



# What is Permanence?

Leaflet to explain the different types of 'Permanence' and what each entails

**Brighter Futures for Children  
Friends & Family  
Leaflet 1  
V2.0**





# What is Permanence?

The dictionary definition of 'permanence' is 'the state of lasting for a long time or for all time in the future' or 'staying the same or continuing for a long time'. Other definitions of permanence include having a 'family for life' and 'a sense of belonging and connectedness'.

- ★ In terms of the law as it relates to children, 'permanence' is defined as providing a child with 'a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity...a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond'.
- ★ Most children and young people enjoy such permanence, growing up at home with one or both of their parents throughout childhood. Such children generally have no reason to question who their family is or how they fit into the world.
- ★ For children who cannot live in their family home with one or both parents, there is a risk of them feeling they do not belong anywhere and of them viewing families as being temporary. This experience can cause children to struggle to make close, trusting relationships.
- ★ These factors, particularly in combination, can restrict a child from enjoying a happy and healthy childhood and can impact negatively on their future adult relationships.
- ★ It is very important that when children are not able to live with their own parent(s), long term plans are made so they can experience permanence in other ways.
- ★ When Children's Social Care is involved with children in these situations, social workers need to consider where the child would be best brought up where they will experience a secure, safe, stable and loving homelife with people who will remain committed to them

throughout their childhood.

- ★ When children make close and trusting relationships with permanent carers who in effect take on the role of parents, they have the best chance of developing a sense of belonging and certainty about their future.
- ★ When children are provided with the opportunity to grow up in a stable and loving family throughout childhood and into adulthood, they have the best chance of developing healthy and positive adult relationships.

## Different types of permanence arrangements

Many children who have to live separately from their parents for a period will later return home to their care. This can include children who live in foster care during court proceedings.

- ★ Children who do not return to the care of one or both of their parents may instead live with a family member or family friend on a permanent basis outside of the looked after system. Other children may grow up in local authority care, placed with long term foster carers who may be related or unrelated to them.
- ★ Some children, particularly younger children, may be placed with adoptive parents if there are no suitable adults within their family networks who are able to look after them. While most children who are adopted will be living with adults who were not previously known to them, some will be adopted within their birth families, or by other previously familiar adults.
- ★ Finally, when they cannot live within their own families, long term residential care can occasionally be the best permanence option





for some children, such as older teenagers and those with significant special needs.

## Growing up with kinship carers

Kinship carers (also known as family and friends carers or connected carers) are family members, friends, or other previously known adults, who already have a meaningful connection with the child(ren). This may include grandparents, uncles or aunts, adult siblings, family friends and neighbours, or occasionally other adults such as teachers, carers, youth workers etc. who have been closely involved with the child(ren).

- ★ The benefit of kinship care is that the child can usually remain with their family or social network, so it is easier for them to maintain a sense of belonging and of who they are.
- ★ Many kinship carers care for the child(ren) concerned under an informal family arrangement agreed directly between the child's parent(s) and the carer(s), where the local authority is not involved. Under such arrangements, the carers do not hold parental responsibility for the child(ren) and they will need to ask the child(ren)'s parent(s) to make all key decisions. This can be a short-term or longer-term arrangement.
- ★ If the child(ren) is in the care of a local authority, the kinship carers will need to be assessed and approved as family and friends foster carers by the local authority responsible for the child(ren) – please see BFfC leaflet *The role of Connected Carers*. In this case, they will be required to comply with the National Fostering Standards, including undertaking relevant training, keeping records and receiving regular professional supervision.
- ★ Kinship carers may choose to become special guardians to the child(ren) who are placed in their care and apply for a

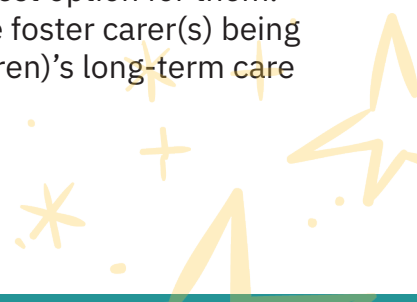
Special Guardianship Order (SGO). This is a court order which lasts until the child who is the subject of the order reaches 18. It gives parental responsibility to the special guardian(s), who then has the legal right to make most of the parental decisions for the child without consulting with the child's parent(s).

- ★ Both family and friends foster carers and special guardians are entitled to ongoing support from the local authority that has responsibility for the child(ren) placed in their care. This will usually include a level of financial support towards the costs of caring for the child(ren). This will be dependent on the legal basis of the placement.
- ★ Kinship carers can also look after children under a Child Arrangement Order. This order invests a level of parental responsibility in the carer(s) for as long as the order remains in place. However, where a child(ren) is placed under a Child Arrangement Order, more parental decisions are shared with the child's parent(s) than is the case under an SGO.

## Growing up with long-term foster carers

For many children looked after, a return to parental care or placement within their wider family or friends network (under kinship care or special guardianship arrangement) will be achieved. However, for other children, permanence through long-term foster care will be the preferred placement option.

- ★ Children who are placed with local authority approved short-term foster carers while care proceedings are ongoing, may remain living with the same carer(s) long-term if this is assessed to be the best option for them. This will depend on the foster carer(s) being able to meet the child(ren)'s long-term care





needs and the carer(s) commitment to caring for the child(ren) through to adulthood. Any decision that relates to the matching of a child looked after with long-term foster carers will be based on a holistic assessment of the child's long-term care and 'parenting' needs and of the carer(s)' ability to meet these needs.

