

7 Minute Briefing: Connected Carers (Regional Protocol)

7) Resources

Regional Protocol:

The guidance issued is to be read with reference to:

- The Children Act 1989 and associated regulations and guidance
- The Care Planning, Placement and Review [England] Regulations 2010
- The Special Guardianship Regulations 2005
- The Fostering Services [England] Regulations 2011
- The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 1: Court Orders and Pre-Proceedings [updated April 2014]
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-court-orders--2>
- The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 2: Care planning, placement and Case Review
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-care-planning-placement-and-case-review>

1) Definition:

A "Connected Carer" means a relative, friend, or other person connected with a child looked after. 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 they are not exclusive categories. For infants and new-borns, they may be someone who knows the parents.

2) Purpose of the Protocol

The protocol provides a consistent approach to the identification, assessment and approval of connected carers so that a timely decision can be made for children and young people for whom we are all responsible to secure permanency at the earliest opportunity.

The connected carer should have knowledge of the family circumstances and be the most suitable person to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

However, being 'connected' does not make the placement inherently safer and professionals should always be professionally curious about the welfare and wellbeing of the child.

3) Connected Carers & Mainstream Foster Carers

Connected Carers are approved foster carers although the child may be placed in an emergency without full assessment having been completed. They are assessed, considered by Fostering Panel and approved by the Agency Decision Maker in the same way as Mainstream Foster Carers.

Like Mainstream Foster Carers the statutory National Minimum Standards are applied and must be met.

6) Reviewing the placement

All placements are visited and supported by a Supervising Social Worker.

Where there are older children in the home, their views are sought on a bi-monthly basis. Their views are also sought and health and well-being reviewed as part of the annual Foster Placement Review.

All Carers have at least one unannounced visit every year

5) Support for Connected Carers:

Connected Carers are provided with financial support in the form of a fostering allowance, depending on the age of the child.

They can receive a fostering fee once they have completed Skills to Foster Training and can continue to be paid this fee with evidence of ongoing training requirements being met.

4) Things to consider when assessing suitability of a Connected Carer:

- The nature and quality of any existing relationship with the
- Their capacity to care for and safeguard children
- Family relationships and composition of the household
- Nature of the neighbourhood and resources available in the community to support the child
- If there are older children in a placement, their views should be sought.
- Review the family dynamics and the motivation to undertake the long-term care of a child.

Once approved, there should be a child centred period of introduction to the connected carer if the child is not already known to them.