



Kinship Care: State of the Nation 2018

Olivia Mervyn-Smith

Charity number 1093975

Foreword

This year, for the first time, over 1,000 kinship carers responded to our survey. That's 1,139 carers taking time out of their busy, often complicated lives to tell us how they feel. 1,139 families taking on the extraordinary challenge of raising a friend or a relative's child, often, as you'll read, with little or no support. I'm grateful to each and every one of them, and because of what they've told us, we can convey a very clear message: enough is enough.

This report is a wake-up call to the Government. Kinship carers are being pushed to the brink. They are dedicated, resourceful, resilient people who have stepped in to do the right thing, but the system around them is letting them down. Nearly a third – 32% – are worried about their health and whether they'll be able to keep going. If they can't, that would be around 64,000 children who might need to go into local authority care. The cost of that? £2.1 billion per year.

Kinship carers are tired of not being recognised, not being supported – financially, emotionally or otherwise. We hear too many stories of carers having to fight for what they're entitled to, or being left to raise vulnerable children without any help. Enough is enough. We're calling for the Government to give kinship care equal status with other permanence arrangements – which means investment at every level, and legislation so that the importance of supporting all children in kinship care and their carers is recognised in law.

Investing in kinship care makes sense. We urge the Government to make the step change in support that's needed before it's too late.

Dr Lucy Peake
Chief Executive
Grandparents Plus

Introduction

The Kinship Care: State of the Nation Survey

The findings in this report are based on the largest survey of kinship carers ever - 1,139 kinship carers living in the UK. The survey was promoted widely, including to over 4,000 members of the Grandparents Plus Kinship Care Network, through Grandparents Plus' Kinship Connected programme as well as via local authorities and social media channels. Surveys were completed using online and postal questionnaires between May – July 2018.

About Grandparents Plus

Grandparents Plus is the national charity supporting grandparents and kinship carers, here for any relative or friend when they step in to care for children whose parents are unable to look after them. Through our free kinship care advice service, practical support programmes, and national network, we make sure all kinship carers have somewhere to turn for help. Our research and campaigns give a voice to kinship carers and children and young people in kinship care, as we fight for better recognition and support for kinship families across the country.

Context

There are estimated to be around 200,000 children living with kinship carers in the UK.¹ Just over half are grandparents but there are many others including older brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, cousins and family friends. A number of legal arrangements can be made to formalise kinship care placements, including Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs), Child Arrangements Orders (CAOs), which were formerly known as Residence Orders (ROs), family and friends foster care (can also be known as kinship/connected person foster care – whereby the child remains a looked after child and in local authority care), or a more informal arrangement.

The most relevant statutory framework around kinship care is the [Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Family and Friends Care](#), which is referred to throughout this report, and states that *'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.'* (Section 1.2)

Research has consistently found that children and young people in kinship care have experienced similar adversities to children who are looked after by the local authority (for example, see [Growing Up in Kinship Care: Experiences as Adolescents and Outcomes in Young Adulthood](#) (Grandparents Plus, 2017) and [The Poor Relations? Children and Informal Carers Speak Out](#) (Buttle UK, 2013). The Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Family and

¹ Dinithi Wijedasa's analysis of 2011 census data, accessible [here](#) estimates around 180,000 children were living in kinship care with a family member. It is estimated that 20,000 children and young people are being raised by a friend.

Friends Care sets out an intention that they should be supported according to their needs. However, whatever the intention, the reality for kinship carers is that access to support continues to be determined by legal order, not the needs of children. Children who are looked after by a family and friends foster carer are entitled to the same support as other children in foster care. Children cared for under a Special Guardianship Order can be entitled to limited support only when they were previously looked after by the local authority immediately prior to the SGO being granted. Others – the vast majority of children in kinship care – have no entitlement to support. There is a useful summary from The Kinship Care Guide for England (2018) included as an appendix to this report.

The results of our survey highlight the marked variations in support, both financial and practical, that is available to kinship carers who are looking after children under different legal arrangements. In addition, and new for this year, our survey explores some of the unique stresses associated with kinship care, and their impact on the health and wellbeing of kinship carers.

