



For family or friends who
step up to raise a child.

Information pack for **MPs**

Everything you need to know to
support **kinship families** in
Parliament and your constituency

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Contents

Letter from Dr Lucy Peake, Chief Executive.....	3
About kinship care.....	4
Our policy and research work.....	5
#ValueOurLove campaign.....	6
What we want to see.....	7
The journey so far.....	8
How you can support.....	10
Welsh MP?.....	11
Kinship Friendly Employers.....	11
Kinship care in your constituency.....	12
How to support kinship families in your constituency.....	13
Our support for kinship carers.....	15
Get in touch.....	17

Dear colleague,

Thank you for your interest in Kinship and kinship care.

At Kinship, we look forward to working with you as a Member of Parliament to ensure all kinship families get the support they need and deserve. We are here for all kinship carers – the grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings and other relatives and family friends who step up to raise children when their parents aren't able to.

We're delighted to share with you this digital information pack full of useful information and materials designed to help you in your role as an MP.

This pack will support your constituency casework staff to learn more about kinship care and where to signpost kinship carers in your constituency to available online and local help. It will also equip you and your parliamentary and research staff with information about kinship care policy and our #ValueOurLove campaign so that you can become an effective advocate for kinship families in Parliament and beyond.

As the leading kinship care charity in England and Wales, Kinship supports thousands of kinship carers each year through expert advice and information, peer support groups, one-to-one support and free workshops and training. For more than two decades, we've developed a strong evidence base for what works and we're proud to have campaigned alongside kinship carers to secure significant improvements to policy and practice.

I hope you find this information pack useful whether you are a returning MP with years of experience or a new MP who joined Parliament for the first time after the General Election. We're enormously grateful to all of those in the House of Commons who have been able to lend their support to our #ValueOurLove campaign and advocate on behalf of kinship families, and we look forward to working with you.

Best wishes,



Dr Lucy Peake
Chief Executive



About kinship care

Kinship carers are family or friends who step up, often during an unexpected crisis, to care for a child when their parents aren't able to.

This may be because the parent has died, is unwell, has gone to prison, is experiencing problems with drugs and alcohol, or are neglectful or abusive.

The best estimate we have suggests there are more than 141,000 children in kinship care in England and Wales – three times the number in unrelated foster care.

Kinship carers are usually grandparents, aunts or uncles, brothers or sisters, a stepparent, stepbrother or stepsister, or someone who isn't related but knows the child well. Whatever their relationship to the child, in that moment a commitment is made. To bring love and hope to a child who has experienced trauma, no matter what.

The rights, responsibilities and support available to kinship families depends largely on the type of arrangement they have.

[Learn more about the different types of kinship care](#)

Why support kinship care?

Many children in kinship care will have experienced trauma. A kinship carer provides a stable home life where they can grow and develop in a safe, positive environment. They also get to stay in their existing family network, which helps maintain their sense of identity and family relationships.

It makes sense to invest in kinship care: evidence shows that it delivers good experiences and outcomes for children and families as well as cost savings for the public purse.

For every 1000 children looked after in well-supported kinship care rather than local authority care, the state saves £40 million and increases the lifetime earnings of those children by £20 million.

[Read the economic case for kinship care](#)

"I believe that because she was family, she did everything she could to give me the best opportunities in life. Family sometimes just go above and beyond for other family. The amazing thing that kinship care offers you is that glimmer of hope that you will have a family that can work again."

Poppy, aged 23, raised in kinship care

Our policy and research work

We work collaboratively with kinship families, researchers, professionals, decision makers and other partners to influence national and local policy making across England and Wales.

Our unique reach allows us to listen to the views and expertise of thousands of kinship carers each year, and we campaign alongside them to deliver the changes they want to see most for their families.

Kinship care policy tracker

Our kinship care policy tracker is the best place to understand more about the current state of play for kinship care policy in England. Visit the tracker to keep up to date with what's happening now, our verdict, and what we think should happen next.

[Visit the kinship care policy tracker](#)

The tracker covers all areas of kinship care policy in England, including:

- Financial allowances
- Kinship care leave
- Defining kinship care
- Support for kinship children
- Family justice and legal aid

Reports and briefings

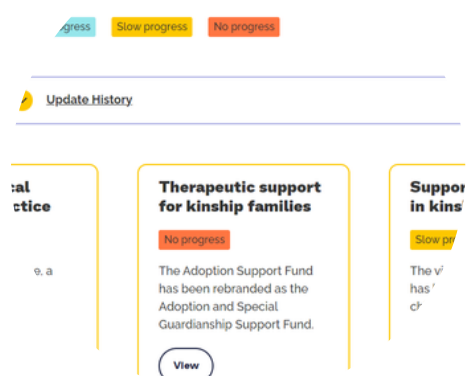
Our surveys of kinship carers are the largest of their kind, and alongside the insights from our advice and support work, enable us to make a compelling argument for policy and practice change. We regularly deliver written and verbal briefings for MPs ahead of debates, respond to consultations and calls for evidence, and publish other policy outputs setting out our recommendations for change developed with kinship carers.

