



Department
for Education

Kinship care

Statutory guidance for local authorities

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Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	4
About this guidance	5
Expiry or review date	7
Legislation this guidance refers to	7
Who this guidance is for	8
Aims of this guidance	9
Chapter 2: Kinship care	12
The role of kinship care	12
Principles that underpin practice	13
The National Kinship Standards	14
Other key considerations	19
Chapter 3: The legal context: types of arrangements and processes	20
Informal kinship arrangements	20
Private fostering arrangements	21
Child Arrangements Orders and Special Guardianship Orders	21
Looked after child: identification and assessment	23
Looked after child: approval of kinship carers as foster carers	26
Specific considerations	31
Adoption	39
Legal requirements	39
Chapter 4: The kinship local offer	45
The context of the kinship local offer	45
Governance of the kinship local offer	46
Types of support to be included in the kinship local offer	52
Health and wellbeing	52
Relationships	53
Education and training	56
Accommodation	58
Financial support	58
Other kinds of support	59
Types of arrangements that should be covered by the kinship local offer	63
Annex A: Glossary of other definitions	65

Annex B: Different types of kinship arrangements	72
Annex C: Helpful information and contacts	77

Chapter 1: Introduction

This statutory guidance from the Department for Education sets out a framework for supporting kinship families and for engaging family networks to meet the needs of children across the children's social care system, including those who are unable to live with their parents. It includes National Kinship Standards for local authorities, which establish expectations for the delivery of services to kinship families.

The guidance aligns with, and should be read alongside, statutory guidance for help, support and protection of children. This includes [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#) and the [Children's Social Care National Framework](#) (the National Framework). Local authorities should also take account of [Foundations Practice Guide on Kinship Care](#) when developing, commissioning and improving services for kinship families.

Furthermore, the [National Kinship Care Ambassador](#) has worked with local authorities to improve policy and practice and in February 2026 published [Improving the kinship local offer and approach to kinship care](#) which should be read alongside this guidance when developing kinship local offers.

Supporting more children to remain safely within their family networks, including in kinship care arrangements, is central to the vision of the Families First Partnership Programme (FFP), which aims to shift children's social care towards earlier, more intensive family support, more expert and focused child protection practice, and greater use of family networks to help prevent children from entering local authority care.

Kinship care also plays a vital role in supporting enduring relationships by enabling children to remain in the care of those that know and love them, helping to sustain their sense of identity and belonging. This is central to the ambition of the Department for Education's [Enduring Relationships Programme](#), which seeks to ensure that every child grows up with a trusted, enduring relationship that provides stability, belonging and support into adulthood, enabling them to feel safe, loved and able to thrive.

Reflecting these wider ambitions for children's social care, this guidance makes clear that effective support for kinship care should be recognised as a whole-system responsibility and local authorities should provide clear, accessible, whole-family and needs-led support to kinship families, with children's voices at the centre of service design and delivery¹.

¹ [Children's social care national framework](#) (Responding to the voices of children, young people families and their networks)

About this guidance

This guidance sets out expectations on the implementation of duties in the Children Act 1989, and subsequent legislation such as the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026² that amends the Children Act 1989³, in respect of children and young people who, because they are unable to live with their parents, are being brought up by members of their extended families, friends or other people who are connected with them.

This guidance will come into effect and be applicable upon publication.

This guidance was historically known as Family and Friends Care statutory guidance and was last updated as the Kinship Care Statutory Guidance in 2024. This version of the guidance includes updates on new statutory requirements of local authorities, including in relation to the duty on local authorities to consult on and publish a kinship local offer (see [chapter 4](#)).

In this guidance, a child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'babies, children and young people' throughout.

For the purposes of this guidance, "kinship care" is where a child lives full-time or most of the time with a relative, friend or connected person and that person provides most or all of the child's care. It does not include parents, foster carers with no prior connection to the child, or anyone caring in a professional capacity. Kinship care arrangements can be formal (underpinned by legal orders and kinship foster care arrangements) or informal (such as where a close family member is caring without a legal order in place). The arrangement may be temporary or longer term.

The following are all types of kinship care arrangement, however this list is not exhaustive:

- a. Informal kinship care arrangements including:
 - i. A private family arrangement in which a close family member who does not hold parental responsibility raises the child and
 - The local authority has had no major role in making the arrangement for the child; and
 - Where a Family Court has not made an order in respect to the care of the child
 - ii. Where a child under the age of 16 is being provided with accommodation for less than 28 days by an individual in their own home who is not a close relative

² [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026](#)

³ [Children Act 1989](#)

- iii. Where a 16- or 17-year-old is being provided with accommodation by an individual who is not a close relative in their own home
- b. A private fostering arrangement in which someone who is not a close relative⁴ of the child under the age of 16 looks after the child for 28 days or more (as per section 66(1)(a) and (b) of the Children Act 1989)⁵
- c. Where a 'lives with' Child Arrangements Order⁴ has been granted in respect of the child, in favour of someone who is a friend or family member but is not the child's parent (see glossary regarding who is a parent)
- d. Where a Special Guardianship Order has been granted appointing a friend or family member as the child's special guardian
- e. Where a child is a 'looked after child' by virtue of either an interim or final care order or being accommodated by the local authority (usually under section 20 of the Children Act 1989) and each of the following apply (this may be described as 'kinship foster care' or 'family and friends foster care'):
 - i. The child is being cared for by a friend or family member who is not their parent, and
 - ii. The friend or family member is approved as a local authority foster carer either on a temporary basis or following full assessment
- f. Where an Adoption Order has been granted in respect of the child and, prior to the making of the order, the adopter was a friend or family member

The categories of friends and family that are often kinship carers can include:

- a. a close relative of the child (this includes anyone who is defined as a relative under the Children Act 1989 such 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')
- b. a close relative of the child's half-blood brother or sister
- c. someone who was formerly the child's step-parent (they may or may not have parental responsibility for the child)
- d. someone who was previously in a cohabiting relationship with the child's parent and whose relationship with the child was like that of a child of the family
- e. a close friend of the child, or of the child's parent(s)
- f. a close friend of the child's close relative

⁴ In relation to private fostering, "relative" has the meaning given in section 105 of the Children Act 1989. It includes only the following: grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership), and stepparent (a married stepparent, including a civil partner).

⁵ 16- and 17-year-olds who are disabled will be deemed to be in a private fostering arrangement. Pursuant to section 8 of the Children Act 1989.

- g. a person with a prior connection to the child who does not otherwise fall within one of the other categories above (for example, a teacher, youth worker, childminder or former foster carer)

Expiry or review date

This guidance has been updated in October 2026 following Royal Assent of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026.

At the time of publication of this guidance, the Department for Education is undertaking a number of public consultations, including a consultation on the statutory framework for help, support and protection of children. This will inform updates to Working Together to Safeguard Children, the National Framework and policy underpinning the development of multi-agency child protection team regulations. There are further consultations on Fostering National Minimum Standards, Training Standards for foster carers including kinship foster carers and statutory guidance, and proposed changes to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund. The outcomes of these consultations are expected later in 2026. Relevant changes from those consultation outcomes will be reflected in further updates to this guidance as necessary.

It should also be noted that the Law Commission has been engaged by the Department for Education to conduct a review of the legislative framework underpinning kinship care and that their recommendations for reform will be published in autumn 2027.

Legislation this guidance refers to

This guidance applies in relation to England only. It is issued under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 which requires local authorities in exercising their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State. Such guidance should be complied with by local authorities when exercising these functions, unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons that justify a variation. Local authorities and health partners/agencies in England must have regard to it when exercising their functions under section 10 of the Children Act 2004.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the following Acts and statutory guidance relevant to kinship carers and children in kinship arrangements in specific situations, which must be followed where applicable:

- Adoption statutory guidance 2013
- Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations 2013
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 1989: Court orders and pre-proceedings statutory guidance 2014
- Children Act 1989: fostering services: Volume 4 statutory guidance on fostering services for looked-after children 2011
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children's Social Care National Framework statutory guidance 2026
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- Replacement Children Act 1989 - Guidance on Private Fostering 2005
- Special guardianship guidance 2017
- Special Guardianship Regulations 2005
- Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance 2026

Who this guidance is for

This guidance is written for those who work in and with local authority children's social care and contains information that may be useful to children, young people and families in kinship care arrangements. This includes children living with kinship carers, kinship carers, parents, family law practitioners and providers of services to children in need and looked after children, including private and voluntary sector providers (alongside those mentioned on page 6-9 of the National Framework)⁶ as well as those with a specific interest in kinship care, including:

- Directors of Children's Services
- Lead members for children's services in local authorities
- Managers of services for children in need and looked after children
- Social workers and staff working with kinship families

Local authorities work in partnership with other agencies, including the police, health, education, adult services, as well as voluntary and community organisations. The

⁶ [Children's social care national framework](#)

expectations set out in this guidance can only be delivered when partners work together effectively. For this reason, whilst this guidance is about local authority children's social care, the responsibilities of all agencies to contribute to effective multi-agency working is reflected as the first enabler to good outcomes in the Children's Social Care National Framework, including outcomes for kinship families.

Aims of this guidance

Children's social care exists to support children, young people and families by addressing problems early, intervening decisively when there is likelihood of harm, and to provide care for those who need it so they grow up to achieve and thrive with safety, stability and love⁷.

The Children Act 1989 makes clear that children are best looked after within their families, with their parents playing a full part in their lives, unless compulsory intervention in family life is necessary. Aligned with this key principle, the National Framework emphasises that children are best looked after and protected within their own network of enduring, loving and caring family relationships⁸. Supporting children to remain safely within their family networks⁹ is also a key pillar of the FFP.

The National Framework sets out the outcomes that should be realised so that children and young people can grow up to achieve and thrive. The outcomes are:

- Outcome 1: children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need
- Outcome 2: children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes
- Outcome 3: children and young people are supported by their family network
- Outcome 4: children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes

This statutory guidance helps you to improve the above outcomes for children and young people who, because they are unable to live with their parents, are being brought up by members of their extended families, friends or other people who are connected to them in kinship care arrangements. Kinship care can be fundamental to achieving the outcomes of the National Framework. It can play a vital role in: families staying together and getting the help they need (Outcome 1), children being safe (Outcome 2), children being connected to

⁷ [Children's social care national framework](#)

⁸ [Children's social care national framework](#)

⁹ [FFP Programme guide: delivery expectations for statutory safeguarding partners in England: year 2 \(2026 to 2027\)](#)

their family networks (Outcome 3), and in ensuring children and young people have stable, loving homes (Outcome 4).

Whilst kinship care helps achieve all outcomes of the National Framework, the expectations for practitioners, practice supervisors and leaders, set out in Outcome 3 (children and young people are supported by their family network) are particularly pertinent to this guidance. Everyone who works in children's services is expected to recognise and respond to the important role family networks play in supporting children and young people in all circumstances, including through kinship care arrangements.

This guidance therefore sets out a framework for the provision of support for children in kinship care and their families. It outlines how local authorities and partners should provide services for children and young people in various kinship care arrangements, including:

- informal arrangements, such as private family arrangements
- private fostering
- kinship foster care
- child arrangements orders
- special guardianship orders, and
- arrangements leading to adoption

It sets out the requirement on each local authority to consult on and publish a kinship local offer (previously referred to as the local policy requirement) setting out the support available to kinship children and their carers. It includes National Kinship Standards, establishing clear expectations that local authorities should apply in developing their local offer and delivering services to kinship families.

This guidance also recognises that each child's situation is unique and effective support means considering the needs of the whole family. This means considering the needs, experiences and strengths of children, kinship carers, parents and the wider family network, ensuring support is coordinated around the whole family to promote safety, stability, wellbeing, and positive long-term outcomes.

The guidance also outlines how family networks can be engaged to support the needs of children throughout the children's social care system, including those who are unable to live with their parents. Children and young people who are unable to live with their parents should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare, whether or not they are looked after by the state or subject to a legal order. Local authorities should consider what support may be offered to meet the needs of kinship families as they interact with services across the system and delivered by multi-agency partners.

This guidance reflects the insights from the report [Improving the kinship local offer and approach to kinship care](#), published by the National Kinship Care Ambassador. In particular, this report informs the development of kinship local offers that are transparent, equitable and responsive to the needs of kinship families.

Chapter 2: Kinship care

The role of kinship care

Kinship care (sometimes known as family and friends care) is the most prevalent form of alternative care for children worldwide. Children living in kinship care may or may not be looked after by the local authority and may not even be known to the local authority.

Kinship care is an essential part of the children's social care system, enabling children to live safely within their family networks if they cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents, and right across the spectrum of early help, support and protection.

For some children, kinship care will be a permanent arrangement. For others, it will provide a stable and loving home until they can safely return to their parents' care. In both circumstances, kinship care can help to ensure children grow up with enduring, trusted relationships that provide stability and a sense of belonging, so they feel safe, loved and able to achieve and thrive.

The Children Act 1989 (the 1989 Act) sets out clear principles that the welfare of children is paramount and that they are best looked after within their families, with their parents playing a full part in their lives, unless compulsory intervention in family life is necessary. Where local authority intervention is required, local authorities will have a responsibility to ensure that kinship arrangements are in the child's best interests and should consider the benefits of permanence for children. This is the framework of emotional, physical and legal conditions that gives a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity.

By seeking to enable those children who cannot live with their parents to remain with members of their extended family or friends, permanence is about providing, where appropriate, a better alternative to growing up in the care of the local authority. For some children, permanence is achieved through a successful return to their family, where it has been possible to address the factors which led to the child becoming looked after. Where this is not possible, kinship care arrangements can provide an important alternative route to permanence for the child, particularly where this can be supported by a child arrangements order, a special guardianship order, or through adoption.

Kinship care affects the whole family¹⁰, and a child and their family network will often continue to need support once an arrangement is in place. While many children in kinship care thrive, they can often face additional challenges due to the circumstances and experiences which led to them coming into kinship care and the complexity that can come with these arrangements, such as tension or conflict, loss, feelings of abandonment and

¹⁰ [Improving the kinship local offer and approach to kinship care](#)

changes in family dynamics. Other children in the kinship household can be affected by the new arrangement and may require support.

Kinship carers often both want and need support to enable them to meet the needs of the children they care for, and parents may also need help and support throughout the arrangement. It is therefore important that local authorities take a whole-family approach to working with kinship families and reflect this approach in developing their kinship local offer.

Principles that underpin practice

When supporting kinship families, practitioners must have regard to and apply statutory responsibilities included in the National Framework and Working Together to Safeguard Children, including the following key principles.

Statutory responsibilities

The National Framework sets out the principles that apply to any work with children and families the following principles are key when considering the guidance:

- **Children's welfare is paramount:** decisions about help, protection and care for children must always be made in their best interests (section 22, Children Act 1989)
- **Children's social care works in partnership with whole families:** children, young people and families are heard, and practitioners build strong relationships with families based on respect. They acknowledge strengths within families and recognise that families, and family networks, will often have solutions to their own challenges, and that holding a focus on the whole family is often the best way of improving outcomes for children and young people
- **Children are raised by their families, with their family networks, or in family environments wherever possible:** children's social care recognises that the best place for most children to grow up is in their families, or with kinship carers (section 17(1)(b) Children Act 1989). Where children cannot safely remain with their family or within their family networks, efforts should be made to support relationships between children and young people with their siblings, family, and friends (section 22C, Children Act 1989). When children and young people need care to be provided by the local authority, such **care is safe and prioritises consistency, stability, and lifelong loving relationships** with those who are important to children and young people, so that they are supported to achieve and thrive

Working together to safeguard children 2026 also sets out 4 principles for working with parents and carers, which should be applied equally when working with kinship families.