This year's recommendations echo those of previous reports, but also highlight that the statutory guidance is not being implemented. There is therefore a need for fundamental, legislative change and investment to ensure that the right support is available to both children growing up in kinship care and their carers.

'I gave up everything
to take on care of my
grandson.'

At a glance

- The majority of respondents (79%) are grandparents. Aunts and uncles make up 11% of the carers.
- 61% are married/living with a partner; 34% are single carers.
- Parental drug or alcohol misuse (51%), abuse and/or neglect (54%), a parent being unable to cope (39%), domestic violence (31%) and the death of a parent (7%); are the most common reasons children are living in kinship care.
- Carers report that over half (54%) of the children in their care have special needs. Of these, 85% have emotional or behavioural problems.
- The majority of respondents are taking care of children under a Special Guardianship Order (57%), 16% have a Residence Order and 5% have a Child Arrangements Order. 10% say they are foster carers, and 9% have no legal order. 2% were unsure of the legal arrangement.
- Over a third of kinship carers (36%) say they find it difficult to make ends meet. While 66% of carers are receiving a financial allowance from their local authority, just 26% say they're getting the financial support they need.
- Overall, only 14% of carers say they're getting the support they need to bring up the child(ren), and only 11% say they are getting the emotional support they need.
- Equally, only 11% agree that they are getting the information they need from their local authority, although 27% of carers say they got the support they needed when the children first moved in.
- 26% of carers said their physical health has been worse and 52% said that their mental health had been worse since becoming a kinship carer.
- 32% of carers in our survey said they were worried about their mental and physical health and their ability to carry out their kinship care role. Should these carers no longer be able to care for their children, **this would mean an estimated 64,000 children would be at risk of going into local authority foster or residential care.**



Meet the families

Most of the survey respondents are members of our national network for kinship carers. While, as in previous years, we've received responses from a high proportion of grandparents, the survey reflects a wide range of kinship care experiences, with different legal arrangements, financial situations and support histories all represented.

About the carers

- 89% of kinship carers who responded to our survey are women.
- The majority of respondents (79%) are grandparents. Aunts and uncles make up 11% of the carers.
- 61% are married/living with a partner; 34% are single carers.
- 59% of carers in our survey are raising one child, 28% are raising two children, and 13% are raising three or more children.
- 85% are working age; 76% are aged 45-64; and 15% are over 65. The majority of carers are over 55 (55%).
- 36% of kinship carers are in paid work, 21% are retired, and 12% are unemployed. Just under a third (30%) of kinship carers are not working due to ill health or caring responsibilities.
- On becoming a kinship carer, 44% of carers say they gave up work, and 23% reduced their hours to care for the child(ren).
- The majority of kinship carers reported their health over the last 12 months as fair (42%) or good (31%). 18% said their health had been poor, and 3% reported it as very poor.

About the children in kinship care

- Parental drug or alcohol misuse (51%), abuse and/or neglect (54%), a parent being unable to cope (39%), domestic violence (31%) and the death of a parent (7%); are the most common reasons children are living in kinship care.
- Carers report that over half (54%) of the children in their care have special needs. Of these, 85% have emotional or behavioural problems, 34% have a learning difficulty/disability, 26% have autistic spectrum

disorder/Asperger's, 13% have a long-term or chronic health problem, 11% have foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and 7% have a physical disability.

- The majority of respondents are taking care of children under a Special Guardianship Order (57%), 16% have a Residence Order and 5% have a Child Arrangements Order.

'We are the forgotten. Once you get the orders nobody is interested.'

Finance

Key statistics:

- Over a third of kinship carers (36%) say they find it difficult to make ends meet. Just 26% say they're getting the financial support they need.
- Only carers who are registered as family and friends foster carers are entitled to a national minimum allowance to cover the cost of raising a child. Overall, 66% of kinship carers surveyed said they are receiving regular financial allowances from their local authority, but many say the amounts are inadequate.
- Nearly half of respondents (49%) say they would be immediately unable to pay their rent or mortgage if they lost their main source of income.

The majority of kinship carers continue to struggle financially and our survey highlights the precarious financial reality for many.

'Having to give up work has given us a massive financial strain. I have used all my savings and struggle weekly.'

Who is getting financial support?

