



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

The **Peer** Post

Stronger **together**

Edition 2
February
2026



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Meet The Hub

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If you email the peer support email I'll direct you to the support you need. I write the monthly email and this magazine so contact me if you have content you'd like to share. I can make changes to your page on the website and help with any resources you need.

Janice



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If your group is facing a challenge, I'm on hand to support you. Whether it's offering insights from Kinship, connecting you with another experienced group or buddying you with another leader, together we'll find the solution.

Laura



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I manage the Hub so if your group has a concern, query, idea or top tip please get in touch: you influence the support we offer. I host our monthly online meets and connect groups with services in Kinship to ensure you have the resources and platform you need to thrive.

Daniel



Associate Director of Peer Support and Community

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I lead Kinship's work in developing new peer groups and ensuring existing groups flourish through our Hub. I also represent your work to the rest of Kinship and externally. Come to me with your suggestions, successes, or challenges.

Group Leader Meets

Each month we host 2 Zoom meets for group leaders to come together and share recent updates, challenges and successes from their groups. We also invite guest speakers based on what you want to see. They are usually on the **second Wednesday** of the month during term time - you can choose between **12:30 to 2pm** or **7:30 to 9pm**.

It's your space, so if there's a topic you'd like to discuss, email us at peersupport@kinship.org.uk

Scan the QR code for the date of our next meets, or visit:
kinship.org.uk/group-leader-meet



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Letter from the editor

Welcome to the second edition of our **Peer Post** magazine.

Thank you for all your support, involvement, and feedback from the first edition - it was a pleasure to create. You can expect more editions in **May 2026, September 2026, and January 2027**, sharing more of your wonderful stories.



This edition is full of beautiful and deeply human stories to help you feel connected to the brilliant groups in the Hub, and to Kinship.

Making this edition meant speaking with many group leaders and Kinship staff, and we saw strength and resilience everywhere we looked. If there's one thing uniting all of us, it's our determination in standing up for kinship carers so you get the support you deserve. I hope this edition brings to light many more things we all have in common.

A running theme in this edition is **wellbeing**, as we move into a new year and consider what it might bring our way. It's an absolute delight to learn about the hobbies that make you happy, which help refuel you and give you respite when you're going through tough times.

Sometimes our hobbies might seem unimportant compared to the bigger things we face, but that feeling of childlike joy we get from doing something we love - whether we've enjoyed it since childhood, or if we're learning something new - **is a feeling we can hold on to.**

It's a glimmer of happiness that can connect us across generations. I've always bonded with my Nan over our shared interest of arts and crafts, and these are memories I'll treasure forever.

We're also bringing you some fantastic **tips and guidance for all things peer support**, topped with features from fundraising, campaigns, advice, and training.

We hope you enjoy seeing the impact you are having, individually and collectively, for kinship carers across the country.

And finally, we're delighted with the news that the **Department for Education have agreed in principle to extend the Peer Support Service for another year**, and we'll be in touch with you about how we plan this year to be even better.

If you'd like to submit content for the next edition or give us some feedback, just email [**peersupport@kinship.org.uk**](mailto:peersupport@kinship.org.uk) - we'd love to hear from you!

All the best, Ellie x

What are your hopes for your group in 2026?

"To set small, achievable goals, and to try holiday-themed activities with the group for Easter and Christmas"

- Carole, Keighley

"Persistence and determination. I know there are plenty of kinship carers out there, now I just need to get them to the group. I have the help of the venue which has free parking and is now offering discounted tea and coffee. I am also going to pursue more connections with schools in the area."

- Nich, Weald

"In 2025 I spoke with the Hub regarding the group and I was thinking of closing due to low numbers. Following that, I moved venue, Janice helped with outreach, and we have seen numbers grow. So in 2026, I want to encourage more kinship carers to join our group, and we'd love to organise more activities such as a caravan weekend, and more."

- Linzi, Over Wyre

"It would be lovely to get some new members along, and try some new things."

- Gillian, Gateshead

"To have better outcomes in our conversations with the local authority."

- Keith, Southport

"We are taking our group from fortnightly to monthly. We've found facilitating fortnightly meetings a struggle, and hope that having a defined day each month will help carers fit it into their busy diaries and be more able to commit to coming. We are, however, talking to a nearby group to align our meetings so they alternate, giving people 2 monthly options. We are liaising with other local carer groups in the borough to bring a wider group of carers together to share and collaborate."

- Ian & Sue, Penge

"To become well enough again to communicate and connect with more of the myriad of incredible kinship carers throughout the county, offering understanding, warmth and support. And simply to listen. To forge effective links and collaborations with related organisations and staff, including our local authority, schools and colleges. But of course, also to continue supporting our amazing existing kinship carers in our group, who continue to render me speechless with their constant and continuing commitment to their young ones."

- Peter, Shropshire

"I feel inspired about the year ahead. We have a great group of very supportive kinship carers who want other kinship carers to come and experience how group makes life easier, so others are not missing out."

- Martine, Newcastle East

Whatever your plan is for 2026, we'd love to help. Get in touch if you'd like to discuss ideas with us or to chat to another group with a similar hope. Remember, you're not alone.



