

### Residence Order

This is a court order that awards the relative or friend caring for the child with Parental Responsibility, alongside mother and father (if he has it). This means that the carer can legally be involved in decision making for the child and is able to sign forms for the child such as school forms, registering with doctor, consent to medical treatment.

- An application must be made to the Court
- The order lasts until the young person reaches their 18th birthday
- Children's Services do not necessarily need to be involved in these situations or applications
- This can be an option where a longer term arrangement is required

### Special Guardianship Order

This court order can offer legal permanence where adoption is not seen as suitable as the child/young person is still maintaining contact with parents and family members. This option provides the carer with Parental Responsibility alongside the birth parent/s meaning that they can make

important decisions for the child only having to consult with parents in exceptional circumstances.

- A court application must be made
- Children's Services must undertake an assessment and report to the court
- The local authority has duties related to support services
- This order usually lasts until the young person's 18th birthday

### Adoption

This is a legal process that once completed transfers Parental Responsibility from birth parents to the adopters.

- There are minimum periods of time before an adoption application can be made
- This is a more lengthy process that involves a full assessment of the potential adopters, including a medical assessment and police checks
- A panel will need to approve the assessment
- There are specific support services for children and young people who are adopted

### Supporting you

Family and Friends carers often feel that having some support, especially in the early days, is helpful to them and the child. You may just want some information or advice or you may feel you need more intensive support. If you have an assessment with the Children's Services Department then support will be one of the areas discussed with you. It may be that Children's Services will provide some assistance or you may be referred or signposted to other types of support within your community, such as Children's Centres.

Sometimes people worry about how they will manage financially. Again, this can be discussed with you. If you are caring for someone else's child it is likely that you will be able to receive Child Benefit and possibly other benefits such as Working Tax Credits. If additional financial support is requested then Children's Services may be able to support you either on a short term or longer term basis. This could require you to have a financial assessment in the first instance. The amount of financial support you receive will be individual to you, your circumstances and the care arrangement you are offering.

Below are some contacts for further support. You may also wish to seek legal advice, especially if you are considering applying for a legal order through the courts.

Full details of Hampshire Children's Services Family and Friends Care policy can be accessed via the following link: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/families/caring-for-children/familyandfriends-care.htm>

### Further information

#### Grandparents Plus

[www.grandparentsplus.org.uk](http://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk)

#### The Grandparents' Association

[www.grandparents-association.org.uk](http://www.grandparents-association.org.uk)

#### BAAF

[www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk)

#### Direct Gov

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

#### Citizen's Advice Bureau

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

#### Hampshire Children's Services Department

[www3.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services.htm](http://www3.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services.htm)

If you wish to discuss a child's situation in relation to family and friends care you can contact HantsDirect on 0845 603 5620. If there is a social worker already working with a family speak to them to gain more information.



## Family and friends care



Whilst the majority of children and young people live with their parents, for some this is not always possible or in their best interests and so an alternative care arrangement is needed. Such situations might include:

- Family breakdown
- Parent unable to provide care due to physical or mental health problems or issues related to alcohol/substance misuse
- Parent in prison
- Death of a parent
- Parent going into hospital
- Parent working away so no one at home to care for a child

In such situations parents often make their **own private and informal arrangements** for their child to be cared for by a relative or friend. If the relative is a close family member such as a grandparent, aunt, uncle or step-parent then Children's Services do not necessarily need to be informed or involved. However, if a child (under the age of 16 years old, or under 18 years old if disabled) is being cared for by a member of the extended family or a friend for more than **28 days** then there is a duty to inform Children's Services as this is known as a **Private Fostering arrangement**.

Even in circumstances where Children's Services are involved and a child or young person comes into the care of the local authority there is a duty to look to family and friends in the first instance as potential carers in place of non-related foster carers. It may be that a Family Group Conference would be useful to help a family network look at the possible options. Support from Children's Services would be needed for this.

This leaflet has been developed to provide information about Hampshire Children's Services Family and Friends Care policy. It sets out details of the range of alternative care arrangements

available, their features and the support available to help families make informed decisions to meet the needs of their child/young person. These options are listed below:

### Alternative care options Living with a close family relative (Informal family and friends care)

Legally, a close relative means a grandparent, sibling, uncle or aunt (whether full or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or a step parent. Children's Services does not need to know about all such arrangements unless the family need advice or support. But in situations where there are complex issues and/or safeguarding concerns Children's Services may be involved and carry out an assessment. Undertaking such an assessment provides an opportunity for a social worker to discuss:

- The current family situation
- Views of each individual involved, including the child/young person
- The capacity of the relative to provide appropriate care for the child/young person
- Any support needed by any person to help make the arrangement succeed

### Private fostering

This is an arrangement whereby an adult (not a close relative as listed above) cares for a child under the age of 16 years old (or 18 if disabled) for more than **28 days**.

- Parents and carers have a legal duty to inform Children's Services of any such arrangements
- Carers will be assessed and need to have police checks
- There will be on-going visits and support from Children's Services

### Family and Friends foster care

This involves a family member, or friend, becoming an approved foster carer for an individual child. Features of this arrangement being:

- The child will legally be in the care of the local authority
- There will be on-going and regular statutory involvement with Children's Services
- A formal assessment process, including police checks, must be completed and a panel has to approve the carers