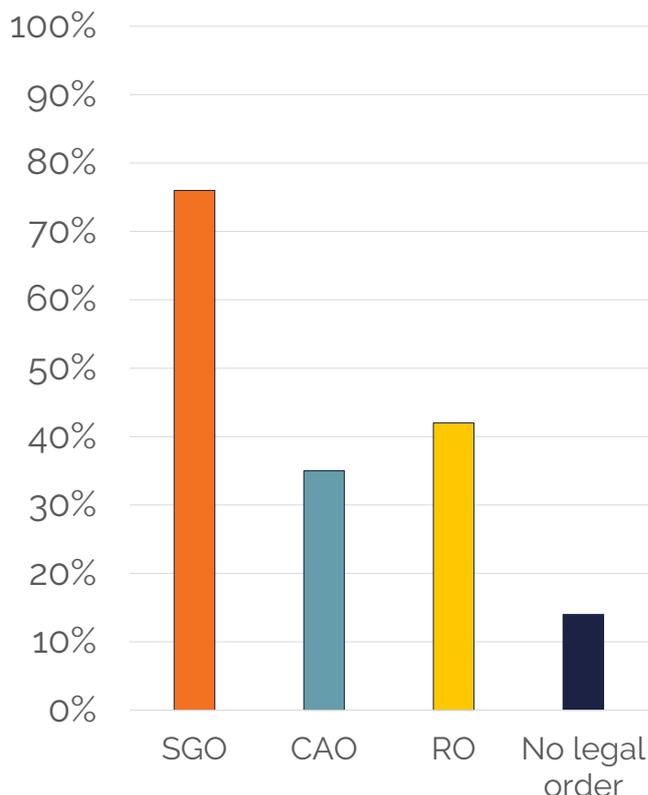
66% of kinship carers surveyed said they are receiving regular financial allowances from their local authority, however, this varies enormously according to legal order. Family and friends foster carers are entitled to a national minimum allowance to cover the costs of raising someone else's child, while allowances for other kinship carers are typically means tested and discretionary and so vary from place to place, carer to carer. Our survey highlights that further research is needed to understand the postcode lottery facing carers who need financial support.

Overall, only 26% of kinship carers feel they are getting the financial support they need to raise the children in their care. As expected, this reflects the pattern of allowances by legal order.

'I don't get enough money to cover the bills, food, leisure etc, so we hardly ever go places. I have to juggle bills and which ones I'm going to pay.'

54% of foster carers say they are getting the financial support they need, more than double the percentage of special guardians (25%), and three times as many as the number of carers with a Residence Order (17%). Of the kinship carers with no legal order, only 9% say they are getting the financial support they need.

Figure 1: Proportion of carers receiving an allowance by legal order



The financial impact of kinship care

Overall, 36% of kinship carers surveyed said they find it difficult to make ends meet, with only 15% saying they are managing well financially.

'Our life is a constant struggle. Every day we find it difficult to provide for the boys. We are always in debt and sometimes find it difficult to even provide proper meals.'

The anxiety surrounding not being able to provide for the children undoubtedly creates additional stress, with over half (53%) saying their income was insufficient to meet the children's needs. 65% said they found their financial situation stressful.

'The £54 a week I receive from social services a week is really inadequate. But as this is a discretionary payment there is nothing you can do.'

'We have no pension and worry sick about the future.'

For many kinship carers a lack of financial support or sufficient income, and the increasing costs associated with raising children, puts them in an extremely precarious financial position. Nearly half of our respondents (49%) would be immediately unable to pay their rent or mortgage if they lost their main source of income. 18% said they'd be able to cover the costs for one month or less.

'I am concerned about impending financial poverty.'

34% of kinship families rely on welfare benefits as their main source of income and without statutory allowances can be at the mercy of policy changes such as Universal Credit. Changes made to policy and welfare benefits often disproportionately affect kinship carers, when they are made without the proper awareness and understanding of kinship care and the challenges carers face.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has recently highlighted the high proportion of complaints received from Special Guardians that have been upheld against local authorities. Themes included:

- Poor advice to potential Special Guardians - including financial matters.
- Getting support needs right for a child subject to SGO.
- Wrongly calculating, changing or cutting special guardianship allowances.

