

Information for parents

The Family Link Scheme offers short breaks to disabled children with another family. Established in 1978, it is a free service to children and young people up to the age of 18, who are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance at the middle or higher rate. We have a variety of Family Link Carers in most parts of North Somerset. They vary in age and personality, and may be single people, couples or families. But they are all committed to giving your child an enjoyable stay.

All our Family Link Carers have been approved in a similar way to Foster Carers. This means that we have to undertake checks with the Criminal Records Bureau, Department of Health and local authority. References are taken up and referees interviewed and the carers have to undergo a lengthy assessment and preparation course. All this can take up to six months to complete. They are then presented to the North Somerset Foster Panel for approval. So you can be assured that your Family Link Carer is committed to the scheme and that every effort has been made to ensure that your child will be safely cared for.

Once we have received your child's name for inclusion on the Family Link Scheme Waiting List we will ask you to complete a detailed questionnaire about your child's care needs. We do not operate a first come first served waiting list. Our aim is to fit the best possible Family Link Carer for your child, who has the necessary skills, similar interests etc. and this may take some time.



As soon as a vacancy occurs we consider all the children on the list to see who will be the best match. Some children are on the waiting list for a few months and others can be on for a year or more. We will contact you annually to see whether you wish your child's name to remain on the list and to ask for an update of his/her care needs to help us find an appropriate carer.

Once a Carer has been identified we will arrange for you to meet them. If at that meeting you feel that the placement would not work for whatever reason please let your social worker know. Your child's name will then remain on the list until another carer becomes available. If you would like your child to continue to visit the carer then a series of introductory visits will be arranged where your child and the carer can get to know one another better.

Before any overnight stays take place we must have a Placement Agreement Meeting with you, your social worker, the Family Link Carers and their support worker to decide how many sessions your child will be entitled to, the pattern of those visits and any other information, which will help the placement run smoothly. We are then legally obliged to review the placement after three months and then at six monthly intervals. Your child will continue to visit that carer until either you or the carer wish the placement to end, or your child reaches the age of 18.