Taking time for you

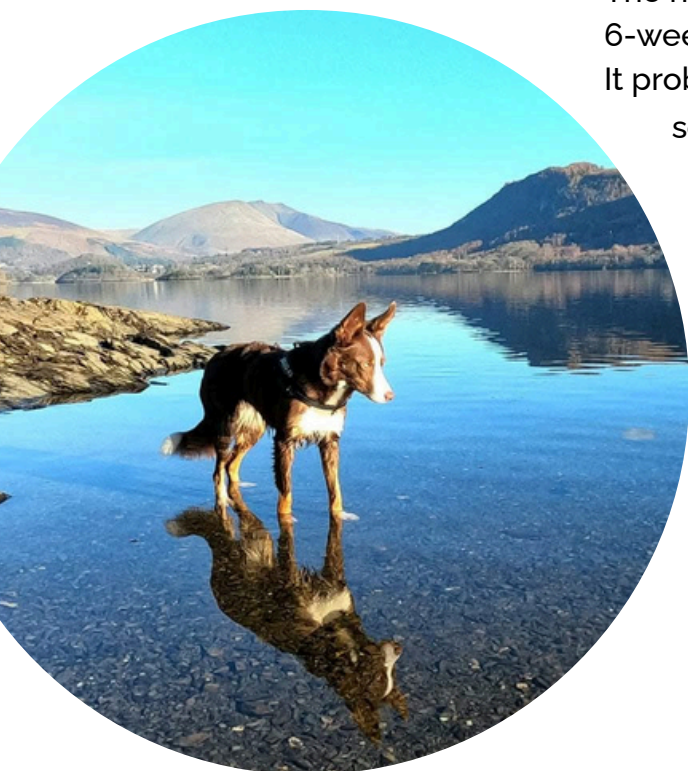
Running a peer support group takes time, energy, and compassion. Your own wellbeing is important. You need to put on your own oxygen mask before you can help others with theirs. Kinship carer and group leader in Cumbria, **Kay**, shares how she stays on top of her wellbeing in the face of challenges.

"I have a confession to make... I'm a bit of a fitness junkie. I wasn't always like this; it happened slowly, and I blame the children. After my nephew and two nieces came to live with me, I was exhausted and spent the first few years in a state of high alert, fighting metaphorical fires and trying to do everything for everyone whilst mourning the life that might have been.



"And slowly, I realised I was disappearing into the role of carer; always doing things for other people and becoming invisible. I also got somewhat stressed at the school gate by how young all the parents looked."

So, having crashed through the big 50, I decided if I couldn't get younger, I could get fitter, and started running with a local group. It was the first time I'd run since school days, but it gave me the chance to get out of the house and talk to adults, so I stuck at it! Then I did my first 5k race... and I liked it.



The next step was more of a giant leap, when I joined a 6-week beginners' fell running programme... and loved it! It probably saved my life; I spent lockdown either home-schooling or running on the fells.

A smarter person would tell you that running is good for your cardiovascular system, builds muscle, and much more. I just know that it feels right for me.

I run to straighten out my head. It's helped me develop an inner superpower that matches my outer strength. After using every one of your body's muscles to get to the top of a mountain, there is nothing like the feeling of looking down on the world and feeling invincible.

Running brings a huge sense of achievement; I've now completed 10km trail races and several half marathons.



I'm not a big fan of races, but I have discovered that I like setting myself challenges and pushing the boundaries. To that end, I've run along Hadrien's Wall, run south to north through the Lake District, and tried challenges like running the river Derwent from source to sea.

I enjoy pouring over a map, plotting a route... and then getting lost. Luckily, I am half homing pigeon, and of course always carry a full running bag with everything I need.

I run regularly with a group of friends – the average age of my group is about 60+ – and the post-run coffee and cake is every bit as important. But I also love to run alone, with my collie, Peg, or occasionally with my nephew. When he joins me it gives us an invaluable chance to chat.

For me, the best form of medication is running. As for the future... perhaps I could manage a marathon! Hmm... road or trail?"

From hills to hammer throwing...

Group leader for South West London virtual group, **Kim**, shares the positive impact of her interest in hammerthrowing.

"This is a photo of me competing for Great Britain at the European Masters Athletics Championships in Madrid in W55 Hammer.

The training allows me to have an hour twice a week to get outside and do something that takes all my focus. This gives space and time away from the usual day to day distractions of school, courts, social services, and behaviours associated with a child who has experienced early life trauma - when you're swinging a lump of metal over your head, you need to be fully focused on that!

The competing has meant meeting fellow competitors from around the UK and the world who all have a similar interest in the sport.

This interest has been my lifeline at times. I've developed new skills (I also now coach the event and officiate when I can), and I have made new friends and acquaintances over the time I have been doing this."

"This interest has been my lifeline at times."





Taking time for you



Peter, group leader in Shropshire, explains what his photography hobby does for him.

"Photography (literally 'drawing with light' and, coincidentally, 200 years old this very year!) combines both science, art and creativity, and is used for a myriad of purposes – not just for recording a moment, a face or a scene.

For me, photography is quite possibly a life-saver, and it gives me a precious creative pathway to slivers of solace, self-esteem and self-worth.

It is my main route to expressing and exploring myself, my interactions and my interpretations with and of the visual world. My photographs are a combination of my eye, my head and my heart."

Mary, group leader in Wolverhampton builds intricate Lego sets, which require a lot of focus and patience.

