The kinship local offer

What is the 'kinship local offer'?

The kinship local offer should provide information about all support and services available to kinship carers in the local area. It could be online or printed but it needs to be relevant to all types of kinship care arrangement. It should be underpinned by the principle that support should be based on the need of the child not merely by legal status.

The kinship local offer should include what support is available, who is eligible, how to access it, and how decisions are made - all in plain language.

The government has recently created a legal duty for local authorities to create a kinship local offer. This means they must now create one, and they must be created in consultation with kinship carers.

Family and friends care policies

Local authorities have been required to publish a 'family and friends care policy' or similar since 2011. However, we know that too many local authorities didn't publish these clearly and accessibly, didn't update them regularly enough, and often didn't show how they had been informed by the views of kinship families.

Kinship local offers will now replace these policies, and updated guidance sets out what they should contain and how they should be delivered (more on that below). Local authorities may still use their old family and friends care policy as a starting point for creating their kinship local offer so it's worth taking a look at it, if it's available.

Making your local authority's kinship local offer as good as possible

We want local authorities to be creating a kinship local offer that is produced with kinship carers and is as strong and useful as it can be. Some local authorities will do this without prompting, while others may need convincing to do it right.

Getting in touch with your local authority now and asking them how they're engaging kinship carers in their work around the kinship local offer is an important first step and can mean the difference between a good and bad local offer.

You'll also be in a good position to build a relationship with your local authority and may be able to help them shape the kinship local offer long term.

How to approach your local authority

You may have a contact in your local authority and they could be a good place to start. If you don't, try these options:

- You can find a contact email or phone number on our website by looking up your local authority: https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/kinship-compass/

- You could also contact your local authority's Director of Children's Services here: https://www.adcs.org.uk/directory/directory_list/directors-of-childrens-services/
- If you're struggling to get a response from the local authority, you could contact the councillor with responsibility for kinship care, known as the lead member for children's services. You should find their details on your local authority's website.

What should I say to encourage a meeting and get it in the diary?

You should write an email inviting them directly to a meeting, offering your experiences and expertise as a kinship carer to support them in developing their kinship local offer. We have included a template letter/email you can adapt at the end of this document (appendix 1).

Or, if you're part of a peer support group, you could invite the local authority contact to meet with your group members to hear directly from them about the challenges they are facing as kinship carers locally and how the kinship local offer could support in providing information about relevant support.

You could also get creative – why not write a letter or email that also includes a drawing from your kinship child, offering the above but adding this personal touch?

Do your research

It will be helpful for you to do some research ahead of any meeting you have with the local authority, to get a sense and an understanding of whether your local authority has started to develop the kinship local offer.

Take a closer look at what your local authority is offering by:

- Heading to https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/kinship-compass/
- Type in your town/city/local authority and click search
- A list of the sections will appear if you choose 'Support from your local authority' you will be taken automatically to this section
- Here you can click through to your local authority's website and you can take a look at what may be available and if you are able to find a friends and family policy, local offer or other information that is useful for kinship carers
- **You can also repeat these steps to take a look at your neighbouring local authorities as a comparison which may be a useful topic of discussion during your meeting.**

Remember, not all local authorities will have started the kinship local offer process and may not have a document available, this is not necessarily a bad thing. It just means you have got your foot in the door early and your voice could help shape what is to come.

Topics you could cover at the meeting

Once you have secured a meeting with your contact, think about what you would like to focus on. Here are some suggestions of questions you could ask as conversation starters.

- How are you currently supporting kinship families?
    - Is there a team? If so, who do they offer support to?

    - Do you already have a kinship local offer?
- How is this offer of support communicated to kinship families?
- Do you send out a newsletter for kinship carers telling them about updates or support available to them?
- Does your communication, including webpages, use consistent language? E.g. using the term 'kinship carer' and not just SGO or special guardian?
- Are you currently signposting kinship families to other support e.g. Kinship or other charities?
- Have you recently reviewed or updated your kinship policy?
- Can you share how your allowances and policies compare with neighbouring local authorities?
- How can kinship carers support the LA to look at the kinship local offer and how this is embedded into the community?
- Have you linked in with other kinship carers and started to think about a working group of experienced voices?
    - This could be your hook to get another meeting in the diary to discuss this area or other areas you identified more broadly, and offer to feed in.

