

Middlesbrough Council

Family & Friends Carers (Kinship Care) Policy Guidance

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Middlesbrough's ambition is to 'believe in families'; to be the best town for children and young people to grow up in, to improve outcomes for all children and young people and ensure that they are at the heart of our thinking, planning and action. 'Believe in Families' is the thread that brings together all the work we do to create better outcomes for all children and young people in our town.

Middlesbrough Borough Council recognises the major contribution of kinship care as a permanent placement option for children who cannot live with their parents. Children may be brought up by members of their extended families, friends or other people who are connected with them for a variety of reasons and in a range of different arrangements. These carers are often referred to as "kinship carers" or "family and friends carers."

Despite the often difficult circumstances of the carers, research shows outcomes are positive for most children living in family and friends care and are considerably better than for children in unrelated foster care. A study, published by Buttle UK and the University of Bristol in 2013 (*The Poor Relations: Children and Informal Kinship Carers Speak Out*), evidences that kinship arrangements provide stability for the children. Children have strong attachments to their carers and have good levels of academic attainment, particularly when compared to children in the formal care system. Nonetheless, over a third of the children have severe behavioural and emotional difficulties as a result of their experiences of abuse and neglect when living with their parents.

Middlesbrough Council acknowledges the personal cost and sacrifice that many kinship families make in order to care for their children, often having to change their lifestyle and plans for the future. The Local Authority remains committed to ensuring that children, wherever possible, reside with family and friends carers, when they cannot live with their parents and this policy sets out how Middlesbrough Council will support Kinship Carers, in collaboration with its local partners to give all children and young people the best possible family experience whatever the child's needs, circumstances or legal status.

In drawing up this policy, the requirements of the Department for Education Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (issued under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 and section 11 of the Children Act 2004) have been considered. The Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 (as amended by the Special Guardianship (Amendment) Regulations 2016) have also been taken in to account. Consultation has further taken place with Leeds City Council who were awarded a 'good' in their 2015 Ofsted inspection. In devising their policy, Leeds consulted with kinship (family and friends) carers already caring for children, partner agencies and local and national support groups, including the Grandparents Association, Grandparents Plus and the Family Rights Group. Kinship carers and practitioners may also access further advice and information from ['The Kinship Care Guide for England'](#).

This policy will be implemented with effect from the date it is agreed by council and will be reviewed upon its first anniversary, taking into account the operation of the policy during the review period and will take into account any feedback and comments received.

1.2 Our values and principles

The key principle of the Children Act 1989 is that children should be enabled to live within their families unless this is not consistent with their welfare and, with this in mind, support for

kinship arrangements in Middlesbrough is based on the needs of the child rather than the child's legal status.

Middlesbrough Borough Council recognises that kinship care is a permanence option for children and young people, as it provides high levels of stability for large numbers of children. Therefore, wherever safe and appropriate to do so, the council actively encourages kinship care as a positive alternative to a child or young person becoming looked after.

The Local Authority will take into account the child/young person's wishes and feelings in all relevant processes and will seek the views of family and friends carers when identifying services to support Kinship Carers.

1.3 How children come to be cared for by people who are not their parents

Kinship care arrangements come about when a child is separated from their parent(s) or their parent(s) are unable to provide the level of care and support the child needs. Common reasons include; neglect, domestic abuse, parental death, imprisonment, mental illness, substance misuse and parental separation.

The majority of kinship carers are relatives of the child as defined by section 105 of the Children Act 1989 or have acquired parental responsibility for the child through a Court order and there is no requirement to notify the Local Authority of the arrangement. (The definition of "relative", in relation to a child, means a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or [by marriage or civil partnership]) or stepparent.")

Arrangements can often remain entirely private without the need for the involvement of the Local Authority, although where support is needed Kinship Carers are encouraged to get in touch with Children's Services where help and advice is available.

First Contact Team: 01642 726004 (office hours)
Emergency Advice: 08702 402994 (out of hours)

1.4 Status of children living with kinship carers

Children can have the following status when living with kinship (family and friends) carers:

- A child who is not 'looked after'
- As a private fostered child (private fostering, see section 3.7)
- As a "looked after" child (this includes those children in care or who are accommodated under s20 Children Act 1989.)

Where the child is 'looked after' by a relative(s) or friend(s) who has been positively assessed and approved as a Local Authority Foster Carer, we will refer to such carers as Kinship **Foster** Carers.

The different legal scenarios are set out in the table below for clarity.

Arrangements where Children and Young People live with Kinship (Family & Friends) Carers

Kinship Care Arrangement	Child was previously Looked after	Special Guardianship Order	Child Arrangements Order	Child was NOT previously looked after	Private Fostering
Who made the arrangement?	Local Authority placed the child	Local Authority placed the child or child's parent made the arrangements or carer stepped in because the parents were not available	Local Authority placed the child or child's parents made the arrangements or carer stepped in because the parents were not available	Child's parents made the arrangements or carer stepped in because the parents were not available.	Child's parents made the arrangements or carer stepped in because the parents were not available.
Is the child looked after?	Child is looked after	When a Special Guardianship Order is in place, the child is not looked after but may or may not have been prior to the arrangement	When a Child Arrangements Order is in place, the child is not looked after but may or may not have been prior to the arrangement	Child is not looked after	Child is not looked after
Did the Local Authority approve this arrangement?	Local Authority approved the carer	A Special Guardianship arrangement may be made in private law proceedings or be a permanence outcome identified by the Local Authority	A Child Arrangements Order may be made in private law proceedings or be a permanence outcome identified by the Local Authority	No approval made	Arrangement is assessed for suitability but not approved by the Local Authority. Arrangement may be prohibited if assessed as unsuitable because of the carer or the premises
Kinship Care Arrangement	Child was previously Looked after	Special Guardianship Order	Child Arrangements Order	Child was NOT previously looked after	Private Fostering