These emphasise the need for practitioners to build strong, positive, trusting, and co-operative relationships with parents and carers; ensure communication is respectful, non-blaming, clear, inclusive, and adapted to parents and carers needs; empower parents and carers to participate in decision-making; and involve parents, carers, family networks, and local communities in designing processes that affect them, including those focused on safeguarding children.

Supporting Practice Guide

The Department commissioned Foundations¹¹ (The What Works Centre for Children and Families) to produce an evidence-based Practice Guide for Kinship Care¹². This supports local authorities to achieve the outcomes of the National Framework by providing a set of key principles alongside actionable recommendations of what works in kinship care. The key principles that underpin this Practice Guide are:

- Support for kinship carers should take into account the specific needs and strengths of kinship carers
- One-to-one relationships and high-quality casework should be at the heart of support for kinship families
- Kinship families need to be made aware of the support they are entitled to, and local authorities should actively work to address barriers to accessing support

The National Kinship Standards

These standards set out expectations for how local authorities, partners and practitioners should approach kinship care. They are intended to support the development of effective kinship local offers and to encourage local authorities to think more broadly about how kinship care is recognised, valued and supported. By embedding these standards, local authorities can strengthen service delivery and improve support for kinship families. The standards should be read alongside the National Framework and Working Together to Safeguard Children, and applied in a way that reflects the diversity, complexity and strengths of kinship families.

Taken together, the standards set out a rights-based, child-centred and whole family approach, underpinned by anti-discriminatory and inclusive practice, effective multi-agency working, and meaningful engagement with kinship children, parents, carers, families and networks. Local authorities should use these standards to review and strengthen their local offer, ensuring support is accessible, responsive and tailored to need.

¹¹ [Foundations - Evidence Driven Change Making](#)

¹² [Kinship Care - Foundations](#)

Standard 1 – Local authorities provide needs-led support and take a whole-family approach, working with kinship carers, parents and the wider family network to understand and support the child or young person’s best interests.

What does this mean?

- Support for kinship families begins with a clear understanding of who “family” is for each child.
- Local authorities recognise the complexity of kinship families and take a whole-family approach, considering the needs, experiences and strengths of children, kinship carers, parents and the wider family network, and ensuring support is coordinated around the whole family in the child’s best interests.
- In undertaking any assessments, local authorities seek to establish trusting and supportive relationships with potential or existing kinship carers and are mindful of the emotional impact of assessments.
- Whilst recognising that there are requirements which may come with a particular legal status or situation, services are not allocated solely on the basis of the child’s legal status. No child should have to become a looked after child or be cared for under particular legal orders for the sole purpose of enabling financial, practical or other support to be provided to the child and their carer.
- Local authorities and partners provide support that helps family members work together in ways that are safe, child-centred, and aligned with the child or young person’s best interests, including where reunification may be under consideration. This includes family network or family group decision making meetings.
- Support plans are reviewed in a timely and consistent manner and updated to reflect changing circumstances and needs. Planning includes consideration of transitions into adulthood, including any support required beyond the age of 16 or 18. Families are informed of their right to request a review of their support plan if required.
- Practitioners recognise and respond to the cross-border relationships, migration histories and cultural contexts that shape many kinship families' lives. Where appropriate, support helps children, carers and parents maintain meaningful relationships with relatives living abroad, and these relationships are considered in assessment, planning and decision-making.

Standard 2 – The voice and experiences of kinship children and young people are at the heart of all decision making.

What does this mean?

- Children and young people are consulted¹³ at critical decision points, including those about where and with whom they will live and their relationships within the wider family network, and on a continuous basis.
- Practitioners recognise the experiences of other children and young people in the kinship household, not just those joining the arrangement, and seek their views when appropriate.
- Practitioners demonstrate clearly in their assessments, planning, and family network decision-making how each child's or young person's views have influenced decisions.
- When a child's or young person's wishes cannot be met, they receive an honest, understandable explanation so they feel seen and heard.

Standard 3 – Anti-discriminatory and inclusive practice underpin all support provided to kinship families.

What does this mean?

- Support for kinship families is founded on cultural humility, anti-racist and inclusive practice, recognising the diversity of kinship families and actively challenging discrimination, bias and inequity.
- Support is disability-inclusive and anti-ableist, with services adapted as required to meet the needs of children, young people and family members with special educational needs, learning disabilities, disabilities or long-term health conditions.
- Inclusive practice ensures that all children, young people and their families can access appropriate rights-based, needs-led support, including those in informal kinship arrangements or where family relationships extend across international borders. Immigration status or No Recourse to Public Funds are not treated as barriers in themselves to assessment or to support for which they are eligible.
- Practitioners recognise that experiences, decisions and policies may disproportionately affect some families where protected characteristics, such as

¹³ Local authorities should have regard to [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#), which include specific expectations beyond consultation, for children looked after and those in a kinship foster care arrangement.

race, ethnicity, age or disability, intersect with socio-economic disadvantage and wider structural inequalities.

Standard 4 – Local authorities prioritise the safeguarding and wellbeing of children in kinship care, providing appropriate support to kinship carers to help them manage complex family dynamics and arrangements.

What does this mean?

- Safeguarding and wellbeing include proactive, child-centred work, such as life story work, support with family time, and tailored interventions that help children make sense of their experiences and maintain safe, meaningful relationships.
- Local authorities understand that children living in kinship arrangements may experience complex family dynamics and that a distinct, nuanced approach which recognises the complexity of family relationships, histories, cultural practices and dynamics may be required to support them and their families.
- Kinship carers receive timely and appropriate support to maintain their own wellbeing to safeguard and meet the needs of the children and young people they care for. Support strengthens carers' confidence and capacity, helping them navigate complex family relationships, reduce isolation and stress, and sustain stable, nurturing kinship care arrangements.
- Bespoke therapeutic and emotional support is signposted and offered to children who have experienced loss, separation, or trauma at points of different developmental stages or transition, such as moving into a kinship household, starting school, court proceedings, or changes in contact arrangements.

Standard 5 – Local authorities work with a diverse range of kinship families to develop an approach to kinship care and a clear, accessible, comprehensive kinship local offer that serves the entire local kinship community.

What does this mean?

- The kinship local offer is a co-created, continuously reviewed resource that not only describes the support kinship families can receive, but also reflects the approach local authorities will take to supporting all kinship families, no matter the arrangement. Local authorities design, develop, and review their kinship local offer in partnership with kinship families, recognising them as experts in their own lives, cultures, and family networks.
- Local authorities use available evidence and outreach to communities in their area to better understand their local kinship cohort and design services that meet their needs.

- Services have defined and transparent processes for consultation and review: they can demonstrate how children and young people, kinship carers, parents and wider family members have shaped the design, content, and delivery of the local offer.
- Co-production is designed so that families with relatives overseas are included, ensuring that the offer reflects global family structures and keeps these children and young people's relationships visible.
- Information in the kinship local offer is clear, accurate, and accessible, written using plain English, published in the languages most used in the local area and formats that the whole community can use and understand. Child-friendly versions are available. The published kinship local offer clearly distinguishes between mainstream services and tailored support designed for kinship children and their families.
- Families are provided with clear information about financial support, legal options, rights and entitlements, and service pathways at the outset and at key points throughout the child's journey, ensuring continuity of support.
- Information provided to kinship families reflects the specific and sometimes complex circumstances of kinship care, including guidance on immigration issues, No Recourse to Public Funds, and the entitlements of kinship families who live overseas or later move abroad.
- Information is available in multiple formats: electronic (e.g., webpages, QR codes, digital guides), printed materials, and physical locations in the community such as hospitals, GP practices, education settings, supermarkets, libraries, and family hubs, faith groups, cultural and community venues.

Standard 6 – Integrated, multi-agency support for kinship families is delivered through collaborative practice and system-wide learning, and across local authority boundaries where necessary.

What does this mean?

- Integrated multi-agency working means that kinship support is owned across the whole system, not held within a single team. Services work with their counterparts in other local authorities where necessary to ensure all children and young people living in their area are getting the support they need.
- Senior leaders across children's services and partner agencies share responsibility, ensure clear accountability, and champion kinship care as part of early and family help, safeguarding, and education practice.

- Local authorities work with adult services, the voluntary sector, education providers and other relevant agencies to ensure coordinated support for the whole family.
- Education, health, housing, childcare and social care (including adult services) and voluntary sector partners have a clear understanding of kinship care and work collaboratively, including with voluntary and faith-based organisations, to promote positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people living in kinship arrangements.
- Coordination is led by an identified practitioner, becoming the link between services and supporting kinship families to navigate systems. Tools are used to reduce duplication and help professionals access essential information promptly, reducing the burden on carers.

Other key considerations

A range of agencies providing family support and early intervention services should be aware of, and sensitive to, the needs of children who are living with kinship carers. This should include schools and other education providers. The disruption, uncertainty and trauma that many children in kinship care may have experienced could be a significant barrier to their educational achievement¹⁴, as well as impacting their attendance and behaviour. From the autumn 2026 term, schools will be able to collect data on all children living in kinship care arrangements through the school census. The data and evidence collected through the census will better equip schools to understand and meet the educational and emotional needs of children in kinship care.

In view of the fact that kinship carers will come from a wide range of circumstances and include grandparents, older siblings and family friends, services such as family hubs will need to be confident that they are accessible and welcoming to all generations and offer a comfortable environment for people of all ages and with a variety of relationships to the child.

Providers of services should be aware that many children in kinship care have experienced trauma and adversities as a result of experiences which led to them coming into kinship care. Specialist services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and services for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) should be sensitive to the particular needs of children living with kinship carers. Local authorities should also ensure alignment between their kinship local offer and SEND local offer.

¹⁴ [Average Attainment 8 score of all pupils, SGO PLAC and CAO PLAC, 2024/25](#)

Chapter 3: The legal context: types of arrangements and processes

This section describes the different types of kinship arrangements that exist and the processes that must be followed to become a kinship carer.

Informal kinship arrangements

If the carer(s) is a relative of the child as defined by section 105 of the Children Act 1989 or has parental responsibility for the child, there is no requirement to notify the local authority of the arrangement. Many such arrangements remain entirely private without the need for the involvement of children's social care services.

Whilst parents retain their responsibilities for the care of their children living with informal kinship carers, those carers may experience a range of impacts as a result, including financial difficulties, alongside practical and emotional challenges when taking on the care of a child or children. Such impacts can be considerable, particularly if assuming a carer role was not planned for.

There will be some children in informal kinship arrangements whose needs meet the threshold for support as a child in need under section 17 of the 1989 Act. Where support services are identified as necessary to meet the child's needs, address a risk of harm to the child or to prevent the need for a child to enter local authority care, these should not be withheld merely because the child is living with a carer under an informal arrangement rather than in a formal arrangement. This support can include a Family Network Support Package (FNSP) that can promote the stability of these arrangements by unlocking support from family network members. It will be the responsibility of the local authority where the child lives to provide support under section 17 of the 1989 Act.

Effective implementation of the local authority's duty under section 17 of the 1989 Act will ensure that wherever possible children's needs are met through the best use of resources designed to safeguard and promote their welfare. This will help ensure that children do not become looked after by the local authority unless to do so is required to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

The local authority does not have a duty to assess informal kinship care arrangements, unless it appears to the authority that services may be necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child in need in their area. Where the local authority assesses that a child and their carers need additional support, Working Together statutory guidance sets out clear guidance about assessments, plans and services that should be provided based on a child and family's needs. Authorities should provide information for parents and carers about the stages of the assessment process, likely timescales and the contact points for enquiries.

In assessing the suitability of a kinship carer, local authorities will need to consider what support might be required to enable the arrangement to be successful. Family members and friends caring for a child, whether the child is in care, returning from care, or would otherwise be in care, should be provided with support that enables them to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

Where a child is a child in need, local authorities must seek to provide any necessary support services unless the child meets the criteria at section 20(1) or section 20(3) of the 1989 Act and requires accommodation. Before providing accommodation the local authority should, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child's welfare, give due consideration to the child's wishes and feelings (s20(6)).

Private fostering arrangements

Private fostering, as defined in the Children Act 1989, is when:

- a. The carers of a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled) do not have parental responsibility for the child and are not the child's grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent
- b. The arrangement continues for 28 days or more or is intended to do so

In these cases, the provisions in that Act and in the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 will apply.

The young person will cease to be privately fostered at the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled) but if the living arrangements continues, then this statutory guidance will continue to apply as the arrangement will revert to that of informal kinship care.

A child who is privately fostered may also be assessed as a child in need and be provided with support under section 17 of the 1989 Act. It will be the responsibility of the local authority where the child lives to provide support under section 17 of the 1989 Act.

Child Arrangements Orders and Special Guardianship Orders

Where a relative, friend or other prospective kinship carer proposes to make a long-term commitment to caring for a child, they may apply for a child arrangements order, setting out that the child lives with them, or a special guardianship order. The effect of both orders will be to give the person in whose favour the order is made parental responsibility for the child. To support the stable placement of children within their families, relatives can apply for a child arrangements order or special guardianship order without the permission of the court after caring for the child for one year.

A special guardian may exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of all others with parental responsibility (although there are things the special guardian cannot consent to, including the adoption of the child, causing the child to be known by a new surname or removing the child from the UK for a period of three months or more). A special guardian is responsible for all aspects of caring for the child or young person and for taking decisions to do with their upbringing.

A person with a child arrangements order is responsible for making decisions about the child's day-to-day care and upbringing, though they share parental responsibility with others who have it. Unlike special guardians, they cannot make decisions to the exclusion of others with parental responsibility. However, they can make routine decisions without needing permission from others.

If a child was looked after immediately prior to the making of a special guardianship order, the child, special guardian or parent has a right to receive an assessment by the local authority for support services, which may include financial support. The Special Guardianship Statutory Guidance¹⁵ makes it clear that it is important that children who were not looked after should not be unfairly disadvantaged by this approach, as in many cases the only reason that the child was not looked after is that a relative has stepped in quickly to take on responsibility for the child when the parent could no longer do so.

In the case of a special guardian who was previously the child's foster carer, financial support may include not only an allowance but also an element in lieu of a fostering fee for up to two years, or longer if the authority considers this to be appropriate. In its calculation of any ongoing special guardianship financial support, the local authority should have regard to the fostering allowance that would have been paid if the child was fostered. Section 17 of The Special Guardianship Regulations 2005¹⁶ continue to set out local authority responsibilities on reviewing annually post-legal order support plans, including the appropriateness of the support plan if the carer's and/or family circumstance's change and the timescales to review such plans.

There is no similar right to an assessment for support for people who have been granted a child arrangements order, but local authorities have the power to pay a child arrangements order allowance where this is the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.¹⁷

Children who were looked after by a local authority immediately before the making of a special guardianship order may qualify for a range of support under the 1989 Act, to support them in making the transition to adulthood. The fear of losing support should not be allowed to become an obstacle to kinship carers taking over responsibility for the long-

¹⁵ [Special Guardianship Statutory Guidance, 2017](#)

¹⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/1109>

¹⁷ [Children Act 1989, Schedule 1, Paragraph 15](#)

term care of a looked after child through applying for a child arrangements order or special guardianship order.

