



Kinship
The Foundry, 17 Oval Way
London, SE11 5RR

0330 0167 235
kinship.org.uk
info@kinship.org.uk

Laura Trott MBE MP
Chief Secretary to the Treasury
His Majesty's Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road,
London SW1A 2HQ

23 February 2024

CC: Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP, Secretary of State for Education

Dear Chief Secretary,

We're writing to you today as a group of kinship carers – the family relatives and friends who step up to care for children when their parents aren't able to. We are the grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, cousins, family friends and neighbours who provide safe and loving homes for more than 141,000 children across England and Wales, guaranteeing them the stability they need to heal and thrive after trauma, separation and loss.

Over the past 18 months, we've contributed our expertise and our experiences to help shape Kinship's #ValueOurLove campaign, which has called on the UK Government to equalise financial, practical and emotional support between kinship families and foster and adoptive families. In that time, we've welcomed many significant steps which your Government has taken towards boosting recognition of and support for kinship families. With the publication of the National Kinship Care Strategy in December 2023, we finally felt as though our needs, our strengths, and the love we have for the children we care for, were being acknowledged.

But it didn't go far enough. Instead of equalising financial allowances between kinship carers and foster carers, as recommended by the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in 2022, the Strategy proposed a four-year pilot of financial allowances in only up to eight local authorities with £16 million investment in the first year. The need for evidence on how robust financial allowances will work in practice is clear – but four years is too long for us to wait for allowances to be rolled out to every area.

We know the unfairness of the current system of financial support. And we know the impact which this has on children growing up in kinship families. We live it every single day. The legal and postcode lottery means that too many of us go without any financial help, plunged into poverty and punished for doing the right thing. When a child enters foster care, it goes unquestioned that their foster carer receives the financial support they need without detriment to support the costs of raising a child, but this same safety net is denied to kinship carers who have to battle for every little bit of support.

As part of our role as Campaign Steering Group members for Kinship's 'Value Our Love' campaign, we consult with and seek the views of many more kinship carers to inform our campaigning activity. In January this year, we asked kinship carers across England to tell us their reactions following the publication of the National Kinship Care Strategy and it was clear to see that the biggest worry for kinship carers is financial support; they told us that they are worried they will never receive any financial support and they are eating into their pensions to raise their grandchildren. We really need



Kinship
The Foundry, 17 Oval Way
London, SE11 5RR

0330 0167 235
kinship.org.uk
info@kinship.org.uk

the financial help, but the Government has put forward yet another lottery, wholly dependent on where people live.

This is despite the value for money we continue to provide by preventing children from going into and remaining in the care system. We know that investing in kinship care makes sense: research shows that, for every 1000 children looked after in well-supported kinship care rather than local authority care, the state saves £40 million and increases the lifetime earnings of those children by £20 million. Given the enormous challenges facing local authority budgets and public services, the cost of inaction is far greater than delivering the financial support which carers need today.

The forthcoming Spring Budget therefore offers an enormous opportunity to further invest in kinship care and accelerate the Government's welcome progress. We urge you to work alongside colleagues in the Department for Education to prioritise additional funding for kinship care reform, and particularly around the provision of financial support for kinship carers.

The need is urgent: in Kinship's most recent annual survey, 12% of kinship carers like us said they worried about continuing to care for their children in the next year if their situations didn't improve. Many of us have already lost enough. We must move further and faster than a four-year pilot which risks paralysing progress for too long, putting additional families at risk of breakdown. Investing today to unlock the potential of family networks would deliver positive outcomes for children, families and the public purse. It's time to value our love.

We look forward to your response and would welcome a meeting with you and colleagues in HM Treasury to share more if that would be helpful. Please get in touch with natalie.grubb-latouche@kinship.org.uk to arrange or for any additional information. We have also copied in the Secretary of State for Education.

Yours sincerely,

Keith, Katie, Jo, Gemma, Linzi, Cath, John, Michelle, Sandra, Meyrem & Janice
Kinship's #ValueOurLove campaign steering group