



Share your views with the government on the adoption and special guardianship support fund (ASGSF)

Introduction

Some kinship carers can get financial support from the [adoption and special guardianship support fund \(ASGSF\)](#) to help pay for essential therapeutic services, such as creative therapies or life story work.

In early February, the Department for Education announced that the ASGSF would be [extended to March 2028](#). Alongside this, it [published a new consultation](#) on a set of proposals to “reimagine adoption and kinship support”. This includes changes to how the ASGSF could work in the future.

We know that kinship carers have a huge amount of insight and knowledge about how the system works right now and what should change to ensure their children get the right support with their mental health and wellbeing.

It’s vital the government hears what kinship families have to say so they can design the best system possible.

Responding to the government’s consultation

To help you to respond with your own views and expertise, we’ve:

- summarised the government’s proposals,
- explained which are most relevant to kinship families,
- shared some questions you might want to reflect on when responding.

You don’t need to respond to every question or proposal, only those you want to share your views on.

Who can respond?

Any kinship carers and their families can respond to the government’s consultation, although the government are particularly keen to hear from kinship carers living in England who are currently [eligible to apply to the ASGSF](#).

The government has no current plans to change the eligibility criteria for the ASGSF and so the new proposals made by the government are only for those kinship families currently eligible to apply for support through the ASGSF.

The ASGSF is only available to kinship families secured by a special guardianship order (SGO) or child arrangements order (CAO) and where the child was previously looked after by the local authority.



We've been campaigning for several years through our [#ValueOurLove campaign](#) for the government to reconsider this and improve the therapeutic support available to all kinship families - and will continue to campaign for this including in our response to these proposals.

Structure of the consultation

The consultation is split into 2 sections. Section 1 is more general and asks for thoughts on what support helps to improve children's mental health and wellbeing. Section 2 asks for views specifically on the government's proposals.

If your family isn't eligible for the ASGSF (e.g. you're a kinship foster carer, an informal kinship carer, or you have an SGO or CAO but your child wasn't previously looked after), you can share your views on everything, but some of the questions in Section 2 will be less relevant for you and you may wish to respond to Section 1 only.

How do I respond?

The consultation closes on **Tuesday 5 May**. The easiest way to respond is [via the online form](#).

However, if you'd prefer, you can email your response to Adoption-Support.CONULTATION@education.gov.uk or send by post to the address listed on page 8 of the [consultation document \(PDF\)](#).

If you choose to respond, we'd love to see your responses too so we can reflect back to government what we're hearing from kinship carers. You can copy and paste your answers into an email to us at comms@kinship.org.uk.

What is Kinship's view on the government's proposals?

We'll be engaging with kinship carers as we develop our own response which will be shaped by these conversations, as well as what we already know from our advice and support work and the evidence we have from research (including our own annual surveys of kinship carers). We'll keep you up to date with how this is progressing and how you can get involved, but in the meantime, you can [read our initial response](#) to the government's announcement.

Although we're pleased the Department for Education is looking to improve the delivery of the ASGSF (and explore other ways to support kinship children's mental health and wellbeing), we don't think these plans will deliver what kinship families need and deserve. They're completely insufficient given the scale of need, especially following [last year's cuts to the funding available](#) per child and the disruption this caused.

Above all, we're really disappointed with the way kinship families and adoptive families have been lumped together in the government's plans. We don't think the proposals recognise the unique needs, experiences and strengths of all kinship families and how they might differ to those of adoptive families. We know how important it is for kinship families to get [support which is tailored just for them](#), and we've encouraged the Department for Education to listen closely to the views of children in kinship care and kinship carers to design a new approach.



We want to see the government acknowledge that all kinship families need access to high-quality emotional and therapeutic support – not just those currently eligible for the ASGSF. This is vital to keep kinship families together. Last year, [more than 1 in 8 kinship carers](#) said they were concerned about their ability to continue in the next year, and difficulties managing children’s social, emotional and mental health needs was by far the most common reason for this.

Where we’ve got other thoughts on each of the specific proposals, we’ve shared them below to be as open and transparent as possible with our community. This doesn’t mean you need to say the same thing – it’s completely fine for you to take a different view. We’d encourage you to share what you think based on your personal experiences and knowledge.

Details of the consultation

We’ve explained what each question in the consultation is asking below, along with guidance on how to respond as a kinship carer and some questions to help you write your response.

If you can, we’d recommend reading through the government’s [full consultation document](#) first as this explains the background behind each of their proposals and why they’re making them.

Introduction

Questions 1 and 2 ask for your name and email address. You can leave these blank if you’d prefer to.

Question 3 asks which category best describes you, including an option to select ‘kinship carer’. You can select other categories in addition to this.

You can ignore **questions 4 and 5** as they are only for responding organisations, not individuals.

