



Kinship's Manifesto for Wales



April 2021



Our vision is a society in which
kinship carers and the children
they care for are recognised,
valued and supported.

Can you help us?

About Kinship

Kinship is the **leading kinship care charity** in England and Wales. We offer kinship carers **financial, legal, practical** and **emotional support** and understanding from the moment they need it, for as long as they need it.

We're here for all kinship carers.

The grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, other family members and friends who step up to raise children when their parents aren't able to.

We want every kinship family to have the **recognition** and **support** they need and deserve.

Kinship carers are **strong** and **determined**. Together, they are powerful. We help them build communities of support and action by connecting families locally and across England and Wales.

Our manifesto

We are calling on all candidates in Wales to **pledge their support** to ensure that kinship carers and their children in Wales are **recognised, valued** and **supported**.



About kinship care in Wales

Wales has the highest proportion of kinship care in the United Kingdom.

Kinship carers step in to care for children whose parents are unable to look after them and keep families together.

There are an estimated **10,000 children** being brought up by family members or friends in Wales - that's one in **67 children**.



Children experiencing multiple deprivations in Wales are nearly three times as likely to be living with a relative compared to children not deprived.

Compared with children living with at least one parent, children in kinship care in Wales are twice as likely to have a long-term health problem or disability that limits their day-to-day activities.

More than three quarters (78%) of children growing up in kinship care in Wales are growing up in deprived households.

The support available to kinship carers in Wales is very often much more limited than that given to people becoming foster carers or adopters. Support is determined by legal order, **not the needs of the children**.

Can you pledge your support for kinship carers in Wales?





A Kinship Care Act

Current **inequality** in the support available to kinship carers can impact everything from the **financial** and **practical support** they can expect to receive, to school choice and access to funding for specific therapies for children who have suffered trauma.

Welsh Government must invest at all levels to ensure local authorities and the voluntary sector have the resources to support kinship families.

Legislation is needed to ensure that kinship care is recognised in law and there must be immediate investment to ensure local authorities are funded to give kinship carers the support they need.

Can you pledge your support for equality for kinship carers in Wales?





Specialist and independent advice

Kinship families' lives **change constantly**. Many kinship carers step in quickly in a **climate of crisis** and **fear**, with little time or access to independent information and advice, or support to consider their options.

Yet in this simple act of wanting to do the right thing, kinship carers often feel they are **penalised**. From not being told about the support they should receive to information about their future security

Only later do they realise that support is determined by the child's legal order – and it is usually discretionary, can be means tested, time limited or cut for good. **Accessing legal and financial support can also take time.**

Kinship carers in Wales should have access to **specialist** and **independent information** and **advice** specific to the needs of every kinship family as soon as they are asked to look after the child.

They also need access to **free, independent legal advice** to make informed decisions about the care arrangements they make for the child.

Access to advice should be available for as long as they need it so they can access the allowances and benefits they are entitled to.

Peer support groups should be offered and developed in local areas, to ensure that kinship carers have a **lifeline to peer networks** of people who understand what it means to be a kinship carer in Wales.

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Comprehensive support

Children being brought up in kinship care often **face trauma** and **neglect**. Their needs emerge over time and are ongoing.

Kinship carers are likely to be **older**, in **poorer health**, from a deprived area and **struggling financially**.

These challenges may continue with difficult contact arrangements and ongoing, changing circumstances creating **housing, financial** and other **hardships**.

Many kinship carers **experience isolation** due to the unique pressures of bringing up a child in kinship care.

We believe kinship carers in Wales need ongoing comprehensive support.

Support should include:

- **Financial support** available wherever the kinship carer lives, with a national minimum allowance to cover the costs of bringing up a child in kinship care.
- **One to one and peer support** arranged and supported by local authorities or voluntary agencies in each local authority regardless of the legal order the kinship carer has for the child they are raising.





Comprehensive support cont:

Support should also include:

- **Contact arrangements** between the child being brought up in kinship care and their parents, siblings or other family members supported to ensure the child's safety and well-being.
- **Suitable housing** recognising the suddenly changing needs of a kinship family with priority adaption and provision from the local authority.
- **Training** which is tailored and specific made available for kinship carers who feel they might benefit.



Will you pledge to
support a package of
comprehensive support
for kinship carers in
Wales?





An informed and supportive network

Young people's needs will only be met if key professionals in a range of agencies, including the voluntary sector, **work together** to provide an **integrated response** to the challenges they face.

Children raised in kinship care should be entitled to the **awareness, understanding** and **support** of those around them for as **long as they need it**. This includes better support for their transition into independent living.

Awareness and **training** in kinship care should be offered by local authorities or voluntary organisations to all relevant organisations and service providers. This includes local authorities, schools, GP surgeries, job centres, voluntary organisations, advice services, and community groups.

Will you pledge to support kinship children and young people in Wales being fully supported through an integrated response?



Thank you

Pledge your support online:



kinship.org.uk/welsh-election-pledge

Pledge your support on social media:

I pledge to support kinship carers in Wales if I'm elected as a Member of Senedd. I'm supporting @KinshipCharity's manifesto for all kinship carers in Wales. I recognise, value and support kinship cares in Wales. #KinshipCareMatters

For more information:

If you're a Member of the Senedd/Aelod y Senedd, please contact us at cymru@kinship.org.uk for individual briefings or information on kinship care in Wales.



@kinshipcharity



www.kinship.org.uk



@kinshipcarecharity

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