

Elections in England and Wales in 2026



Introduction

Elections are an important opportunity for kinship carers to help shape the decisions made about children, families, and support in their local area.

This guide explains which elections are happening in 2026, and how kinship carers can engage effectively with candidates to build their understanding of kinship care.

When and where are elections happening in 2026?

All elections across England and Wales are happening on:

Thursday 7 May 2026

In England, elections are being held to elect councillors across 136 local authorities including:

- 32 London boroughs
- 32 metropolitan boroughs
- 18 unitary authorities
- 6 county councils
- 48 district councils

Plus, six directly elected mayors in Croydon, Hackney, Lewisham, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Watford.

In Wales, elections for Members of the Senedd (MSs) are happening in all seats in the Welsh Parliament/Senedd.

How to find out if there's an election in your area and who the candidates are

To check if elections are happening in your area use the Electoral Commission's postcode tool: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk>. Or check your local authority website.



Why are local elections important (England)?

Local elections choose the local councillors who make decisions on a range of issues from bin collections to children's services – and that includes support for kinship families.

As a result, local councillors have real influence over decisions that directly affect kinship families – but they may not know what kinship care is or what support kinship families need.

That's why it's important to engage with local councillor and mayoral candidates now, while they're keen to hear from voters.

Every conversation with candidates is valuable. They may win their seats and become councillors but even if they don't, unsuccessful candidates remain influential within their local political parties and could be useful allies in the future.

Why are Welsh Parliament/Senedd elections important?

Kinship care is a devolved matter for the Welsh Parliament, meaning MSs make decisions on support for kinship families – but they may not know what kinship care is or what support kinship families need.

That's why it's important to engage with candidates now, while they're keen to hear from voters.

There has also been a change to the voting system in Wales and the division of constituencies. You can read more about those changes here:

<https://senedd.wales/senedd-now/senedd-blog/how-will-the-new-voting-system-work-at-the-next-senedd-election/>

How to engage with election candidates

Candidates are keen to speak to voters and there are a few ways you can reach them:

Speak to candidates who are canvassing

Some will knock on doors, and this is a great opportunity to start a conversation.

Email candidates or contact through social media



You'll have to search for their contact details: look on flyers that come through your door, search the internet for candidates' names, you can also look on social media to find their profiles.

Request a meeting or phone call

Once you've made contact, it might be worth asking candidates to meet you. Many are keen and willing to meet residents, especially on key social issues – but others won't have the time so you may have to settle for an email exchange.

Attend local hustings or debates

Hustings are public meetings with all or most of the candidates present. You can ask what the candidates are going to do to support kinship carers locally.

When engaging with candidates, do think about your personal boundaries and what you would and would not feel comfortable sharing about your experience.

What does a successful conversation look like?

A successful conversation with candidates isn't going to result in change straightaway, but it can help build their understanding of the challenges kinship families face, and the role the local authority/Welsh Parliament can and does play in kinship family's lives.

Raising awareness

If a candidate better understands kinship care because of the conversations you have with them, that's a win.

Building long-term relationships

Win or lose, you've started building a positive relationship with someone who is engaging in local politics.

Creating champions for kinship care – and strengthening the visibility of kinship families

If the candidate you've engaged does go on to win their seat, they can be a useful ally. They can ask questions and push for better support and raise kinship care in committees.



What can you ask council candidates in England to do?

Local councillors play a key role in shaping support for kinship families, particularly through their influence with senior council officers and their ability to champion kinship care publicly.

- We know local authorities are starting to develop their **kinship local offer** right now and local councillors can help guide the direction and ambition of the offer – by speaking to the team in the local authority who are putting it together. They can also ask them to ensure they co-produce it with kinship carers, helping ensure the final offer is clear, accessible and grounded in real experience.
- Councillors also have a **public platform to advocate for kinship care** – especially on social media. They can highlight the importance of supporting kinship families, show their support for **#ValueOurLove** and raise awareness of the challenges as well as signpost other kinship carers to support available from the local authority, charities like Kinship and any peer support groups in the area.
- Ask your candidates to **attend a local kinship carer support group**. You could also bring kinship carers you know together for a one-off meeting if there isn't a regular meeting in your area.

What can you ask MS candidates to do?

MSs play a key role in Wales in shaping support for kinship families through the Welsh Government and Senedd.

- MSs can use their **public platform to advocate for kinship care** – especially on social media. They can highlight the importance of supporting kinship families, show their support for **#ValueOurLove** and raise awareness of the challenges as well as signpost other kinship carers to support available from the local authority, charities like Kinship and any peer support groups in the area.
- Ask your candidates to **attend a local kinship carer support group**. You could also bring kinship carers you know together for a one-off meeting if there isn't a regular meeting in your area.



Being politically neutral

Kinship is a politically neutral organisation and doesn't support any political party. To achieve change for kinship families we work with all the mainstream political parties. We recommend that you engage with every candidate in your area from the mainstream political parties to remain neutral.

If you could be seen to be representing Kinship (e.g. wearing a T-shirt or holding a sign with our logo) you should not be seen to be endorsing that candidate or encouraging votes for them.

You can do this by making sure any photos you have taken with your candidate don't include any 'vote for me' type signs.

More support from Kinship

We hope the information above will help you have a successful meeting with your election candidates. We're here to help too and you can contact the campaigns team on comms@kinship.org.uk if you have any questions.