What relation is the carer to the child?	The carer is a relative or friend of the family	The carer is a relative or friend of the family or may have been a non-related foster carer	The carer is a relative or friend of the family or may have been a non-related foster carer	Carer is a close relative of the child defined as: grandparent; brother; sister; uncle; aunt; or stepparent	Carer is not a close relative of the child defined as: grandparent; brother; sister; uncle; aunt; or stepparent. May be a more distant relative, or a friend or a teacher
Is there a legal order?	Available legal orders: Adoption Order; Care Order; Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangements Order	Available legal order: Special Guardianship Order (SGO). Section 8 contact Order or Supervision Order (usually for up to one year) can be considered alongside the SGO	Available legal order: Child Arrangements Order (CAO) Section 8 contact Order or Supervision Order (usually for up to one year) can be considered alongside the CAO	Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Orders or Adoption Orders are available as legal orders under private law.	Not supported by a legal order
How long will the arrangement last?	Arrangement is intended to last as per the requirements of the care plan or the making of an alternative order	Arrangement is intended to last until the child becomes 18 unless varied or discharged by the Court before age 18	Arrangement is intended to last until the child becomes 18	Duration of the arrangement is subject to the discretion of the person with PR or dependent on a legal order	Arrangement is intended to last for 28 days or more
Kinship Care Arrangement	Child was previously Looked after	Special Guardianship Order	Child Arrangements Order	Child was NOT previously looked after	Private Fostering

<p>Who has Parental Responsibility (PR)?</p>	<p>Remains with birth parents if the child is accommodated under s20 Children Act; or if the child is subject to a care order or Emergency Protection order, the Local Authority shares PR and determines the extent it is delegated to others</p>	<p>Birth parents retain PR but do not exercise it and share this with the Special Guardianship carer. There are decisions that cannot be made without the consent of the parents; or if parents do not consent, without the permission of the Court. These include: changing the child's last name; removing the child from the UK for more than three months; situation where consent is required by law, e.g. male circumcision; and giving consent for the child to be placed for adoption</p>	<p>Birth parents retain PR but do not exercise it and share this with the Child Arrangements carer. There are decisions that cannot be made without the consent of the parents; or if parents do not consent, without the permission of the Court. These include: changing the child's last name; removing the child from the UK for more than three months; situation where consent is required by law, e.g. male circumcision; and giving consent for the child to be placed for adoption</p>	<p>PR remains with birth parents but the carer may do what is reasonable to safeguard or promote the child's welfare; and has delegated responsibility unless an alternative legal order is in force.</p>	<p>PR remains with the birth parents</p>
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1.5 Legal orders which can support the kinship arrangement

In circumstances whereby a child may be living with a Kinship Carer without a legal order in place, the carer can apply directly to the Court to seek an appropriate order to secure the arrangement in the longer term. Described in more detail later in this policy, these orders include:

- Child Arrangements Order (formerly known as a Residence Order)
- Special Guardianship Order
- Adoption Order

Such applications, albeit made in accordance with private law proceedings, can be supported by the Local Authority as an alternative to statutory care. This could include assistance with legal costs and advice on making the application. The carer may also be able to apply for legal aid, but only in certain circumstances (see 3.5.4).

1.6 What we know about the role of kinship (family and friends) carers

Kinship (family and friends) carers play a significant role in enabling children and young people to remain with people they know and trust if they cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents.

Family and friends often start to care for other people's children in a crisis or emergency situation. These children are sometimes looked after by the Local Authority, but most are not. The majority of the relatives who provide care are usually grandparents, aunts and uncles and older siblings.

The advantage of these arrangements is that children are able to stay in touch with their parents, and other members of their family where appropriate, and can live with people they know. They will often be able to stay at the same school and may feel less stigma and loneliness than living with carers they do not know. Recent research indicates that the outcomes for children living with family and friends can be better than for children in unrelated foster care placements (Hunt et al 2012 and Selwyn et al 2013).

Middlesbrough Council recognises that in order to enable family and friends to offer appropriate care for children and young people who cannot live with their parents, access to a range of support services at universal, targeted and specialist levels may be needed.

Middlesbrough Council can sometimes become involved in such arrangements if there are:

- Welfare or protection issues and where the family needs support
- If the arrangement falls within the definition of Private Fostering (see section 3.7)
- If the child is, or becomes, looked after by the Local Authority.

1.7 Some considerations for anyone thinking about becoming a kinship carer

- Does the child have an established relationship with you?
- Is there sufficient/appropriate space in the house for this particular child and their belongings?
- Do you have sufficient practical support?

- Do you have any financial constraints/debts?
- What other commitments do you have e.g. work, other caring arrangements?
- The needs of your own children or other dependents and the impact caring for an additional child/young person may have upon them?
- What support, if any, would you need from your own family network or from the Local Authority?

2. Our approach

2.1 Early Help & Intervention

The majority of kinship arrangements work well and meet the needs of the child with the support of universal agencies such as health, education and housing services. A swift response and early intervention is therefore crucial. Families may need advice and assistance during the early stages of considering whether to care for a relative or a friend's child, in order to weigh up the options and to consider what support services they may require. This advice can be obtained from a variety of sources, including Children's Services, Family Rights Group; Grandparents Plus.

Partner agencies such as Health, Education and Housing have a key role to play in identifying and supporting children who are living with family and friends carers. Services need to be aware of, and sensitive to, the needs of these children and their families and give priority access to services wherever possible.

To enable family and friends to offer appropriate care for children and young people who cannot live with their parents, access to a wide range of universal and targeted services may be needed. Support services should not be withheld because a child living with a kinship carer is not a looked after child.

There are also a wide range of resources available to support children in the local area, including early years provision, day care and out of school services, schools and colleges, health services, leisure facilities and youth support services. Kinship carers are encouraged to access all the universal services available both locally and nationally. Details are provided in the list of local and national organisations at the end of this policy.

Early help may help prevent difficulties increasing to the point where specialist services/intervention is required. Early help may be provided through an increase in the levels of universal services, or services provided or commissioned in localities; this includes family support provided by schools and third sector services.

When it is felt that the child's needs cannot be met through early help, a referral will be made to Children's Care. Where a child is assessed as 'being in need'; support may be provided under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. This may include practical, emotional and financial support.

A child shall be taken to be in need if:

- a) s/he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for her/him of services by a Local Authority
- b) her/his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or
- c) s/he is disabled

It is important to note that Middlesbrough Council recognises that support may be required at different stages of the child's life, for example, during the transition to secondary school, and therefore access to services will remain fluid and based on assessed need.

2.2 Family Group Conferences

Where assessment by Children's Care determines that there are support needs or concerns about a child/young person's welfare, Middlesbrough Council will always look within the kinship network for a short-term and/or permanent solution for the child and will give consideration to a Family Group Conference, to help achieve this. Family Group Conferences are meetings with family members, which aim to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people, and reduce the need for them to become looked after.

FGCs are intended as a respectful and empowering process in which parents, children and wider family members are given clear information about the agency's concerns and are asked to produce a plan that addresses those concerns and answers specific queries. This plan may involve extended family members supporting the child and parents but it may also involve the child living with a kinship carer.