Read the report [here](#).

'I received an allowance after finding out that I was entitled to one after speaking to Grandparents Plus. Before this life was very tough for us. I feel sad that social services told me at the time that no help was available to me, although they also said that if I hadn't taken her she would have been taken into care.'

Support

Key statistics:

- Overall, only 14% of carers say they're getting the support they need to bring up their child(ren), and only 11% say they are getting the emotional support they need.
- Equally, only 11% agree that they are getting the information they need from their local authority, although 27% of carers say they got the support they needed when the children first moved in.
- 40% of carers had attended a support group, and 20% said they'd received counselling. A worrying 24% of respondents said they'd asked for help but not been able to get any.

Accessing practical and emotional support continues to be a challenge for many carers. The majority of this section focuses on support provided by local authorities, but it is important to note the role of peer and voluntary sector support. There is growing evidence of the impact of providing support to carers (see Grandparents Plus' Kinship Connected programme).

Who is getting practical and emotional support?

The statutory guidance states explicitly that **'it is essential that services are not allocated solely on the basis of the child's legal status'** (2.12), on the grounds that all children in kinship care have experienced similar adversities and services should be used to promote their welfare and enable a successful placement. However, the survey suggests that there is both an overall lack of support and that provision of, and/or access to, support varies by the legal order the kinship carer has for the child they have stepped in to raise.

Support when the child first moves in

- Overall, just 27% of kinship carers say they got the support they needed when the child first moved in.
- 47% of local authority foster carers agreed that they got the support they needed when the child first moved in, compared with only

30% of special guardians and 11% of informal kinship carers.

Many of the carers' comments suggested that available support dropped off once they gained a legal order to care for the children:

'My local authority just drops everyone asap once they have an SGO, they certainly don't inform us that that will be the case. They were reluctant to make their family and friends policy doc available to us until requested by city councillor.'

'We are the forgotten. Once you get the orders for the grandchildren nobody is interested.'

'I feel support for kinship carers is totally inadequate and its just an expedient way to put a child in care at a low cost.'

Information and advice about available support

Only 11% kinship carers say they are getting the information and advice they need from the local authority to bring up the children.

Comments on what would be useful included:

'We want to know where support can be accessed and what support is available.'

'Needs to be clear, concise, open and honest information.'

'Advice on what your rights are, how to obtain financial support and a dedicated SGO person for good quality, factual advice.'

The statutory guidance states that **'Local authorities and their partners should make sure that family and friends carers are aware of relevant support services, and that these can be readily accessed by those caring for children whether or not these are looked after by the local authority.'** (2.12) However, any good intentions in the statutory guidance to treat all children in kinship care equally are at odds with recent

Government policy and funding developments which limit support to certain groups of children in kinship care, for example, the Adoption Support Fund is limited only to children who left care under a Special Guardianship Order.

In our survey, informal kinship carers find it hardest to access support, information and advice. According to the guidance, ***'where support services are identified as necessary to meet the child's needs, these should not be withheld merely because the child is living with a carer under an informal arrangement rather than in a placement with a foster carer or with a person with a residence or special guardianship order.'*** (Section 2.12)

Only 3% of informal carers say that they are getting the information and advice they need from their local authority and only 10% say they're getting the support they need overall.

'Just no recognition, especially if caring for the children through a private arrangement even though social services know.'

'Kinship carers are not valued and respected, they are often providing essential help long before any issues arise.'

Our survey highlights the lack of parity of support for children within kinship care and other permanence arrangements and increasing awareness, confusion and unhappiness among kinship carers about the disparity:

'I have 2 on fostering and 1 on SGO, am fighting and chasing to get help for the foster children and it's non-existent for the SGO child.'

'It is a bit confusing how you get help under one sort of order then you get no help under another order even though the circumstances of the children and the way we got them living with us is the same.'

'Social services need to recognise that although the children are living with kin, they have been

traumatised and need supporting. Also carers need to be made aware of the likelihood that the children will need support specific to their needs and given the correct training and support for the parenting styles they may need to be using. Adopters are prepared and supported.'