"It's my therapy, it helps me relax and deal with other things in life."

Dealing with emotional challenges workshop

Our **Breaking Point** research found nearly 1 in 5 kinship carers feel lonely "often or always". If you're feeling this way, you're not alone. In this workshop, you'll meet other kinship carers like you, learn how to look after yourself and cope with the emotional challenges of being a kinship carer.

In this interactive workshop, you'll learn:

- practical strategies to cope with difficult emotions
- how to recognise when you need a break and find time to look after yourself
- where to get further emotional support

Scan to book your free place, or visit kinship.org.uk/events.



If you have a hobby or technique to unwind, please share it in the group leader's WhatsApp - it might inspire others.

Not yet a member? Email peersupport@kinship.org.uk to add your number.



A fond farewell...

This year Newcastle East wished farewell to their leader, **Jackie**, whose hard work over the years to support kinship carers in her area has made an incredible, lasting difference. We spoke with Jackie to find out more about her journey:

How did you become group leader?

I started attending the group when my kinship children were in primary school, then became treasurer in 2016 when the group became constituted. I became a committee member to help organise fundraising events, like domino cards, tombolas, and race nights to name but a few. I was then inspired to step in as group leader when the chairperson stepped away, and I loved it. I was determined to keep the group from folding, as it is a vital space for kinship carers to talk freely without judgement.

What are you proud of in your time as group leader?

Over time, people would come to the group and leave with more knowledge about kinship care. I was proud to keep the group alive during the pandemic, and to be a part of the Value Our Love campaign when it launched. I've loved watching people grow in confidence and helping them make an informed decision for the future.

What are your plans now?

Now my Kinship children are happy following their chosen professions, I always wanted to spend more time horse-riding and volunteering giving horse riding lessons for a charity. My homelife has changed due to family health issues and I am looking forward to more time for me.



...and a welcome!

New leader **Martine** has stepped up to take the reins. Welcome Martine!

How long have you attended the group, and how has it helped?

I found the group when I was almost through the entire SGO process. I was finally told about it by a social worker, and was really angry because it was only a 5 minute walk from my house, and I could've done with the support through all the grief I was experiencing whilst going through the assessment. That's why I wanted the group to continue when I knew Jackie was stepping down.

What made you step up to be group leader?

Nobody else was up for it - people were afraid it would be hard and difficult. But I know I can rely on Kinship if I ever need support.

What are your hopes for the group?

To fundraise, apply for grants, delegate jobs so the whole group is involved in the running of it, encourage new members to come along, and we would love to have some days out and activities with the kinship children.



Sharing the load

Groups thrive when there's consistency, but what happens when the group leader is facing a crisis, doesn't feel well, or has something unexpected come up?

If the group can't go ahead without them, other kinship carers could miss out on support they desperately need. We recognise how much pressure that is for one person.

We spoke to **Karina and Tina** about how sharing group leadership for their South Norfolk group helps benefit them and the group.



How did you start running the group together?

When it was time to become self-led, we didn't want the group to disappear, but we were also worried we wouldn't have time to run it by ourselves. We met at the group and decided to run it together. Now we don't know what we'd do without each other!"

What tasks are involved, and how do you share them?

We run a Whatsapp group, so between us we'll post the next meeting date on there, and arrange the day before who will bring tea, coffee and biscuits. We reply to emails and invite guest speakers like the virtual school head.

We also speak to kinship carers on the phone if they can't make it to the group, so they still get some peer support. Whenever we come across useful information, we share it with the group, and arrange meet ups with the kinship children.



"It can look like whatever you make it - it doesn't need to be a lot of work.

As long as the venue is booked and we've got tea and coffee, people can just turn up and chat."

What would you say to people who are thinking about sharing group leadership?

Tina: Don't be put off by it, it's one of the best things I've ever done. I know it seems daunting - I felt really stressed when I first took it on, but then I thought, maybe it's not that much to actually do. We just answer if people need us. There are tears and laughs, and it's so rewarding at the end of the day. The friendships you make are worth it. When we're all sitting in the park in the summer with the children laughing, knowing we're all in the same situation, we know we're not alone.

Karina: It's nothing posh or clever, just a cuppa and a listening ear. The group is there to support families so they don't have to struggle alone. Just try to make it as easy as possible for someone else to pick up if you can't run it for whatever reason. We're all in the same boat and I feel eternally grateful to Kinship for bringing us together. We feel very blessed to have met each other and to have a friend who just gets it.

Could these tasks be shared amongst your group?

- Answering emails
- Sharing the group on social media
- Putting posters up in the local community
- Booking the venue
- Bringing tea, coffee, treats
- Setting up the room and packing away
- Arranging guest speakers
- Reaching out to partners in the community
- Keeping helpful info in one place, to share with new members



Kinship can help too

Every kinship arrangement is unique, so both the practical and emotional challenges can be really complex. Peer support is a lifeline for members but if professional guidance is needed, make the most of Kinship by signposting to our online advice guides and workshops:

Scan to view all our advice guides, or visit kinship.org.uk/advice-and-information.



Topics include:

- Financial support and benefits
- Health and wellbeing
- Childcare and education
- Relationships and parenting
- Types of kinship care
- Your rights
- ...and many more

Scan to view all our workshops, or visit kinship.org.uk/events.