Where it is not possible to hold a FGC, for example; should the family prefer a familiar practitioner to chair the meeting, the Local Authority will facilitate a Restorative Discussion with the family, again encouraging the family to devise its own plan, to avoid the need for the child/young person to become looked after.

2.3 Housing

Middlesbrough Council is committed to ensuring that no child should become looked after because of inadequate housing. Housing Services provided by the Council can make an important contribution to promoting kinship care arrangements by assisting carers to secure suitable housing.

Statutory Housing Services are responsible for the assessment of housing need and making accompanying priority awards for council re-housing. A housing applicant can be awarded priority status for re-housing if, for example, their current accommodation is overcrowded, is considered not 'reasonable' for occupation or to promote the capacity of parents/carers to care for dependent children/prevent children becoming looked after.

Statutory Housing Services remain responsible for carrying out adaptations (Disabled Facilities Grants) for children living in non-council housing: privately owned, private rented and housing association. Middlesbrough Council Housing division will assess whether adaptations are required for children living in council housing. Again the provision of

housing adaptations will be an option to promote the capacity of the kinship carers to care for disabled children.

Children's Services also work with Middlesbrough Welfare and Benefits Service to make applications for Discretionary Housing Payments where a family is affected by the Social Sector Size Criteria relating to housing benefit eligibility. Assistance with accommodation costs can also be provided where families are eligible for Section 17 support.

2.4 Education

Middlesbrough Council recognises the importance of continuity of education for children and young people. Advice and guidance on educational matters for children cared for by family and friends will be provided, by directing carers to the most appropriate helplines or services.

The VSM (Virtual School Middlesbrough) may be a useful starting point, and is able to offer advice and provide information, as well as signposting other agencies that may be relevant and helpful. VSM can be contacted on 01642 201885.

Young people aged 16 -19 (and in some cases 19+) in kinship placements may be entitled to the Government funded bursary scheme. For more information contact www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund. Although the fund is discretionary for non-looked after children, those children looked after or who are care leavers will be able to access the fund and receive £1,200 per annum. This funding is to help the young person cover the costs of education and training and can be spent on, for example books and equipment.

Priority schools admissions are available for those children who were in Local Authority care but who are now placed with their family under a Residence Order, Special Guardianship Order or Adoption Order. This is under [the Schools Admission Code 2012](#). Middlesbrough's Schools Admissions Team (Civic Centre) can provide further advice on all matters relating to school admissions.

3. Arrangements for children living with kinship carers who are not 'looked after'

3.1 About these arrangements

When families have difficulties and the child cannot, at that time, live at home with their parents, an arrangement may be made with a member of the family or a friend for them to live with them for a short period of time or in the longer term, if required.

The arrangement can be made directly between the parents and the kinship carer or a Social Worker may also be involved because the child is a child in need or at risk of harm. Parental responsibility will generally remain with the birth parents but with day to day parenting tasks and decisions delegated to the carers. On the whole, these arrangements work well and will rarely come to the attention of the council although there may be a need for some advice and support during the placement.

Children cared for under the following arrangements are **not** looked after children;

- Children living with close relatives, as agreed by parents at the parents' own initiative.

- Children living under a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order made in favour of a family and friends carer via private proceedings.
- Children living with close relatives as agreed by parents and with the support of the Council in accordance with section 17 of the Children Act, 1989; the arrangement may have been agreed as part of a Family Group Conference.
- Young people aged 16+ who are living with a relative or family friend of their own volition.
- Children and young people living with friends or non-close relatives as agreed by parents for a period of less than 28 days.
- Parents have made an arrangement with friends or non-close relatives for over 28 (Private Fostering). In such circumstances, overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the privately fostered child remains with the parent or other person with parental responsibility and it is the responsibility of the Parents and the carer to inform the Local Authority of the arrangements they have made for their child.

Whilst this is a private arrangement between the parent(s) and carer(s), and is one made without the involvement of the Local Authority, Middlesbrough Safeguarding & Children's Care has a legal duty to ensure that any child or young person is safe and well looked after and does not come to any harm in a private fostering arrangement.

3.2 Arrangements made without the involvement of the Local Authority

Where kinship carers have stepped in to protect and care for the child without the involvement of the Local Authority, parental responsibility remains with the parents but day-to-day parenting tasks and decisions are delegated to the kinship carers. It is good practice for an agreement to be drawn up between the carer and the parents, so that everyone knows the arrangements for the care and protection of the child.

The carer may do what is reasonable to safeguard and promote the child's welfare (s.3 (5) Children Act 1989) but should be supported to refer back to the parent or other person with parental responsibility about significant decisions. It is acknowledged that many of these arrangements will be temporary and short term however, if the arrangement continues, plans need to be made to secure permanence for the child.

Some arrangements may have been formalised by the Court and in these cases the parental responsibility, delegated to the carers, is much more clearly prescribed. Advice about legal options available to carers can be provided from Children's Services as well as Family Rights Group and local child care solicitors.

Kinship carers may also require information regarding the range of universal, targeted and specialist services in their local area, including schools, children's centres, police, social

care, the voluntary sector, and housing. This can be provided by Early Help Services or the First Contact Team for Children's Services.

3.3 Request for services

Families requiring support will be assisted and signposted by the First Contact Team to appropriate services that will help them care for the child, including access to any state benefits they may be entitled to. Support and access to services will be based on the needs of the child rather than their legal status, in order to ensure that family and friends carers are provided with support they require (please refer to page 28 for contact details for the First Contact Team).

Middlesbrough Council will provide advice and guidance to carers requesting information about kinship care and will signpost carers to appropriate organisations. These may include voluntary organisations, health and education services and welfare benefit services as well as independent legal advice, e.g. from Family Rights Group or Grandparents' Plus.

Where there is a request for services to Children's Social Care, children who are not looked after and living with kinship carers will be assessed to determine whether they are to be treated as 'children in need' and may therefore be entitled to an assessment for support services. The assessment will determine whether the child is in need and, if this is the case, a plan will agree practical and any other support required, including emotional support; access to psychological services or financial support (section 17 payments to prevent a child/young person becoming looked after).

In all cases, it is essential that the parents and the kinship carers have a clear understanding of the status of the arrangements and are able to make informed decisions, with the opportunity to access independent advice and advocacy.

3.4 Arrangements made where there has been involvement of the Local Authority

The Council has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are 'in need' and to consider how such children can live with their families and friends before considering any action that may result in them becoming 'looked after'.

Where Middlesbrough Council are supporting a child in need and it is clear that they cannot continue to live with their parents, either on a short term or long term basis, then the Local Authority will broker or assist the family in discussing their care by a close family member or connected person.