Where a person intends to apply for a special guardianship order, or in the case of a non-agency adopter an adoption order, they must give notice to the local authority who will investigate and prepare a report for the courts. Further information is found in the Special Guardianship statutory guidance.

If a child is living with a kinship carer under a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order (with respect to living arrangements) in a local authority area that is different from the local authority area where they previously lived, the local authority in which the child is now resident in will be responsible for providing support that the child and family may need.

However, regulation 5 of the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 provides that the duty in section 14F of the Children Act 1989 to provide special guardianship support services applies to a child looked after by that local authority or that was looked after by the local authority prior to the Special Guardianship Order being made, the special guardian or prospective special guardian of that child and any children of the special guardian or prospective special guardian outside the local authority's area. The responsibility of the local authority to provide special guardianship support services ceases to apply at the end of a period of 3 years from the date the Special Guardianship Order was made, except in a case where the local authority are providing financial support and the decision to provide that support was made before the making of the order.

Looked after child: identification and assessment

The provision of accommodation under section 20

Section 20(1) of the 1989 Act provides that every local authority must provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who appears to them to require accommodation as a result of:

- a. there being no person with parental responsibility for the child
- b. their being lost or having been abandoned or
- c. the person who has been caring for them being prevented (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason) from providing them with suitable accommodation or care

Under section 20(3) the local authority must provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who has reached the age of 16 and whose welfare the authority consider is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they do not provide them with accommodation.

It may not always be easy to determine whether a child who is cared for by family or friends requires accommodation for the purposes of section 20(1), section 20(3) or whether that child's needs should be met by providing support under section 17 of the 1989 Act. Where a local authority played a major role in making the kinship care arrangement, a court might deem the child to be looked after on the basis that the local authority was fulfilling its duty to accommodate.

Under section 20(4) the local authority may also provide accommodation for any child in their area (even though a person who has parental responsibility for the child is able to provide them with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child's welfare. Short breaks are frequently provided under this provision; however, this is not the only provision under which short breaks are provided.

Before providing accommodation under section 20, the local authority must, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child's welfare, ascertain and give due consideration to the child's wishes and feelings regarding the provision of accommodation.

Children accommodated voluntarily under section 20 can be removed at any time by a parent, or anyone else with parental responsibility for the child. If the local authority continues to have significant safety and wellbeing concerns for the child, then they can apply for a care order under section 31 of the 1989 Act. Further information on this can be found in the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 1: Court Orders¹⁸.

Where a child is provided with accommodation under section 20, or is subject to a care order, the child is looked after and the duties in Part 3 of the 1989 Act, particularly sections 22 to 22D, and The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010¹⁹ will apply.

Accommodation of looked after children

Section 22C(2) to (4) of the Children Act 1989 provides that a local authority must make arrangements for a child who is looked after to live with:

- a. their parents
- b. a person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or
- c. in a case where the child is in the care of the local authority and there was a child arrangements order in force with respect to the child immediately before the care order was made, the person in whose favour the child arrangements order was made

¹⁸ [Children Act 1989: court orders - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁹ [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#)

The arrangements must be both consistent with the child's welfare and reasonably practicable. They should reflect the principle that state intervention in family life should be to keep children safe and ensure that families have the necessary support to bring up their children. For children subject to a care order, any placement back with their parents must be in accordance with the Care Planning Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.

Where a local authority is unable to make arrangements under section 22C(2) to (4), section 22C(5) requires the authority to place the child in the most appropriate placement available. Section 22C(6) to (9) sets out what those placement options are and how the local authority must determine the most appropriate placement.

In determining the most appropriate placement for a child, the local authority must comply with the requirements of section 22C(8), so far as is reasonably practicable in all the circumstances of the child's case. These criteria are important because many children benefit by being placed with relatives or friends or others connected to them, near their own homes, continuing to attend the same school, living with their siblings and in accommodation that suits any special needs. However, it may not be practicable to meet all these criteria in the circumstances of every case. The authority should therefore assess the extent to which each placement option meets the child's identified needs, taking account of both their history and current circumstances. In any consideration, the authority must have regard to its general duty under section 22 of the 1989 Act to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

The authority must also "give preference to" a placement with a person who is a relative, friend or other person connected with the child. They must be approved as a local authority foster carer in accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011²⁰ or temporarily approved as a foster carer under the 2010 Regulations. These regulations, together with the [National Minimum Standards \(NMS\) for Fostering Services](#), set out requirements in relation to support and supervision of all foster carers including those who are family members, friends or other connected persons.

The 1989 Act therefore reflects the principle that all children, including looked after children, should be cared for within their family network wherever possible. Guidance in respect of the assessment of kinship foster carers is included in the following subchapter.

In the case of a child who is provided with accommodation under section 20, the child's looked after status will end when the local authority considers that the child no longer requires accommodation under section 20 of the 1989 Act. In the case of a child subject to

²⁰ [The Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011](#)

a care order, the child will continue to be looked after until the order is discharged or the child turns 18.

Looked after child: approval of kinship carers as foster carers

The approval process

In order to care for a looked after child, relatives, friends or other persons who are connected with the child must be approved as foster carers under the 2011 Regulations or temporarily approved as foster carers under the 2010 Regulations. The current National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Fostering Services²¹ apply, and standard 30 relates specifically to kinship foster carers. The Statutory Guidance for Fostering Services (2011)²² provides more detailed information about the assessment and approval of foster carers, and applies in relation to kinship foster carers as it does for other foster carers.

Whilst many of the issues that go with being a kinship carer are likely to be the same whether or not the carers are approved as foster carers, being a kinship foster carer brings with it additional responsibilities and obligations which have to be met. The local authority will be responsible for the child's care plan and for supervising the kinship foster carer. The kinship foster carer will exercise delegated authority in accordance with the care plan and the placement plan. They will also be expected to demonstrate they are meeting the child's needs as set out in the care plan and engage in appropriate learning and development.

Temporary approval of a kinship foster carer

Sometimes there will be an urgent need for a placement for a looked after child, and the most appropriate placement is with a connected person. In these cases, it may not be possible to fulfil all the requirements of the 2011 Regulations in approving the person as a foster carer before placing the child. Regulations 24 and 25 of the 2010 Regulations set out arrangements for the temporary approval of a connected person as a kinship foster carer to allow an immediate placement. The authority must be satisfied that the placement is the most appropriate placement for the child, and it is necessary for the child to be placed there before the full approval process is completed. Further guidance regarding temporary approval as foster carers can be found in Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services.²³

²¹ [Fostering services: national minimum standards - GOV.UK](#)

²² [The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services](#)

²³ [Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services July 2013](#)

A person approved under the 2010 Regulations is in all respects a local authority kinship foster carer, other than that the approval is made on a temporary basis.

The connected person may be approved as a local authority kinship foster carer for a period not exceeding 16 weeks. This time period has been set to allow sufficient time for a foster carer approval process to be undertaken, including any criminal records checks required.

Before the child is placed with a temporary foster carer, the local authority must assess the suitability of the connected person to care for the child, taking into account the matters set out in Schedule 4²⁴ to the 2010 Regulations. This includes the details of any criminal offences committed by the connected person. While it is not a requirement to have a DBS check in place before temporary approval is granted, local authorities should apply for DBS checks for all adults living in the household at the earliest possible opportunity. Local authorities must consider whether, in all the circumstances, the placement will safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

Regulation 25 of the 2010 Regulations sets out the circumstances in which, exceptionally, the period of temporary approval may be extended with approval from a senior officer within the authority. These circumstances are either:

- a. where the approval process has taken longer than anticipated (and in these circumstances the temporary approval may be extended for a further 8 weeks); or
- b. where the connected person has not been approved following the assessment process and seeks a review of the decision through the Independent Review Mechanism (and in those circumstances the temporary approval will continue until the outcome of the review is known)

If these time periods expire and the connected person has not been approved as a foster carer in accordance with the 2011 Regulations, the responsible authority must arrange for an alternative placement and remove the child from the connected person in accordance with regulation 25(6). There is no right to review by the Independent Review Mechanism of a person who is temporarily approved under the 2010 Regulations if the fostering service decides not to undertake a full assessment under the 2011 Regulations and the child's placement is ended.

Whilst many kinship placements are made in an emergency, provisions relating to temporary approval are intended to be used exceptionally and in circumstances which could not easily have been foreseen, when it is not possible to undertake a full foster carer assessment prior to placement. The power will be most useful where it is clearly in the

²⁴ [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#)

child's interest to be placed with or remain in the care of a familiar figure in reassuring surroundings. Before making such a placement the authority should satisfy itself as to the reasons for the carers coming forward to offer a placement, and that there is no obvious barrier to undertaking a foster carer assessment.

Certain assessment requirements must be met before a child can be placed under these arrangements, as outlined in regulation 24 of the 2010 Regulations. These requirements serve as the minimum standards for evaluating the suitability of the connected person within a potentially short time frame. Every effort must be made to maximise the level and quality of information available to support the decision as to whether the person should be temporarily approved. In particular, the assessment must look at the quality of any existing relationship between the child and the proposed carer. The intention of this provision is that the connected person has an existing relationship with the child. There may be some circumstances where the connected person is known to the child's parents or other person with parental responsibility but is not known to the child. In such circumstances the child should be introduced to the connected person and the proposed accommodation in order for the child's wishes and feelings to be appropriately ascertained.

The home should be visited by the social worker as part of the assessment of the suitability of arrangements. This is to ensure that the physical environment of the home and space available is suitable for the particular child, and to identify the need for additional resources to meet the child's needs, such as special equipment. The home visit will also provide the opportunity to more clearly identify the composition of the household and the nature and quality of the relationships between the residents, as well as their view about the proposed arrangement for the connected person to care for the child.

The child's wishes and feelings about the proposed arrangements must be ascertained, subject to age and understanding and, wherever possible, an opportunity provided for the child to visit the connected person's home before the decision is finalised. The views of the child's parents and others with parental responsibility must also be obtained.

Local authorities should nominate an officer with authority to grant temporary approval of foster carers. This is an important decision, since the authority will have responsibility for any children placed, but a full foster carer assessment will not have been undertaken and there will be no independent view from the fostering panel. It will usually be appropriate for the fostering service decision maker to reserve the authority of granting temporary approvals.

As the connected person will be a local authority foster carer, both the 2010 and the 2011 Regulations will apply. A care plan, including a placement plan, will be required in accordance with the 2010 Regulations. A person temporarily approved as a foster carer under the 2010 Regulations will be entitled to the same support and services as are available to mainstream foster carers, including relevant fostering allowances and any fees for which they meet the criteria set by the particular fostering service. Temporarily approved foster carers should receive the training and support they need to provide an

appropriate level of care to the child. As the placement will have been made without the benefit of a full fostering assessment, the visiting requirements are higher than for other foster placements. The visiting requirements for looked after children are set out in regulations 28 and 29 of the 2010 Regulations.

The assessment process

Information about the assessment and approval process for kinship carers who apply to be foster carers for a specific looked after child and details about services for them should be covered in the local authority's kinship local offer (described in detail in [chapter 4](#)). This means that those assessed are clear about what is expected of them, how they will be judged, what support will be offered during the assessment process, and the reasons for this. Part 5 of the 2011 Regulations sets out the legal requirements in relation to the assessment, approval, review and termination of approval of foster carers. The information which must be taken into consideration in assessing the suitability of a person to become a foster carer is set out in Schedule 3 to the 2011 Regulations.

Nobody has a right to be a foster carer, but Standard 13 of the NMS for Fostering Services requires that people who express an interest in becoming foster carers are treated fairly, without prejudice, openly and with respect.

It requires that they are prepared in a way which addresses, and gives practical techniques to manage, the issues they are likely to encounter and identifies the competencies and strengths they have or need to develop. The assessment process for foster carers should be set out clearly and include:

- a. the qualities, skills or aptitudes being sought or to be achieved
- b. the standards to be applied in the assessment
- c. the stages and content of the selection process and, where possible, the timescales involved
- d. the information to be given to the applicants

Standard 13 also requires that prospective foster carers should be considered in terms of their capacity to look after children in a safe and responsible way that meets their developmental needs. Appropriate checks and references should be carried out in line with minimum expectations and an explanation given as to the reasons for these checks. Standard 30 of the NMS clarifies that when a foster carer is being assessed for approval for a specific child or children only, there is no need to consider their suitability to care for other children. In considering whether a relative, friend or other connected person should be approved as a foster carer, account must be taken of the needs, wishes and feelings of the child and the capacity of the carer to meet those particular needs. In order for the placement to be in the child's best interests, the carer will need to have the capacity to meet their needs for the duration of the proposed placement, whether this is short or long

term. The assessment should take into account the likely length of the placement, the age of the child and, if appropriate (as may be the case where the carers are older), the capacity of the wider family to contribute to the child's long term care.

When making decisions about kinship foster carers, the fostering panel should not make negative recommendations solely based on prospective kinship foster carers not meeting the NMS for fostering during the assessment. As outlined in MBC & Ors [2018] EWFC 42²⁵, the deciding question should be: 'Is the proposed placement in the child's welfare interests?' If the placement aligns with the child's best interests, then the prospective kinship foster carer should still be considered for approval to foster the child, and then they should be supported by the fostering service to attain the standards. Applying this approach is important in the context of enabling children to remain safely within their family network wherever safe and possible.

Where it is assessed that the kinship carer could meet the needs but will require some support or services to be able to do so, these should be specified in the assessment report required under regulation 26 of the 2011 Regulations. Subsequently, the report of the foster carer's annual review, required under regulation 28 of the 2011 Regulations, should set out how the support provided assisted the foster carer to meet the child's needs and whether continued or additional support is required. The child's placement plan, required under the 2010 Regulations, will set out in detail how the placement is intended to contribute to meeting the child's needs as set out in the care plan including the child's permanence plan, and should make clear any support or services that the kinship foster carer needs in order to meet the child's needs.

Kinship foster carers will usually bring with them knowledge and experience of the child they are to foster, and in many cases, they will have already been providing the child with a home prior to the child becoming looked after. Whether or not the prospective foster carers have direct prior knowledge of the child to be placed, the assessment should focus on the experience and strengths that they bring and the support that they will need to enable them to provide safe care for the specific looked after child. The assessment will need to balance the strengths of the carers due to their position within the family network against any aspects which may make them less suitable. The needs of the child should be kept central to the process, as the assessment will also be a matching process of the child to the carer.

A different approach may be needed to assessing kinship foster carers compared to other foster carer applications. The format used by a local authority for presenting assessment reports to the fostering panel may not be appropriate for kinship assessments if it does not allow for a focus on how the carers will meet the specific needs of the child concerned.

²⁵ [MBC v X & Ors \[2018\] EWFC 42 \(14 June 2018\) \(baillii.org\)](#)

Once a foster carer is approved, they must be notified in writing of this fact and of any terms of the approval. For a kinship foster carer, the terms of approval will often specify that they may foster only a specific named child or children. All foster carers, including those who have been temporarily approved under the 2010 Regulations, must also enter into a foster care agreement covering the matters set out in Schedule 5 to the 2011 Regulations.