Many topics are covered including:

- Introduction to kinship care
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Managing contact
- Life story work
- SEND and EHCP process
- Trauma and attachment



Strengthening **connections** and reaching more kinship carers



If you'd like to reach more kinship carers in your area, consider the barriers which might prevent them attending. It could be time or location, but it could also be a fear of opening up to strangers. A group activity can be a great way to attract new people, with less pressure to open up, but still with opportunities to bond over a shared experience.

Food always attracts people - maybe because it feels more celebratory. But there are lots of other activities you can do to mix things up. Why not ask your group?

Here are some ideas:

- Craft activities with recycling, or whatever materials people have access to - pick a theme and see what everyone comes up with!
- Going for a walk together
- Quizzes
- Board games
- Pot luck dinner (everyone brings a dish)
- Everyone makes something small which contributes to a bigger masterpiece, like a collage.

"In our group we once painted little ceramics with the kids. Everyone was laughing and chatting and it was a lovely experience. It's been years and I still think about that group and how it made me feel."
- Janice

Many groups have been strengthened by arranging family activities outside of their meets. It's a great way for the kids to meet others like them and allows members of the group to connect as friends, not just as kinship carers. Kinship carers put their kids needs before their own, so it may be just what some need to take that leap to join the group.

Some ideas you could try:

- **Your local library:** Not only can you borrow books from your local library, but they often have regular activities such as storytelling sessions. [Find your local library on GOV.UK](#).
- **Discounted cinema tickets:** [Vue](#), [Odeon](#) and [Cineworld](#) offer discounted cinema tickets for families. Vue's Mighty Morning and Big Shorts offer an affordable way to watch a film, whilst Odeon offers an Adult and Child offer where the adult pays child ticket prices. Cineworld also has a Family Ticket offer where adults pay child ticket prices.
- **The Max Card:** Get discounts at over 3000 venues across the UK, including Legoland, Alton Towers, Go Ape, Butlins and more with the Max Card.
- **Family Pass:** Get discounts on thousands of days out and attractions with the Family Pass. From riding down the log flumes at your favourite theme park to braving a scary dungeon in the capital, they've got ideas for all the family.
- **The Kids Pass:** For £1 for a 30-day trial or £3.99 a month, you can get discounts on theme parks, holidays, zoos, restaurants, cinema trips and days out with Kids Pass.
- **Kids for a Quid:** Many train operators offer 'Kids for a Quid' train tickets, where children aged 5 to 15 can travel for just £1 or £2 when travelling with an adult during off-peak times.
- **National Trust/English Heritage:** They often offer vouchers in newspapers and social media.

Outreach events

In the last edition we listed places you could try doing some outreach to reach more kinship carers. Community events where support services can have a stall are a great place to start. Group leader in Windsor and Maidenhead, **Rosie**, attended an event at a local GP surgery to raise awareness of her group, and has kindly shared how it went.

How did you find out about the event?

I'm part of the participation group at the GP, so I knew they wanted to launch their new community room. I took the chance to tell them about kinship carers, and asked for a stall.

How was it useful?

The conversations I had with people dispelled some myths and helped them understand kinship care better. I spoke with lots of people who were looking after neices, nephews, and grandchildren. The GPs stood and listened so they also learned about kinship care, which means they can better support kinship carers and signpost them to my group.

What connections did you make?

Plenty! I spoke with other charities including ones which provide neurodiversity coaching and mental health support for young people. I informed them of Kinship and my group, and they told me what services they provide, so we can now signpost to each other.

What would you say to someone who is curious about doing outreach at an event like this?

It's amazing! We stood in our Kinship t-shirts and said 'this is who we are'. It's a great PR opportunity, and we had Kinship cake toppers, banners, and flyers to catch people's attention. The group was amazing, they were all on board and even though they weren't asked to, they shared their stories to help people relate and get some peer support right there at the stall.

My advice for anybody curious is to go for it, stand and be proud of what you are doing, and value our love.



How and when to find community events

The summer is usually when most community events take place so reach out early to have the best chance of securing a table. Events will be advertised in local newspapers and magazines, community notice boards, social media, local radio stations, and online. A quick Google search here and there should do the trick!

Kinship Christmas Trees

We saw some fantastic Kinship-decorated Christmas trees this year, which is a beautiful, festive way to spread the word about kinship care. Make sure to contact your local churches and cathedrals early in the year to get a place.





The new year offers an opportunity to reassess your group agreement, or to write one if you've not already.

A group agreement is a **set of shared guidelines or rules** created together and revisited at the start of each meet. It helps both new members and those who attend regularly feel safe and confident to share openly in a confidential space, free from judgement. Even in the most informal and friendly spaces, it's helpful to agree on respect, inclusivity, boundaries, and making space for everyone's voice.

Creating the agreement together means everyone shares responsibility for upholding it. Every group's agreement will be different but one principle should always remain central: ***what is said in the group stays in the group.***

Simple steps to creating your agreement:

1. Let your group know in advance that you'll be discussing a group agreement - some people appreciate time to collect their thoughts.
2. Bring pens, slips of paper for ideas, and a larger sheet to capture them all.
3. Introduce the conversation and explain why group agreements matter. You might offer a couple of examples to get things started.
4. Ask questions to generate ideas and give everyone time to write down their thoughts.
5. Encourage open discussion, making space for everyone to share. You may not all agree at first, but work together until the wording feels right for everyone.
6. Write up the final agreement and share it in your WhatsApp group and at the start of each meet.