In most cases this assistance will involve support in making decisions about whether or not legal orders are required and whether on-going financial support and social work support is available and how it can be accessed. This could include offering the family a family group conference or a restorative discussion/meeting. This type of assistance will be provided under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and so does not constitute a placement by Middlesbrough Council.

In some circumstances Middlesbrough Council will play a major role in facilitating and supporting the arrangement. This may happen when there is concern that the child may be at risk of significant harm if an arrangement is not made for him/her to be cared for by a close family member or connected person, resulting in the initiation of PLO procedures or Care Proceedings. The basis of support being offered by Middlesbrough Council will always be clarified in writing to the parent and the proposed kinship carer.

Where there are serious child protection concerns or a possibility of the child becoming looked after, the family will be offered the opportunity of a Family Group Conference (FGC) to ensure the best arrangements are made to secure the child's welfare. The FGC will assist families in making support plans for children and potential kinship carers will be provided with advice and information to help them care for the child. It is essential that everyone has a clear understanding of the status of the arrangements, is in agreement and that this is recorded in writing with a copy given to parents and carers.

The suitability of the arrangements to meet the child's needs and the range of support, including any financial support to meet the child's needs, will be reviewed via Middlesbrough Council's Child in Need or Child Protection Procedures.

If the assessment determines that the child may need to remain with the carers, even if the parents don't agree or the child's contact with parents needs to be supervised, a Family Group Conference and/or legal advice for all parties may be appropriate to assist with the decision making regarding the care arrangements.

3.5 Support for kinship carers

Our aim is to ensure that kinship carers receive the support they need to meet the needs of the children they are caring for.

3.5.1 Contact

Children benefit from having contact with their parents unless there are specific reasons why this would not be safe or in the child's interest. In some cases, older children will want to make their own decisions about keeping in contact with their parents. In all cases the wishes and feelings of the child will be established and taken into account, having regard also to the age and maturity and other characteristics of the child.

Contact arrangements must meet the needs of the child rather than just be for the benefit of the parent. It is acknowledged that management of contact can be a source of considerable anxiety and sometimes conflict for kinship carers. Advice and support may be needed to manage contact and Middlesbrough Council will undertake to provide this until such a time arrangements can be positively, and safely, managed within the family.

Local mediation services can help parties to communicate more effectively and resolve disputes, taking account of the child's wishes in a supported environment. Similarly if the Courts are involved with the children, the CAF/CASS Officer may assist in drawing up safe contact arrangements for the family. If necessary Contact Orders (now called Child Arrangements Orders) can be made in Court, which set out the agreed arrangements although there is an expectation that families have tried mediation first. Legal aid may also be available for mediation in such circumstances if carers and parents meet the eligibility criteria.

3.5.2 Financial responsibility and benefit entitlement

Parents can elect to make arrangements for their children to live with close relatives for as long as they choose or with friends for a limited period (under 28 days for non-close relatives), without the involvement of Middlesbrough Council.

The responsibility for funding these private arrangements rests with the parent(s) and or others with parental responsibility. Parents will always be expected to make appropriate financial arrangements with the carer to enable them to care for the child. Arrangements can be made for the carer to claim Child Benefit or any universally available benefits for children payable by contacting the Child Benefit Centre. Only the person caring for a child is entitled to claim Child Benefit. Other benefits may be also be claimed, such as Working Tax and Child Tax Credit (or universal credit, where this is applicable).

3.5.3 Financial support

Section 17 Support

In some situations, if a child's needs cannot be met by a family member or friend without additional financial support, Section 17(children Act 1989) support can be provided where the child is assessed as being 'in need'.

It is an expectation that any Kinship Carer will access universally available financial and practical support in advance of approaching the Local Authority for financial assistance, as the Local Authority cannot duplicate state benefits.

- Child Benefit
- Child Tax credits (or Universal benefit when this applies)
- Welfare benefits (or Universal benefit when this applies)

Advice, information and assistance on how to claim Welfare Benefits can be sought from the Welfare Rights Unit; to book an appointment call 01642 01642 729242 / 01642 729985 Monday – Thursday between 9am – 4.30pm and Friday between 9am and 4pm or email welfarerights@middlesbrough.gov.uk

For more information regarding your benefit entitlements you can also visit <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators>.

Time limited payments may assist carers at any stage of the child's life. Examples of time limited financial support might be a contribution towards nursery care fees where the carer is working and the child is not of school age or where the carer needs to manage a change or interruption to their work commitments or to respond to the child's needs.

Basic equipment may be required, e.g. bed, bedding, clothing where the carer does not have essential equipment in the family home and cannot access these from other sources or it is required immediately for the child to be able to live with carer.

CAO/SGO Allowance

Where longer term financial support is required to maintain the child in the kinship placement, including those subject to a Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangements Order or Adoption Orders, Middlesbrough Council has the discretion to, subject to the Department for Education means test financial assessment, pay an allowance to carers. Any payments made by Middlesbrough Council will be reviewed annually, to ensure that they are still required, unless there is a significant change in the carers' circumstances allowing for a re-assessment sooner (***please refer to section 6.1 for a copy of the Financial Support Model Means Test and <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education> for supporting guidance regarding Standardised Means Test Model for Adoption and Special Guardianship Financial Support***).

Those carers who may only be in receipt of welfare benefits payments for children, or have an extremely limited income, may be eligible to receive a top-up payment for the child up to the age-related fostering allowance. This top-up will usually only be payable for a maximum of two years. These payments are to cover costs, for example, during the transitional period and to assist the carer in realigning their financial commitments.

The level of allowance may be adjusted to include an enhanced payment where the Local Authority considers that the child needs special care which requires a greater expenditure of resources than would otherwise be the case because of illness, disability, emotional or behavioural difficulties, the consequences of past abuse or neglect, or other exceptional circumstances. This applies where the child's condition is serious and long-term. For example, where a child needs a special diet or where items such as shoes, clothing or bedding need to be replaced at a higher rate than would normally be the case with a child of similar age who was unaffected by the particular condition.

Payments would commence in line with the date that Middlesbrough Council assessed that this was a child in need and the arrangement with the kinship carer had already commenced.

A Child Arrangements Order or Special Guardianship Order Allowance **may** be paid where;

- the child is Looked After or was Looked After by the Local Authority immediately prior to the making of the CAO/SGO; and
- the Local Authority supports the placement of the child with the person(s) in whose favour the CAO/SGO is made; or
- the Local Authority is satisfied, having regard to all the circumstances, that, but for the making of a CAO/SGO, the child would have become Looked After by the Local Authority; and
- the Local Authority supports the placement of the child with the person(s) in whose favour the CAO/SGO is made.