If a prospective kinship carer wishes to become a foster carer, they can apply to become one. Local authorities should support prospective kinship carers in setting out possible options to care for children, for example becoming a foster carer or taking out a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order. Regulation 26(1B) and (1C) provide that at any point during stage 1 of the assessment process, if the fostering service's decision maker decides that the applicant is not suitable to foster, they must write to the applicant informing them of this decision and give full reasons for it.

Specific considerations

The [National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services](#) cover fostering services' responsibilities with respect to all their foster carers, including those who are kinship foster carers. Fostering services should deliver services in a way which ensures that kinship foster carers are fully supported to care for children placed with them and are not disadvantaged as a result of their prior relationship with the child.

Family relationships and safeguarding the child

Many children benefit from placements with kinship carers because these can provide more continuity than placements with previously unknown carers. Living with relatives preserves a child's sense of belonging to a wider family network, a close attachment is more likely to exist already or to develop, and there is also some evidence to suggest that relatives are more likely to persevere with a placement if difficulties arise. However, not all relatives are able to safeguard and promote a child's welfare, and their parenting capacity should be rigorously assessed before approval as kinship foster carers.

Mainstream foster carers are assessed in the knowledge that any children placed with them will be previously unknown to them, and that part of their task as carers will be to build a trusting relationship with the child. For the majority of kinship carers, a significant and possibly trusting relationship already exists with the child. However, the carers may have to negotiate a changed relationship with the child, since parenting requires a more authoritative relationship than being a grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling or friend in other circumstances. There may also be implications for other children and adults in the extended family which are difficult to manage. There is a greater complexity in the relationship between foster carers and parents when the carers are family members or friends or other connected person. Whilst kinship foster carers are just as likely as mainstream foster carers to safeguard and promote the child's welfare, this is sometimes

at the cost of the loss of their relationship with the child's parents, who may be the carers' own child, sibling or friend. Additionally, if parents are felt to be a potential threat, it can be easier to safeguard unrelated carers, by keeping their location secret from the parents.

Kinship foster carers may experience hostility from the parents of the children they are raising, who may blame them for taking the child away from them or for not supporting them against the local authority. This hostility can make managing family time particularly difficult for kinship foster carers. It is sometimes hard for kinship foster carers to accept arrangements for supporting family time which have been set out by the court or the local authority. They may have difficulty understanding the reasons for these or find it hard to stand firm with a parent who does not accept any restrictions set. In certain cases, carers will welcome restrictions being put in place and would like structured and supervised family time to be available. The assessment of a relative or friend to be a child's foster carer will need to carefully address the carer's ability to manage family time outlined in the care plan, and any support which the local authority needs to provide to enable this.

Some families, friends or connected people live hundreds of miles from the child's home. Whilst the chance of developing a secure attachment with a relative may be of key significance to a younger child, the same may not be true of a teenager who may resent being cut off from peer networks or having to change schools at a critical time. It is important to discuss the priorities of placement with the child concerned and to take account of their wishes and feelings. A good understanding of the child's priorities for placement, needs, wishes and feelings will provide a sound basis for exercising professional judgement and decision-making.

Timing of, and attitude towards, the assessment

Most prospective mainstream foster carers ask to be assessed for approval at a time of their own choosing, when they feel they have the capacity to bring another child into their family. In contrast, kinship carers, including those living abroad, have to make similar decisions when the need arises. Sometimes this is an immediate response to an emergency, without a significant opportunity to consider the options and to plan ahead for the impact it will have upon them and their family. Many carers have to make life-changing decisions, such as giving up jobs or moving home, in order to respond to the needs of the child.

Whilst mainstream foster carers generally approach making an application to foster in the knowledge that this will involve an intrusive assessment process, kinship foster carers are not usually prepared for this in the same way. As with other foster carer assessments, kinship foster carer assessments need to be undertaken in genuine partnership with the assessing social worker. The assessment process may be particularly challenging for potential kinship foster carers, and needs to be undertaken with sensitivity, particularly as there may be time constraints. Developing trusted relationships with practitioners is a key

aspect of effective support for kinship families, and evidence²⁶ suggests that dedicated one-to-one support and consistent, intensive interactions with practitioners helps to build positive relationships, promote engagement, and improve outcomes for both carers and children.

Motivation and impact on the family Kinship foster carers are usually motivated by family loyalty and commitment to the child, with whom in most cases they already have a close and loving relationship and who might otherwise be placed with strangers. This differs from mainstream foster carers, who are typically motivated by a commitment to help vulnerable children. The decision to become a kinship foster carer sometimes causes significant tensions within the family, since it may not be a consensual decision made by the whole family network. The assessment process can provide an opportunity for families to fully think through all the implications of their decision, and this may be helpful in overcoming or managing any tensions within the family.

Carers' own feelings

Kinship carers are often deeply affected personally by the events which have led to the need for a child to live away from their parents. They may, for example, be dealing with the death of their own child or a parent, or the deterioration in mental health or drug addiction of a sibling, at the same time as being assessed as foster carers. For most mainstream potential foster carers, major life events might delay their assessment until they have had time to adjust. However, for kinship carers, these events might be the reason they're applying, so social workers and the fostering panel need to approach their case with extra sensitivity. This should include adjustments to ensure anti-discriminatory practice in relation to cultural practices and timelines relating to bereavement.

Accommodation

Sometimes kinship foster carers will find that taking a child or children into their home places undue pressure on their accommodation which would make it unsuitable in the case of another foster carer. Children living with kinship foster carers have the same rights to privacy and suitable sleeping accommodation as other looked after children, but these should be seen as part of the total assessment of suitability, to be balanced against other factors. A child who would be unhappy to share a bedroom with a child unknown to them may not mind sharing with another child who is a relative and who they know well. They may already be living in the carer's home and happy with the overall situation. In approving the foster carer, the fostering service will need to be satisfied that there is adequate space to a suitable standard, as set out in Standard 10.6 of the NMS, or if this is not the case set out proposals as to how it will be met in the future.

²⁶ [Kinship Care - Foundations](#)

Fostering panels should try to avoid making negative recommendations solely based on the foster carers not having adequate space to a suitable standard during the assessment. The wishes and feelings of the child will be an important factor in helping the social worker to assess the suitability of the accommodation. Housing and social care services should work in partnership to support the housing needs of kinship families. Kinship local offers should also address the need for partnership working to support the housing needs of kinship families for example to enable a sibling group to be placed together, where that is in their best interests. As corporate parents, local authorities should take a whole-council approach to meeting the needs of looked after children in kinship care, with all relevant services working collaboratively to provide effective support.

Financial support

Fostering allowances to foster carers should be sufficient to meet the cost to the carer of caring for the child and should be at least the minimum set annually by the Department for Education. The allowances paid by a fostering service should be calculated for kinship foster carers on the same basis as for all other foster carers, and any variations should relate to the child's needs, the skills of the carer or some other relevant factor that is used as a criterion for all of the service's foster carers.

A judicial review of Manchester City Council's policy on payments of allowances to kinship foster carers in 2001 (the Manchester City Council judgment) held it was unlawful to discriminate against kinship foster carers by paying them a lower allowance than nonrelative foster carers. There is no requirement to pay a fee to reward a carer's time, skills, commitment, etc in addition to the allowance. Where a fee is paid, it should be payable to those foster carers who meet the criteria set out for the scheme, including foster carers who are family or friends.

Location

Most people who apply to a local authority to become foster carers live in the local authority area, and foster children from the local community. In contrast, kinship foster carers may live further afield, and the requirement to place a child near their home should be balanced against other competing needs. Familiar surroundings may be less important than the ability to support family ties, whilst some children may benefit from a fresh start and the chance to develop new relationships and skills.

The requirement that a decision to place a looked after child out of the local authority area must be approved by the responsible authority's nominated officer does not apply if the child is being placed with a foster carer who is approved by the same local authority, or who is a person connected with the child. However all relevant factors, including the wishes and feelings of the child and parents, must be ascertained and taken into account in making the decision.

If a looked after child is placed outside the responsible authority's area, that local authority remains responsible for the child.

International kinship placements

Where a child cannot live with their parents, relatives or other connected persons living abroad may be identified as potential carers. Local authorities should give due consideration to family members abroad as part of family network identification and assessment, recognising that children may have important family, cultural and identity connections beyond England and Wales. Decisions about international kinship placements should be guided by the child's welfare and best interests, taking account of the child's wishes and feelings, their relationships with family members, and the ability of the proposed carers to meet their needs.

In the event that a relative, friend or other person connected with the child who is living outside England and Wales offers to become a foster carer for a looked after child, the responsible authority should take steps to ensure, as far as is practicable, that the requirements imposed on the placement are equivalent to those that would have applied if the child had been placed in England or Wales. For placements outside England and Wales, applicable provisions are in paragraph 19 of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989²⁷ and regulation 12 of the 2010 Regulations. Further guidance can also be found from page 56 onwards of the current care planning guidance (July 2021)²⁸. The child's care plan must include the arrangements for the supervision of the placement.

Placements of looked after children with kinship carers abroad can happen but are less likely where the child has developed close ties within the UK or links to the family abroad are weak. The overriding priority remains the best interests of the child. Authorities are legally required to ensure that any placement being considered meets and continues to meet the child's needs. Assessments of prospective carers overseas should be culturally relevant and compliant with UK law as well as that of the prospective carer's country.

When the country where the child is to be placed is a Contracting Party to the 1996 Hague Convention an assessment by the authorities in their country (of potential kinship carers) can be requested through the Central Authority for England for the 1996 Hague Convention, the International Child Abduction and Contact Unit (ICACU) or Children and Families Across Borders, acting as the Central Authority for Wales, at the earliest opportunity. ICACU has a Request for Cooperation form that can be used²⁹ and ICACU can be contacted for information. The ICACU form and guide set out what information should be provided in making the request. There are no time limits in the 1996 Hague

²⁷ [Children Act 1989](#)

²⁸ [The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations](#)

²⁹ [icacu-request-for-co-operation-form.docx](#) and [icacu_request-for-co-operation-guide.docx](#)

Convention, so it is important to decide whether an assessment is needed from another country at an early stage in the case to allow for the time needed to send the request and receive a reply. The time needed for translations to be made should also be taken into account.

Under the 1996 Hague Convention, an order for the placement of the child in another Contracting State can only be made after the relevant local authority in England has consulted the relevant authorities in the potential receiving State, transmitted a report on the child and the reasons for the proposed placement, and received consent to the placement from the competent authority in the receiving State. It is generally the receiving State which decides what categories of kinship care placement come within the requirements of the 1996 Hague Convention. Again, with no time limits in the 1996 Hague Convention, it is important to request consent as early as practicable. If prior consent is not obtained as required under the 1996 Hague Convention, the receiving State is under no obligation to recognise the placement.

Health

The health of the carers will be an important factor to consider in deciding whether a kinship carer is suitable to be approved as a foster carer, especially if one or more is in poorer than average health or significantly older than the average for parents bringing up their own children. Lifestyle issues which may impact on the carer's health should be addressed within the assessment, and these and other health matters need to be balanced with other factors. Specialist advice may be needed, such as from the fostering service's medical adviser. In situations where there is particular concern, it will be important to know about the response of the wider family should the carer become unable to care for the foster child. Family responses may be different to those of mainstream foster carers who do not have a prior commitment to the child, and other relatives may provide support or offer to take over the caring role.

Parenting capacity

Fundamental to the assessment of a potential kinship carer to be a foster carer will be consideration of their capacity to provide a level of parenting to meet the child's particular needs within the requirements of the care plan, including the placement plan. The child's core assessment and care plan will have identified their developmental needs, and the carer's parenting capacity should be assessed in relation to those dimensions. Kinship foster carers should be in a position to meet the child's assessed needs, bearing in mind that those needs may be greater than for other non-looked after children of a similar age. The circumstances of the child's own parents should be identified and the likely impact on the capacity of the family member or friend to provide adequate care assessed.

The carer's past experiences of parenting will need to be assessed as part of a fuller picture of their capacity to care for the child. It may be that the looked after child's parent

has been the only family member to experience difficulties, or these may have been part of a broader pattern within the family. The carers may be able to draw positive learning out of previous difficult experiences and it will be important to understand their level of insight into these.

Training support and development

Fostering services should ensure that all foster carers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the care needs of children placed with them, and to achieve at least the minimum level of knowledge and skills outlined in the 2011 Children's Workforce Development Council's (CWDC's) Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards³⁰. Given that the TSD Standards are designed to equip foster carers with the knowledge and skills to provide an acceptable level of care to the children they look after, it is in the interests of looked after children that they should be achieved by all foster carers. In recognition of the fact that the context of kinship foster care differs from other types of foster care, kinship foster carers will work towards an amended set of standards and are given additional time to demonstrate achievement of the Standards.

The TSD Standards provide an opportunity to identify any gaps in skills and knowledge, as well as support needs. Foster carers achieving the Standards need to show also that they understand their role, responsibilities and obligations. They need to show an awareness of other professionals and services involved in the child's life and how they are meeting the health and wellbeing needs of the child they are looking after. Working to achieve the Standards can also provide a focus for the work of support groups and provide opportunities for kinship foster carers to meet other foster carers. Authorities should ensure that the TSD Standards are framed and delivered in such a way that carers can see how they support them in their caring role, building upon any areas for development identified in the assessment.

Once approved as foster carers, the extent to which kinship carers wish to be involved in training and formal support varies greatly. Authorities should consider how training and support can be delivered to kinship foster carers in a way which recognises their particular circumstances, needs and perspectives, helps them to understand the relevance and importance of participating in learning and development and makes it as easy as possible for them to engage. There are benefits to incorporating training into support groups or providing specific training for kinship foster carers. Evidence of learning and development may be available through the family and parenting support offered to kinship carers and through their relationship with their social worker.

The National Framework makes clear that when designing training and support for practitioners and carers, children, young people and families should be involved in

³⁰ [TSD standards guidance for supervisors.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444444/TSD_standards_guidance_for_supervisors.pdf)

identifying training and development needs, offering opportunities for them to shape programmes that will improve knowledge and skills.

Criminal convictions

The 2011 Regulations³¹ normally prevent anyone from becoming a foster carer if they, or any other member of their household, have been cautioned for or convicted of specified offences committed over the age of 18. However, the fostering service may consider the approval of a kinship foster carer for a particular child (or children) even though they would otherwise have been debarred by these Regulations, if they or a member of their household are related to the child, providing the responsible authority is satisfied that the child's welfare requires it.³² Such a decision should only be made when the decision maker is satisfied that approving the applicant is the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. The reasons for any such decision will need to be fully explained and recorded (regulation 24 Care Planning Regulations). Local authorities should not seek to prioritise the placement of a child with a kinship carer where previous cautions, orders, charges or convictions would make that carer a risk to the child.

Fostering service expertise

Specialist posts may be a way of developing expertise in fostering services. The designated decision maker for the fostering service will need to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the particular challenges facing kinship foster carers to inform decision-making about approval as foster carers.

A fostering service must ensure that individual members of its fostering panel collectively have the experience and expertise necessary to effectively discharge the functions of the panel. Panel members are drawn from a central list, maintained by the service, of people with the appropriate qualifications or experience. The list must include at least one social worker with at least 3 years' relevant post-qualifying experience. That experience should include experience in or with fostering services.