Support gaps

Our survey highlights the need for additional support:

- For the children – including practical support at school, counselling, widening access to the Adoption Support Fund, as well as the range of support it can fund.
- Around managing contact and family relationships (including support for birth parents).
- For kinship carers, including 'self care', respite and time off; peer support groups; training; and support with 'life story' work.

'Once the child is no longer under a local authority care order, unless you fight for help, finance or info, you and the child don't exist.'

Looked after children

The term 'looked after children' (LAC) refers to children who are in local authority care. The looked after status of a child, or being previously looked after, has significant implications regarding the support, both financial and practical, they are entitled to, despite the statutory guidance **'making it clear that it is important that children who were not looked after should not be unfairly treated...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 of the child.'** (3.24)

Furthermore, our survey shows that there is a lack of clarity among carers as to whether their child is or has been looked after. 3% of carers said they were unaware of whether their child had been looked after or not. However, the survey suggests there is confusion among a larger group, due to the lack of detailed information being provided by the local authority and confusion around terminology and eligibility. Some experience difficulty finding out if their child has ever been looked after:

'Have never been able to establish if child was LAC or not.'

This lack of clarity has important ramifications when it comes to accessing support, especially for the children. For example, the remit of both the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) and virtual schools have been extended to provide practical and financial support to kinship families, but are only available to those children who have left care under a Special Guardianship Order. There is also a significant lack of awareness of them - with only 7% of carers being aware of virtual schools and 16% having heard of the ASF.

Resources and Support from Grandparents Plus

Kinship Care Network

Our free network keeps kinship carers connected and up-to-date on the world of kinship care.

Advice Service

Our advice service provides free comprehensive advice on welfare benefits, financial support, employment, housing and education amongst other topics. Call 0300 123 7015 or email advice@grandparentsplus.org.uk.

Someone Like Me

Our Someone Like Me service provides telephone peer support for kinship carers and offers the chance to talk to someone who has been in a similar position.

Local Support Groups

There is a network of friendly local support groups for kinship carers across the country, and these are a great place to meet people who understand what you may be going through.

Kinship Connected

Our Kinship Connected programme, available for commission by local authorities, offers tailored support to kinship carers.

Health & Wellbeing

Key statistics:

- 32% of carers in our survey said they were worried about their mental and physical health and their ability to carry out their kinship care role. Should these carers no longer be able to care for their children, this would mean an estimated 64,000 children would be likely to go into local authority foster or residential care. This would be at an associated cost to local authorities of £2.1 billion per year.¹
- 26% of carers said their physical health has been worse since becoming a kinship carer, and the same proportion said they have developed a disability or long-term health condition. This is a marked proportion when it's remembered that 85% of carers we heard from were of working age.
- A worrying 52% said that their mental health had been worse since becoming a kinship carer. 51% said kinship care had negatively impacted their relationships with their friends.
- 65% of kinship carers said they found the lack of information about support that's available to kinship carers to be stressful or very stressful.

The impact of kinship care on health and wellbeing

Since becoming kinship carers, 26% of carers in our survey said their physical health has worsened, and 52% that their mental health has worsened. 26% of kinship carers have developed a disability or long-term health condition since becoming a kinship carer. It is not clear whether being a kinship carer is a contributing factor, but it does add a further element of stress as they think about their long-term caring responsibilities.

¹ This costing is based on the average cost of a foster care placement, as determined by Foster Care in England, 2018, accessible at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/679320/Foster_Care_in_England_Review.pdf. The average weekly cost of a foster care placement is £634, which equates to £32,968 annually.

32% of carers in our survey are worried about their mental and physical health and their ability to carry out their kinship care roles. The majority of carers who took our survey are grandparents who are older, and some in poorer health, meaning that nearly a third of kinship carers are concerned that the placements may not last. Some carers **'worry about who would take care of him if something happened to me'**, while many **'just feel like giving up.'**

There is also a huge impact of the challenges of kinship care on the viability of placements, and carers who have been unable to continue caring: **"I no longer bring my granddaughter up...I couldn't cope due to lack of support from social services,"** or offer a home to a second grandchild because **'[we] could not go through the experience all over again and we could not afford it.'** One carer reflected on their experience: **'I would never do this again.'**

Stress and anxiety

Almost half (44%) of kinship carers said that they worry about the impact of their stress and anxiety on their health and wellbeing. The survey highlights factors causing stress and having an impact on their overall health and wellbeing.