Questions to spark conversation:

- Who is our group for?
- What does our group need to feel safe and comfortable?
- What does confidentiality mean to us?
- How can safeguarding be everyone's responsibility?
- Are mobile phones welcome in the group?
- How can we stay mindful of time?
- How can we help everyone feel able to share openly?
- How can we avoid anyone dominating the space, whilst allowing time for those who really need to talk?
- What can we do to make sure we're respectful of each other, including our differences?
- How can we support each other without judgement or imposing our own views?



Chilbury Kinship Peer Support Group



Group agreement

Everyone joining our group agrees to respect this group agreement.

Creating a safe and open space

- What is said in group, stays in group. No one will share information on anything discussed in the group with others unless permission is given.
- Safeguarding is important. If anyone is worried about an adult or child connected to the group, they should speak to the group leader immediately.
- Mobile phones can remain on vibrate or quiet in group. Take calls outside.
- We do not allow birth parents to attend the group so everyone feels safe to speak openly.
- People can come to group when you want to or are able to. You're not expected to come to every meeting. The door is always open.
- Do not share personal information (including details of birth parents) or photos of children in group messaging or the Facebook group.

How we talk and share

- Everyone has the right to speak and have an opinion. Not everyone has to agree, but they should be respectful of others' opinions.
- Listen carefully.
- Do not swear or use disrespectful language in group.
- Be open and encouraging to other group members. Share ideas and examples to help others.
- Try not to dominate or take over or the conversation. Time is precious and everyone has the right to share.
- If anyone wants to feedback on something they want to see changed, or do not agree with, they can share anonymously in the feedback box or bring to the group if they are comfortable.

How we show respect

- Talk to each other with respect
- Respect and accept difference. Everyone's experience will be different.
- We will not argue in group or raise voices. We work through any problems together.
- If you are late for group, come in quietly and do not interrupt discussion.



Take this along to your group to start a discussion and create your own.

You can download this example and view more information on group agreements [on our website](#) by scanning the QR code.

Remember, the Hub team are also on hand to offer support.



Promoting peer support

Many leaders have told us that finding more kinship carers - especially those in the early stages - is their main goal for 2026, and we want to help.

Around 79% of the UK use social media regularly and more than half of adults use it as a source of news or to find out about things happening around them.

Kinship has a platform and we want to share it with every group.

We've recut our Kinship Care Week film, which featured **Kelly's** kinship journey, this time including more on the impact of peer support.

Thanks to **Andy, Janet, Kelly** and the **members of Chesterfield**, it beautifully captures why groups are a lifeline, and signposts people to the Kinship peer support page so they can find their local group.

As well as promoting via email and our website, we'll be sharing on **Facebook** and **Instagram**. Follow us and share on your social media, email your social workers, schools, local authority and community partners. This video is intended to be an outreach tool for you all. Let us know if it helps.



"I felt I was the only person going through what I was going through.. I would encourage people to look for their local group. I certainly don't feel lonely or isolated anymore." - **Kelly**



"For kinship carers, the thing we share is thinking we're alone. When members come to the group, the relief they feel just being in a room with people who have similar issues to them, you find that it lifts all of you to go on and give the best you can to the children you are caring for." - **Andy**

Visit kinship.org.uk/groups to make sure your page is up to date. We hear from lots of leaders that this is where they found their group.

Feeling inspired?

Seeing the venue, hearing from group leaders or members, and understanding what to expect from a meeting could reduce the fear that stands in the way from potential members joining. If you've signed up to the Network Agreement, we have microphones groups can borrow and can assist with ideas for filming, the consents and editing. You can share your video on local Facebook groups, or with professionals in your community. Speak to the Hub team to learn more.

You can read more about the Network Agreement on Page 18

Engaging with your **Virtual School Head (VSH)**

We've heard some strong relationships have been built between kinship peer support groups and their local virtual school. We know they have visited groups, listened to the stories of the people there, and made movement on real changes to help children in need of support. Group leaders **Aileen and Angela**, from Harrogate and Knaresborough, have shared their talking points below, which helped structure their meeting with their VSH.



What information they gave the VSH:

- An overview of kinship care facts and figures. Visit kinship.org.uk/kinshipcompass to discover the number of kinship carers in your area.
- The variety of arrangements and how kinship children can have unique needs
- The issue of little to no financial support tied to the above arrangements
- An overview of the challenges that come with contact with birth parents
- The lack of social, educational, and emotional support and resources including training for kinship carers
- They highlighted the trauma that kinship children have often experienced pre and post-natal, including bereavement, parents with substance misuse issues, neglect, domestic abuse, parents with mental health issues etc
- The prevalence of kinship children having SEND and the challenges that come with this
- The diversity of kinship carers and their confidence in navigating systems and processes involved, for example applying for EHCPs and funding, using technology, and advocating for their children
- The importance of trauma-informed approaches

What support they outlined would be useful:

- Access to information and advice about what is or should be available for their child in the education setting given that child's particular needs
- A dedicated online space for information and in-person access to Virtual School staff for support queries
- Access to information and support that may be available beyond the school settings
- Advocacy and a supported-advocacy when working with key staff members in the school setting, e.g. DSL, SENCO, attendance officers, pastoral staff
- Tailored and timely support in navigating the educational SEND system regarding SEN/IEP plans and applications for EHC assessment
- Training for Virtual School staff and schools. informed by kinship carers

Andrew, group leader of Watford, also shares some questions you can take along to a meeting with your VSH. This will help you get a better understanding of how they operate:

- How do you monitor the number of children in each school who are in kinship care?
- How do you record their progress, comparing and contrasting it with the progress of other children?
- How do you monitor the spending of PPG+ (Pupil Premium Plus) to ensure that children in kinship care are receiving the extra support many of them need?

