



## Support for Family and Friends Carers in East Sussex

# What Makes a Suitable Family and Friends Carer

Occasionally, the concerns about the child are so serious, or the parents' difficulties are such, that it is agreed that the child is better off living with a family member. The child's social worker will meet with the proposed family carers and make an initial assessment of their suitability. If this is positive and there is a need to assess the family member as a potential long term or permanent alternative carer for the child a full rigorous assessment will be undertaken, usually by a social worker who is separate to the child's social worker.

This leaflet is designed to help potential family and friends carers understand the qualities and abilities that make a good family and friends carer and what makes a family & friends carer unsuitable. It also gives some further information about the assessment process.

### The qualities and abilities that make a good family and friends carer

The social worker who undertakes your assessment, will look at whether you have:

- Long term commitment to the child throughout their childhood and ability to put their welfare first, even when it conflicts with loyalty/ concern for the birth parents.
- Understanding and acceptance of the real reasons that the child's parents are unable to care for the child.
- Ability to protect the child from further harm.
- Ability to deal with the strain of changing family roles.
- Sufficient support network.
- Sufficient time and space to devote to everyone in the family.
- Capacity to offer warm, stimulating care.

- Capacity to understand, adapt to and meet the child's changing needs.
- Ability to promote the child's educational and health needs.
- Commitment to helping the child develop an understanding of their history and promote a positive identity, including their ethnic and cultural heritage.
- Capacity to be realistic about the possible problems and special needs which the child may present.
- Capacity to work with professionals and to seek out and accept help.
- Criminal record of prospective carer and adults in the household - Certain types of offences will automatically bar the offender from caring for a child. Other offences will need to be discussed in detail to establish if they may impact on the care of the child.
- Housing - where the current accommodation is temporary, overcrowded and/or poorly maintained and there are no realistic prospects for re-housing within near future or arrears of payment so significant that you could be at risk of losing your home.
- Work/lifestyle - where your work responsibilities and/or leisure pursuits severely limit the time available for child care.

## What makes a family and friends carer unsuitable?

Although we believe it is better for a child to live with someone to whom they already have a connection, there are several reasons why we might not recommend a child lives with them.

These can include:

- Health - where your medical and/or psychiatric history and current state of health give serious cause for concern about your future health prospects
- Age - where the medical opinion is that you may not survive all the years of the child's dependence or retain sufficient energy and vigour to meet the child's needs until independence.
- Drug/alcohol problems - if you have a drug or alcohol dependence that is likely to affect your ability to offer safe care.
- Family composition - where the needs of other children and or dependent adults in your household/network or regular visitors are likely to conflict with the needs of the child you are offering to care for.
- Parenting concerns - where there have been serious difficulties in how you parented your own children, particularly a history of abuse and neglect.
- Understanding children's needs - Inability to demonstrate an understanding of children's development and needs.
- Meeting needs of a specific child - Unwillingness or inability to understand or meet the identified educational, medical or emotional needs of the child, including for those who may require a high level of specialist care.

- Protecting the child - Unwillingness or inability to protect the child from abusive parents and enforce restrictions on contact with birth parents.
- Working together - Lack of co-operation with Children's Social Care and other professional services.
- Finance - where your current income and/or level of debt means you cannot protect your family from losing fuel and food.

**The full assessment process is a series of meetings which should take about eight weeks.**

We will explore your own childhood and your parenting of your own children (if you have any), your support systems, your relationships and your coping mechanisms.

We will discuss your feelings and wishes about how you will care for the child/children, what support you might need and how you might manage contact with their parents and other family members into the future.

We will explore how you will manage to care for the child now and when she/he is older, considering any behavioural issues that may present at a later date.

We will discuss the legal options about acquiring Parental Responsibility with you and try to signpost independent information routes.

At the beginning of the assessment you will be asked to complete a financial assessment form. This will determine what level of weekly

allowance you would be entitled to if you had long term care of the child.

As well as meeting you and your family we will need to undertake a number of different checks which we will start at the beginning of the assessment.

We will ask you to complete forms for Disclosure and Barring Service checks and Police National Computer checks.

We will ask your permission to contact your GP for her/his opinion about your health and whether they feel that you are able to take on the role you are being assessed for.

We will ask you to provide a number of referees, people who have known you over a period of time and have some knowledge of your parenting ability.

We will then write a Report, this will then be part of the information which is presented to Managers within the department and/or the Family Court and a decision will be made about where the children will live in the future.