Our most recent publications include:

- [Make or Break: annual survey of kinship carers 2024](#).
- [Forgotten: Support for kinship children's education and mental health](#)
- [Out of Order: the case for boosting financial support for kinship arrangements outside the care system](#)

[View all research and reports](#)

[View all briefings, responses and submissions](#)



#ValueOurLove campaign

Kinship's #ValueOurLove campaign launched in October 2022 and calls on the UK and Welsh Governments to equalise support between kinship families and foster and adoptive families.

More than 141,000 children in kinship families across England and Wales know the value of love. But politicians still overlook them and undervalue the role of kinship carers in keeping children out of the care system.

Unlike children in foster and adoptive families, most kinship children and those that care for them receive no financial or practical support. As a result, more than 1 in 8 kinship carers told us they are concerned about



continuing to care for their children in the next year if their situations don't improve.

This not only risks the futures of thousands of children, but is also economically short-sighted. Love provides the best value to children, society and the economy – the love and sacrifice of kinship carers saves the public purse millions a year by preventing children from going into the care system.



What we want to see

We need to provide urgent support for kinship families across England and Wales today, and take steps to build a kinship care system fit for the kinship families of tomorrow.

1. Equal financial allowances

Kinship carers are more than twice as likely as other adults to be using food banks; most kinship carers do not receive any financial support when they unexpectedly take on the care of a relative or friend's child.

We want to see all kinship carers get the financial support they need, including a financial allowance which at least matches the guaranteed financial allowance provided to all foster carers.

2. Equal paid leave from work

Our Forced Out report revealed that more than 8 in 10 kinship carers had given up work permanently or reduced their hours after taking on their caring role. The lack of paid leave for kinship carers is unnecessarily pushing them out of work and into poverty, and robbing them of protected time where they can focus on settling in a child to their new home.

We want to see a new right to statutory pay and leave for all kinship carers, at least on a par with that for adoptive parents.

"I have thought about whether I can go on like this, or whether I should hand her back to social services. It makes me feel awful to even consider it, because she's my granddaughter, but what if I can't give her what she needs?"

Grandmother and kinship carer

3. Equal therapeutic and educational support for children

Children growing up in kinship care have typically experienced trauma, separation and loss. But unlike their counterparts in the care system, most don't have access to vital help at school or with their mental health.

We want to see all kinship children get the support they need to heal and thrive, enabling them to understand their journeys into kinship care and get professional help to manage their social, emotional and mental health needs.

4. Equal access to training and support

Unlike foster care or adoption, kinship care often happens in a crisis and so most kinship carers don't get the preparatory training and ongoing advice and support they need. Around one third of kinship carers rate the information provided by their local authority about kinship care as very poor.

We want to see all kinship carers offered independent expert advice and the ongoing training and support they feel they need to best support the children in their care.

[Learn more about the #ValueOurLove campaign](#)

The journey so far

Kinship has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with kinship carers for more than two decades, but we've been on an exciting journey over the last few years in particular as awareness of and support for kinship care has grown. Here are some of the key milestones.

May 2022

The [Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#) said that the relatives and family friends raising children had for too long been a "silent and unheard majority" in children's social care and deserved "far greater recognition and support". It made a number of welcome recommendations to "unlock the potential of family networks".

October 2022

Kinship's #ValueOurLove campaign [launched in Parliament](#) calling on the government to equalise support between kinship families and foster and adoptive families, with contributions from leading politicians including Bridget Phillipson MP, then Shadow Secretary of State for Education.

December 2022

We handed in the #ValueOurLove campaign petition signed by more than 10,000 kinship carers and supporters who joined us to call for a dedicated kinship care strategy and equalised support between kinship families and foster and adoptive families.

February 2023

The previous government published its children's social care implementation strategy, [Stable Homes, Built on Love](#). This finally gave kinship care the recognition it deserved, and committed to publishing a dedicated kinship care strategy and investing in a national offer of training and support for kinship carers.



July 2023

Kinship carers such as [Ginna, who were forced out of work](#) when they stepped up to care for a child, took the campaign to Westminster to push ministers to deliver a right to statutory paid employment leave for kinship carers.