Kinship's Peer Support Network Agreement

We've been listening closely to the needs of volunteer group leaders, and we're committed to providing deeper, more tailored support for every group. This includes existing and new groups, whether developed with the Kinship peer support team or independently.

To better support challenges like outreach and fundraising, we've created an agreement between Kinship and groups — the **Network Agreement**.

This agreement, created in consultation with group leaders, is designed to provide clarity and strengthen our relationship, ensuring every group in the network - as well as those joining in the future - are aligned to the mission, vision, and values you've worked so hard to foster.

We want you to have freedom to make your own choices at local level, but with the support, resources and community to help your group thrive.

The Network Agreement is based on 10 commitments Kinship and groups make to one another around:

- Collaboration
- Safeguarding
- Safety
- Funding and finances
- Status transparency
- Branding
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Resolving complaints
- Reporting
- Data management

In practice, the only changes this means for groups are:

- Each year at least 1 member of the group attends our safeguarding, inclusion and GDPR training. Any or all of your group are welcome to join.
- Your group completes a risk assessment annually. We have a template and can support you.
- Completing a monthly register to ensure we can tailor the support to the size and needs of your group, in a way that respects the members who don't wish to share their details.

No group will miss out on support. Without signing up you can still access the resources available to all Hub groups, but those who sign the Network Agreement can access additional benefits.

Kinship's Peer Support Network Agreement

Hub groups	Hub Network member
• Group leader's monthly meet • Group leader meeting notes • Group leader's WhatsApp group • Peer Post magazine	Hub benefits, plus: • Public liability Insurance • Tailored support from the Hub team • Use of the <i>In partnership with Kinship</i> logo • Both mandatory and optional training modules • Fundraising templates • Access to Kinship merchandise • Safeguarding support • Promotion to kinship carers in your community • Personalised poster designed for your group • Buddying with fellow network members • Help with complaints or challenging situations • Priority access to in-person training for your group



In partnership with



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

Groups who have signed the Network Agreement can ask the training team to deliver a **workshop of their choice** in their local area.

You need a minimum of 15 attending but if your group is smaller we could partner you with another local group. Open to all kinship carers in the area, we hope they serve as great opportunities to promote your group too.

For more information email:
peersupport@kinship.org.uk



The peer support team have created **6 new training modules** to help with group facilitation, which can be delivered in person or online:

Introduction to running your group

Active listening

Making your group inclusive

Safeguarding

Dealing with challenges

Confidentiality and trust



Our online groups

We run a wide range of online peer support groups every month to bring kinship carers together over a mutual experience or interest. We know it can be daunting not knowing what to expect before joining, so we hope this information helps!

What can I expect when I join an online group?

Usually, attendance is around 5-10 people, but this can vary. The groups run for 1 hour and will be facilitated by a Kinship staff member or a volunteer group leader, who can help the conversation get started, support with technical issues, make sure everyone gets a chance to speak, and manage any challenges. This includes making the group agreement clear at the start of the call and revisiting it if needed.

Our online group agreement helps attendees be mindful of:

- confidentiality
- one person speaking at a time
- respecting each other's privacy
- sharing only what is comfortable
- self-care and taking time out
- anything else people would like to add



What are the benefits of attending an online group?

Our online groups help people access peer support and meet kinship carers who share a specific experience or interest. It removes the need to travel or arrange childcare (although we recommend children are not able to hear what is said on the call), and some people feel safer sharing in an online space - for example, it's easier to leave if you need to.

Meet our facilitators...

The staff who make these groups possible!



Keren



Lisa



Suman



Justin



Diane



Jayne



Kieron



Maxine

New additions

Time for me Thursdays

An hour a month to focus on your wellbeing and positivity.

Parenting support group

A place for kinship carers to come together, share parenting tips and support one another with challenges.

Neurodiversity within kinship families

A friendly supportive space for kinship carers caring for children with neurodiverse needs.

Arrival of a new sibling

For kinship carers who are taking on - or considering taking on - an additional child into their family.

Parenting your own and kinship children

This group is an opportunity to discuss the complexities of parenting your own children and your kinship children together

And more...

- Grandparents group
- Kinship carers Book Club
- Aunts & Uncles
- Men's group
- Adoption and kinship carers
- Kinship carers with young children
- Kinship carers with teenagers
- Diverse families
- Kinship families affected by drug and alcohol misuse
- Life changes and my life now
- Kinship carers and bereavement
- Caring for children on your own
- LGBTQ+ kinship carers group
- Kin Craft & Chat

Our online groups



Kinship carers who are dual caregivers

A welcoming space for people navigating the unique challenges of dual caregiving.

Kinship carers who are not already parents

A friendly supportive space for kinship carers who were not already parents when they became a kinship carer.