★ Children who are in local authority care will move on from the care of their short-term foster carers and will be placed with different long-term foster carers who are able to offer permanence through fostering. Permanent foster carers are generally identified through a process called **family finding**.

★ Before any fostering arrangement is agreed as long-term, Children's Social Care must be able to demonstrate there is a positive 'match' between the child(ren) and the proposed foster carer(s). This must be considered by the local authority's fostering panel and agreed by its Agency Decision Maker for fostering.

★ Children living in long-term foster care will remain in the care of their placing authority. While foster carers care for the child(ren) who are living with them on a day-to-day basis, they do not hold parental responsibility for them. That responsibility is still held by the children's parents, or if a child is subject to a Care Order by the responsible local authority.

★ All foster carers are paid a regular fostering allowance for each child placed with them. The allowance has two separate elements: a **childcare allowance** which is calculated to meet the cost of caring for the child, and a **carer's fee** which is paid in recognition of the responsibilities that carers have under the Fostering Regulations. Foster carers are required to comply with the National

Fostering Standards, including taking relevant training, keeping records and receiving regular professional supervision.

★ Long-term foster care is also referred to as permanent foster. This reflects the expectation that the child(ren) will continue living with their long-term foster carers throughout their childhood. The placing authority will continue to be involved in the child(ren)'s life, with visits by a named social worker and the child(ren)'s living arrangements reviewed on a regular basis. There may be fewer social work visits to promote a sense of 'normal' family life for both the child(ren) and the carer(s).

★ When children establish good relationships their permanent foster carers, some foster carers decide they want to become their special guardian(s). This means the child(ren) will then have the opportunity to grow up outside of the care system, with their previous foster carers having parental responsibility for them. This will generally enable the children to experience a more normal family life. It may not be appropriate for some children, for example if they have complex long-term needs and are likely to require ongoing support from the local authority.

★ Kinship carers may be asked to consider becoming, or may decide to become, a child's long term foster carer(s) rather than pursuing special guardianship. This may happen where the child(ren) needs high levels of support best provided through the formal care system. Also, where kinship carers prefer to be supported as foster carers rather than taking on the higher level of legal responsibilities they would gain under a Special Guardianship Order.





## Adoption

Adoption legally involves the greatest change for children, as once a child is adopted they no longer have any legal ties to their birth parents and their adoptive parent(s) gain full parental responsibility for them.

- ★ Children can be adopted by unrelated adults who they have not previously known, or sometimes by adults they know who may or may not be biologically related to them.
- ★ Children who are adopted outside of their birth families generally have considerably less contact with their relatives than they would if they were to grow up in foster care or be subject to a special guardianship arrangement.
- ★ Before a child is adopted into a family outside of their birth family network, social workers will thoroughly assess the child's immediate and likely longer-term care and parenting needs and will take care to match the child to prospective adopters. As with long-term fostering, this process is called 'family finding'.
- ★ Adoption is generally considered the best option for younger children and most children adopted in the UK are under six years old. Adoption can also be an option for older children, particularly those who do not have significant ties to their birth families and/or children who want to be adopted by their permanent foster carers.

## Fostering for adoption

- ★ For some children, particularly babies, where adoption is already agreed as the preferred option for them, early permanence can be achieved by the child being matched to and then living with approved adopters under a fostering arrangement. This requires the already approved adopters to be

approved as foster carers for the specific child(ren) prior to them living in their care under a fostering arrangement while court proceedings are ongoing.

- ★ Children who are living with their potential adopters under these circumstances remain children looked after and the level of parental responsibility held by their parents, and their parents' rights to have contact with them, will not be affected.
- ★ If the court subsequently agrees a care plan of adoption for a child who living in a fostering for adoption arrangement, the fostering for adoption carer(s) will be supported to become the child's adoptive parent(s).
- ★ This means the child will not need to experience a further change of home and will have had the opportunity to build an attachment to their potential adoptive parent(s) from as young as possible.

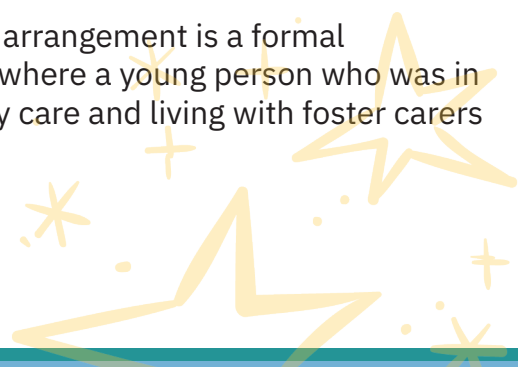
## Residential placements

While living in a family setting is generally the preferred permanence option for most children (including those who have previously experienced a period of living in residential care), there are a small number of children for who long-term residential care is the preferred option.

- ★ Residential care may be the most appropriate placement option for some children who have special needs and for some young people who are unable to cope with the emotional demands of living in a family.

## Staying Put arrangements

A Staying Put arrangement is a formal arrangement where a young person who was in local authority care and living with foster carers





immediately before their 18th birthday, can continue to live with their foster carers up to their 21st birthday.

★ The benefit of a Staying Put arrangement is that it provides an ongoing sense of security and stability for a young person once they legally become an adult and while they transition into adulthood and independent living.

### **Any questions?**

If you have questions about any of the information contained in this leaflet, or you require further information, please contact your assessing social worker or the team manager of the Brighter Futures for Children Adoption & Permanence Service:

Name:

Email address:

Phone:

Alternatively, visit us online at [www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org](http://www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org)

