invited to the meeting

The family network can include anyone important to family members, not just blood relations. The allocated social worker or key worker for the family will need to be at the FGC to provide information about the concerns. Families are able to invite any other professionals they think would be helpful, but attendance by other professionals is not required. The decisions made at a FGC are agreed by the local authority, as long as they are safe for any children involved.

Family Group Conferences happen in three parts:

1. Information sharing - where the lead professional will talk to the family about the concerns the local authority has. The family can ask questions/get more information about the situation and options available.
2. Private family time - The family is left on their own to discuss the issues and write up their plan. Examples of family plans are available from the **Documents** section of this page.
3. Agreeing the plan - The whole group gets back together to view the plan, ensure it is clear to everyone at the meeting and anyone who may not be, and gain agreement from the referrer/local authority.

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS WHICH MAY BE USEFUL FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARERS

(details correct at the time of publication)

ADDACTION

Offers a range of support services developed for families and carers affected by substance misuse

www.addaction.org.uk

tel 020 7251 5860

ADFAM

Works with families affected by drugs and alcohol, and supports carers of children whose parents have drug and alcohol problems.

www.adfam.org.uk

tel 0207 7553 7640

ADVICE CENTRE FOR EDUCATION (ACE)

Offers independent advice and information for parents and carers on a range of state education and schooling issues including admissions, exclusion, attendance, special educational needs and bullying.

www.ace-ed.org.uk

Advice line 0300 0115 142

CORAM CHILDREN'S LEGAL CENTRE

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

www.childrenslegalcentre.com.

Childlawadvice.org.uk

Family and child law Tel 300 330 5480

Education law Tel 0300 330 5485

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAUX

Helps people resolve legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice through local bureaux and website

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

OFFICIAL

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FAMILY FUND TRUST

Helps families with severely disabled or seriously ill children.

www.familyfund.org.uk

Tel 01904 550055

FAMILY RIGHTS GROUP (FGR)

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. Publishes resources, helps to develop support groups for family and friends carers and runs a discussion board.

www.frg.org.uk

Tel 0808 801 0366

THE FOSTERING NETWORK

Supports foster carers and anyone with an interest in fostering to improve the lives of children in care.

www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

Tel 020 7401 9582

GRANDPARENTS PLUS

Champions the role of grandparents and the wider family in children's lives

www.grandparentsplus.org.uk

Tel 0300 123 7015

FAMILY MEDIATION HELPLINE

Provides advice and information about family mediation services and eligibility for public funding

www.Familymediationcouncil.org.uk

NATIONAL FAMILY MEDIATION

Provides mediation services to support families who are separated and their children and others affected by this

www.nfm.org.uk

Tel 0300 4000 636