September 2023

We mobilised [more than 400 kinship carers to respond](#) to the government's consultation on its children's social care reforms, representing nearly half of all respondents.

December 2023

In response to our campaign, the first ever [National Kinship Care Strategy](#) was published. This made a number of welcome commitments to kinship carers and their children, but ultimately failed to deliver the transformation in support which kinship families needed.

June 2024

We published our [manifesto for kinship care](#) and a refreshed [kinship care constituency map](#), supporting more than 1,500 kinship carers to contact MP candidates in 90% of constituencies across England and Wales during the General Election campaign.

July 2024

New Minister for Children and Families – Janet Daby MP – [met with a group of kinship carers at our head office](#) on only her second day in post to hear their views and experiences and what they wanted from the new government.



August 2024

We published our [Forgotten report](#) which revealed the inadequate landscape of support for kinship children's education and mental health. More than 7,000 kinship carers, supporters, politicians and celebrities raised in kinship care (including actor Brian Cox CBE) have since signed [Poppy's open letter](#) to the Secretary of State for Education urging the government to improve support for all children in kinship care.

September 2024

We published our [Out of Order policy paper](#) which makes the case for boosting financial support for kinship arrangements outside the care system.

October 2024

We marked [Kinship Care Week 2024](#) with the launch of our new [#ThisIsKinshipCare film](#) and our [Make or Break report](#) based on our 2024 annual survey findings, and welcomed the Minister and the [new National Kinship Care Ambassador](#) to a meeting of one of our peer support groups.

We also hosted our third [#ValueOurLove](#) parliamentary reception and welcomed a contribution from the Secretary of State for Education who said *"I'll fight every day for children in kinship care and kinship carers. I'll be a voice for you. You will not be forgotten by this government."*

November 2024

The government published its children's social care policy paper [Keeping children safe, helping families thrive](#) which reinforced their prioritisation of kinship care.

December 2024

The [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) was introduced in Parliament, legislating for improved information and support for kinship families, but falling short of delivering the vital educational and therapeutic support [which children in kinship care need](#).

How you can support

We're grateful for the support of MPs who can help to champion kinship care in Parliament and push the government to commit to improving support for all kinship families. Here's how you can help.

1. Meet with kinship carers

Why not meet with kinship carers in your constituency to learn more about the challenges they face and their views on what should change?

We coordinate more than 145 peer support groups across England and Wales as well as a network of kinship carer campaign champions who would love the opportunity to share their views directly with you. Please [get in touch](#) and we can help to arrange.



2. Share the campaign

Show your support for kinship families and boost awareness of kinship care by sharing the #ValueOurLove campaign on social media and via newsletters, websites and other networks.

Follow and tag us at [@kinshipcharity](#) on X/Twitter, [@kinshipcarecharity](#) on Facebook, and [@kinship_charity](#) on Instagram. We can share suggested copy for posts.

3. Take actions in Parliament

Write to the Secretary of State for Education and/or the Minister for Children and Families, as well as other Ministers with relevant policy responsibilities, and urge them to consider kinship families and our #ValueOurLove campaign calls. Please [get in touch](#) for template letters you can adapt.

You could also table written and oral questions to push for further information and action, and try to secure or speak in debates on kinship care and other relevant topics. We can help by providing suggested wording or briefing materials, and finding other Members to support actions.

You might also wish to join the APPG on Kinship Care. We campaign alongside our friends at the Family Rights Group who act as the Secretariat for the APPG, as well as other organisations who form the sector-wide Kinship Care Alliance. We regularly brief APPG members ahead of meetings or events.



Welsh MP?

We're grateful to those MPs representing Welsh constituencies in Westminster who have helped us to push the UK Government for the changes which kinship families need.

This includes potential reforms led by the UK Government which could impact on kinship families in Wales too, such as our call for a new entitlement to paid employment leave for kinship carers.

As children's social care is a devolved issue, our policy and campaigns activity also seeks to influence the Welsh Government and Members of the Senedd in Wales.

We want the Welsh Government to put kinship care at the heart of its vision to improve children's social care in Wales.

Welsh MPs can help this too by supporting engagement with colleagues in the Senedd and raising awareness of the [#ValueOurLove / #TrysoriEinCariad campaign](#) in Wales.

Kinship Friendly Employers

Our Kinship Friendly Employers scheme provides a free framework and toolkit for employers.



To date, we've worked with leading employers such as Tesco, John Lewis, cardfactory, B&Q, Lloyds Banking Group, Correla and many others to introduce their own paid leave policies for kinship carers.

However, employers of all sizes tell us that the lack of statutory underpinning for kinship carers in the workplace means they often cannot go as far as they would like to.