Fostering panels which consider applications to become kinship foster carers should have an understanding of the nature and requirements of the role of such carers, to ensure that they are able to adequately fulfil their independent quality assurance role and make sound recommendations to the service. The panel members should also receive specific training on kinship care, and have representation from person(s) with either lived or professional experience of kinship care as this will aid the panel's consideration of matters before it.

³¹ [The Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011](#), regulation 26(8)

³² [Help and support for foster parents in England: Help with the cost of fostering - GOV.UK](#)

Independent reviewing officers should also receive training to ensure that they are fully conversant with care planning issues for looked after children living with kinship foster carers.

Adoption

Where a child is already living with a kinship carer it may also be possible for them to apply for an adoption order. This would end the parental responsibility of the birth parents and treat the child as if born to the adopters. Local authorities should therefore carefully consider adoption as a permanence option for a child, bearing in the mind the legal consequences of this type of arrangement.

Local authorities are required to make a range of adoption support services available in their area to meet the needs of people affected by adoption. Adopted children and adopters have the right to be assessed for certain support services, the details of which are set out in the relevant regulations and statutory guidance. These are now normally delivered through Regional Adoption Agencies. Kinship carers should have sufficient information about the consequences of obtaining an adoption order, including their right and entitlements under such arrangements. Requirements for the assessment of people who wish to become adopters are set out in the relevant regulations and statutory guidance.

Legal requirements

Provision of Family Help services under section 17

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a general duty on the local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need. So far as is consistent with that duty, they must also promote the upbringing of such children by their families, in particular by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs ("family support services"). "Family" in relation to such a child means not only a person who has parental responsibility for the child but also any other person with whom the child has been living.

The definition of a child in need in section 17(10) is broad. A child in need is a child whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a reasonable level of health, or development or their health or development would be significantly impaired, without the provision of services by the local authority, or they are disabled.

The range and level of family support services which may be provided under section 17 is wide. Kinship carers may need practical support, advice, guidance or counselling about how to manage issues such as those arising from managing family time or from caring for children with emotional or behavioural difficulties due to their earlier experiences. Such

services may be provided by local authorities to support both formal and informal kinship care arrangements. The 1989 Act does not impose a limit on the amount of support which may be provided under section 17.

Section 17(6) sets out that the family support services provided by a local authority may include giving assistance in kind and may also include giving financial assistance to the family. A local authority may provide financial support on a regular basis under section 17. Local authorities providing such financial support to kinship carers will need to be clear that this support is provided under section 17. Under section 17 of the 1989 Act, local authorities may also provide bespoke FNSPs to enable a family network to practically support whoever has parental responsibility for the child, where finances would otherwise be a barrier, so that more children can remain at home wherever safe and appropriate, or in kinship arrangements where that is in their best interests. The local authority should have in place clear eligibility criteria in relation to the provision of support services under section 17, including financial support to children living in kinship care.

There are some differences between the entitlement to different forms of support by children in kinship care receiving services under section 17 and by growing up in kinship foster care (as children looked after). The main differences are summarised in the table below.

Table 1: Entitlement to support by kinship carers and the child/ren in their care, under Children Act 1989 section 17 and for children looked after

Child in need supported under section 17	Child looked after growing up in kinship foster care
The child is not looked after by the local authority	The child is looked after by the local authority
The child will not have a care plan but there may be a family help plan or child protection plan	The child must have a care plan (including health plan and personal education plan) which will be reviewed by an independent reviewing officer
If there is a family help plan or a child protection plan, a social worker or other worker may visit the child and carers	A social worker will visit the child and carers and oversee the child's welfare
The child must be offered access to information about an advocacy service or help to find an advocate, where they make or intend to make representations under section 26 of the 1989 Act	The child must be offered access to information about an advocacy service or help to find an advocate, where they make or intend to make representations under section 26 of the 1989 Act

Child in need supported under section 17	Child looked after growing up in kinship foster care
The carers will not usually have a separate social worker.	Foster carers will receive supervision from a worker with the skills and experience to provide effective support.
The local authority has discretion to give financial assistance (which can be on the basis of regular payments) but there is no entitlement and family income may be taken into account since the local authority must have regard to the means of the child and parents under section 17 (8) the 1989 Act)	A weekly fostering allowance will be paid at least in line with the National Minimum Allowance ³³
Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit may be payable	There is no entitlement to Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit
A national programme for the provision of information, support and training is open to all kinship carers	A national programme for the provision of information, support and training is open to all kinship carers
There is no entitlement to leaving care support	On leaving care the young person may be eligible for ongoing support under the 1989 Act

³³ [Help and support for foster parents in England: Help with the cost of fostering - GOV.UK](#)

Child in need supported under section 17	Child looked after growing up in kinship foster care
Any support offered will cease when the child becomes 18, unless criteria are met for support from adult services	All care leavers are entitled to support from a Personal Advisor (PA) to age 25. The PA's role is to help care leavers access support from mainstream services (e.g. housing, health, benefits); and to provide practical/emotional support to help them prepare for/cope with the challenges of living independently. PAs work with the young person to develop a (mandatory) pathway plan, which sets out the support the local authority will provide. If the care leaver is aged 16 or 17 the local authority must accommodate them. There is a duty on the local authority to support care leavers to 'Stay Put' in foster care to age 21, if the young person and former foster carer want it. The local authority must also provide financial assistance in a staying put arrangement if the care leaver's welfare requires it. The local authority should provide a leaving care grant (£3,000) to enable the young person to furnish their first home. LAs should support care leavers to engage in Education, Employment and Training (EET), including providing a bursary of £2,000 if the young person is studying in Higher Education. Care leavers are also a priority group for 16-19 bursary if studying in Further Education (up to £1,200 a year paid by the college) and are also entitled to a bursary of £3,000 if they take up an apprenticeship.

Pre-proceedings and care proceedings

During the pre-proceedings stage, the local authority must offer family group decision-making, such as the family group conference model, to parents and those with parental responsibility, unless it would not be in the child's best interests. Practitioners should consider the use of an independent coordinator and families should be offered "private

family time” unless there are safeguarding concerns which would mean this might be considered inappropriate or unsafe. This enables families to continue to explore potential placements within the family network (including with overseas relations) and to clarify the realistic options available for the child.

A FNSP should be agreed through the family group decision-making (FGDM) process if there are financial or practical barriers to the family network enacting the agreed plan and providing support. Further details of the FGDM process and the duty on local authorities to offer an FGDM meeting at the pre-proceedings stage (unless not in the child’s best interest to do so) are explained in Chapter 4: [The Kinship Local Offer](#).

In relation to care proceedings, the pre-proceedings checklist for Public Law Outline requires local authorities to submit decision-making records, including records of key discussions with the child’s family with an application to the court for a care order.³⁴ During court proceedings, the local authority will need to disclose information about discussions with relevant family and friends that were held throughout the pre-proceedings stage. Statutory guidance in relation to [Pre-proceedings and Court Orders](#) emphasises that consideration of potential alternative carers should always be fully explored before making an application under section 31 of the 1989 Act, provided that this does not jeopardise the child’s safety and welfare.

Care leavers

The Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to provide leaving care support to certain young people (i.e. those who have been in care for a minimum of 13 weeks, some of which was after they reached age 16 (s23A Children Act 1989) when they cease to be looked after and are making the transition to adulthood. This applies to children placed by the local authority with kinship foster carers in the same way as it does to all other care leavers. This includes support from a Personal Adviser up to the age of 25, and support to engage in education, employment or training (including a £2,000 bursary if they attend higher education). The responsibilities are set out in the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010, the Children Act 1989 (Higher Education Bursary) (England) Regulations 2009 and the relevant statutory guidance.

Local authorities are also under a duty to consult on and published a local offer for care leavers, setting out their legal entitlements, plus any further discretionary support that the local authority provides, such as Council Tax exemptions. The offer should also set out how the local authority will support care-experienced young people to secure stable accommodation, access opportunities, build financial independence, and, critically, develop and sustain enduring relationships, community connections and a sense of belonging into adulthood.

³⁴ [Family Procedure Rules, direction 12A](#)

The National Framework sets out the principles for practice in relation to children in care and care leavers having stable, loving homes under Outcome 4, and emphasises that achieving positive outcomes for care leavers starts with effective support for children and young people while they are in care. This includes setting out that practitioners should look to place children in homes that offer an experience of family.

Chapter 4: The kinship local offer

The context of the kinship local offer

As required by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, all local authorities must publish information about their general approach to supporting children living in the authority's area who live in kinship care and kinship carers living in the authority's area. This includes information about financial support and services which may be available to them. This was previously referred to in the guidance as a local family and friends care policy but is now known as the kinship local offer. As part of the development of their local offer, local authorities and their partners should consider the needs of children in kinship care when they are targeting their early help and family help services, and reflect these needs in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment³⁵, which is an assessment of the health and wellbeing of the local community.

Before publishing its kinship local offer (or any updated version), a local authority must consult relevant persons about any services that they offer, or may be offered, which may help to improve outcomes for children in kinship care living in the authority's area. This could include children living in kinship care, kinship carers, and anyone who may be representative of children in kinship care and kinship carers in the area, such as former kinship carers, parents, children who used to be in kinship care and kinship advocacy organisations. The local authority must publish a report on the consultation. In developing the kinship local offer, local authorities should consider how to ensure that they are applying the National Kinship Standards set out in [Chapter 2](#).

Ultimately, whilst the detail of the kinship local offer is a matter for local authorities to decide, within the framework of the law and statutory guidance, it should address the matters outlined in the rest of this chapter.

This chapter outlines:

- a. the governance principles associated with the kinship local offer
- b. types of support that should be included in the kinship local offer
- c. types of arrangements that should be covered in the kinship local offer

³⁵ [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and joint health and wellbeing strategies explained. - GOV.UK](#)

Governance of the kinship local offer

Values, principles and objectives

Kinship local offers should be based on a clearly stated set of values and principles. The principles underpinning practice, set out earlier in the guidance, which underly the 1989 Act and the National Framework, provide a sound foundation for this. The National Kinship Standards should also inform the development and design of the kinship local offer.

Local authorities must consult with relevant persons on the kinship local offer prior to publishing or updating it, and a report on that consultation must be published. Kinship local offers should be co-developed with the local kinship population in order to ensure that it meets their needs.

Kinship local offers should be underpinned by the principle that support should be based on the needs of the child rather than merely their legal status. The kinship local offer should provide kinship families with support to ensure that children do not become looked after, or remain looked after longer than is needed.

Kinship local offers should make clear that children are active participants, and that their wishes and feelings should be taken into account when adults are trying to solve problems and make decisions about them. Local authorities should respond to the voices and experiences of children, young people and families in providing support and meeting outcomes.

A kinship local offer should be developed in collaboration with local partners and signpost support reflecting all kinship arrangements, including informal kinship or private family arrangements, child arrangements orders, special guardianship orders, connected persons fostering, and, where relevant, private fostering arrangements. As far as possible, local offers should respond to need, rather than creating eligibility criteria based on legal order. It should address the needs of children in kinship care, whether or not they are looked after children. Local authorities should ensure inclusion of services that meet culturally diverse needs, including for example peer support and online offers.

Local authorities should take a whole-family approach to developing their local offer, ensuring it considers the potential needs of the whole kinship family, including siblings, kinship carers, parents and other children in the kinship household. Children and young people should have appropriate opportunities to express their views to help local authorities design kinship local offers that reflect children's needs and experiences.

Local authorities should also ensure that services available to kinship families across the children's social care system and support from multi-agency partners are signposted within the kinship local offer. For example, kinship local offers should highlight the availability of support from wider early help and family support systems and signpost these services. Local authorities should also consider how the organisational positioning of

kinship services affects families' access to early help, family support and multi-agency services, and whether current arrangements promote a whole-family approach.

Effective local services should be underpinned by clear information, which is known to all interested parties and applied consistently. A kinship local offer should be clearly expressed, regularly updated, made freely and widely available, including on the local authority's website and publicised by relevant means, such as websites and leaflets. Local authorities should also consider whether publishing information in different languages is appropriate for their local kinship population.

As a minimum, kinship local offers should clearly set out:

- **scope** — who the offer applies to
- **access** — how families can access help and at what point
- **support** — what is available locally and which services provide it, though, where appropriate, the kinship local offer may signpost to other information rather than repeat it
- how multi-agency responsibility for kinship families is shared across the system, not held solely by children's social care, and which services contribute to the local offer and support of kinship families, including partner agencies, adult services and voluntary and community sector organisations; and
- **routes back into support** — how families can seek help if circumstances change

In formulating the kinship local offer, legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 must be complied with. The Equality Act 2010 puts a duty on public authorities in exercising their functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those persons who do not share it, as well as foster good relations between those persons. Any potential barriers to accessing services should be considered and mitigated where appropriate and able. This is important because of the differences in the minimum support that should be available depending on the type of kinship arrangement.³⁶

Evidence base

Kinship local offers should be based on evidence of what works in supporting kinship carers to meet children's needs³⁷, as well as knowledge of the services which carers and

³⁶ For example, children from Black, Asian and Other ethnic backgrounds appear less frequently in formal kinship arrangements (including in special guardianship and in kinship foster care) compared to the children in care population (Understanding Formal Kinship Care Arrangements In England - Foundations). Children from Black ethnic backgrounds are more likely to be informal kinship arrangements, children in kinship care are more likely to have a disability, and the carers are more likely to be female and older compared to the general parental population (Kinship care in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics).

³⁷ Local authorities should consider the DfE commissioned Practice Guide, which brings together the evidence on programmes or services that aim to support kinship families.

children want to be available to them. Local authorities must consult children, kinship carers and parents, as relevant, in developing their kinship local offers, and publish a report of that consultation. They should set out how the kinship local offer has been informed by relevant persons in the published offer.

Clear policy frameworks and a focus on evidence-based interventions, supported by good demographic and needs data, will ensure the development of appropriate local services. As part of the development of their local offer, local authorities and their partners should consider the needs of children in kinship care when they are targeting their early help and family help services, and reflect these needs in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment³⁸, which is an assessment of the health and wellbeing of the local community.

The National Framework is supported by the Children's Social Care Dashboard, available to local authorities and the public, which is a data dashboard designed to support local authorities and partners with the implementation of the National Framework. A range of published Practice Guides also support local authorities to achieve outcomes set out in the National Framework, including a focused guide on Kinship Care³⁹.

The National Kinship Care Ambassador published a report, [Improving the kinship local offer and approach to kinship care](#), summarising learning from autumn 2024 to autumn 2025 to inform the development of kinship local offers. The report sets out the elements stakeholders consistently described as important to kinship local offer development and delivery. These insights are intended to support local authorities to design kinship local offers that are transparent, equitable and responsive to the needs of kinship families. Key learning and insights from that report are reflected in the content of this guidance.

Information about services and support

Kinship local offers should support the promotion of good information about the full range of services for children and families in the area, for example, relating to local special educational needs and disabilities offers and care leaver local offers, and the availability of advice from independent organisations. Whilst the kinship local offer may primarily be accessed by kinship carers, there should also be information for children and young people.