Question 6 asks which sections of the consultation you’d like to respond to. See ‘Who can respond?’ above for a steer on this depending on the type of kinship arrangement you have.

Question 7 asks if you’d like the Department for Education to keep your responses confidential. You don’t have to give a reason if you say yes.

Section 1: What works for children and families?

Question 8 asks in what capacity you’re responding. As a kinship carer, you’ll want to select ‘A family member of an adopted or kinship care child or young person, or an interested third party’.

Question 9 asks what support helps to maintain or improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in kinship care.

This includes support from:

- family (e.g. from you as a kinship carer, or from the child’s parents or other relatives).
- social care (e.g. from a social worker, or from training provided by the local authority).
- healthcare (e.g. from therapists, GPs, doctors or nurses).
- education (e.g. from teachers or other school or college staff).



- community (e.g. from peer support groups of kinship carers or others, religious groups, sports clubs, or youth workers).

Question 10 asks why this support helps.

Question 11 asks what could be improved about this support.

You might want to consider the following when responding to the questions in Section 1.

- How have you been able to support your kinship child's mental health and wellbeing as their kinship carer? What's worked well? Why do you think this is? What's been difficult? What support would you have liked to help you best support your child?
- What other support has your kinship child received for their mental health and wellbeing, if any, from children's services, school, health, or elsewhere? Has this made a difference? If yes, what worked well? If no, why do you think this was?
- Have you received any advice or support from Kinship (e.g. through an online or in-person workshop) or through attending a peer support group of kinship carers which has helped you support your kinship child's mental health and wellbeing?

Section 2: Proposals to reform the adoption and kinship support system

If you can, we'd recommend reading through the government's [full consultation document](#) first as this explains the background behind each of their proposals and why they're making them, as well as a suggested timeline for what might change and when.

Proposal 1...

... is to develop a *"baseline offer of parenting support and training"* for adoptive parents and eligible kinship carers. This could include training, workshops and online courses, coordinated by local authorities and/or Regional Adoption Agencies, to help provide skills and knowledge to kinship carers so they can support their child's mental health and wellbeing.

The consultation says this would be *"delivered at the point of... eligible kinship arrangement"*, which suggests this would be at the point at which a kinship carer secures an SGO or CAO for a previously looked after child.

Question 12 asks whether or not you agree with this proposal and for your views.

You might want to consider the following when responding:

- Do you think this proposal would help kinship carers to support their child's mental health and wellbeing?
- At what point in a family's kinship journey would this be most helpful, if at all (e.g. when the child first comes to live with their kinship carer, and/or at a later point)?
- How important is it that support and training is tailored to kinship families? Why is this?



- Would you prefer training and support to be provided by the local authority or an independent organisation?

Our verdict: We support improved access to training and support for kinship families, but think this should be designed specifically for them to respond to their unique needs and circumstances, which we know often differ to those of adoptive families. For example, many kinship carers will start to look after their kinship children and might benefit most from this support long before they secure an SGO or CAO. Training also can't replace more intensive therapeutic support when this is needed, including that funded through the ASGSF.

Remember – Kinship delivers [free online and in-person workshops and events](#) specifically for all types of kinship carers in England.

Proposal 2...

... is to strengthen peer support and community for adoptive parents and children, recognising the benefits which peer support networks have had for kinship families. The government highlights the positive impact of its investment in the [national peer support service](#), delivered by Kinship, and proposes expanding community-based activities to support adoptive families too.

Question 13 asks whether or not you agree with this proposal and for your views. Although the focus in this proposal is on adoptive families, this is a good opportunity to emphasise the value of peer support for kinship carers and the difference you think this makes for you and the children you're caring for.

You might want to consider the following when responding:

- Do you attend a peer support group of kinship carers? What impact has this had for you and your ability to support your children's mental health and wellbeing?
- Would you like to see peer support and community-based activities which are specifically for your kinship child or children? Do you think they would get value from this?
- Is it better for peer support groups and community services to be coordinated by local authorities, independent organisations, or neither? How might this change over time?

Our verdict: We know just how important peer support can be for kinship carers – and in turn for the children they're raising – and want to see the government continue to invest in national services which help all types of kinship carers build community and friendships. But this should sit alongside an offer of funded therapeutic support too – peer support isn't a replacement for this.

Proposal 3...

... is to provide support for adopted and kinship children at key life stages, including "*predictable stress points*" like school transitions, adolescence and transitions to adulthood. This could include workshops for kinship carers and their children as well as specialist



educational advice, potentially coordinated by local authorities and/or Regional Adoption Agencies, linking in with virtual schools and family hubs.

Question 14 asks whether or not you agree with this proposal and for your views.

You might want to consider the following when responding:

- What are the key life stages where additional support for your kinship child would be, or would've been, helpful?
- What support would you and your kinship child like to see at these points?
- Who do you trust most to deliver this support (e.g. local authority, virtual school, child's school or college, a charity)?

