The Rt Hon Jonathan Reynolds MP
Secretary of State for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade
Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade
Old Admiralty Building, Admiralty Place,
London,
SW1A 2DY

cc: Kate Dearden MP, Minister for the Future of Work

Thursday 15 October 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: Introducing Paid Leave from work for Kinship Carers

141,000 children across England and Wales are being raised by kinship carers - relatives or family friends - when they can no longer live with their parents. Kinship carers step in, often at short notice and in crisis circumstances, to care for children who would very likely otherwise enter the care system. They enable children to stay within their loving family, providing stability, continuity of relationships and better outcomes for children, while delivering significant savings to the public purse.

Other working parents, including adopters, are entitled to a period of paid leave from work when they take on the care of a baby or child. Yet kinship carers are expected back at work the next day. This gap in the law often leaves them with no other choice but to quit their jobs, pushing them into financial insecurity and the benefits system, at the very point they are taking on new unexpected costs of raising a child or multiple children.

Research by the charity Kinship found that:

- 45% of working kinship carers lose jobs when they take on the care of a child
- Over half (51%) of those previously in work said paid leave would have helped them return to work fully (32%) or partly (19%)
- Of those who stop working when they become a kinship carer, 80% never go back to work
- 40% of kinship carers are forced onto benefits as a result of leaving their job or not being able to work as before.

For those who are forced to juggle work with settling a child into their home, a lack of paid leave is having significant negative impact on the child with 41% of kinship carers saying the lack of paid leave increased a child's stress or anxiety and 32% saying it made it harder for children to manage trauma.

When employers understand kinship care, the unfairness is obvious to them and support for kinship carers in the workplace is widespread. Some employers are already leading the way by starting to add kinship carers into their family-friendly policies. However, employers are clear: to ensure equitable outcomes across the labour market, an entitlement to paid leave needs statutory backing in the same way as it is needed for other working families. Indeed, over three quarters of employers would support a statutory paid leave scheme for kinship carers according to new YouGov research for Kinship.

Over a year into the review of parental leave and pay, we have come together as a diverse coalition of employers, employer organisations, charities, academics, campaigners, trade unions and kinship carers to demonstrate our unified support for a statutory right to paid leave for kinship carers. To secure this right, legislative changes must be made in this Parliament as a clear outcome of the review. Kinship carers are taking on life-changing responsibility to care for children who have experienced trauma and loss. They must be treated fairly, and parental leave policies brought into the 21st century.

We are calling on the government to:

- Introduce statutory paid leave for kinship carers.
- Ensure entitlements are clearly set out so that employers and employees understand them and to support take up.
- Work with employers, unions, employer organisations, the voluntary sector, kinship carers and others to support implementation of the new entitlement.

Paid kinship care leave is fair and achievable - if paid leave exists for working parents including adopters, it should and can exist for kinship carers, feeding into this government's mission to break down the barriers to opportunity at every stage of work and life.

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Peake, Chief Executive, Kinship
Brigitte Gater, Managing Director of Children's Services, Action for Children
Emily Frith, CEO, Adoption UK
Mary Redcliffe, Director of People Operations and Experience, B&Q
Andrew Reece, Strategic Lead, BASW
Greg McCaw, Chief People Officer, BKL
Kevin Munday, CEO, Buttle

Alex Lloyd Hunter, Co-Founder, Dadshift
Richard Bradford, Chief People Officer UK&I, Dentsu
Jordan Hall, Head of Public Affairs, Family Rights Group
Penny East, CEO, Fawcett Society
Gemma Jose, Director, Hearnden Associates
Grant Taylor, Founder and CEO, Peridot Partners
Rachel Grocott, CEO, Pregnant then Screwed
Dan Paskins, Executive Director - UK Impact, Save the Children
Natasha Rice, Group Reward and Wellbeing Director, Tesco
Jack O'Neill, Director of Policy, Advocacy & Influencing, The Children's Society
Sarah Thomas, Chief Executive, The Fostering Network
Kudsia Batool, Director of Equalities, TUC
Andrea Egan, General Secretary, Unison
Joanne Thomas, General Secretary, Usdaw
Dr Daniella Jenkins, Executive Director, Women's Budget Group
Sarah Bailey, CEO, West Cheshire and North Wales Chamber of Commerce