



Centre for Professional Practice

## **Regulation 24**

### **Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Procedure**

#### **Introduction**

This guidance is to be read in conjunction with Dudley's Family, Friends and Connected Persons Policy ([Dudley - Family, Friends and Connected Persons Policy 2018](#)). The purpose of this guidance is to set out the procedure for Regulation 24. Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) regulations 2010, which became effective from 1 April 2011, relates to the immediate placement of children with relatives and friends not previously approved foster carers.

This guidance will set out the responsibilities of the Children's Social Work team and the Connected Person's team when making emergency placements and assessing connected carers.

#### **Family and Friends Placements**

Where a child cannot be looked after by a parent, the Local Authority has a responsibility wherever possible to make arrangements for the child to live with a member of the family who is approved as a foster carer (S22 Children Act 1989).

Ideally this should be planned and assessed prior to any placement of a child to ensure that the placement is suitable to meet the long term needs of the child or young person.

Consideration should be given to holding a Family Group Conference or Family Meeting to help the family decide who may be the best candidates to care for the child in the event they cannot be cared for by their birth parents. This process should be considered at the earliest stage possible such as during the Child in Need or Child Protection process so that should a child need to come into care, any connected carers have been assessed in advance to avoid emergencies and delay.

However, in exceptional circumstances, emergencies do occur and immediate family placements may be required under Regulation 24.

#### **What is Regulation 24?**

Regulation 24 is detailed in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010). This regulation allows Local Authorities to place children and young people with family members or connected carers subject to an assessment for immediate placement for a period of up to 16 weeks. Temporary approval is only to be used in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances where children need to be placed immediately. A viability assessment must be completed and approved by the Head of Service, prior to temporary approval been given and the child being placed with the family or friend carer. As with any other placement, the Local Authority must be satisfied that the placement is the most suitable means to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. The Head of Service is responsible for approving any Regulation 24 placements.

### **What is the process for assessing viability and seeking approval of Regulation 24 Guidance?**

If an emergency arises and the situation requires approval for a Regulation 24 placement, the child's Social Worker should complete an [initial screening referral form](#). The completed form should then be sent to [Connected.PerDuty@Dudley.gov.uk](mailto:Connected.PerDuty@Dudley.gov.uk). If exceptional circumstances arise and the placement is required on the same day, the Team Manager of the Connected Persons Team should be informed immediately.

A duty worker from the Connected Persons Team on receipt of the referral form will allocate an assessor. The allocated assessor will contact the children's Social Worker within 2 working days to arrange a joint visit to undertake the viability assessment.

Following the visit, the child's Social Worker will complete the first section of the [viability form](#) regarding the child's needs and information relating to the birth family. The connected person's Social Worker will complete the second section in relation to the suitability of the prospective family or friend carer. A joint conclusion should be reached and a clear recommendation provided. The timescale for completing the viability assessment is 10 working days. If a Court Order directs a different timescale, this should be discussed with the Connected Persons Team Manager. DBS and medicals will be initiated by the Connected Person's Team at this stage if the outcome of the viability assessment is positive.

Once completed, the Child's Social Work Team Manager should review and sign off the assessment for the section the child's Social Worker has completed and forward the assessment to the Team Manager for the Connected Persons Team. The Connected Persons Team Manager will review the viability assessment and sign it off.

If the outcome is **negative**, the assessment should be recorded on the child's case file by the child's Social Worker. A copy should be provided to the prospective carers via Legal, who will advise how they can challenge the assessment if they wish to do so. Legal advice should be sought by the child's Social Worker about other options for the child.

If the outcome of the assessment is **positive** then the Connected Persons Team Manager will forward the assessment to the Head of Service for Regulation 24 approval if an emergency Regulation 24 placement is imminent.

If the Head of Service **does not** grant temporary approval the child cannot be placed with the carers and the child's Social Worker should seek legal advice about other options and follow the same steps above in relation to a negative assessment.

If the Head of Service **agrees** then temporary fostering approval is granted for up to 16 weeks and the child can be placed. Once temporary approval is granted the connected carers will be entitled to a fostering allowance and fostering fee and this will be requested by the Connected Persons Team.

### **Connected Persons Fostering Process**

Once the child has been placed, a full fostering assessment will then be undertaken. This will be completed jointly by the connected person's Social Worker and the child's Social Worker. The child's Social Worker will provide information regarding the child and the child's birth family. The connected person's assessor will complete the section regarding the prospective carer's suitability. The report should be completed within 16 weeks. It is expected that during this time, the child's Social Worker and the connected person's Social Worker will be in regular communication during this time to ensure that any issues about the suitability of the placement are raised at the earliest opportunity. Once the assessment is completed, it will be signed off by the Child's Social Worker Team Manager for the section the child's Social Worker has completed and the Connected Person's Team Manager will sign off the applicant's suitability section.

If by week 13 it appears that extra time is needed for the assessment due to exceptional circumstances, then an extension request must be completed. The extension can be up for up to 8 weeks. This form [Request for Extension of 16 Week Approval](#) will be completed by the connected person's Social Worker who will send the form to the Fostering Panel for it should be signed off by the Head of Service. If this is not completed, the placement is no longer approved and therefore will be deemed as an illegal placement.

Once the full fostering assessment is completed the connected carers will be presented at Fostering Panel. Following the recommendation from panel, the decision will be ratified by the Agency Decision Maker.

If the connected carers are **not approved** as foster carers at Fostering Panel, the carers can accept the outcome and the children's Social Worker will need to seek legal advice and an alternative placement for the child. Alternatively the carers may choose to disagree with the outcome and wish to challenge this through the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). The carers have 28 days to challenge the decision once the letter is received from Dudley regarding the decision. If the carers choose the IRM Route, then the Regulation 24 approval remains in place until the IRM decision is made.

If the connected carers **are approved** then they will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker for the support within 7 working days.

**Referring to the Connected Persons Team (when it is not an emergency or Regulation 24 Placement)**

Where it is not an emergency placement and an assessment of a family member is required, the child's Social Worker will still completed the initial screening form and send it to the connected person's inbox. The connected person's duty worker will contact the child's Social Worker to arrange the joint viability assessment. Once the viability assessment is completed and signed off by Team Managers from both the Child's Social Work Team and the Connected Persons Team, it will be allocated for a Full Connected Persons Assessment. The applicants will be booked into panel and the child will be placed with them once they are approved foster carers.

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