'We are desperately stressed and our morale is very low. Our daughter has been sectioned again after another attempt on her life. I am 56 and my wife has just turned 60. I worry for the future of all of us.'

Lack of recognition and information about their caring role

Three-quarters (72%) of kinship carers find the lack of recognition and support as a kinship carer stressful or very stressful. Carers report that they don't feel listened to, valued, or acknowledged, and a lack of clarity around the role means they have to fight for support;

'being understood and accepted as doing a job that assists the local authority and government financially. Not having to fight to get heard about our issues.'

Again they highlight the disparity between recognition for kinship carers and other forms of care for vulnerable children, and a feeling that they are treated differently as kinship carers appears to be contributing to their worsening mental health.

'more recognition as a carer – on equal footing with looked after children.'

65% of kinship carers find the lack of information about support that's available to kinship carers to be stressful or very stressful.

Kinship carers report feeling unable to make an informed decision before obtaining a legal order and also the impact of early experiences on the children and their support needs do not become apparent to them until after the legal order has been put in place. They often feel very let down by the system that initially offered them support to be able to care for these children:

'Feel like I have been sold down the river by the local authority.'

Relationships

A sense of loss of other relationships is common for kinship carers, with one-quarter (23%) reporting that being a kinship carer has a negative impact on relationships which affected their health and wellbeing:

- Half (51%) said their relationship with friends had been affected negatively
- 46% had seen relationships with wider family worsen
- 39% said that kinship care had had a negative impact on their relationship with their partner.

A lack of understanding contributes to this in many cases, ***'others don't understand what I'm going through'*** and reflects the general lack of understanding and awareness of kinship care. Kinship carers are out of step with their generation - their peers are not raising young children with complex issues and needs:

'I gave up everything to take my grandson on. I have lost most of my friends as I'm not able to socialise anymore. I feel very lonely and isolated most of the time and often feel like just giving up on everything.'

'I feel like my life is over. I love my grandson very much but I resent his parents and paternal grandparents. I spent years caring for my very difficult mother, my freedom barely lasted six months.'

Recommendations

1. Kinship care should have the same status as other routes to permanence.

Children and young people in kinship care experience similar disadvantages to those who are looked after in the care system but they do not receive equivalent support. There needs to be a greater focus on ensuring that kinship carers are supported to enable children to thrive.

- a. Permanent kinship care should have the same status as other permanence arrangements.
- b. The Statutory Guidance for Family and Friends Care should be replaced with legislation that ensures that support services are not allocated on the basis of legal status, and that all kinship carers can access support services for both themselves and the children in their care. There needs to be investment at all levels, including from central government, to ensure local authorities and the voluntary sector have the resources to support kinship families.
- c. Irrespective of their legal status or the local authority's involvement in the original arrangement, kinship carers and children in kinship care should be entitled to request an assessment of their support needs from the local authority at any time. The local authority should then be required to carry out a thorough assessment of their support needs and set out how these are to be met, by whom, over what time period and the plan reviewed regularly.

2. Advice, information and support when kinship carers are taking on children

Kinship carers need access to free, independent legal advice and representation in order to make informed decisions. They also need access to specialist and non-judgemental independent advice and support, for example from the Grandparents Plus advice service.

Local authorities should provide clear and accessible information about the support that will be available – including financial support – so that prospective kinship carers can make informed decisions. There should be greater focus on preparing people for the kinship care role, including information about the kinds of challenges they may meet and services and support available to help them.

- a. Assessments need to address a range of issues that are unique to kinship families, including allowing time for prospective kinship carers to consider and fully understand the children's support needs and what their own needs would be as a new family; the challenges of managing ongoing family relationships and contact with birth parents. A realistic assessment of financial and other needs is required so that kinship carers are not pushed into poverty, so reducing their ability to provide optimal care for children.
- b. Peer support from other kinship carers arranged by local authorities or voluntary agencies can provide important help at this early stage as well as later, for example the Grandparents Plus Kinship Connected support programme.

