



Fostering  
Changes Lives



What is a  
regulation 24  
connected person's  
foster placement  
and  
what does it  
mean for you?

PUT  
YOURSELF  
IN THE  
PICTURE

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# Fostering changes lives. You can too!

## When a child can no longer stay with their parents and a placement is required, the Local Authority is required to seek a placement within a family first.

As a family member/ connected person to the child, you will have been approached to care for the child. The child's social worker will discuss the specifics of the case and inform you of their future plans. For example, they may have discussed with you your thoughts and feelings with regard to caring for the child long term and whether you would consider applying for a Child Arrangements Order or Special Guardianship Order. However, this can vary depending on the circumstances of the case.

The child social worker will then complete a short basic assessment and initiate basic police checks, to determine your suitability to care for the child. This is a statutory requirement and is necessary to legally place the child in your care. On completion of this assessment and the approval of the head of safeguarding for children's services, you will be temporarily approved to foster the child.

At this point, you will be allocated a fostering link worker. The child will retain their social worker and the child social worker will remain the key professional in the case. However, the fostering social worker (link worker) is allocated to provide support and guidance to you.

The approval will begin from the date of the assessment for 16 weeks, at which point an extension for a further 8 week approval may be granted by the fostering panel.

## The fostering link worker role and what this means for you

The fostering link worker will complete an initial visit with you and explain their role. Also,

- You will be asked to complete a fostering application form. Within this application you will be required to give information with regard to your previous relationships. Others living within the house, employment details, current health issues and give information of any criminal record. Furthermore, you will be required to provide references from your employer, family members and friends.

- They will verify with you whether you are applying for a Child Arrangements Order, special guardianship or a full fostering application would be required and advise you of the processes.
- Full DBS checks will need to be completed with anyone in the household over the age of 18 and anyone who will be supporting you to care for the child.
- You will be required to give details of your GP and attend a medical, which the fostering service will pay for.
- If you have pets you will be required to complete a pet questionnaire.
- The fostering link worker will discuss with you whether you need any equipment to support you. As a service we will provide equipment to support you care for the child. For example, we can provide pushchairs, beds, car seats etc.



- The link worker will discuss with you the payments you will receive while you are approved as a foster carer. You will not be able to apply for child benefit or tax credits for the child at this stage, you will receive a fostering allowance weekly from the date of the regulation 24 assessment.
- While you are approved as a foster carer you will have full access to the training packages available. The link worker will discuss this with you and book you on any training that you wish to take part in.

From this point you will be visited by your link worker every month to support you within your fostering role and to supervise the placement. If you have any questions at any point you can contact your fostering link worker or the duty worker on (01472) 325545.

## What is PR?

Parental responsibility (PR): Parental responsibility means the legal right to make decisions about how a child is raised. Those with parental responsibility include:

- **Mothers**
- **Fathers** who have been married to the mother at any time since the birth of the child; or who are jointly registered on the birth certificate as the father after 1.12.03; or have acquired PR by formal agreement with the mother or by court order
- **Anyone who has Child Arrangements Order** saying the child should live with them, a **Special Guardianship Order** or an **Adoption Order** in their favour on the child.

## What is the difference between a Special Guardianship Order and a Child Arrangements Order?

A **Special Guardianship Order** is a court order which says that a child will live with someone who is not their parent on a long term basis; and gives parental responsibility to that person.

A Special Guardianship Order is similar to a Child Arrangements Order (saying who the child should live with) although it is a stronger order. The key difference is that parents cannot apply to discharge (end) an SGO unless the court gives them permission to make the application.

If a child is going to live with you in the medium to long term, the court could also consider making a Child Arrangements Order (saying who the child should live with) instead of a Special Guardianship Order, to confirm the arrangement legally and give you parental responsibility.

A **Child Arrangement Order** gives you the power to make some, but not all, decisions about the child in your care. In this way it is slightly less strong than a Special Guardianship Order. It gives you parental responsibility and you can make decisions about how

to raise the child in your care. But there is more of an expectation that the parent will be involved in some decision making with a Child Arrangement Order than with a Special Guardianship Order.

There are also more restrictions on what you can do or decide with the child under a Child Arrangements Order than a Special Guardianship Order. For example with a Child Arrangements Order:

A carer cannot take your child outside the UK for more than one month without the parents agreement and the agreement of everyone else with parental responsibility or the permission of the court.

The carer cannot appoint a testamentary guardian to look after your child if they die.

## What is the role of the independent reviewing officer (IRO)?

They monitor local authority performance in relation to the child's case;

- participate in any review of the child's case;
- ensure that the wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority; and
- perform any other function as set out in the regulations.

## The IRO is also responsible for ensuring that the care plan for the child fully reflects:

The child's current needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child.

As corporate parents each local authority should act for the children they look after as a responsible and conscientious parent would act.