National evening group

Join our online group for all kinship carers nationally, to meet, listen, share and support one another.

Working kinship carers lunchtime drop-in

An opportunity to speak with other kinship carers during your lunch break.

Starting your kinship journey

A peer support group for kinship carers in their first 12 months of caring offering a safe, understanding space.

Regional online groups:

- North London
- South Yorkshire
- Yorkshire & Humber
- Isle of Wight
- South West England
- Derbyshire
- Lincolnshire
- South West London
- Bristol

Scan to view all online groups and scheduling, or head to kinship.org.uk/groups.



We're looking for volunteers!

You could lead one of these online groups to help kinship carers access vital peer support, while also building your own skills. The groups usually run for 1 hour per month and there will be a small amount of admin involved. If you're interested, email peersupport@kinship.org.uk.

#ValueOurLove campaign update: paid leave from work



"I thought I was done with nappies and night feeds..."

"It's not fair that we are doing the right thing by keeping children within the family but we're not receiving any support to help us do that.

If I'd had the opportunity to take paid leave from work with the option of working flexibly, that would have been a massive help. I would have had the security of an income and the social interaction that goes with the job, because being a kinship carer can be very lonely and isolating."

Kinship carer Samantha who is raising her three-year-old great nephew.



Right now, the government is reviewing the parental leave system, which includes all the entitlements working parents have to time off from work to care for children - like maternity and paternity leave.

This gives us the chance to fix the gap in the law and give kinship carers the right to paid leave.

Nearly half of kinship carers (45%) in work lose their jobs and careers when they step up to raise a child. This leaves many kinship families facing significant financial hardship and reliant on the benefits system.

Imagine if parents were expected to return to work the same day their baby was born, or adoptive parents were expected back in work the day the child they adopted arrived – that is currently what is expected of kinship carers.

We have been calling on the government to give kinship carers paid time off from work when they take on the care of a child for over a decade and this year, we have a big opportunity to make it happen.

You can help us stand up for kinship families by signing our petition. Use the QR code or head to kinship.org.uk/valueourlove to add your name.



This year we'll be ramping up the pressure on the government, so watch out for more campaigning – and lots more ways to get involved.



Kinship local offer

All local authorities are now being asked to create a *kinship local offer* – a document or pages online which lay out exactly what support is available to kinship families. It should all be in plain English and created alongside kinship carers, so it's a great chance to talk to your local authority about the support they are currently offering, and what you would like to see in the future.

Many kinship carers have already started engaging with their local authority about their *kinship local offer*, including kinship carer campaigner and support group leader **Andy from Cheshire**. The group had been struggling to make contact with the local authority, but a change to the council leadership meant things started to get moving.

Andy explains: "We quickly took the opportunity to contact the new Cabinet Member for Children and Families (on the day after they were appointed), congratulating them on their appointment and offering our support. To our surprise, within days we found ourselves in County Hall explaining what kinship care was, who we were and how better supporting kinship carers could have benefits for both children in kinship care, kinship carers, and the local authority themselves. We aimed to be, and by and large were, better informed than the people we were meeting. This helped us gain their respect and we came away with firm promises of action."



Andy is right, all kinship carers are experts by experience and can be an absolutely valuable asset to local authorities, by telling them what really needs to be done to support their local kinship communities.

Andy and his group have had further positive meetings with the local authority and expect to move on to working with them on their *kinship local offer* too.

Peer support groups across the country are getting in touch with their local authorities now and working with them to help make the difference between a good and bad *kinship local offer* – and Kinship's campaigns team are here to help.

We've created a toolkit for kinship carers, and information for local authorities and can support kinship carers to have positive meetings with their local authorities.

Find out more about the workshops and access our kinship local offer resources using the QR code, or head to kinship.org.uk/campaign-champions





Meet a training facilitator

Each week the training team deliver roadshows and themed workshops across the country as well as online via Zoom. It's our pleasure to introduce you to **Bennet**, one of the Training Facilitators you could meet.



My role

My job is to deliver workshops on a number of different themes, in a bunch of different ways. For example one day I might be sitting at my desk talking to kinship carers on screen about what financial support is available. The next I can be halfway across the country at a big Roadshow in front of 50 people, discussing different legal arrangement types, or at a Peer Support Group in a village hall chatting about how to work with local authorities.

"The best part of this job is when someone finishes up a session feeling better than when we started."

How I got where I am

I've always known I love learning, and sharing what I've learnt. I have a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education, and have worked in a huge range of places. I've taught in schools, been a private tutor for disadvantaged kids, been part of prison programmes for young offenders, written quality assurance training, worked one-on-one with families facing challenges, and designed and run corporate skills inductions and training days. Knowledge really is power, and I love helping people access it.

I'm also a kinship child, so I understand first-hand what it's like. I love my aunt, and am so grateful she came into my life, but I know how hard it was on her. I wish she had had access to the kind of support Kinship offers. Every workshop I run is a little bit in her honour – I want to do for others what I wish someone had been able to do for her.

"I love my aunt. Every workshop I run is a little bit in her honour"

A typical day

The days and weeks vary a lot depending on which events are happening. On average, about half of my time is spent on delivering the workshops themselves. The other half is spent on research, general organisational admin, designing and reviewing training, and tracking the feedback we get (so important! Without feedback from attendees, we can't know what's working well and what needs to change).