Kinship carers often face challenges accessing information that can help them in their caring role, particularly when they take on the care of a child in an emergency. It is essential that they are aware of the support available to both themselves and the children in their care. This should include information on universal services such as early years provision, out-of-school activities, schools and colleges, health services, leisure facilities,

³⁸ [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and joint health and wellbeing strategies explained. - GOV.UK](#)

³⁹ [Foundations Practice Guide on Kinship Care](#)

and youth support services. Kinship carers may be less aware of local services than other parents and carers, especially if they have not previously raised children or are of a different generation to most parents. Kinship local offers can help address this by providing clear, accessible information about available services, reducing the need for families to navigate multiple agencies and service boundaries.

Early years providers, family hubs, education settings, health visitors, advice agency staff and other staff working directly with families will often be the people who first come into contact with children living with kinship carers. They should therefore be aware of the challenges they may face and have an understanding of the impact of the experiences that led to them entering kinship care. The kinship local offer should provide such workers with information to signpost carers to relevant services.

Given the specific needs of many children growing up away from their parents, carers will also need to know how to access targeted and specialist services which may be required, such as special educational needs services and CAMHS.

Kinship local offers should also include what support may be available to kinship families through Family Help services. Family Help is for children, young people and families whose needs are multiple and/or complex, meaning that a child is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without services. This will be where needs are above the level of universal and community based early help, such as that provided by a Family Hub or in community settings, and they are less able to access and navigate support themselves.

Management accountability

The Director of Children's Services should identify a senior manager who holds overall responsibility for the kinship local offer. They will need to ensure that the kinship local offer meets the statutory requirements and is responsive to the identified needs of kinship families. Whilst there is no requirement for a dedicated post for this purpose, local authorities may want to consider whether this is beneficial to ensure sufficient oversight of the kinship local offer.

Effective kinship local offers should be informed by up-to-date information. Local authorities and partner agencies will have access to certain relevant information, such as the number of kinship foster carers, and of those to whom they are providing special guardianship or adoption support services. In monitoring implementation of the kinship local offers, the responsible manager may find it helpful to gather further specific data from sources such as the Children's Social Care Dashboard.

To further support local authorities with implementation, Foundations have developed [an Implementation Framework for designing and delivering services for children and families](#). This has been developed jointly by the Foundations with the Department for Education and sector partners. This Framework sets out a clear and consistent evidence-based

approach for local authorities and partners, helping them map local systems, identify strengths, convene key colleagues, and follow defined steps to design and deliver evidence-informed services. It provides a shared model for implementation, enabling leaders to track progress and assess whether changes are improving services. This Implementation Framework is intended to be a useful resource that underpins implementation across all children's service reforms.

The senior manager with responsibility for the kinship local offer should ensure that relevant staff implementing the kinship local offer receive appropriate training on the challenges faced by kinship carers, as well as their duties outlined in the kinship local offer. Staff should understand the support available to different kinship families as set out in the kinship local offer. As a result they should be able to support kinship families in a fair and consistent manner. The manager should also ensure that relevant staff know their responsibilities for children in kinship care and actively meet those needs. The kinship local offer should be well-publicised for potential carers to understand its content and know how to contact the local authority for more information.

Legal framework

The kinship local offer should explain the relevant legal framework, in a format which is accessible to kinship carers and for parents. This should include an explanation of the authority's powers and duties in relation to children in need and looked after children, and address the effect of a child arrangements order, special guardianship order or adoption order. This is to ensure that potential kinship carers have the necessary information to make informed choices about the most appropriate route for them to follow based on the minimum support that should be provided (see Annex B). Information should be provided about the meaning and implications of different arrangements, including those in informal arrangements, the rights of carers and of the children's parents, and the nature of decisions which kinship carers will be able to make in relation to the child. However, services should not be allocated solely on the basis of the child's legal status and local authorities should take a needs-led approach to supporting kinship families.

Safeguarding in kinship contexts

While kinship arrangements often provide children with stability, continuity and a strong sense of belonging, the safety and welfare of the child must remain paramount. Local authorities should ensure that safeguarding considerations are fully explored when assessing, supporting and reviewing kinship arrangements, recognising both the strengths that family networks can offer and any likelihood of harm that may be present.

Some safeguarding considerations may be particularly relevant in kinship care. These can include a child's continued proximity to individuals who may present a risk of harm, the complexities of family relationships and contact arrangements, and circumstances where kinship carers themselves experience threats, coercion, domestic abuse or other

pressures from family members. Local authorities should also recognise that some kinship carers take on caring responsibilities with limited preparation and may require additional support to help them safeguard the children in their care.

Practitioners should maintain professional curiosity and avoid assumptions about the suitability or safety of a placement based solely on family relationships. Assessments and ongoing support should consider all potential sources of harm, including risks external to the home and arising within the wider family network and, where relevant, risks posed by the kinship carer or other members of the household.

Safeguarding needs and risks may change over time and local authorities should ensure that appropriate support and oversight are available where concerns continue beyond the establishment of a permanent arrangement.

Local authorities should have a clear approach to safeguarding kinship families that reflects the complexity of these arrangements. Children should be seen and heard directly wherever appropriate, and practitioners should seek to understand their lived experiences, wishes and feelings, including how safe and supported they feel within the arrangement.

Sharing information about children in kinship care may fall under the Information Sharing Duty at section 2 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026. As set out in statutory guidance⁴⁰, under the duty relevant organisations are required to share concerns relating to a child's safety and welfare across organisation boundaries in England where a child is known to be relocating, to avoid important information being lost. Local authorities must therefore apply this duty in circumstances where a child in kinship care moves to another local authority area, where there are concerns about that child's safety and welfare.

Complaints

The kinship local offer should explain or signpost how children, kinship carers and other relevant people may make a complaint about the service. The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006⁴¹ govern how complaints and representations must be dealt with and require local authorities to have procedures for dealing with complaints and representations about the exercise of their children's social care functions. Statutory guidance to accompany the regulations is contained in Getting the Best from Complaints (2006).⁴²

As set out in the National Framework, leaders should put in place clear mechanisms for children, young people and families to raise concerns. They should listen to the voices of

⁴⁰ [Information sharing to safeguard children and young people - GOV.UK](#)

⁴¹ [The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

⁴² [Children's social care: getting the best from complaints - GOV.UK](#)

children, young people and families and act on any complaints swiftly. Any kinship carer or child who feels that they have grounds may make a complaint to the local authority in accordance with its complaints procedure.

All foster carers, including kinship foster carers, have the right to make a complaint about the fostering service or any aspect of the service provided for a fostered child. Fostering services must specify their complaints procedure in their statement of purpose, which must be made available to all foster carers. Adopters and special guardians also have a right to make complaints about support offered to them.

Types of support to be included in the kinship local offer

Local authorities must publish information about services available in their area which may assist children living in kinship care and their kinship carers, including services relating to:

- health and wellbeing
- relationships
- education and training
- accommodation
- financial support

This is not an exhaustive list and local authorities should include information about any services or support that is relevant.

In drafting the kinship local offer, each local authority should consider the availability and route for accessing the following types of support.

Health and wellbeing

Therapeutic support

Expectations on how local authorities should consider promotion of, and access to, appropriate health and wellbeing support (including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provision) for kinship children formally looked after, are set out in statutory guidance: [Promoting the health and well-being of looked-after children](#). In addition, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has produced guidelines⁴³ on therapeutic assessment and intervention for children looked after, which local authorities may also wish to consider as part of support planning.

⁴³ [Children's social care | Topic | NICE](#)

Local authorities should also make kinship carers aware, in the kinship local offer, that the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) is available to children and families where the children are subject to Special Guardianship Orders, or Child Arrangement Orders and were previously in care.⁴⁴ The ASGSF provides funding for therapeutic support for these children and young people up to and including the age of 21, or up to the age of 25 if the child has an education, health and care plan.

Support groups

Local authorities should guide kinship carers and children and young people to peer support groups. Local authorities should collaborate with partner agencies and the voluntary sector to establish and improve access to this type of support.

Peer support groups can be invaluable for combating the isolation many carers may feel. These groups can provide emotional support, help carers connect with others facing similar challenges, and offer access to important information and services. Support groups can be a particularly vital resource for those not receiving local authority services as evidenced by the [Foundations Practice Guide on Kinship Care](#).

Support groups can vary, catering to specific needs such as grandparents or informal kinship carers. Successful groups often combine member discussions, expert advice, and social activities for both carers and children.

Kinship foster carers may also benefit from support groups. They will share many of the same experiences and challenges as relatives and friends who are caring for children who are not in care, and are likely to benefit from support groups focused on issues relating to kinship care.

Support groups for special guardians and prospective special guardians, children subject to special guardianship orders and their parents are included in services prescribed by the [Special Guardianship Regulations 2005](#) for which the local authority must make arrangements. In the case of children placed by an adoption agency, local authorities are required by the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 to provide support groups for adopters, adopted children and birth parents.

Relationships

The children's social care system should ensure that every child grows up with enduring, trusted relationships that provide stability and belonging into adulthood, so they feel safe, loved, and able to thrive. Enduring relationships are the important, consistent and lasting

⁴⁴ [Adoption and special guardianship support fund \(ASGSF\) - GOV.UK](#)

relationships in a child's life which provide emotional security and warmth, responsiveness, attunement, dependability and shared positive experiences.

Supporting these relationships for children in kinship care is important and local authorities should consider the particular needs and experiences of children in kinship care, including in relation to family time. The Department for Education's Enduring Relationships Programme is clear that all children in care and care leavers should be supported to find and re-build lost relationships. Family finding programmes such as Lifelong Links⁴⁵ have a promising evidence base for effectively rebuilding the most important relationships in a child's life.

Under paragraph 15 of Schedule 2 to the 1989 Act, local authorities are under a duty to endeavour to promote contact between a looked after child and their parents, other persons with parental responsibility and relatives, friends and connected persons. Where a child is in the care of the local authority, section 34 of the 1989 Act provides that the local authority shall allow the child reasonable contact with their parents and certain others. The local authority may refuse to allow such contact in certain circumstances. The local authority, child and other prescribed persons may make an application to court for contact.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 amended Section 34 of the 1989 Act so that for a child looked after maintaining their connection with siblings matches the legal weight given to parents and guardians. The new duty applies to whole blood, half blood, and step-siblings, requiring local authorities to promote contact/family time and maintain meaningful relationships between siblings, whether they live together or apart, unless a court order alters it, or if stopping contact is urgently required for up to seven days to safeguard the child's immediate welfare. Although this duty is only applicable to looked after children, local authorities should apply the same approach to promoting sibling relationships for all children in kinship care.

Arrangements for keeping connections with parents should be consistent with the child's welfare and children's wishes and feelings about arrangements for family time should be ascertained. Most children living in kinship care will be in touch with one or both of their parents, and often also with other relatives, and this will often help to promote positive relationships.

However, management of family time can often be a source of considerable anxiety and conflict for kinship carers. Complex family dynamics and emotional ties to parents, for example, can make navigating these arrangements particularly challenging for kinship carers. They can place emotional and practical strains on all the parties involved. For example, there may be particular challenges and complexity associated with supporting

⁴⁵ [Lifelong Links](#)

family time between a parent who has experienced domestic abuse and a child who is in the care of relatives of the parent who has perpetrated the abuse. Family dynamics and relationships may be fundamentally changed by these arrangements, particularly for grandparents, and children may not understand why they are being brought up by relatives, whilst parents may resent the fact that their children do not live with them.

Negotiating these intertwined relationships demands a sensitive approach. Greater clarity around expectations such as roles, contact arrangements, and access to services like local contact centres, mediation or support with facilitated conversations, may help families navigate the relational aspects of kinship care with more confidence. This may be particularly beneficial for informal kinship care arrangements where the courts have not been involved. Family mediation can help parties to communicate better and resolve disputes taking account of the child's wishes in a supported environment. Contact centres and mediation services need to be made aware of the particular challenges which may face kinship carers and be sensitive to their needs.

Where there are safeguarding concerns there may be a need for the involvement of children's social care services to support safe family time arrangements. Family time may be limited through a court order and kinship carers may have difficulty in enforcing, or may not understand the necessity of, these limitations on family time with their own families, including the child's parents. Kinship carers may also be reluctant to facilitate family time with a particular family member, even when that arrangement is safe and in the child's best interests. Family time may therefore need to be carefully managed, monitored and supported, to ensure that it does not become unsettling and possibly harmful for the child.

Kinship local offers should identify services available to kinship carers to support the management of family time arrangements, and where necessary to offer independent supervision. Depending on the child's circumstances and local arrangements, this might be a direct service provided by the local authority children's services or an arrangement made through a contact centre or family mediation service. Local authorities should consider providing family time support for different types of kinship arrangements, including for children who are not looked after.

Practitioners should be aware of the complex circumstances many children in kinship care face and the critical importance of building and maintaining relationships for them, for example, where unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may not have a family network in the country, where a child's parent or carer is in prison, or where the child is in custody themselves.

Education and training

Kinship children often face unique educational challenges that require targeted support.

When children cease to be looked after, their educational needs are unlikely to have changed significantly simply because their care status has changed. In many cases the impact of pre-care and care experience can be a significant barrier to their educational achievement, for example attendance, which may explain the gap in attainment to non-looked-after children. Statutory guidance for local authorities, maintained schools, academies and independent schools on Working together to improve school attendance⁴⁶ should be consulted in relation to how to address such challenges for kinship children and families that arise. Evidence⁴⁷ estimates that a significant proportion of children in formal kinship care have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

To support the educational attainment of children who left local authority care through special guardianship or child arrangements order:

- a. Virtual School Heads have a statutory duty to promote the educational attainment of pupils who are no longer looked after because they are the subject of adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangements order through the provision of information and advice, upon request, to their parents, educators, and others they consider necessary
- b. all maintained schools and academies must appoint a designated teacher, who has a leadership role in promoting the educational achievement of every previously looked-after child on the school's roll. This includes making sure that all staff have high expectations of their learning and understand the importance of involving the child's parents or guardians in decisions affecting their child's education
- c. previously looked-after children attract Pupil Premium Plus funding, which is provided to help improve their education outcomes and close the attainment gap between them and their peers. It is paid to and managed by the school, with allocations based on the number of previously looked-after children recorded in the school's October school census return to the Department for Education
- d. previously looked-after children have top priority in school admissions and should be placed in schools that are best able to meet their individual needs and support their educational progress

⁴⁶ [Working together to improve school attendance: July 2026](#)

⁴⁷ [Release home - Children looked after in England including adoptions - Explore education statistics](#)

e. previously looked-after children and those in formal kinship care arrangements are also eligible to be secured a school place through Fair Access Protocols. This is the mechanism which ensures that unplaced and vulnerable children who are having difficulty securing school places in-year are allocated one promptly

Virtual School Heads have a strategic role in championing the educational outcomes of children in kinship care, regardless of their legal status. Through this role, VSHs work with education settings, local authorities and partner agencies to help children overcome barriers to learning and to improve educational outcomes. They may also provide information and advice to kinship carers and relevant professionals on request.

From September 2027, the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 will place new statutory duties on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children in kinship care, and to ensure that their VSH provides information and advice in relation to children subject to a special guardianship order (SGO) or child arrangements order (CAO), regardless of whether they were previously looked after by a local authority.

