



#ValueOurLove

local campaigns toolkit

Your guide to campaigning for change within your
local authority

ABOUT THE #VALUEOURLOVE CAMPAIGN

162,000 children in kinship families across England and Wales know the value of love.

Love means commitment to children, being there for them and supporting them as long as they need it. And love provides the **best value to children, society, and the economy** – the love and sacrifice of kinship carers saves the public purse millions a year by preventing children from going into the care system.



WHAT WE WANT TO CHANGE

The UK Government has recently made a number of commitments to kinship families in England including a dedicated kinship care strategy due by the end of 2023. We need this strategy to deliver transformative change for kinship families that is long overdue.

The kinship care strategy must:

①

Equalise financial allowances between foster and kinship families.

②

Equalise access to training and support between kinship carers and foster carers.

③

Equalise leave between adoptive and kinship families.

④

Equalise support between children in kinship care and those in care.

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to **support anyone who feels passionately about improving life for kinship families** to campaign for changes within your own **local authority** so that kinship families are better supported.

You can start making a difference today by contacting someone in your **local authority** – **a Councillor, a Council Cabinet member, or even your local Mayor** – and asking to speak to them about kinship care.



What's included:

- What is a local authority?
- Who do I need to speak to, to start making a difference?
- How do I reach them and what do I say?
- Why now?

**TOP
TIPS**



When having your first conversation with someone in a local authority remember:

- **Be polite, cooperative and collaborative** – be clear that you're not just pointing out a problem, you're keen to help!
- **Be confident in your formal request for a meeting** – you are the expert on kinship care given your experience and have a lot of helpful insight to offer.

WHAT IS A LOCAL AUTHORITY?

Your **local authority** (sometimes known as your **county council, borough or city council**) is the local government that is responsible for specific services in the area where you live.



If you don't know which local authority you are in, you can find out at:
www.gov.uk/find-local-council

Local councils are made up of Councillors who are elected by the public to ensure that local people have a say in how local services are delivered. Councillors represent their local communities, make important decisions about services and the council's priorities, and provide community leadership.

One of the areas local authorities can be responsible for is delivering children's social care, and for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who may be more disadvantaged in the area ('Children in Need'). If you live in an area with two tiers of local government (i.e. with both district councils and a county council), then it is the county council which holds this responsibility. Because of this, **local authorities can be a very influential target for campaigns to make change for kinship carers locally.**

How kinship families are supported within local authorities – from financial support to peer support and training – varies significantly depending on where you live, with a patchwork of often very poor or non-existent support for the majority of kinship families.

Every **local authority** is run slightly differently. **We want to give you the information you need** to work out what might work best in your local authority to push for change for kinship carers.

WHY NOW?

There was a local election on 4 May 2023 in many parts of England (230 Councils) and hundreds of new Councillors were elected!

As newly elected Council members, Councillors will be looking to get to know their communities and learn about any challenges they may face. **They will be deciding their priorities for their time in office and starting to think about where they are planning to put council budget.**

Many Councillors will have never heard of kinship care before.



This is a great opportunity to congratulate new Councillors on being elected, to get kinship care on their agenda and **make supporting kinship carers a priority in their new role.**



WHAT YOU CAN DO

WHO DO I CONTACT?

Councillors

There are several **different types of Councillor** that you can contact who may be able to help you with different kinds of requests:

- The **Leader of the Council or any of the Cabinet members** who form the main decision-making body of the Council. They will make decisions around budget as well as local service provision.
- There is usually also a specific **Councillor responsible for children and families**, sometimes called the Lead Member for Children and Families or Cabinet Member for Children's Services, who would be the best person to target regarding improved support for kinship families.
- Your **Ward Councillor** is the person elected in the specific area within your local authority where you live - or any other member on the Council can help with raising awareness or help connect you to decision makers higher-up in local Government.

