



**ASF Covid-19 funding:
Kinship Response - Impact Summary
October 2021**

Overview:

In May 2020, following the start of the pandemic, the **Department for Education (DfE)** allocated additional funding to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) to support adoptive and special guardian families.

They expanded the scope of the ASF from solely therapeutic interventions to include **peer support** and **advice and information**. Regional adoption agencies (RAAs) and local authorities who were not part of RAAs were able to apply for some of this funding to commission services from providers.

Kinship developed **Kinship Response**, which is an adaptation of the Kinship Connected support programme, developed and delivered by Kinship since 2012, in consultation with local authorities and with feedback from special guardians.

Kinship Response offers a comprehensive package of support beyond the specialist therapeutic support normally funded by the Adoption Support Fund. This includes **tailored advice** and **one-to-one** and **peer support**, which is what kinship carers have told us they need and for which there is strong evidence of impact.

The model of Kinship Response allowed local authorities to purchase **Tier 1** or **Tier 2 Membership**. Tier 2 included all elements of Tier 1 with the addition of 1:1 support with a focus on crisis intervention.

It was commissioned by **68 local authorities** during 2020 and supported over **2,300** special guardians.



Kinship Response Tier 1 support:

In total **2,831 special guardians** were supported across **68** local authorities under **Tier 1**. This allowed them to access:

- **Grants** for essential items
- **Financial advice** from our advice team (including welfare benefits checks and advice around Special Guardianship Allowance)
- Telephone support from one of our Someone Like Me kinship carer **peer support volunteers**
- Attendance at a **virtual support group**

Impact:



2,831
special guardians
supported



£138,562 grants
for **372**
essential items



426
carers accessed
Someone Like Me



71
virtual support
groups with
228 carers



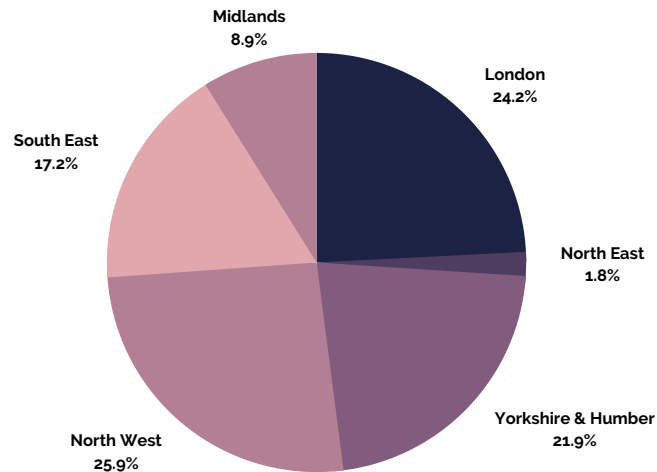
75% of
2,831 carers
needed **financial**
advice

Other predominant advice themes were:

- Rights and legalities around contact with birth parents
- Housing

Kinship Response Tier 2 support:

In total **922 special guardians** were supported via the Tier 2 service commissioned by **55 local authorities**.



Common case work issues for Tier 2 one-to-one support from a project worker:

- **Emotional distress**
 - often around family breakdown – bereavement, imprisonment, mental health sectioning of birth parents
 - Exhaustion and SGO breakdown point
 - Overwhelmed with responsibility but fearful of losing children if social worker involved
- **Isolation**
- **Financial crisis**, particularly around stopping work to become carer, no SGA
- **Health fears** around Covid and what would happen to children if SG hospitalised/death of carer
- Unsuitable **housing** for taking on kinship role
- **Lack of digital skills** or digital access

- Concerns relating directly to the children:
 - **Children's behaviour** – routines lost, children confined to home, family frustrations
 - **Home schooling issues** – lack of understanding and lack of digital access
 - **Managing kinship children's well-being**, including answering difficult questions about life story
 - The temporary pausing of all Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCP's) – preparation, actions and review – due to Covid
 - Feeling pressured to take on an additional child
- **Legal issues:**
 - Feeling pressurised to take an SGO
 - Impending court hearings

Outcomes from one-to-one case work:



81%

felt better equipped to care for their kinship children



87%

felt more confident to ask for and access support to help them manage their role as a special guardian



91%

felt more resilient to fulfil their role as a kinship carer



78%

felt less isolated and more part of a kinship community