Local authorities should include in their kinship local offer information about educational support available to children in kinship care and how to access that support. The kinship local offer should also direct families to the local authority's (SEND) local offer to ensure families who need it can find that information.

Amendments to the Education (Information About Individual Pupils) (England) Regulations 2013, (effective from July 2026) will enable schools to collect data on all children living in kinship care arrangements (including informal arrangements) through the school census from the autumn 2026 term. The data and evidence collected through the census will better equip Virtual School Heads to meet their duties in relation to children in kinship care, schools to understand and meet the educational and emotional needs of these children.

Training for kinship carers

Local authorities should guide kinship carers to relevant training. Training can boost the confidence of kinship carers and equip them with skills and knowledge to provide high-quality care. Local authorities may wish to include training in their local offer, for example information about different types of kinship care, parenting support and training in self-care (which have both been found to improve carer wellbeing⁴⁸), knowledge about child development and how to manage challenging behaviours, or practical information on how

⁴⁸ [Foundations Practice Guide on Kinship Care](#)

to navigate the children's social care system, register for a new school or how to access a GP.

Consideration should be given on how best to support carers in accessing and completing training. Kinship carers may be expected to undertake training within timescales that are not always realistic, particularly given the number of children they may be caring for and the complexity of the needs they are managing. Additionally, some kinship carers may be less familiar or confident with digital systems, including accessing online training platforms or maintaining electronic foster carer records and diaries. Providing practical support, flexible delivery options, and realistic expectations around completion times can help ensure that training requirements are achievable and do not place additional pressure on carers.

Accommodation

Kinship carers may need support with accommodation as their homes may not be of sufficient capacity to take on the care of a child or possibly a sibling group of children. Living in cramped conditions may impact the wellbeing of the child and their family and add to the pressures of caring for a child.

Housing authorities and registered social landlords should be engaged to ensure that their policies recognise the importance of the role performed by kinship carers, and that, whenever possible, kinship carers living in social housing are given appropriate priority to move to more suitable accommodation if this will prevent the need for a child to become looked after or to enable a sibling group to be placed together, where that is in their best interests.

Kinship local offers should help to ensure that housing and social care services work in partnership to support the housing needs which may face kinship carers across the range of legal circumstances outlined in [Chapter 3](#).

Local authorities have the power under section 17 of the 1989 Act to give financial support towards accommodation costs where they assess this as the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote a child's welfare.

Financial support

Local authority powers to make payments in respect of children in need are outlined under section 17(6) of the 1989 Act but only apply to a child in need in line with the legal framework. Provision of financial support for special guardians can also be made under section 14F of the 1989 Act.

The kinship local offer should set out the eligibility criteria for any financial support available. It should identify how kinship carers can apply for financial support, the

circumstances in which they will be eligible for financial support, when means testing for financial support will apply, and how and when decisions are made about eligibility. Where financial support is offered, a written agreement should be drawn up detailing the level and duration of the support that is to be provided, and the mechanism for review, to ensure that all parties remain clear about the arrangements.

Carers in different circumstances need to be aware of their entitlement to any state benefits and allowances, such as child benefit and child tax credit, and how to apply for any discretionary financial support which may be available. There should also be no detriment in terms of kinship financial support to kinship carers in receipt of disability benefit when means testing for financial support.

Kinship carers may need financial assistance for one-off expenditure, such as for school clothing or bedroom furniture, or on a more regular basis either to enable them to make adjustments or to make it possible to continue to care for a child in the longer term. Whilst FNSPs are not intended to replace Kinship Allowances, a FNSP may be appropriate where the eligibility is met, for children under Family Help, s.47 and s.31. More information on FNSPs can be found in this guidance or in the [Families First Partnership Programme Guide](#).

Other kinds of support

Legal support

A kinship local offer should set out the independent legal support and specialist advice that may be available to kinship carers and prospective kinship carers, including the eligibility for and extent of that support. This should cover any legal support provided by the local authority, partner organisations or the voluntary sector as well as when kinship carers or prospective kinship carers may be eligible for legal aid.

Legal aid can help with the costs of legal advice, representation in court or at a tribunal or family mediation. The current statutory framework governing the provision of legal aid in England and Wales is set out in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO)⁴⁹, and its supporting secondary legislation. LASPO sets out the categories of case for which legal aid services can be provided, subject to relevant means and merits tests.

In certain public family proceedings, legal aid may be available for those with parental responsibility and third parties, such as prospective kinship carers and kinship carers where they have been, or are seeking to be, joined as a party to proceedings by the court and subject to meeting the relevant means and merits tests.

⁴⁹ [Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

In private family proceedings, legal aid may be available for prospective kinship carers and kinship carers in relation to special guardianship orders. Legal aid may also be available for prospective kinship carers and kinship carers in some other private family proceedings, for example, for child arrangement proceedings where there has been or is a risk of relevant abuse, as well as for family mediation. To be eligible, means and merits tests, and evidence requirements also usually need to be met.

A local authority can also choose to offer support for legal costs to a prospective kinship carer, where they are not eligible for legal aid, and to kinship carers where they are facing legal challenges where the local authority continues to support the existing placement.

If a kinship carer wishes to discuss their matter with a legal aid provider and explore their eligibility and whether their case is in scope you can refer them to [Find a legal aid adviser](#) which will assist them to find a provider in the area. Individuals can also check whether they might be eligible for legal aid by going to [Check Legal Aid](#).

Links to all statutory materials as well as published guidance can be found at: [Civil legal aid: civil regulations, civil contracts, and guidance](#).

Supporting kinship carers to stay in work

Whilst in some circumstances carers may be able to take time off work due to caring responsibilities, family members sometimes take on the care of children in an emergency and may have to take unpaid time off work or a career break in order to settle the children into their new environment and to make adjustments to their own lifestyles. It will not always be possible or in the child's or carer's best long-term interests for the carer to reduce their hours and therefore income, or give up work altogether, particularly if this would lead to future financial hardship which would impact on the care provided for the child. The Department for Education has produced guidance setting out information for employers on supporting kinship carers at work: [Kinship carers in the workplace](#).

Kinship carers may be entitled to a range of workplace rights and arrangements designed to help employees balance work and caring responsibilities. These can include flexible working arrangements, time off for dependants in emergencies involving a child or dependant, and other forms of family-related leave, subject to relevant eligibility requirements.

Employees have a day-one right to take up to one week of unpaid Carer's Leave in any 12-month period to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need.

Flexible working arrangements, including part-time working, flexitime, job-sharing, remote working and hybrid working where appropriate, can help kinship carers manage both the immediate impact of taking on the care of a child and the longer-term responsibilities of raising them. Employees also have a day-one right to request flexible working arrangements, which employers must consider reasonably.

Immediate short term financial support may be especially necessary to enable this period of transition. Where carers are employed, the employer will be able to provide information about any relevant parental leave entitlements though eligibility may depend on the carer having parental responsibility (or meeting other qualifying conditions). Not all kinship carers will qualify for statutory unpaid parental leave.

There is currently no specific statutory entitlement to paid kinship care leave in UK employment law, although some employers voluntarily provide enhanced paid leave for kinship carers.

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)

A family network consists of a group of people who have an interest in, and are important to, the child's welfare. This can include parents or any other person with parental responsibility, relatives, friends or other persons connected with the child; for example, step-parents, siblings, grandparents, close family friends, teachers or faith leaders.

Family networks can provide vital support to help families stay together and thrive. Where this is not possible, they may be able to offer a safe, loving and stable home, including through a kinship care arrangement, helping to prevent children from entering local authority care.

Local authorities should prioritise family-led solutions. Early and meaningful engagement with family networks (including overseas relations who may not be otherwise identified until care proceedings are instigated) can help reduce the need for statutory intervention and improve outcomes for children. Family networks should be involved from the early help stage and, where appropriate, throughout a family's involvement with children's social care, as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

FGDM is a family-led process through which the family network develops a plan to address concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing. Effective FGDM recognises and mobilises the strengths and resources available within the family network, enabling those within the network to identify and agree solutions that support the child's welfare.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 places a duty on local authorities to offer an FGDM meeting at the pre-proceedings stage to parents, or others with parental responsibility, where this is in the child's best interests. To support implementation of this duty, the Department for Education has published [Best practice guidance and resources for local authorities](#). This includes best practice guidance on ensuring that the FGDM process is safe for those involved and safeguarding considerations.

The Department for Education does not prescribe a specific model of FGDM, but local authorities are encouraged to consider the evidence supporting family group conferences

(FGCs).⁵⁰ An FGC is a voluntary process facilitated by an independent coordinator. Evidence indicates that the use of FGCs at the pre-proceedings stage can reduce the likelihood of children entering care.

FGDM can help clarify expectations, coordinate support, and identify what may be needed to sustain kinship arrangements or, where appropriate, support reunification. It complements whole-family approaches to planning and can assist local authorities in clearly identifying roles, responsibilities and support available through the kinship local offer.

As part of the FGDM process, local authorities should make clear the support available for members of the family network who do take on some caring responsibilities as part of any family-led plan made. FGDM meetings should also be used as an early opportunity to inform those who might be able to act as kinship carers in the future, should a family-led plan fail to keep a child safe with their parents, about the potential types of kinship arrangements, routes and the implications these may have for eligibility for support.

Family involvement in decision-making remains important at all stages of a child's journey through children's social care. Local authorities should consider offering families FGDM at the earliest appropriate opportunity. Where a child becomes looked after before an FGDM meeting has taken place, for example following an emergency, the local authority should consider offering one at a later stage, including where reunification with parents or the wider family network is being explored. An offer of FGDM may be revisited as circumstances change, including where a family has previously declined to participate.

Local authorities should have clear arrangements in place for delivering FGDM. While the Department for Education does not mandate a model, these arrangements could include referrer knowledge of the FGC model and how it can benefit families, improve uptake and access for minoritised families ensuring that consent is genuinely informed. These should be described within the kinship local offer. More information on expectations for delivering FGDM can be found in the [FFP programme guide](#). Foundations has also [Family Group Conferences: Service design & family experience](#), which can further support local authorities.

Family Network Support Packages (FNSPs)

As part of the FGDM process, local authorities should routinely consider whether a Family Network Support Package (FNSP) can facilitate a family-led solution to support a child.

FNSPs are a preventative tool, providing targeted funding for practical or financial support. For example, they can be used to fund items such as a car seat, to enable a family network member to provide support transporting children to school, or bedroom furniture to

⁵⁰ [Family Group Conferences: Service design & family experience - Foundations](#)

allow family network members to provide a safe home environment separate from the family home. FNSPs can therefore be essential to unlocking the support of the family network. They should be bespoke to individual families' needs and co-designed with them, through FGDM, to ensure they are targeting specific barriers the family network face in providing support.

The primary aim of an FNSP is to unlock family network support to enable children to remain safely under the parental responsibility of their parents or those with parental responsibility at the time of FGDM. Even small initiatives can help to harness that support; for example monies for a baby cot and bath package so a grandmother can look after a baby once a week, or plane tickets for family who live abroad to come and stay for a short period.

FNSPs can be used for short term support needs, building sustainable support for ongoing network involvement, or to allow family networks to quickly mobilise, if, and when crisis occurs. They should be used throughout the system, building family network support into support plans from early involvement with children's services, through to pre-proceedings, and reviewed regularly. When there could be a consideration of reunification, a holistic approach that recognises the needs and responsibilities of everyone in the family, including birth parents, is necessary. FGDM can be seen as one of the pathways for reunification, with this arrangement potentially supported through a FNSP.

FNSPs are not designed to replace kinship allowances. Where a child is subject to a care order and is under s.17 or s.47, FNSPs can be used to bolster the support of the wider family network to support the child with the aim to stabilise the arrangement and reduce escalation.

FGDM and FNSPs are being delivered by local authorities as part of Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme. Further detail on the scope and eligibility of the FNSP policy is detailed in the [FFP programme guide](#).

Types of arrangements that should be covered by the kinship local offer

In drafting the kinship local offer, local authorities should consider how it applies to all kinship families (both informal and formal), including the different groups described below.

Private fostering arrangements

The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering⁵¹ require the local authority to have a written statement which sets out its duties and functions in relation to private fostering

⁵¹ [The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering](#)

and the ways in which they will be carried out. This statement should define what private fostering means, making clear which relatives caring for a child will not be regarded as private foster carers within the meaning of the 1989 Act. Private foster carers may at the same time be kinship carers, and facing the same issues as other kinship carers, and so should have access to the same range of support services as informal kinship carers.

Kinship foster carers

Kinship local offers should include information about the local authority's powers and duties including circumstances in which a child may become accommodated by the local authority or in which care proceedings may be instigated, and how and by whom such decisions are made.

The Statement of Purpose for the local authority's fostering service, prepared in accordance with regulation 3 of the 2011 Regulations, must spell out the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the services and facilities provided by it. The kinship local offer should incorporate this information in so far as it relates particularly to kinship carers who are approved as foster carers. Fostering services should deliver services in a way which ensures that kinship foster carers are fully supported to care for children placed with them and are not disadvantaged as a result of their prior relationship with the child. This includes access to training to support them in their role. Kinship foster carers may benefit from some services being delivered in a different way, but there should be equity of provision and entitlement. It is not acceptable to discriminate against kinship foster carers on the basis that they have a pre-existing connection with the child they are caring for.

Special guardianship, child arrangements orders and adoption

Local authorities should identify in their kinship local offer where further information can be found in relation to people in whose favour a special guardianship order, child arrangements order or adoption order has been made, and by what means these kinship carers may seek support services.

Advice and guidance should be made available to kinship carers regarding the respective implications of orders which give them parental responsibility, so that they fully understand the implications of applying for such an order. Section 17 of The Special Guardianship Regulations 2005⁵² continue to set out for local authorities' responsibilities on reviewing annually special guardianship support plans, including the appropriateness of the support plan if the carer's and/or family circumstance's change and the timescales to review such plans. The local authority's responsibility with regards to reviewing special guardianship support plans should be set out in the kinship local offer.