Settling in Grant

A Settling in grant may be awarded where the Local Authority considers it appropriate, further to an assessment of the needs of the child joining a new family under a Child Arrangements or Special Guardianship Order. Reference will be made to a list of basic requirements for children of different ages held by the Local Authority. The price of items needed will be based on the price of equivalent items from locally agreed retailers.

A settling in grant is a one off payment, paid up to an agreed maximum per child, subject to agreement by a Head of Service.

Contact Expenses

It is recognised that there may be a need for contact to be maintained between the child and his/her birth family or other persons after the CAO/SGO is made. The principle employed by the Local Authority is that the special guardian is expected to be able to manage contact themselves, or is working towards taking on responsibility within a reasonable timeframe.

The Local Authority **may**, however, consider payment of expenses in respect of contact based on an assessment of the child's needs, the circumstances of the individuals involved and the nature of the contact arrangements. Such support, when agreed, must be recorded within the Special Guardianship Support Plan and also remains subject to annual review.

Arrangements for Financial Support

Where the decision is made to pay a CAO or SGO allowance, the Local Authority will write to the holder of the respective order setting out:

- the amount of the allowance;
- the date of the first payment;
- the method and frequency of payment
- when the payments will be reviewed and
- when the payments will cease

Those in receipt of a CAO/SGO must promptly notify the Local Authority of any changes in their circumstances or those of the child. In particular, the Local Authority must be notified if:

- there is a change to the carers household income;
- the child ceases to live with the holder of the CAO or SGO;
- the Child Arrangements Order/ Residence Order is revoked; or
- there is a change of address.

The notification should take place promptly and in any event within 28 days of the relevant change in circumstances. If an over payment has been made, due to a failure to inform the Local Authority of a change in circumstance, the Local Authority will be entitled to recover the overpayment (please refer to Financial Assessment Declaration attached for further details).

Exceptions

Whilst the Local Authority acknowledges that it is important to ensure continuity for the child and family in the early stages of the currency of the order, there are some exceptions to the assessment and provision of services, namely in relation to those subject to SGO arrangements. In cases where the child or young person was looked after by the Local Authority immediately prior to the making of the SGO, the council will remain responsible

for the provision of services, including financial support, for three years from the date of the order.

When the three year period from the making of the SGO has lapsed, and when the child was previously looked after, the responsibility for assessment and support remains with the Local Authority in which the special guardian resides.

Appeal Mechanism

If dissatisfied with a decision as to payment or amount of allowance, the holder of the CAO or SGO may appeal the decision within 28 days of written notification of the decision. The holder of the CAO/SGO must address their appeal, in writing or via telephone, to the Chair of the Decision & Review Panel, Safeguarding & Children's Care, Middlesbrough House, 50 Corporation Road, Middlesbrough, TS1 2RH.

3.5.4 Legal Aid ('public funding') and legal fees

Financial support will be offered in the form of 2 hours legal consultation, payable by the Local Authority at the CLS Public Funding rates, so that kinship carers can make an informed decision about taking on the care of the child, the legal status and the consequences for access to support at the outset. This will assist carers in considering whether to put themselves forward for a Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangements Order, where the Local Authority supports the plan and where not doing so would lead to the child becoming looked after or remaining looked after unnecessarily.

Decisions about these payments will be made by a Head of Service in Children's Care. It is an expectation that legal aid eligibility will be explored before any payments are made by Middlesbrough Council.

3.6 Legal orders to support these arrangements

3.6.1 Child Arrangements Order

A Child Arrangements Order is a Court Order which specifies with whom a child is to live, gives parental responsibility to the person in whose favour it is made, usually lasting until the child is 18. Parental responsibility is shared with the parents but the carer can make most major decisions about how the child is raised. Relatives may apply for a Child Arrangements Order after caring for the child for one year or earlier, with the consent of others who have parental responsibility or with the Court's leave.

Child Arrangements Orders may be made in private family proceedings, during which the Local Authority is not a party. It can also be made in care proceedings, either of the Court's own volition or if the carer applies for a Child Arrangements Order during the course of the care proceedings. In these circumstances, where the arrangement is an alternative to Local Authority care, a means tested Child Arrangements Order allowance will be payable up to a maximum of two years to assist with the transition to the new arrangement.

A Child Arrangements Order in favour of a kinship carer with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need.

3.6.2 Special Guardianship Order

Special Guardianship offers a further option for children who cannot live with their parents and require permanent care. It can offer greater security without absolute severance from the birth family as in adoption. A special guardian formally takes on the legal powers and responsibilities of parenting a child until their 18th birthday. This includes taking most decisions to do with the child's upbringing, including where the child lives and goes to school, and what medical treatment they receive. A Special Guardian can appoint a Guardian to care for the child after their death. This is not the case with Child Arrangements Orders.

As Special Guardians, they will have parental responsibility for the child which, while it is still shared with the parents, can be exercised with greater autonomy on day-to-day matters than a Child Arrangements Order allows for.

Special Guardianship Orders may be made in private family proceedings and the Local Authority may not be a party to any such arrangements. However, Middlesbrough Council will be responsible for preparing a report for the Court regarding whether a Special Guardianship Order is in the child's best interest. It can also be made in care proceedings, either of the Court's own volition or if the carer applies for a Special Guardianship Order during the course of care proceedings. A Special Guardianship Order can be made in favour of a kinship carer with whom a child is living and may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need.

3.6.3 Adoption Order

Adoption is the process by which all parental rights and responsibilities for a child are permanently transferred to an adoptive parent by a Court. As a result the child legally becomes part of the adoptive family.

An Adoption Order in favour of a kinship carer with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need. However it is more unusual because of the impact it has on changing the family relationships order, e.g. the child's grandmother would become the child's mother and the mother, the child's sister. Middlesbrough Council's Adoption Service provides a range of adoption support services in conjunction with partner agencies. An assessment for adoption support services can be requested by the adopted child, adoptive parents and their families, as well as birth relatives. The support required is then set out in an Adoption Support Plan and this may include a range of support services and signposting to other services.

3.7 Private Fostering arrangements

Private fostering arrangements are arrangements made directly between the parents or those with parental responsibility without the involvement of the Local Authority.