Challenges to consider

So many people have never even heard the term 'kinship', never mind know we as an organisation exist. My aunt certainly hadn't! It's frustrating knowing there are people out there, struggling alone, and not being sure how to reach them. I'm constantly chatting to people about my job, and find kinship carers everywhere.

I know it can also be intimidating joining a group for the first time, whether that's a workshop or a peer support group, online or in person. We're always looking for more ways to make it feel easier.

What I love about what I do

The absolute best part of this job is when someone finishes up a session feeling better than when we started. Kinship carers are under so much pressure from every direction, and often feel isolated and overwhelmed. We can't necessarily fix the system, we can't change the stress points (although our campaigns team is brilliant, and is making progress!) What we can do is provide some clarity, ideas for next steps, and a space where they can talk to people who understand. Seeing what a difference that makes is really fulfilling.

"Without feedback from attendees, we can't know what's working well and what needs to change"



Meet an advice worker

Hi, my name is Sian, and I feel privileged to work as an Advice Worker for Kinship.

As part of a small team, I provide advice on your rights as a kinship carer wherever you are in your kinship journey. This includes advice on your entitlement to financial support, the pros and cons of different legal orders, access to health and wellbeing support for you and your child, and much more besides.

I am also our specialist Welsh advice worker - I can deal with any cases requiring a Welsh speaker or specialist knowledge of kinship care policy and practice in Wales.

I love working in the Advice Team, we all support each other and pull together to help carers access all the support they so rightly deserve.

Our Advice Line is open from Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 2pm. You can call us during these hours for free on 0300 123 7015.

We are a very friendly service, but we are also a very busy service, and unfortunately this can sometimes mean you may find it hard to get through at first or may need to wait for advice.

We will be putting in place a number of improvements to our service over the next few months to make it easier for kinship carers to get our expert advice quickly, so watch this space.



Visit kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice to view all our online advice guides and upcoming training workshops.

Raising funds for **Kinship** - sponsored walks



In September 2025, **Coreen, Selamawit, and Maxine** (our Senior Peer Support Officer in London), achieved something remarkable. By taking on the Thames Path Challenge sponsored walk, they raised an incredible **£2,345 for Kinship**. This is the highest amount raised by any individual fundraiser activity in 2025. What an enormous achievement!

Coreen, a peer support group leader in Kentish Town, shares what inspires her to take on sponsored walks and to turn her passion into purpose.

"I started fundraising through sponsored walks over 6 years ago and I've been hooked ever since! It's such a positive experience, you meet passionate people raising money for many different worthy causes.

We all wear the Kinship logo and when people see it, they want to know more, so we've had some powerful conversations making people aware of kinship care. It's wonderful to get talking with people, sharing knowledge, connecting, and learning from each other. It's very empowering and feels like a great achievement."

Fundraising events come in all shapes and sizes, from small, local activities in your nearest park to nationally recognised challenges like the Thames Path Challenge. Most events require a small entry fee, often referred to as '*self-funded*' or '*own place*' entry (contact the organiser to ask) after which you can set up a JustGiving page and invite friends and family to support a cause close to your heart. For Coreen, these challenges are about far more than fundraising alone; they're also about feeling good, staying connected, and spending time with others.

"I find walking is really good for my mental and physical health, so I try to keep active, and it's a great way to see friends at the same time. On the day of the Thames Park Challenge, it rained, but we didn't let that put us off. I brought everyone rain macs and we still enjoyed the walk, which took us past some beautiful views along the Thames. If you're thinking about trying one out, don't be afraid! You can start small and gradually build it up. I love trying new things - I've gone skydiving, and one day I might try a 100k walk!"



If you find a fundraising opportunity and would like some extra guidance, our fundraising team would be happy to help. Just email fundraising@kinship.org.uk.

This year, we're also keen to help you raise funds for your **peer support groups**. We'll be in touch with opportunities and guidance around this.

Kinship Directory



Peer Support & the Hub

peersupport@kinship.org.uk

Individual Hub team contact details on page 1



Fundraising (for Kinship)

fundraising@kinship.org.uk

Contact for guidance around raising funds for Kinship.



Find peer support group resources on our website at kinship.org.uk/peer-support-resources



Campaigns

comms@kinship.org.uk

Contact campaigns whenever you engage in 'campaign activity' - this includes meetings with your council, MPs, and VSHs, and any work involving the local offer or paid leave for kinship carers.



Advice line

0300 123 7015

Open Mon - Fri 9:30am to 2pm

Or visit kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice to view all our advice guides.



Find campaigning resources and toolkits on our website at kinship.org.uk/campaign-champions

Social media

Follow us and share our posts to help kinship carers find your group and discover support from Kinship:



[Facebook](#)

[@KinshipCareCharity](https://www.facebook.com/KinshipCareCharity)



[X \(formerly Twitter\)](#)

[@KinshipCharity](https://twitter.com/KinshipCharity)



[LinkedIn](#)

[@Kinship](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Kinship)



[Instagram](#)

[@Kinship_Charity](https://www.instagram.com/Kinship_Charity)



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

Kinship is the working name for Grandparents Plus, which is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales under number 4454103 and registered as a charity under number 1093975.

Registered office: The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London, SE11 5RR