Mayors

Many local authorities also have Mayors. Some are **elected Mayors** who are responsible for the day to day running of local services and some chair meetings but cannot make decisions about Council business. Others are **non-elected and undertake ceremonial duties only**. How influential they are can vary depending on the Council but they are generally well connected and good person to support your cause.

TOP
TIPS



You can find who your Councillors are by heading to your [local authority's website](#) and clicking the Councillors tab. It may be a few weeks after the election before local authority websites are fully up to date. You can also look at your local authority's [Facebook or Twitter pages](#) or google your local election results.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

WHAT DO I ASK FOR?

Campaigning is about creating change that would benefit many people so it's important to make sure that when you approach your Council member you **think about taking them an "issue" – a specific problem that affects multiple kinship carers** with a solution or action that they can take to fix it. You may also need help with a problem specific to your individual situation. If you need help identifying the right person to talk to about that, please contact the Kinship Advice line (0300 123 7015, 9:30am - 2pm, Mon - Fri).

There are lots of things you can campaign on at a **local authority** level. Some options to consider are:



Raise awareness of kinship care

Awareness of kinship care is still very low. It's possible newly elected Council members will never have heard of it. This is the perfect opportunity to explain some of the key information about kinship care and to share your experience with them to push kinship care up the political agenda locally. You can use our **Kinship Care Map**: <https://valueourlove.kinship.org.uk/map> to show them how many kinship children there are in your local area and how much extra it could cost the state per year if children in kinship care were instead looked after in local authority care.



Ask about their support offer for kinship carers

In the Government's recently published Children's Social Care Implementation Strategy, **local authorities** were urged to "**review their existing support offer for kinship carers, including financial support for Special Guardians or those with Child Arrangement Orders.**" You can ask a Council member what is being done to review these policies and offer to share your experience as a kinship carer to help inform any changes they want to make.

WHAT YOU CAN DO cont.

SO WHAT DO I ASK FOR?



Ask for kinship care information on the local authority's website

Check if your local authority has a **page on their website about kinship care**. Every local authority with responsibility for children's services is **required to publish a policy setting** out its approach towards meeting the needs of children living with family and friends carers.

- Check if they outline the support available to kinship carers within the area and signpost to other organisations for further support. Kinship carers need enough information to make a fully informed choice about what routes are right for them and local authorities should provide this.
- If there isn't any information, or you feel the information isn't good enough, you can offer to provide suggestions on what should be on this webpage, or within other sources of information such as leaflets and newsletters that reach kinship carers.
- As someone who has been through the system, you'll have a good sense of what would have been helpful to have known.



If you're raising a problem, offer to work with them on a solution. Or even better, know in advance what change you would want to see to solve the problem! Local authorities often have to meet with people who just want to share their anger. **It's important to build a relationship that is constructive and collaborative** even when it needs to be critical.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

HOW DO I CONTACT THEM?

1

You could **email**, **send a letter**, make a **phone call**, or request to **meet in person**.



2

If you're part of a **kinship carer support group**, you could extend an invite to your local Councillor to attend so that many kinship carers can share their experiences, helping to put this higher on Councillors' agendas.



3

All council members should have a **public email address**. You can also write a **hard copy letter** to your local council – just be sure to be as specific as possible about who you are writing to as council buildings can have very busy mailrooms!



4

You can also get **creative!** Campaigners send thousands of letters and emails trying to change things, so do what you can to make yours stand out. If you want to, you could:



- Include a letter or drawing from your kinship child.
- Get other kinship carers involved and send a letter signed by several local campaigners who are all concerned about the same thing.



The main thing to remember is to be **persistent!** If at first you don't receive a response, try again or try to contact a different person at the local authority who can help bring attention to your campaigning.



LET US KNOW HOW YOUR CAMPAIGNING JOURNEY IS GOING



If you have any questions about this toolkit and how we can support your campaigning activity, or would like to tell us about campaigning you've been doing please email:
kelly.taylor@kinship.org.uk

