

Family and friends care



What is it?

Family and friends care is the raising of children by grandparents, great-grandparents, other relatives, close family friends or people who are connected to them because the biological parents are unwilling or unable to do so, this arrangement is also known as “kinship care” or “relative care”. Although it is not easy for children if they cannot live with their own family, family and friends foster carers are able to continue to care for them within their own family network in a way that other foster carers cannot.

Kinship placement may reduce the number of home placements children experience, allow children to maintain connections to communities, schools and family members, increase the likelihood of eventual reunification with birth parents. These placements can be permanent or temporary usually the children already have a relationship with their carers before they go to live with them.

What does the Law say about it?

The Children Act 1989 and 2004 states that when a child has to live away from home, the local council shall make arrangements to enable a child to live with a relative, friend or other person connected with them, unless it would not be reasonably practical or consistent with their welfare. The accompanying guidance states that this should be explored before other forms of placement are considered.

Government guidance also says that children should only become looked after because it is necessary to safeguard and promote their welfare – not just to enable financial, practical or other support because this can be provided anyway.

Types of care:

Informal family and friends care

Family and friends carers may be caring for a child and these arrangements can be made directly between parents or someone with parental responsibility and their relatives (defined as grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step parent). The child is not ‘looked after’ (in care) under these arrangements. The length of placement is decided by the parent or those with parental responsibility.

Private fostering

This is a private arrangement where a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is cared for 28 days or more by someone who is not a close relative, i.e. not a brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparent or step parent. Further information is available from the leaflet in the right hand column. There is a duty to inform the local authority of any private fostering arrangement.

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5 Minute Facts

Child Arrangement Order/Special Guardianship Order

Where a family and friends carer wishes to make a long-term commitment to caring for a child, they can apply to court for a Child Arrangement Order (previously residence order) or a special guardianship order. These orders give the carer parental responsibility for the child, although they do not remove it entirely from the parents. Special guardianship and residence or child arrangement orders can provide a very positive way for the carers to take over legal responsibility so that the child no longer has to be looked after by the local authority.

Family and friends foster care (looked after children)

There will be occasions where the local authority believes it is necessary for a child to be placed with family or friends even though they haven't been assessed as foster carers. Following an initial assessment, the child will become "looked after" and may be placed temporarily with family or friend carers for any time up to 16 weeks. The local authority will provide those families and friends with information about the process for them to be assessed as foster carers.

What do we have in Bolton?

Bolton Council believes that in the great majority of cases children should live with their parents and where this is not possible their families and friends should be free to make suitable arrangements for their care without the intervention of the local authority. To support this there are a wide range of local universal resources in the area such as early years provision, after/before school/holiday provision, health services, leisure services. These and other services are available on [Bolton Families Information Service](#) website.

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.

Within Bolton's Children's Services there is a dedicated family and friends team who can provide information, advice, training and financial support. Support groups and out of hours support is also available to family and friends carers via the Careline numbers **01204 335732** and **01204 335733** and the emergency duty team (EDT) on **01204 337480**.

Support for Family and Friends carers is set out in full in Bolton's Looked after Children Living with Connected People Policy, Family and friend's carer's handbook, Family and friends carers leaflet.

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What should practitioners do?

Practitioners should recognise and respect family and friends carers for the extremely valuable work they do and ensure there is greater consistency and transparency in terms of promoting and supporting family and friends care for children who may otherwise become looked after.

Practitioners need to ensure that family and friends carers have access to support services to meet their identified needs so as to overcome adversities they may experience, such as advise on welfare rights and legal options, emotional support, support on managing difficult behaviour, support to access other services in health, housing and education, support groups and training opportunities.

Key contacts and for more information...

You can find out more information from the Bolton Council [website](#)

Foster with Bolton

Tel: 01204 337884 / 0800 1071564

Bolton Family and Friends Duty Line

Tel: 01204 334580

Family and Friends Care: Gov Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities

www.gov.uk

The Grandparents Association

Tel: 011 3244 6111

Grandparents Plus

Tel: 020 8981 8001

Family Rights Group

Tel: 020 7923 2628

All the local info I need is just a **click away!**



www.mylifeinbolton.org.uk

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