⁵² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/1109>

Annex A: Glossary of other definitions

In this guidance:

- a. “the 1989 Act” means the Children Act 1989;
- b. “the 1996 Hague Convention” means the 1996 Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children”
- c. “the 2010 Regulations” means the Care Planning Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010;
- d. “the 2011 Regulations” means the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011;
- e. “the 2026 Act” means the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026
- f. “care plan” means the plan for the future care of a looked after child prepared in accordance with Part 2 of the 2010 Regulations;
- g. “a child in need” is defined in section 17(10) of the 1989 Act, which provides that a child shall be taken to be in need if (a) 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 him of services by a local authority under this Part; (b) his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or (c) he is disabled;
- h. “child” means a person under the age of 18.
- i. “foster carer” means a person who is approved as a foster parent (by a local authority or an independent fostering agency) in accordance with regulation 27 of the Regulations 2011, or temporarily approved under regulation 24 of the 2010 Regulations;
- j. “fostering service” means a local authority fostering service;
- k. “independent review mechanism” means a review process that prospective or existing foster carers can access when they do not agree with the qualifying determination letter sent to them by their Fostering Service Provider Agency Decision Maker. The review process is conducted by a review panel which is independent of a fostering service provider.
- l. “informal arrangement” include (i) a private family arrangement in which a close family member who does not hold parental responsibility raises a child and the local authority has had no major role in making the arrangement and where the family court has not made an order in respect of care of the child; (ii) where a child under the age of 16 is being provided with

accommodation for less than 28 days by an individual in their own home who is not a close relative; (iii) where a 16- or 17-year old is being provided with accommodation by an individual who is not a close relative in their own home. References to “informal arrangements” in this guidance do not include arrangements where the child is looked after by the local authority or where the child placed for adoption, or subject to a child arrangements order or a special guardianship order. The legislation which governs these arrangements does not apply to an informal arrangement.

m. “looked after child” means a person under 18 who is subject to a care order under section 31 of the 1989 Act (including an interim care order), or is accommodated under section 20 of that Act (see s22 of the Act);

n. “Non-agency adoption”, also known as independent adoption, is a type of adoption in which an adoption agency is not involved, such as in applications by step-parents or by relatives of the child;

o. “parent” includes any birth parent, with or without parental responsibility for the child, any step parent, with or without parental responsibility for the child, who is in a subsisting relationship with the birth parent, any adoptive parent, any parent by virtue of section 42 or section 43 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008, whether or not they have parental responsibility for the child, any parent by virtue of section 42 or section 43 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008, whether or not they have parental responsibility for the child.

p. “parental responsibility” has the meaning given by section 3 of the 1989 Act, being all the rights, duties, powers responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property;

q. “private fostering arrangement” means an arrangement where a child who is under 16 (or 18 if disabled) and who has not been provided with accommodation by the local authority, is cared for and accommodated by someone who does not have parental responsibility and is not a relative, and the arrangement continues for a period of 28 days or more or is intended to do so;

r. “relative” means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent, as defined in section 105 of the 1989 Act;

s. “responsible authority” means, in relation to a looked after child, the local authority or voluntary organisation as the case may be, responsible for the child’s placement.

Abuse - A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others.

This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour and economic or financial abuse, where they see, hear, or experience its effects.

Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or extra-familial context by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. This includes in teenage relationships, or under the guise of 'honour' based abuse including forced marriage and female genital mutilation, or abuse related to faith or belief such as allegations of demonic possession.

Care proceedings - When a local authority needs to get involved with a family to keep a child safe, they may initiate court proceedings, known as care proceedings.

Child in need - defined in section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of children's social care services, or the child is disabled.

Child protection - Part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

Children and young people - In the National Framework the term 'children and young people' refers to people under the age of 18 or 25. A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.

Children in care - In the National Framework the term 'children in care' refers to all children whose care is being provided by the local authority. Legislation uses the term 'looked-after children' to refer to children who are being cared for by the local authority, whether that is under section 20, or sections 22 and 31 of the Children Act 1989. Legally, the language of 'children in care' does not include children accommodated and looked after under section 20. However, children and young people often tell local and central government that the term 'looked-after children' is unhelpful, and we have made the deliberate choice to use 'children in care' throughout the National Framework to refer to all children, regardless of the legal provision under which they are being cared for by the local authority.

Disability - The Equality Act 2010 defines a person as having a disability if they have a physical impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. It also outlines that a reference to a disabled person is a reference to a person who has a disability. For guidance on how to apply this definition to specific circumstances, please see Disability: Equality Act 2010 - Guidance on matters to be taken into account in determining questions relating to the definition of disability.

Domestic abuse - The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced the first ever statutory definition of domestic abuse (section 1 of the Act). The statutory definition is clear that domestic abuse may be a single incident or a course of conduct which can encompass a wide range of abusive behaviours, including a) physical or sexual abuse; b) violent or threatening behaviour; c) controlling or coercive behaviour; d) economic abuse; and e) psychological, emotional or other abuse. Under the statutory definition, both the person who is carrying out the behaviour and the person to whom the behaviour is directed towards must be aged 16 or over and they must be 'personally connected' (as defined in section 2 of the 2021 Act). The definition ensures that different types of relationships are captured, including ex-partners and family members.

Education providers, settings and childcare settings - Education providers and childcare settings work with children up to the age of 18. They include schools, alternative provision, pupil referral units and further education. Early education provision within schools and maintained nurseries are also classed as education providers and childcare settings as are private nurseries and childminders.

Family Help – Family Help aims to improve outcomes for children by understanding and responding to their needs, and to the circumstances of their family, as early as possible. It takes place at the heart of communities, bringing together local services under a combined, multi-disciplinary practice approach and service offer. Family Help (including targeted early help) is further defined in the: [The Families First Partnership \(FFP\) Programme Guide](#)

Family group conference (FGC) - this is one model of family group decision-making.

Family group decision-making (FGDM) - Family group decision-making is an umbrella term for voluntary, family-led decision-making forums in which a child's family network has all the resources, adequate preparation, relevant information and a safe and appropriate environment to make a plan in response to concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing, working alongside skilled professionals. At pre-proceedings stage, practitioners should consider the use of an independent coordinator and families should be offered "private family time", unless there are safeguarding concerns which would mean this might be considered inappropriate or unsafe. The Department for Education does not prescribe a particular model for delivering family group decision-making. However, local partnerships should consider the strong evidence for the family group conference model. In both domestic and international studies, family group conferences have been shown to be

highly effective in supporting families, improving decision-making processes and diverting children from care.

Family network - A group of people close to a child made up of relatives and non-related connected people (where connected people has the same definition used in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010²⁴¹ in addition to close family friends who have a connection with the child) A family network could include step-parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, godparents, or close family friends.

Family Network Support Package (FNSP) - FNSPs are targeted funding for practical support. For example, funding items, such as a car seat, to enable a family network member to provide support transporting children to school, or a loft conversion to enable family network members to provide a safe home environment separate from the family home. FNSPs should be bespoke to individual families' needs and co-designed with them, through FGDM, to ensure they are targeting specific barriers the family network face in providing support. Expectations for FNSP support is further defined in the [Families First Partnership \(FFP\) Programme Guide](#).

Kinship care - When a child lives full-time or most of the time with a relative, friend or connected person and that person provides most or all of the child's care. It does not include parents, foster carers with no prior connection to the child, or anyone caring in a professional capacity. Kinship care arrangements can be formal (underpinned by legal orders and kinship foster care arrangements) or informal (such as where a close family member is caring without a legal order in place).

Looked-after child - A child is looked after by a local authority if they are provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours (section 20 Children Act 1989) or are subject to a care order (defined in section 22(1) Children Act 1989).

Multi-agency working - Working across organisations to meet children's needs including effective information sharing, joint decision making and co-ordinated interventions.

Multi-disciplinary working - A range of practitioners and professionals from different backgrounds working together to enable the best outcomes for children.

Parent carer - A person aged 18 or over who provides or intends to provide care for a disabled child for whom the person has parental responsibility.

Relative - The Children Act 1989 (section 105)²⁴⁶ defines a relative as in relation to a child, meaning a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent. This guidance uses this definition and includes cousins when referring to relatives.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children - Defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development (Children Act 1989 Section 105)
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- promoting the upbringing of children with their parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework

Safeguarding partners - A safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 as: (a) the local authority, (b) an integrated care board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area, and (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area. The three safeguarding partners should agree on ways to co-ordinate their safeguarding services, act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others, and implement local and national learning, including from serious child safeguarding incidents. To fulfil this role, the 3 safeguarding partners must set out how they will work together and with any relevant agencies as well as arrangements for conducting local reviews.

Targeted early help - refers to targeted support delivered to children and families through Family Help who have multiple and or complex needs. Families receiving this support will have a plan in place and will be appointed a lead practitioner. This support takes place before statutory intervention.

Trauma - The government defines trauma as follows: "Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as harmful or life threatening. While unique to the individual, generally the experience of trauma can cause lasting adverse effects, limiting the ability to function and achieve mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being."⁵³

Virtual School Head (VSH) - in charge of promoting the educational achievement of all the children looked after by the local authority they work for.

Young carer - A young carer is a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person (of any age, except generally where that care is provided for payment,

⁵³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice>

pursuant to a contract or as voluntary work). Young adult carers are aged 16 to 25 and may have different support needs as they transition to adulthood.

Annex B: Different types of kinship arrangements

Table 1: Different types of kinship arrangements

Type of kinship arrangement	Parental responsibility	Approval process	Duration of placement	Supervision of placement	Minimum support that should be available to the carer and the child/ren
Informal Kinship Care	Informal arrangements are when a close family member or friend look after a child for a temporary or permanent amount of time. This arrangement is agreed privately with the parents and parental responsibility for the child remains with the parents.	None.	Subject to the discretion of the person with parental responsibility.	None.	• Access to local peer to peer support groups • Access to Kinship's training offer • Access to the Family Rights Group's free Family and Friends Helpline

Type of kinship arrangement	Parental responsibility	Approval process	Duration of placement	Supervision of placement	Minimum support that should be available to the carer and the child/ren
Private Fostering	In England, private foster carers are individuals or families who look after a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if the child has disabilities) for more than 28 days, but who are not close relatives of the child. These arrangements typically occur without the involvement of the local authority. Private foster carers have a significant responsibility for the child's welfare during their time in their care. While they don't have parental responsibility in the same way that birth parents do, they do have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. This includes providing the child with a safe and nurturing environment, ensuring their physical and emotional needs are met, and promoting their education and development.	The arrangement is assessed by LA, but the carer is not 'approved' as a local authority foster carer. The arrangement may be prohibited if assessed by the local authority as unsuitable. Additionally, private foster carers are required by law to notify their local authority of any private fostering arrangement, allowing the authority to assess the suitability of the arrangement and provide support and oversight if necessary.	Subject to discretion of person with parental responsibility and readiness of private foster carer.	It is not a placement, but there are statutory visits to child by social worker (minimum 6 weekly in first year, then 12 weekly).	This is a private arrangement, and there is limited support available from the local authority, however, these carers may wish to access some of the support available to informal kinship carers as set out above.

Type of kinship arrangement	Parental responsibility	Approval process	Duration of placement	Supervision of placement	Minimum support that should be available to the carer and the child/ren
Kinship Carers with a 'lives with' Child Arrangements Order (CAO). <i>(In 2014, Child Arrangements Orders replaced Residence Orders and Contact Orders)</i>	Child Arrangements Orders are granted by the family court and determine who a child can live with and/or who a child can stay with and for how long and determine contact. The kinship carer shares parental responsibility with the child's parents, or others with parental responsibility, until the age of 18 unless the court states otherwise.	Appointed by court following application.	Age 18 unless varied or discharged by the court before the child reaches 18 years.	None.	All of the support available to informal kinship carers, plus: • if the kin child/ren is previously looked after they will be eligible to apply to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) • a range of educational support is available, particularly to previously looked after kinship children, as set out in the educational support section of the guidance

Type of kinship arrangement	Parental responsibility	Approval process	Duration of placement	Supervision of placement	Minimum support that should be available to the carer and the child/ren
Kinship Carers with a Special Guardianship Order (SGO)	They have parental responsibility for a child following an order made by the family court. SGO Kinship carers live permanently with their children but need permission from the court to make important decisions, such as changing the child's surname.	Appointed by court, following application from the applicant. LA must investigate the matter and prepare a report for the court dealing with the suitability of the applicant to be a special guardian.	Age 18 unless varied or discharged by the court before the child reaches 18 years.	None.	All of the support available to kinship carers with a CAO, plus: financial support may be available at the discretion of the local authority.
Kinship Foster Carers	They look after children who are "looked after" by the local authority following a voluntary agreement, if a child spends more than 24 hours in local authority care under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 or if a Care Order is made by the family court.	Approved as local authority foster carers in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations. (If child is looked after, carers must be approved as foster carers even if close relative.)	So long as placement remains in line with child's care plan, as determined by the LA.	Statutory: visits to child by social worker and supervision of foster carers by supervising social worker.	Kinship Foster Carers are entitled to the same support as any other local authority foster carer, based on the NMA. This is set out in more detail in chapter 3 .

Type of kinship arrangement	Parental responsibility	Approval process	Duration of placement	Supervision of placement	Minimum support that should be available to the carer and the child/ren
Adoption	Parental responsibility transfers to adopters and legal relationship with birth parents is severed.	Adoption agency assesses and approves prospective adopters, court makes order regarding specific child. If the child is not looked after then notice of intention to adopt must be given to the LA who then carry out an assessment / report for the court.	Permanent lifelong relationship.	When child is placed for adoption by the LA, the placement is supervised and there are statutory reviews. Once the adoption order is made, none.	Entitlement to assessment for adoption support services, which may be provided at discretion of LA in accordance with Regulations and NMS. Adopters and adopted children are entitled to therapeutic support from the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund.

Annex C: Helpful information and contacts

Information and support as of the 2026 update of this guidance.

Improving the Kinship Local Offer and Approach to Kinship Care [Insight report: February 2026](#)

- A report from the National Kinship Care Ambassador summarising learning from engagement with kinship carers, parents, children and young people, local authorities, voluntary and community sector organisations, ADCS and the National Association of Virtual School Heads. It outlines key themes and considerations identified as relevant when designing and developing a kinship local offer, that is transparent, equitable, responsive to the needs of kinship families.

Designing and delivering services for children and families - [Foundations Implementation Framework](#)

- This implementation framework aims to acknowledge the complexities facing local authorities while offering a structure for integrating evidence into local systems that support children and families.

Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB)

- CFAB provides free wrap-around support to migrant and refugee kinship families, as well as free social work advice and factsheets to professionals on International Kinship Care and can arrange overseas assessments/welfare visits.
- Website: www.cfab.org.uk. Free professional Advice Line: 02037807222.

Coram Children's Legal Centre (CCLC)

- Coram Children's Legal Centre provides free independent legal advice and factsheets to children, parents, carers and professionals.
- Website: www.childlawadvice.org.uk. Telephone number: 0300 330 5480.

Family Lives

- Family Lives offer free online and phone support for parents and carers on various topics, such as mental health, behaviour, bullying, divorce, finances, welfare rights and more.
- Website: www.familylives.org.uk. Telephone number: 0808 800 2222.

Family Rights Group (FRG)

- Family Rights Group provides specialist advice to parents, kinship carers, relatives and friends who are involved with children's services in England or need their help. Family Rights Group's advice service is free, independent and confidential. It supports families to understand the law and child welfare processes when social workers or courts are making decisions about their children. The service offers a website packed with useful advice resources, online forums, a free telephone advice line, a webchat service, and online enquiry form.
- Website: www.frg.org.uk/get-help-and-advice , Advice line: 0808 801 0366 (open Monday to Friday 9.30am to 3pm, excluding bank holidays)

Kinship

- Kinship is a national charity for kinship care in England and Wales. It supports grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and family friends who care for children when their parents cannot. The charity provides information, advice, training, and support, including peer support groups and training services. Website: www.kinship.org.uk. Advice line: Kinship carers can call during these hours for free on 0300 123 7015. The phone line is open Monday – Friday, 9:30am – 2pm. Kinship carers can also use the Kinship Compass to find out about local information and support: [In your area - Kinship](#)
- Kinship lead on the departmental contract for peer to peer support groups across England. You may wish to find a local group online [here](#) or to get in touch directly with Kinship via their website [here](#).
- Kinship also lead on the departmental training and support programme for kinship carers across England. You can find more information about what training and support is available [here](#).
- Professionals working with kinship carers can access information about Kinship here: <https://kinship.org.uk/for-professionals/>



Department
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