



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

Employment Rights Bill

Committee Stage, House of Lords, from 29 April 2025

Summary

- Although the current Employment Rights Bill could help improve workplace experiences for kinship carers, proposed legislation does not include the new right to paid employment leave they need and deserve.
- **More than 8 in 10 kinship carers tell us they are forced to leave work permanently or reduce their hours** after taking on the care of a relative or friend's child. A lack of workplace rights and support is pushing kinship families into poverty.
- We want to see the government **introduce a statutory right to paid kinship care leave**, at least on a par with adoption leave and pay. As a minimum step, the government should commit to **including kinship care leave within the terms of reference for the forthcoming review of parental leave due to commence in June**.
- In the meantime, our **Kinship Friendly Employers** scheme is working with pioneering employers including the Department for Education, Tesco, John Lewis and B&Q who have introduced their own paid leave policies for kinship carers.

What's happening now?

Currently, kinship carers do not have any specific entitlements at work, and there are no plans to introduce statutory paid employment leave for kinship carers.

When they take on the care of a child, adoptive parents quite rightly have an entitlement to adoption pay and leave, similar to maternity leave. No similar right is available to kinship carers who step up to care for a relative or friend's child, often in an emergency and with no other financial or practical support.

Depending on the type of kinship arrangement they have and whether or not this confers parental responsibility, kinship carers may be able to utilise other limited entitlements available to support parents and those with caring responsibilities, such as unpaid parental leave, Time Off for Dependents, or flexible working.

What's happened before?

In May 2022, the [Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#) recommended that paid leave on a par with adoption leave should be introduced for special guardians and kinship carers with a child arrangements order where the child would otherwise be in care. A similar recommendation was also made by the [House of Lords Children and Families Act 2014 Committee](#), and the [previous Education Committee](#) said that *the case for... 'kinship leave' on par with Adoption Leave must be reviewed*.

The previous government's [Stable Homes, Built on Love](#) strategy published in February 2023 committed to "explore additional workplace entitlements" for kinship carers and provide an update in the National Kinship Care Strategy. However, no further commitments were made in this Strategy, published in December 2023. Instead, the Department for Education [published information for employers](#) which sets out best practice for supporting kinship carers at work, including how to adapt internal HR policies and improve cultures of support.

The case for kinship care leave

Kinship has been campaigning for a right to paid employment leave for kinship carers for more than a decade. In 2023, our [Forced Out report](#) revealed the devastating consequences which a lack of employment support is having for kinship families and for the state.

- More than 4 in 10 kinship carers (41%) told us they had to **leave work permanently** and a further 45% were forced to reduce their working hours after they became a kinship carer.
- More than one-third of kinship carers experienced an **income drop of more than 50%** after they stepped up to take on the care of a child.
- 28% of kinship carers had to **claim benefits** due to changes in their employment status after they took on their caring role.
- More than half of kinship carers said a **right to paid leave** on a par with adoption leave and pay would have prevented them from leaving work or changing their employment status.

[Read our **Forced Out** report](#)

The result of this forced and unnecessary withdrawal from employment is often **significant financial hardship and poverty** for kinship families, poor health and wellbeing for kinship carers, and reduced stability for children. It is vital for children entering kinship care to have a period of protected time with their new caregivers to settle in after immense trauma, separation and loss.

A lack of paid leave is also **splitting up siblings**: in our most recent [2024 annual survey of kinship carers](#), 17% of kinship carers said they had been unable to take on the care of a brother or sister to a kinship child already in their care, and more than half of this group said that a lack of paid employment leave and/or workplace support contributed to this.

Finally, it also has significant **consequences for the state**. An absence of support pushes many kinship carers into the benefits system: this year, our [Make or Break report](#) found that nearly half of working-age kinship carers (46%) were receiving Universal Credit. Prior to taking on the care of a child, kinship carers are also overrepresented in the health, education and social care sectors. As such, their withdrawal from the labour market is likely to be exacerbating significant workforce challenges in our schools, hospitals and communities.

"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

What we want to see

Kinship's #ValueOurLove campaign is pushing for the government to introduce a **statutory right to paid kinship care leave, at least on a par with adoption leave and pay**. This would align with the government's existing action to ensure those with parental and caring responsibilities are able to remain in work where they want to, and contribute to its mission to grow the economy, raise living standards across the country and create opportunities for all.

The government has outlined plans in [Next Steps to Make Work Pay](#) to deliver a review of the parental leave system, due to commence in June. At minimum, **the scope the parental leave review must include an assessment of the value of introducing paid leave for kinship carers**.

Kinship Friendly Employers

Our Kinship Friendly Employers scheme provides a free framework and toolkit to help any employer – from any sector and of any size – to introduce policies which retain their staff and support kinship carers in their workforce to maintain their income, job security and career prospects whilst stepping up to take on caring responsibilities for children they love.



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.

In January 2025, the **Department for Education** became the first government department to achieve "gold standard" from the Kinship Friendly Employers scheme. Recent answers to written questions from Chris Bloore MP have highlighted the lack of any specific employment support for kinship carers from other governmental departments. Ahead of any future statutory right, we hope to see more departments lead by example and consider becoming a Kinship Friendly Employer.

[Learn about Kinship Friendly Employers](#)

In the Commons

Amendments were tabled at both committee stage and report stage by Steve Darling MP to introduce kinship care leave; these were withdrawn and left unconsidered respectively.

During the committee stage debate, the responding minister noted that employed kinship carers could *"benefit from a number of workplace employment rights that are designed to support employees in balancing work alongside caring responsibilities"* and said that *"this Government are committed to ensuring that all employed parents and carers receive the best possible support to balance their work and family lives. We are also aware that the existing system of leave for parents and carers needs improvement"*.

In the Lords

At the Bill's second reading on 27 March, both Lord Palmer of Childs Hill and The Lord Bishop of Newcastle echoed our call for the government to deliver paid employment leave for kinship carers. **Lord Palmer of Childs Hill has subsequently tabled an amendment as above on kinship care leave.**

During committee stage, we ask that Peers use any further opportunity to highlight the absence of a right to paid employment leave for kinship carers within the Bill, offer support Lord Palmer's amendment, and make the case for kinship care leave and its inclusion within the scope of the government's forthcoming parental leave review.

"Kinship carers are not recognised within the workplace in the same way as maternity or adoption, employers fail to recognise the impact on individuals and families who take on the role of kinship carer and how time is needed to make relevant adjustments... Kinship care is undervalued in all aspects of society from employment to Local Authority support. As family members we are just expected to be grateful to give up our hopes and dreams for our future and live in poverty to raise the children of our relatives."

Kinship carer and special guardian

Further information

Please visit the [kinship care leave](#) section of our [kinship care policy tracker](#) and read our [Forced Out report](#) for more information on what's happening now, our verdict and what should happen next for kinship care leave.

[Learn about our policy and influencing work](#)

About kinship care

Kinship care is when a child lives full-time or most of the time with a relative or family friend, usually because their parents are not able to care for them. There are [more than 130,000 children in kinship care](#) in England – that's three times the number in unrelated foster care. Grandparents are most commonly kinship carers, but they can also be older siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins and family friends.

[Learn more about kinship care](#)

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.

Contact

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