3. Improving financial, practical and emotional support for kinship carers

Financial support

There needs to be greater clarity and consistency about financial support that is available for kinship carers.

- a. Kinship carers should be entitled to financial support wherever they live, with a national minimum allowance to cover the costs of bringing up a kinship child, equivalent to the fostering allowance.
- b. Kinship carers should be entitled to paid adjustment leave when they step in to raise a kinship child, enabling some to continue in employment if it is in the interests of the child.
- c. Kinship carers should be entitled to the equivalent of Adoption Leave when a child is placed with them permanently, enabling some to continue in employment if it is in the interests of the child.

Practical and emotional support

Local authorities should work proactively with the voluntary sector to offer high quality, accessible and tailored support for kinship carers and their families (including access to specialist advice and peer support) that would greatly improve their wellbeing and ability to provide safe, stable and nurturing homes for children so they achieve the best outcomes possible, help families avoid crisis and reduce the likelihood of future reliance on public services.

- a. Support for children should be based on need, not legal status. Kinship carers need to be able to access support from Children's Services whenever they require it, which may be some years after the child joins their family.
- b. Kinship carers need support from others who understand their situation, especially the complexity of the kinship care role. Specialist voluntary organisations have a key part to play in providing practical and emotional support to kinship carers through helplines (for example the Grandparents Plus advice service), peer support groups and peer-to-peer support (for example the Grandparents Plus Someone Like Me service is delivered by experienced kinship carers). Funding needs to be available to support these services and information about these resources should be made widely available, for example in local authority welcome packs for new kinship carers.

4. There needs to be greater awareness of the situation of young people in kinship care

- a. Kinship care is the main route to permanence for children who cannot live with their parents. Policy developments on permanence should therefore always include kinship care as a key permanence option, since it provides high levels of stability and enduring support into young adulthood.

- b. Ofsted should include family and friends care in their inspections and ensure that they inspect across the different legal dispositions.

- c. Given the lack of basic data about children in kinship care and their progress, local authorities need to collect information about all the arrangements known to them (not just looked after children in kinship foster care but also those on Special Guardianship Orders and Child Arrangements Orders, including those who were not previously looked after) for publication by central government. It should then be made possible to link this to data collected by schools. This would help to inform the development of national and local policy and the planning of support services for children and young people in kinship care.

Appendix

Taken from the Kinship Care Guide for England (Grandparents Plus, 2018)

The purpose of this table is to highlight the key features of different forms of kinship care to help you make comparisons which may inform your decision making. It is important that you should refer to the relevant sections of the guide for full information.

	Informal kinship care	Private fostering	Kinship foster care
How are the arrangements made?	You must be the child's grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step-parent. You make the arrangement yourself with the child's parent; it is not made by the local authority.	You are not the child's grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step-parent. You make a private arrangement with the child's parents which you intend to last for more than 28 days.	Also known as family and friends foster care. The child is 'looked after' by the local authority, which wants to place the child with you and so must approve you as a foster carer.
Do the arrangements have to be approved?	No	Arrangement assessed by the local authority and may be prohibited if considered unsuitable.	If the child is looked after by a local authority you must be assessed and approved as a foster carer even if you are a relative. Temporary approval is sometimes given in an emergency.
How long do the arrangements last?	As long as you and the parents agree. It may be ended by either party without notice.	As long as you and the parents agree. It may be ended by either party without notice.	As long as the local authority decides it is in the child's best interests, and you agree to go on caring.
Are the arrangements supervised and reviewed?	No	Regular visits by a social worker, and the local authority may also undertake formal reviews.	Regular visits to the child by a social worker, and reviews of their care plan. Foster carers are supervised by a social worker and approval reviewed annually.

	Residence Order and Child Arrangements order	Special Guardianship Order (SGO)	Adoption
How are the arrangements made?	Often the child will have been living with you for some time and you want to formalise the arrangement and take on parental responsibility. Or you may want to secure children with you in an emergency situation. You apply to the court for an order.	Often the child will have been living with you for some time and you want to take on parental responsibility. Or the children may be placed with you following care proceedings. You apply to the court for an order.	Usually the child will have been living with you for some time and you want to legally take over all responsibility from the parents. You apply to the court for an order. You need the consent of the parents, or to show the court why they should dispense with this.
Do the arrangements have to be approved?	The court decides.	The local authority has to assess your suitability but the court decides.	The local authority has to assess your suitability but the court decides.
How long do the arrangements last?	Until the child reaches 18, unless varied or discharged by the court before then.	Until the child reaches 18, unless varied or discharged by the court before then.	Adoption is a permanent lifelong arrangement.
Are the arrangements supervised and reviewed?	No	No	A social worker supervises until the Adoption Order is made, but not thereafter.