What could the kinship local offer include?

The local offer could include support and services on lots of different issues. These include:

- Support groups and training
- Financial support
- Supporting kinship carers to stay in work
- Accommodation
- Education
- Supporting family time
- Family Group Decision Making
- Legal support
- Therapeutic support

You could also start off with quick wins which may feel less overwhelming for you as a kinship carer campaigner, and that may be more realistic and free for your local authority to do right now to better the way their support package looks these could be:

- If they don't have the kinship local offer yet, which for most will be the case they could easily been signposting to Kinship the charity to enable their kinship carers to access the support they need such as training, advice and peer support groups.
- If the local authority being consistent and using the right language for kinship carers to identify themselves with. A change in language will go along way for example – the team that supports kinship carers should be named to reflect what they do – support kinship carers and by using kinship carers in the team name will mean more kinship carers identify that team as being there to support them.
- Does the local authority send out a newsletter having a newsletter that informs kinship carers with what is available or the progress that is being made whilst developing the local offer is a great way to communicate and signpost – it also

helps to build a trusting relationship as the local authority is being open and honest with what is available.

- Has the Local authority established a working group which includes other kinship carers to help develop this work, have they meet with the wider kinship carer community and visited some support groups to get their take on what needs to be available to better support kinship families.

If you really don't know where else to start – you could come up with a wish list of all the things you think should be available to support kinship families, not all wish lists make the final cut but it's a good starting place for local authorities to look at and figure what is realistic for them to do as this early stage.

More in-depth conversations with your local authority

For more in-depth conversations about the local offer here are some topics and questions you could ask your local authority.

Support groups and training

Support groups for kinship carers can be run by local authorities, charities such as Kinship or by groups of kinship carers locally. Your local authority should know what support groups exist and be able to signpost to kinship carers. Your local authority may also provide training for new and existing kinship carers.

Kinship's research indicates only 3 in 10 kinship carers had been signposted by their local authority to other places where they could get support.

Questions to ask your local authority on support groups and training:

- Does the LA run a support group for kinship carers and who can access this group?
- Does the local authority offer training to kinship carers and can all kinship carers regardless of legal status access this training?
- Do you signpost kinship carers to training and support including peer support via kinship the charity?
- Do kinship families in your area have access to trauma-informed mental health support?

A couple of prompting questions for kinship carers to reflect on their own experiences and how they could use these to ask about the LA offer (we can help with this).

Financial support

Some local authorities offer financial support to kinship carers as part of their kinship local offer and some don't. What local authorities offer differs across the country - some may offer a small allowance for a set period and some may match the allowance with the national minimum fostering allowance. Often allowances are based on the legal order and many local authorities operate a blanket policy and deduct child benefit which goes against government guidance.

Kinship's annual report 2024 highlights that kinship carers continue to face significant hardship, and their greater reliance on welfare support leaves them vulnerable to financial insecurity. Kinship carers are four times more likely to have had a direct debit, standing order or bill they weren't able to pay in the last month and 8%of kinship carers were using food banks because of increases in the cost of living.

Questions to ask your local authority on financial support:

- What does this look like for your local authority?
- What is their policy for financial allowances?
- Has this been reviewed in line with government guidance and recommendations?
- Are they offering financial support based on the child's needs—or on their legal label?
- Do they deduct child benefit?
- Do you offer anonymous ways for carers and young people to give feedback safely, such as online forms or third-party interviews?
- What steps could be taken to reduce inequality between formal and informal kinship carers?

A couple of prompting questions for kinship carers to reflect on their own experiences and how they could use these to ask about the LA offer (we can help with this).

Supporting kinship carers to stay in work

For many kinship carers, taking on the care of a child has a big impact on their working life. Some carers have to give up jobs altogether, while others move to part-time or flexible working. This loss of income can add to financial strain and contribute to isolation. At the same time, being able to stay in work can provide financial stability, social connection, and a sense of identity outside of caring.

Kinship's annual survey shows that **almost half (48%) of kinship carers said they had to give up work or reduce their hours after becoming a carer**, and **around 1 in 3 carers told us they struggle to balance employment with their caring responsibilities**. Too often, carers feel they have to choose between supporting their family and maintaining employment.