A privately fostered child is a child under 16 (or 18 if disabled) who is cared for by an adult who is not a parent or close relative, or a Local Authority foster carer, where the child is to be cared for in that arrangement for 28 days or more. Close relative is defined as 'a

grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent.’ It does not include a child who is Looked After by a Local Authority.

In a private fostering arrangement, the parent still holds parental responsibility and agrees the arrangement with the private foster carer and is responsible for any financial payments in respect of the child. Child benefit and child tax credits can be claimed by the private foster carer.

Middlesbrough Council has a duty to assess and monitor the welfare of all privately fostered children and the way in which they carry out these duties is set out in the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005. However, the Local Authority may also become involved with a child in a private fostering arrangement where the child comes within the definition of a Child in Need. In such cases, Middlesbrough Council has a responsibility to provide services to meet the assessed needs of the child under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Following assessment, a Child in Need Plan will be drawn up and a package of support will be provided to meet any identified needs. This may comprise a variety of different types of services and support, including financial support (please see section 3.6).

4. Arrangements for children living with kinship carers and who are ‘looked after’

4.1 Definitions of a looked after child

A looked after child is ‘in care’ or ‘accommodated’ by the Local Authority under s20 of the Children Act 1989. To be ‘in care’, the Court has made an order in relation to a child/young person, providing the Local Authority with the power to remove the child from the care of their parents. These orders include:

- Interim Care Order
- Care Order
- or
- an Emergency Protection Order

A child is ‘accommodated’ by the Local Authority in accordance with section 20, and with the agreement of the parents / others with parental responsibility, whereby none of the above orders have been made. This may, in exceptional circumstances, include the cases whereby the Local Authority has played a **major** role in making arrangements/decisions for the child to live with a relative because they are concerned about the child’s safety.

In either scenario, children may only be cared for by family and friends if the carers have been approved as Local Authority Foster Carers in accordance with the Fostering Regulations 2011 and where they are deemed to meet the requirements of the National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011. Children may also be placed in an emergency, with the kinship carer being approved on a temporary basis in line with Regulation 24 of the Care Planning Regulations 2010.

4.2 Reasons why a child may be looked after

Within Middlesbrough, the Single Assessment is used to identify a child’s needs and determine what level of support/intervention, if any, is required. The child may need to be

looked after for a short period or longer term if some or all of the circumstances below apply. Each case must be assessed on its own merit. This list is not exhaustive and other factors may be relevant:

Where no known and suitable kinship options are available and

- A child is at risk of or experiencing significant harm and it is not safe for them to stay living at home
- Both of the child's parents may be deceased

Where kinship options are available:

- Birth parents may not agree, or may be inconsistent as to their agreement for their child being cared for by family and friends carers
- There may be a concern that an arrangement for a child to live with family or friends carers may be seriously disrupted by a birth parent, whose behaviour may have been assessed as being potentially dangerous, or as posing a significant risk to the child or family
- A birth parent may be untraceable, or incapable of giving agreement to the child being cared for by family/friends carers
- Middlesbrough Borough Council assesses that it needs to share parental responsibility with the birth parents in order to promote and safeguard the child's welfare and secure the placement

4.3 Looking within the kinship network

Where a child is looked after, and it is the most appropriate placement, Middlesbrough Borough Council will give precedence to a member of the family/relative, or friend (connected persons) as the placement of choice for the child. The person will need to be assessed as a Foster carer in accordance with the Fostering Regulations 2011.

Middlesbrough Borough Council will take a pro-active approach to identifying, considering and supporting family and friends carers in the child's network who may be able to care for the child. There is an expectation that a Family Group Conference/Restorative Family Meeting will be held as soon as possible to help identify any potential carers or family support, to prevent the need for the child/young person to become looked after.

4.4 Assessment of kinship carers

When a child is looked after and placed with a kinship carer, the carer must be assessed and approved as a **kinship foster carer** by the Local Authority.

The child can be placed with a kinship carer on an emergency basis under Regulation 24 to grant the carer temporary approval as a foster carer for a period of up to 16 weeks. During this time, a full assessment of the carer and the arrangement will be undertaken. This temporary approval can only be extended in exceptional circumstances for a further 8 weeks. Within this context the carer is referred to as a Connected Person.

The assessment and approval process for family and friends who apply to be kinship foster carers for a specific looked after child will be the same as for any other foster carer, except that the timescales for the assessment differ from when a child is already in the placement

as indicated above. In all other respects, the requirements are the same as for any other potential foster carers and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering apply, in particular Standard 30, which refers directly to kinship foster carers. The aim of the assessment is to help the Local Authority determine whether to approve the prospective carer as a kinship foster carer and to consider what support the carer needs when caring for the child. The kinship carer will need to be registered as a kinship foster carer following approval.

In considering whether a relative, friend or other connected person should be approved as a foster carer, the needs, views and wishes of the child to be cared for under the arrangement must be taken into account, in conjunction with the capacity of the carer to meet any such needs. The assessment will consider the strengths of the carers arising from their position within the family network and balance these against any aspects which may make them less suitable. The carer's past experiences of parenting will also be taken into account when considering their capacity to care for the child/young person.

4.5 Support for kinship foster carers

Kinship foster carers will be involved with all the processes that are in place to ensure that the child receives appropriate care and support, for example, contributing to reviews of the child's Care Plan, working with professionals, including the child's Social Worker and promoting the child's education and health care needs.

Once approved as kinship foster carers, carers will receive support from the Local Authority as set out below. In addition, the child will have a placement plan which sets out the specific arrangements surrounding the child and the carers, including the expectations of the kinship foster carers and the support they can expect to receive to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities for the child. A Delegated Responsibility agreement will be drawn up in order to clarify day to day/specific and longer term decision making the carers and child are permitted to make. The support that is provided to kinship foster carers is set out below.

4.5.1 Supervising Social Worker

When looked after by a kinship foster carer, the child's care continues to be managed by a Social Worker to ensure their needs are being met. The kinship foster carer, on being approved, will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker from the kinship care team to provide them with support and supervision. The Supervising Social Worker will meet with the kinship foster carer weekly until the child's first looked after review. Following this, visits will be undertaken on a regular basis by both the child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker (please refer to minimum visiting frequency guidance for further details).

A foster carer agreement will be drawn up and signed by the kinship foster carer, which sets out how the carer will work in partnership with the Local Authority and details the support and training that will be provided.

4.5.2 Financial support – fostering allowance

Kinship foster carers will receive a weekly fostering allowance payment to cover the costs of caring for the child. This is in line with all foster carers and is based on the age related allowance for the child and is set out in the placement plan.

