

Family Link Short Break Scheme

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Family Link Short Break Scheme

1. Introduction and objectives

This Guidance supplements the existing Foster Care procedures and specifically relates to the placement of children and young people with Family Link foster carers. The guidance is to be used by Integrated Disability Social Workers, and the Family Link Service

2. Short breaks in Warwickshire

Family Link short breaks is where a child or young person spends a series of planned overnights stays in an approved Family Link foster carer's home. This can include activities in the community.

3. Objectives

Family Link aims to provide a preventative service that is based around the child or young person's assessed needs. This service can help give the child or young person the opportunity to have different life experiences to those they may receive at home. It may also give the child or young person an opportunity to be involved in different activities that may not be available to them at home. It can also support a young person's progress towards greater independence in adult life.

It may give families a short break, to enable parents to spend additional time with other siblings or do activities that they may not have been able to do before, due to the time required in caring for or supervising their disabled child.

4. Referral of children to the Family Link scheme

4.1 Referral process

Referrals for Family Link are made by the child's social worker to the North and South Overnight Allocations Panels (NONAP and SONAP). Each child will have had a Core Assessment which demonstrates the need for overnight short breaks. The assessment is discussed at the panel and if it is agreed that the child and family are eligible for the service, the child is then placed on the waiting list for Family Link. ([Family Link Referral Form](#))

Following the referral being agreed at panel a joint visit can be arranged with the child's social worker and the Family Link fostering social worker to the child and their family at home. This meeting will assist the Family Link fostering social worker in gaining a full appreciation of the child or young person's needs so that appropriate

matching can take place. The Family Link social worker will also require a copy of the completed Child's Profile from the [Family Link Referral Form](#).

4.2 Unmet needs

The North and South Overnight Panels of the Integrated Disability Service (IDS) should monitor the circumstances of those children and young people awaiting a service for Family Link. The panels should be satisfied that action is being taken through specific recruitment and other family finding activities to address this need.

5. Placement and review of children and young people with Family Link carers

5.1 Introductions

The success of Family Link placements is linked to a planned series of introductions. This gives all parties the opportunity to find out what the other is like before any formal placement is made.

The typical introduction programme will start with the child and their parents/carers visiting the foster carer's home. Subsequent visits will build up gradually, leading to an overnight stay.

Planned introductions are important and should take place at a pace appropriate for the child or young person.

5.2 Family Link paperwork

Although Family Link carers are approved foster carers, children placed with them are not considered to be 'Looked After Children'. The child's social worker completes an [Overnight Short Break Care Plan](#) with the child's family which gives the carer the information they need to care for the child. The Family Link fostering social worker also completes a [Safe Care Plan](#) which ensures that any safety issues have been considered.

5.3 Reviews

The child's social worker arranges regular reviews so that everyone involved in the child's care can meet to ensure that the child's needs are being met.

6. Recruitment and preparation of Family Link foster carers

6.1 Recruitment strategy

Family Link will work closely with Integrated Disability Service (IDS) to identify current placement needs and focus on recruitment opportunities to meet this need.

6.2 Recruitment Process

The central fostering team will process all initial enquiries for Family Link fostering. The team will discuss the potential applicant with the Family Link social worker who will visit the applicant.

6.3 Preparation for potential applicants

Family Link applicants can access the Focus on Fostering Preparation Training which can be delivered either through the groups or on an individual basis.

7. Assessment of Family Link foster carers

The assessment is conducted using the standard British Association for Adoption and Fostering Form F format. The Family Link fostering social worker will ensure that Family Link applicants cover the standard material required by all applicants. Applicants also have the benefit of additional training and information relevant to Family Link placements.

8. Training for Family Link foster carers

Family Link foster carers have access to all the training offered by the Fostering Services. Family Link carers will complete the Training Support and Development Standards within 12 months of approval. The core training for a Family Link foster carer is:

- Child Protection which must be completed in the first year;
- Communicating with children with disabilities which must be completed within the first two years;
- Promoting equalities which must be completed within the first two years.

Other training courses particularly relevant to Family Link carers include:

- Basic first aid;
- Safe use of medication;
- Managing challenging behaviours positively;
- Physical and learning disabilities and autism.

Family Link carers are able to access Skill Level payments. Please refer to [Guidance on Skill Level Scheme](#).

9. Further Information

For further information about the service and the availability of Family Link foster carers please contact Laura Thornton, social worker on 01926 743097 or email: laurathornton@warwickshire.gov.uk

Information in other formats

If this information is difficult to understand, we can provide it in another format, for example, large print, audio tape, easy read, or in another language.

Please contact the Interpreting and Translation Unit on 01926 410410

APPENDIX

Family Link Referral Form