Residence Order and Child Arrangements order	Special Guardianship Order (SGO)	Adoption
Parental responsibility shared with parents.	Parental responsibility shared with parents but the special guardian is able to make virtually all decisions about the child unless the court overrules them.	Adopters take on all the rights and responsibilities of the parents as if the child had been born to them.
Parental responsibility shared by parents and the holder of the residence order/child arrangements order.	Parental responsibility shared with the Special Guardian, but the Special Guardian is able to make virtually all decisions about the child unless the court overrules them.	When an Adoption Order is made the birth parents lose parental responsibility altogether and are no longer related to the child.
No special entitlement. Local authority may assess child as a child in need and provide support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989	If child was 'looked after' prior to making the SGO, local authority must assess need for support services, although it has discretion whether to provide. A young person may be entitled to leaving care support services if they were a 'looked after' child prior to the making of the SGO.	Adopters entitled to assessment for support services, which may be provided at the local authority's discretion.
Treated as parents by the benefits system plus Guardian's Allowance in some circumstances Local authority has discretion to pay a Residence Order or Child Arrangements Order allowance in some circumstances. Any allowance is likely to be means-tested and reviewed annually, so may be stopped if your circumstances change.	Treated as parents by the benefits system plus Guardian's Allowance in some circumstances Entitled to an assessment for financial support if the child was 'looked after' prior to the order being made and meets certain criteria. Regular or one-off payments are possible but any allowance is likely to be means-tested and reviewed annually, so may be stopped if your circumstances change.	Benefits paid as for any other parent, and you are entitled to an assessment for financial support if the child was 'looked after' prior to being adopted. Subject to an assessment, one-off payments or a regular adoption allowance may be paid. Any allowances will be reviewed annually so may be stopped if your circumstances change.

What are the rights and responsibilities of kinship carers?

What are the rights and responsibilities of parents?

What support is there?

Is there any financial support?

Informal kinship care	Private fostering	Kinship foster care
Has a responsibility to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.	Must notify the local authority that they are a private foster carer. May do what is reasonable to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.	Never have parental responsibility, and the child's care remains with the local authority. Responsibilities set out in a foster care agreement and placement plan.
Retain parental responsibility and financial responsibility to maintain the child.	Retain parental responsibility and financial responsibility to maintain the child. Must notify the local authority that they are making a private fostering arrangement.	Parental responsibility remains with birth parents unless the child is subject to a care order, in which case the local authority also has parental responsibility and can limit the decisions which are made by parents.
No special entitlement. Local authority may assess child as a child in need and provide support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.	Social worker may give support. Local authority may assess child as a child in need and provide support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.	Support to meet child's needs, including a health plan, personal education plan, contact plan and placement plan. Young person may be entitled to leaving care support services. Training, advice and practical support for foster carers. There may be support to both the carer and the young person up to 21 if staying put arrangements apply.
Treated as parents by the benefits system plus Guardian's Allowance in some circumstances If local authority assesses child as a child in need it has discretion to make one off or regular payments under section 17.	Treated as parents by the benefits system plus Guardian's Allowance in some circumstances. If local authority assesses child as a child in need it has discretion to make one off or regular payments under section 17.	You cannot claim child benefit, child tax credit or guardian's allowance. Fostering allowance to meet the costs of caring for the child. Some fostering services pay a fee to recognise the carers' skill, experience and commitment.

What are the rights and responsibilities of kinship carers?

What are the rights and responsibilities of parents?

What support is there?

Is there any financial support?

Grandparents Plus
1 Addington Square
London
SE5 0HF

020 8981 8001
info@grandparentsplus.org.uk
www.grandparentsplus.org.uk

© Grandparents Plus 2018