Questions to ask your local authority on work support:

- Does the local authority provide any support to help kinship carers stay in work, such as flexible contact arrangements, respite care, or childcare support?
- Do they work with local employers or Jobcentre Plus to raise awareness of kinship care and carers' rights at work?
- Are kinship carers routinely signposted to employment advice or financial planning support?
- Are allowances or other financial supports designed to recognise the impact of lost earnings?

- Are there specific policies in place to prevent kinship carers from being penalised for trying to remain in employment?

Prompting reflections for kinship carers:

- How did becoming a kinship carer affect your working life?
- Did you feel supported by the local authority in balancing work and caring responsibilities?
- Are there particular times (e.g. school holidays, during contact) when you feel more support could make a difference to your ability to work?

Are you struggling to engage with your local authority?

Every local authority is taking a different approach to creating their kinship local offer. Some have been working well with kinship carers, while others have been less keen to engage. Now that creating a kinship local offer is a legal duty for the local authority it's even more important for all local authorities to speak to kinship carers when they create a kinship local offer.

If you have approached your local authority and are struggling to get them to engage with you, there are other approaches you can take.

- Use our follow up template letter below (appendix 2) which has more details about the local authorities legal duties and reasons to engage with you.
- You could also contact your councillor or the councillor responsible for children's services in your area. You can copy them into your email to the local authority and will show you're serious about engaging on this issue. Send the councillor a separate follow up email to introduce yourself and explain what you're trying to do – and ask them what they can do to support you.
- Your MP could be another route to gaining an ally as they care about the challenges their constituents are facing and may be able to help you get a foot in the door. You could copy them into your email to local authority and follow up with more information on what you're trying to achieve, Even if they can't/won't help directly, having them copied into your email can push it up the local authority's inbox.
- Remember: you also have access to the Kinship campaigns team for 1-2-1 support, as well as kinship local offer drop sessions where you can come along to chat with the team, as well as other kinship carer campaigners who are campaigning on the same issue.

Don't forget, you can contact the Kinship campaigns team on comms@kinship.org.uk for support with working with your local authority on the kinship local offer at any time.

Appendix 1: template letter/email to your local authority

Dear

[I'm a kinship carer / We're a group of kinship carers] living in [village/town/city] and I'm keen to speak to you or one of your team about the kinship local offer.

As I'm sure you're aware, all local authorities must produce a kinship local offer and this should be developed in consultation with kinship carers.

[I/We] would like to offer our experience and insight to support you to develop your kinship local offer. Together we can create something that truly helps kinship families across [local authority area].

I/we would be keen to meet you and your colleagues to discuss how we can make sure the kinship local offer is as relevant, accessible and useful for kinship families as possible.

If you have already started the process of creating a kinship local offer, please do let [me/us] know how [I/we] can help.

If you are not the relevant person to speak to, please do let me know who to contact.

Kind regards

Appendix 2 - template letter/email if you're struggling to engage with your local authority

Dear

[I'm a kinship carer / We're a group of kinship carers] living in [village/town/city] I/We have been in touch before but have not heard back. [You could include details of communication you have sent here] We are keen to speak to you or one of your team about the kinship local offer.

As I'm sure you're aware, the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act recently placed a legal duty on local authorities to produce a kinship local offer by 29 June 2026, and this should be developed in consultation with kinship carers,

Section 5 of the Act states that local authorities 'must consult relevant persons about any services that are offered, or may be offered, by the local authority which may assist to improve outcomes for children living in the authority's area who live in kinship care, and publish a report on the consultation'.

, In this section the Act provides a detailed definition of who kinship carers are to ensure local authorities consult with kinship carers and young people across these areas.

[I/We] would like to offer our experience and insight to support you to develop your kinship local offer. Together we can create something that truly helps kinship families across [local authority area].

I/we would be keen to meet you and your colleagues to discuss how we can make sure the kinship local offer is as relevant, accessible and useful for kinship families as possible.

If you have already started the process of creating a kinship local offer, please do let [me/us] know how [I/we] can help.

If you are not the relevant person to speak to, please do let me know who to contact.

Kind regards