[Learn more about Kinship Friendly Employers](#)

"I had to take unpaid leave from my job, then take a career break, I had a job which I had to give up and then had to go to job centre to get benefits to support my family. If I had maternity or adoption pay, I wouldn't have had to do that. It's really important that the government's plans to support working families introduces statutory paid leave for kinship carers like me."

Meyrem, aunt and kinship carer

Kinship care in your constituency

Kinship care constituency map

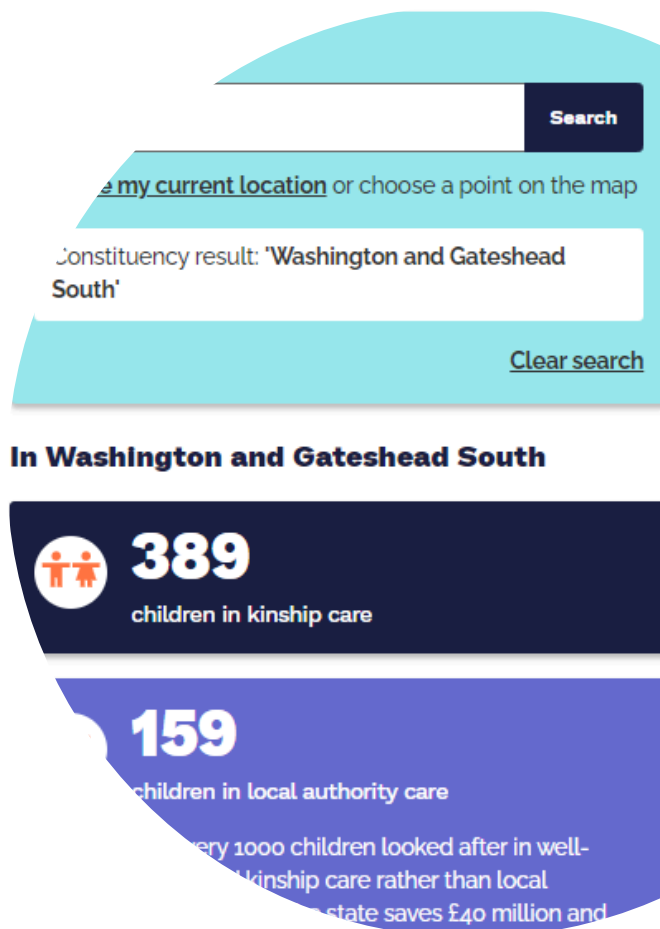
Learn about kinship families in your constituency and the key challenges facing kinship carers in your region at our kinship care constituency map.

[Visit the kinship care constituency map](#)

You may want to use the map to support your advocacy for kinship families in Parliament by highlighting the scale of kinship care and the number of kinship children in your constituency during debates or in letters to Ministers.

The map can also support with local or regional activity, including in discussions with local authorities or as part of constituency casework involving kinship families.

For more information or figures about kinship care in your constituency, please don't hesitate to [get in touch](#).



How to support kinship families in your constituency

1. Meet with kinship carers to help improve local policy and practice

As noted above, we can support you to meet with kinship carers and families in your constituency so you can hear their experiences and their views on what needs to change locally.

We coordinate more than 145 peer support groups across England and Wales and also work closely alongside local authorities who are pioneering new ways of supporting kinship families. Find your nearest kinship carer peer support group by using our [Kinship Compass tool](#).



Please [get in touch](#) as we can help to arrange visits and meetings, and look out for invitations from kinship carer constituents to meet with them during [Kinship Care Week](#).

You could also write to council leaders, lead members for children's services and/or

Directors of Children's Services in the local authority(ies) which covers your constituency area to learn more about the support they offer and their plans for working alongside kinship families to improve this. Developing relationships with relevant colleagues in the local authority can also help with constituency casework. We can provide template letters and share contact details to help you.

2. Raise awareness of kinship care and Kinship

As visible leaders in their communities, MPs play an important role in helping us to raise awareness of kinship care.

Many relatives and friends may not know they're a kinship carer, especially those who are informal kinship carers, and the wide reach which you have as an MP can help us to boost understanding and ensure more families recognise themselves as kinship carers and subsequently get the support they need.

Please do consider sharing information about kinship care and Kinship through your social media channels, website and any constituency newsletters or groups, as well as other wider networks or organisations based in your constituency which work with children and families, including charities, schools and early years settings, family hubs, primary health services and other community and faith groups.

Kinship coordinates [Kinship Care Week](#) each year which is a perfect time to celebrate and raise awareness of kinship families in your constituency.