Our verdict: We recognise there are moments in families' lives where planning in additional support makes sense. However, the government's proposal here is underdeveloped, and so it's difficult to know what this might look like, how useful it would be, and whether or not it would reduce the need for more intensive therapeutic support.

Proposal 4...

... is to enhance support plans for adoptive and kinship families so they are regularly reviewed, transparent and give clarity on what support they can expect.

Question 15 asks whether or not you agree with this proposal and for your views.

You might want to consider the following when responding:

- If you have a support plan (e.g. a special guardianship support plan) created by the local authority, how helpful has this been? Has it helped you to access high-quality support?
- How could the quality of support plans for kinship families be improved

Our verdict: Kinship carers tell us commonly that – even where a plan exists – they do not see promised support being delivered, and that plans are rushed and fail to address their family's needs and wishes. We want to see improvements made to support plans created by the local authority which are tailored to each family's unique needs and strengths, reduce inconsistency in support between families, and improve accountability.

However, the government's proposal talks mostly about adoption support plans and gets confused about the different types of plans available to kinship families at different stages in their journeys and with different types of kinship arrangement. The Department for Education must offer clarity on what they are proposing and which support plans will be impacted.

Proposal 5...

... is to create higher-quality and more consistent needs assessments for adopted and kinship children. The government wants to establish an agreed approach for assessing more complex needs based on the evidence, including the impact of autism or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder for example, and how these link to specialist support.



Question 16 asks whether or not you agree with this proposal and for your views.

You might want to consider the following when responding:

- Has your kinship child ever had a needs assessment (e.g. an assessment for the ASGSF) to identify specialist support? Do you think this appropriately considered your child's needs, experiences and behaviours? What was the outcome from this and did it lead to high-quality support afterwards?

Our verdict: It's right the government wants to improve the consistency and evidence base behind needs assessments. This could help more kinship families get specialist support. We know that children in kinship care have broadly comparable levels of special educational needs to other groups including adopted children but are often less likely to get a formal diagnosis and access suitable support. However, we urge the government to ensure that considerations specific to kinship families are included and they aren't just assumed to be identical to those of adoptive families. Kinship carers often tell us that current assessments and support funded by the ASGSF isn't tailored enough and organisations don't have enough experience with kinship families.

Proposal 6...

... is to ensure clinical support funded by the government and provided to adopted and kinship children meets NHS standards of evidence. The government also wants to see wider non-clinical support meet standards which demonstrate it does make a difference to children's mental health and wellbeing, recognising that not all support funded by the ASGSF currently meets these standards.

Question 17 asks whether or not you agree with this proposal and for your views.

You might want to consider the following when responding:

- If your kinship child receives support – funded by the ASGSF or not – for their mental health, were you informed about the evidence base which backs up the use of this type of support?

Proposal 7...

... is to devolve responsibility for managing the ASGSF to local authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies. The government outlines that the national, central administration of the ASGSF currently causes lots of problems. It believes that regional or local bodies (e.g. local authorities for kinship families) are better placed to do this as they are closer to families and can understand and coordinate support more effectively.

Question 18 asks whether or not you agree with this proposal and for your views.

You might want to consider the following when responding:

- Do you think that the local authority is the right body to oversee funding through the ASGSF? What benefits might this have, as well as what risks?



- What kind of relationship do you have with your local authority? What is the right role for children's services when it comes to accessing funded therapeutic support through the ASGSF?
- How else should local authorities improve access to therapeutic support for kinship families through their kinship local offer?

Our verdict: We've always wanted the government to explore further how the ASGSF could be set up differently to better support kinship families and recognise where the structures and systems around them are different to those for adoptive families. However, there are significant risks associated with moving towards a devolved ASGSF given the much lower levels of local authority trust amongst kinship families and how their relationships and engagement with their local authority is very different to that of adopters with their Regional Adoption Agency. We'll be exploring this further with kinship carers soon to understand the different options, their benefits, and their risks.

Proposal 8...

... is to review the costs of each intervention funded by the ASGSF and use this to inform guidance for therapeutic services. This could then lead to new measures to bring greater consistency and fairness to therapy pricing.

Question 19 asks whether or not you agree with this proposal and for your views.

You might want to consider the following when responding:

- If your child has received support funded by the ASGSF, do you think this represented good value for money? Were you kept informed about the cost per session or per intervention? If your child received different kinds of support or changed providers, do you think there was consistency and fairness in the cost?

Question 20 asks if you've got any further comments. You can leave this section blank if you don't, but feel free to use this box to share any other comments which don't fit neatly into one of the others described above.

Remember – we'd love to see your responses too so we can reflect back to government what we're hearing from kinship carers. You can copy and paste your answers into an email to us at comms@kinship.org.uk.