When receiving this allowance, the carers **will not** be able to claim any other state related benefits for the child, such as Child Benefit or Child Tax Credits because foster carers are not eligible for such benefits. Kinship foster carers will receive fostering allowances for as long as they care for the child as a foster carer, following approval.

4.5.3 Corporate offer to foster carers

Kinship foster carers, whether temporarily or permanently approved, are entitled to the same level of training and support as unrelated foster carers. The allocated Supervising Social Worker will be responsible for the kinship foster carer's support, supervision, training and development.

Middlesbrough Fostering Service ensures that all kinship foster carers, whether temporarily or permanently approved, receive support which is equivalent to that provided for unrelated carers, including basic and incremental fostering allowances. Kinship foster carers are able to progress within the payment band model should they meet the tasks, skills and competency requirements of the progression criteria.

Middlesbrough Borough Council will ensure that kinship foster carers have access to preparation groups, post approval training and support in order to achieve the children's training, support and development standards within 18 months of approval. They may also attend foster care support groups in their locality in order to make links with other foster carers.

Further training and development needs will be identified with the carer in consultation with the Supervising Social Worker and recorded in the kinship foster carer's development plan.

4.6 Care planning and alternatives to children being looked after

Permanency planning is based on the philosophy that every child has the right to a permanent and stable home, preferably within his or her own family. The primary focus of permanency planning is to prevent children becoming, or remaining, unnecessarily in care; to ensure the child's needs are met in a secure and loving family.

Middlesbrough Borough Council will work diligently to find permanent, safe homes for children and young people who are no longer able to remain in the care of the parents/main care giver, in a timely manner. The best possible care involves providing children with security, stability and love throughout their childhood and beyond.

At any stage of the assessment process, where it is considered in the child's best interests to promote their welfare and achieve a permanence arrangement, consideration will be given to supporting the kinship foster carers to apply for an appropriate legal order to secure them parental responsibility. Such orders may include a Child Arrangements Order, Special Guardianship Order or an Adoption Order.

Middlesbrough Borough Council will review the child's care plan through the care planning process to ensure that the child does not remain looked after for longer than is needed. The review will be chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer for the child.

4.6.1 Legal fees

Where a child/young person has resided with carers in line with section 20 arrangements, Middlesbrough Borough Council will, subject to the completion of the appropriate assessments, DBS checks and references, seek to initiate care proceedings in order to secure an appropriate long-term order in favour of the carers, to prevent the child/young person remaining looked after unnecessarily.

However, should carers initiate proceedings of their own volition then, providing the Local Authority is in support of the continuation of the placement, consideration will be given to the payment of any legal costs by the Local Authority. Decisions about these payments will be made by a Head of Service in Children's Social Work Service.

Orders which can be applied for in either of the above circumstances include Child Arrangement Orders, Special Guardianship Orders and, on occasions, Adoption Orders.

4.7 Care leavers and 'Staying Put'

Middlesbrough Borough Council is committed to young people remaining with their kinship foster carers after the age of 18 and has a 'Staying Put' Policy in place. 'Staying Put' is the name that the government has given to arrangements whereby a young person aged 18 and above, remains living with their former foster carer. The aim of 'Staying Put' is to help young people make the transition to independence and adulthood at a pace, and within a timescale that suits them, rather than having to move when they reach the age of 18.

Planning for a 'Staying Put' arrangement in Middlesbrough commences before a young person reaches the age of 16. The Supervising Social Worker and the young person's Social Worker will meet with the carer and young person prior to the young person's 16th birthday to explain the 'Staying Put' Policy and to discuss the different options. The Children Looked After Team, in conjunction with the Pathways Team, will provide guidance and support to young people and their carers in these circumstances. The young person will have the support of a personal adviser in the pathway planning process.

5. Compliments and Complaints

Where a kinship carer or a young person living in a kinship arrangement would like to make a comment or suggestion they can contact the Children's Services Customer Relations Team. To find out more, visit our webpage, ring, email or write to us.

Feedback and Complaints Team
Middlesbrough Council
PO Box 503
Town Hall
Middlesbrough
TS1 9FX

Tel: 01642 729815
 01642 729817
 01642 729707

Email: comps@middlesbrough.gov.uk

6.1 FINANCIAL SUPPORT MODEL MEANS TEST

All figures should be calculated on a monthly basis

1) PROJECTED FAMILY INCOME		
i) Pay	Parent 1	Parent 2
Basic net monthly pay	0	0
Drawings if self employed	0	0
Total subsection 1i	0	
ii) Benefits and pensions (parents)	Parent 1	Parent 2
Employers' sick pay (after compulsory deductions)	0	0
Incapacity benefit	0	0
Statutory maternity, paternity and/or adoption pay and/or maternity allowance	0	0
Bereavement benefit	0	0
Working tax credit (if paid directly and not as part of pay and excluding any childcare element paid)	0	0
All pension payments being received	0	0
Other benefits	0	0
Total subsection 1ii	0	
iii) Benefits (family/children)		
Income Support/Jobseeker's Allowance per household	0	
Child tax credit per household	0	
Child benefit for each child, excluding child/children who are the subject of this assessment application	0	

Total subsection 1iii	0	
iv) Other sources of income		
Income from capital, savings and investments - net monthly interest	0	
Income from boarders/lodgers (see guidance for details of calculation)	0	
Income from unfurnished properties	0	
Income from furnished properties	0	
Maintenance payments received for any child in household	0	
Existing adoption or special guardian 'allowances' (including any enhancements or specific payments for special needs) paid for any child	0	
Total subsection 1iv	0	
v) Income relating to child(ren) being adopted or becoming a special guardian child		
Any regular interest on capital and/or income in which the child(ren) has a legal interest and entitlement e.g. trust fund, property or other type of legacy. Do not include payments from Criminal Injuries Compensation Awards	0	
Any other income	0	
Total subsection 1v	0	
TOTAL PROJECTED FAMILY INCOME	0	
DISREGARD FIRST 20%	0	
FAMILY INCOME FOR PURPOSES OF TEST	0	
2) PROJECTED FAMILY EXPENDITURE		
i) Home		
Mortgage payments (capital and interest) including any endowment payments linked to mortgage	0	
Rent (after any housing benefit payable)	0	
Council tax (after any council tax benefit payable)	0	
Total subsection 2i	0	
ii) Other outgoings		
Loan repayments for essential purposes (see guidance notes)	0	
Maintenance payments	0	