[Revisit Kinship Care Week 2024](#)

3. Signpost to our support

We know that growing awareness of and support for kinship care has increased the number of kinship carers who feel empowered to reach out to their MPs and ask for their help in pushing for change, as well as those requesting advocacy and casework support as a constituent.

The information in the following section should support you and any constituency casework staff with signposting your kinship carer constituents to relevant advice, information and support from Kinship.

We can also provide digital and some printed copies of relevant flyers and other materials; please [get in touch](#) to request.



Watch and share our [#ThisIsKinshipCare animated film](#), released to mark Kinship Care Week 2024.

Our support for kinship carers

Advice and information guides

There is so much to know about when you're a kinship carer. From which benefits you can apply for, to navigating work and childcare, finding a school and how to support a child with anxiety. Our advice and information guides aim to help kinship carers find the information and support they need to help them on their kinship journey.

Some of our most popular online advice and information guides include:

- [What is kinship care?](#)
- [Legal help for kinship carers](#)
- [Worried about a child's safety or welfare?](#)
- [How do I obtain parental responsibility for the child I am caring for?](#)
- [Financial support and benefits for kinship carers](#)
- [Family and friends foster care](#)
- [Managing contact time with family.](#)

Advice Line

Being a kinship carer can be overwhelming. Our Kinship advice team are specialists in supporting kinship carers across England and Wales through our Advice Line. The system can be complex, and often confusing. We'll help them through it – whatever stage they are at in their kinship carer journey.

[Get help and advice from the Kinship Advice Team](#)

Your kinship carer constituents can contact our advice line by phone on 0300 123 7015 between 9.30am and 2pm Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours, kinship carers can reach our advice team using our web inquiry form and one of our advisers will get back to them as soon as possible. We also hold monthly [Facebook advice sessions](#).

Please note that we can only advise kinship carers in England and Wales. If you are supporting a kinship carer who would like advice, please encourage them to contact us directly.

Peer support groups

Our support groups are a great way for kinship carers to meet other kinship carers in their community. They are a safe and welcoming space to share experiences, exchange advice and get support.

With over 145 support groups across England and Wales, a community of kinship carers is never far away. Kinship carers can find groups which meet near to where they live or which meet online, including regional and other special interest groups such as those for kinship carers with teenagers, male kinship carers, LGBTQ+ kinship carers, and many more.

[Find a peer support group](#)

Someone Like Me service

We match kinship carers with other kinship carers, who are trained to provide emotional support, through our Someone like Me service. Through 3 phone calls, kinship carers can talk about any issues or difficulties they're facing – and how they're feeling. Our volunteers will listen, without judgement, offer understanding and provide emotional support.

[Find out about Someone Like Me](#)

Free events and workshops

We deliver free workshops and events in England for new kinship carers as well as those who have been a kinship carer for years. Events take place both online and in-person. As well as getting advice, tips and practical tools, attendees also get to connect with other kinship carers and build support systems.

[View our training and events](#)

Kinship Compass

Kinship Compass is an interactive tool which helps kinship carers to navigate and find independent information, support and advice to guide them in their caring role, at a local and national level, using a postcode search.

Your constituency casework staff can also use the tool to discover support in a kinship carers local area. Including their virtual school contact details, local legal clinics, food banks and more.

[Visit Kinship Compass](#)

Our programmes and services

Our commissioned programmes provide excellent outcomes for kinship families in England and Wales. They support local authority teams to build trusted relationships with kinship carers.

[Kinship Connected](#) is the only independently evaluated, evidenced based programme for kinship carers in England and Wales.

Developed from our award-winning Covid response programme, [Kinship Reach](#) provides immediate support to kinship carers through phone and video calls.

Free for kinship carers in England, and available in-person and online, our [Training and Support Service](#) responds to the needs of kinship carers wherever they are on their kinship journey.

The [Kinship Peer Support Service](#) is helping kinship carers to set up thriving peer support groups in their area. Sharing experiences, creating community and building resilience and knowledge.

Ask if the local authority(ies) covering your constituency area commissions our specialist programmes and how they are supporting our national services.

[Find out more about our programmes and services](#)

Get in touch

Please get in touch with our friendly policy and public affairs team for further information or help with anything around kinship care. Thank you for your continued support for kinship families.



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About Kinship

We are Kinship. The leading kinship care charity in England and Wales.

We're here for kinship carers – friends or family who step up to raise a child when their parents aren't able to.

Together, let's commit to change for kinship families.

kinship.org.uk



@kinshipcharity



@kinshipcarecharity



@kinship_charity



For family or friends who step up to raise a child.