

Join our parliamentary drop-in on adoption and kinship support alongside Adoption UK.

Monday 13 July, 1pm to 3pm, Macmillan Room, PCH



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

#ValueOurLove campaign

Briefing for MPs – July 2026

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

Grandparents are most commonly kinship carers, but they can also be older siblings, aunts and uncles, cousins and family friends. Kinship care can take many forms, and the rights, responsibilities and support available to kinship families depends largely on the type of arrangement they have.

Most children in kinship care have experienced trauma, adversity and loss. Children typically enter because the parent has died, is unwell, has gone to prison, is experiencing problems with drugs and alcohol, or are neglectful or abusive. A kinship carer provides a stable and loving home life where a child 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 100 children looked after in well-supported kinship care rather than local authority care, the state saves £4 million per year and increases the lifetime earnings of those children by £2 million.

About Kinship

Kinship is the leading kinship care charity in England and Wales. We're here to change lives and change the system. We provide advice and support to thousands of kinship families each year through our specialist advice service, network of more than 180 peer support groups, and free in-person and online events and workshops. Working closely with kinship carers, local authorities and other partners, we develop research, campaigns and policy solutions – creating positive change across society.

5 top links for MPs

1. Download our **information pack for MPs** which covers everything you need to know to support kinship families in your constituency and in Parliament.
2. Visit our **kinship care policy tracker** to stay updated kinship care policy in England, including what's happening now, our verdict, and what we think should happen next.
3. Read our most recent '**state of the nation**' **report** based on the findings of our 2025 annual survey of kinship carers, and explore our collection of **reports and briefings** for further evidence and policy recommendations.
4. Learn more about kinship care in your constituency at our **kinship care constituency map**.
5. Discover Kinship's support for kinship families in your constituency by using our **Kinship Compass tool**. If you'd like to learn more from kinship carer constituents or join a local peer support group meeting, please get in touch and we can arrange.

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About the #ValueOurLove campaign

For too long kinship care has been overlooked and undervalued. That's why our [#ValueOurLove campaign](#) is calling on politicians to increase emotional, practical and financial support for kinship families. Since launching in October 2022, we've mobilised a community of kinship carers across England and Wales to take actions which have secured significant changes to policy and practice, including the first-ever national kinship care strategy for England in December 2023.

Our current policy priorities are:

1. Ensuring all kinship families have access to financial support.

Financial insecurity remains a core part of too many kinship families' lives. Kinship carers are more than twice as likely as other adults to be [using credit more than usual](#) to cope with the cost of living. Unlike foster carers, most kinship carers do not receive any financial support when they unexpectedly take on the care of a relative or friend's child. The current system [creates perverse incentives](#) which keeps children looked after in care and prevents families moving to the right kinship arrangement for them, with significant implications for children, families and the public purse.

Current status: In February, the government [announced the launch of 7 'Kinship Zones'](#) in England to pilot financial allowances for some kinship carers and deliver investment in family network support from April. Whilst this is a positive step, it will only reach about 4% of children in kinship care and risks paralysing progress towards equalising financial support more widely. We want to see the government outline how the pilot could lead to a further rollout and to take additional action in the meantime to encourage – and challenge – non-participating local authorities to [improve their financial support](#).

2. Securing a new right to paid kinship care leave.

Nearly half of kinship carers in work [lose their jobs after taking on their caring role](#), and 8 in 10 never return to work. Unlike adoptive and other working parents, kinship carers have no right to paid leave from employment after taking on the care of babies and children. This unnecessarily forces them out of work and into poverty and the benefits system, and robs them of protected time to help settle their children. Since 2023, we've supported leading employers – such as Tesco, John Lewis and B&Q – to become [Kinship Friendly Employers](#), but there should be statutory backing through the parental leave system.

Current status: We were successful in [securing the inclusion of kinship carers](#) within the scope of the government's parental leave review last year; it's vital this leads to a new right to paid kinship care leave. In February, we [published our proposals for a new statutory entitlement](#), developed alongside kinship carers and workplace leaders, which sets out how and where the parental leave system is best placed to support this group and close this unfair gap in the law. You can help by writing to Minister Dearden [using our template letter](#) and urge her to meet with kinship families.

3. Improving educational and therapeutic support for kinship children.

Children growing up in kinship care have typically experienced trauma, separation and loss. As a result, they have levels of special educational needs comparable to children in care. But unlike their counterparts in the care system, most [don't have access to vital help](#) at school or with their mental health. For those kinship carers [concerned about their ability to continue](#) in the next year, the most common reason is the lack of support for their children's [social, emotional and mental health difficulties](#).

Current status: Recent steps taken through the [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act](#) and elsewhere have been insufficient to support all children in kinship care. Last year's [changes to the adoption and special guardianship support fund](#) (ASGSF) were chaotic and poorly considered. Furthermore, proposals published in February to reform mental health and wellbeing support for adoptive and some kinship families [are confused and problematic](#). The government's plans fail to recognise the unique needs, strengths and experiences of kinship families, treating them as an afterthought in reforms designed with adoptive families in mind.