Court orders	0	
Private pension contributions	0	
National insurance if self employed	0	
Reasonable child care costs including nursery fees (after any childcare element paid as part of the working tax credit)	0	
Total subsection 2ii	0	
iii) Core regular family expenditure		
Based on 125% income support allowances per household	0	
Total subsection 2iii	0	
TOTAL PROJECTED FAMILY EXPENDITURE:	0	
CALCULATION		
Total projected net family income (per month):	0	
Total projected family expenditure (per month):	0	
Disposable income (per month):	0	
Local Authority Maximum Payment ENTER MANUALLY:	0	
Amount of payment to adopters or special guardian	0	
Minus child benefit for child/children who are subject of this application ENTER MANUALLY:	0	
Final payment to adopters or special guardian:	0	

6.2 Declaration



Financial Assessment Declaration Form

The Information given to the Financial Assessment Team to complete this Financial Assessment is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and I/we agree to inform Middlesbrough Borough Council of any changes to my/our circumstances including income/benefits, expenses, capital and accommodation. I/we have been given a full explanation of how this assessment has been calculated and fully accept and understand the level of financial support applicable, as outlined in the Financial Assessment.

I/we also understand that if I/we are awarded any additional welfare benefits, or if my/our financial situation should change, this Financial Assessment will be affected. I understand that any such changes would be backdated to the Monday following the date of the change.

I/we understand that Middlesbrough Borough Council will; re-assess my/our financial support annually, upon our request, and in line with the increases in benefits/pensions as defined the Department for Works and Pensions. I/we understand this assessment will be completed in office, using information available, and that it will be my/our responsibility to check the financial information used in the assessment and advise Middlesbrough Borough Council of any omissions/inaccuracies.

Failure to inform Middlesbrough Borough Council of any changes in my/our circumstances or any omissions may result in an overpayment of financial support which may be recovered from ongoing payments at a maximum rate of three sevenths of my/our weekly allowance.

This authority is under a duty to protect the public funds it administers, and to this end may use the information you have provided on this form for the prevention and detection of fraud. It may also share this information with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds for these purposes.

Signature:

Name:

Date:

7. Glossary and definitions

Looked after child – the child is 'in care' or 'accommodated' by the Local Authority

In care – a Court has made an interim or full care order, or an emergency protection order on the child which gives the Local Authority the power to remove the child from the care of their parents

Accommodated – the child is being looked after by the Local Authority with the agreement of the parents / others with parental responsibility under s20 Children Act 1989

Connected person – the term used in regulations and guidance to include relatives, friends, and other persons connected to the child and who are approved as foster carers to look after the child.

Parental Responsibility – the legal right to make decisions about a child’s care and how they are raised

Child in Need – Under Section 17 (10) of the Children Act 1989, a child is a Child in Need if: he/she is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him/her of services by a Local Authority; his/her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him/her of such services; or the child is a disabled child

Private Fostering – an arrangement where a child under 16 (or 18 if the child is disabled) who is cared for by an adult who is not a parent or close relative, where the child is to be cared for in that arrangement for 28 days or more

Close relative – is defined as: grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step-parent by marriage or civil partnership

Child Arrangements Order specifying with whom a child will live. It usually lasts until the child is 18. Parental responsibility is shared with the parents. Carers can apply **after caring for the child for one year**

Special Guardianship Order – Like a **Child Arrangements Order specifying with whom the child will live**, this Court order states where a child should live and gives the carer parental responsibility. An SGO gives the carer more authority to make decisions than a residence order.

Adoption Order – a Court order made as part of the adoption process. All parental rights and responsibilities for a child are permanently transferred to the adoptive parent.

Family Group Conference – a decision making meeting in which a child’s wider family network come together to make a plan about the future arrangements for the child

8. Local and national organisations providing support, advice and opportunities

The following provide a wealth of information about local and national resources that kinship carers can access. In particular, families and professionals may wish to consult the Kinship Care Guide for England, an information booklet written by Grandparents Plus.

Services in Middlesbrough provided by the Local Authority and health services

Children's Services Middlesbrough – First Contact Team

Tel: 01642 726004 Monday – Friday, between 8.30am – 5pm. Requests for services,
To report a concern about a child/young person and support for children in need.

08702 402994 7 days per week, between 5pm and 8.30am (out of hours)

Email: firstcontact@middlesbrough.gcsx.gov.uk

Middlesbrough Health Visiting Service- 0-5 Children's Service

Tel: 0300 303 1603 Monday – Friday between 9am-5pm (excluding bank holidays)

Email: hdfm.mborohealthychildservice@nhs.net

Middlesbrough Borough Council Welfare Rights Unit

Tel: 01642 729242/01642 729985 Monday – Thursday, between 9am – 4.30pm and Friday between 9am and 4pm

Email: welfare@rights@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services - CAMHS

The CAMHS service provides a range of assessments and therapeutic interventions to promote the emotional and psychological well-being of children, young people and their families who live in the Middlesbrough area.

Tel: 01642 529720/01642 201858 Monday – Friday, between 8am – 8pm and Saturday, between 9am and 5pm

Local and National Organisations**The Grandparents Association - <http://www.grandparents-association.org.uk>**

The Grandparents Association is a national charity. The charity supports kinship carers through various ways including local support groups, welfare benefits advice, assistance for people on a low income to have a holiday and sometimes access to needed furniture or white goods. There is a dedicated welfare benefits advice line to assist people with maximising their entitlements.

Helpline: 0845 4349585

Grandparents Plus - www.grandparentsplus.org.uk

Grandparents Plus is the national charity which champions the vital role of grandparents and the wider family in children's lives - especially when they take on the caring role in difficult family circumstances.

Tel: 020 8981 8001 Email: info@grandparentsplus.org.uk

BeGrand.net - www.begrand.net

A website offering information and advice to grandparents

Family Rights Group - <http://www.frg.org.uk/>

Charity that advises whose children are involved or need children's services because of welfare needs or concerns.

Tel: 020 7923 2628 - Advice line: 0808 801 0366 E-mail: advice@frg.org.uk

British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) - <http://www.baaf.org.uk/>

Provides information and advice about adoption and fostering and publishes resources.

Tel: 020 7421 2600 Email: mail@baaf.org.uk

The Fostering Network - www.fostering.net

The Fostering Network – is a national charity leading on foster care and provide advice and information to prospective approved foster carers.

Tel: 020 7620 6400

Department for Education - www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families Lists details of telephone help lines and online services to provide information, advice and support on a range of issues that parents and families may face in bringing up children

Cruse - <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>

Bereavement Care and helpline

Helpline: 0844 4779400

Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk