

Kinship Care Strategy



BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council



CONTENTS

1. Introduction	2
2. Definitions of Kinship Care	4
2.1 Who are Kinship Carers:	4
2.2 What is Kinship Care:.....	4
2.2.1 Informal Kinship Arrangements.....	4
2.2.2 Assessment Process	5
2.2.3 Child in Need	5
2.2.4 Private Fostering Arrangement.....	6
2.2.5 Child Arrangements Order.....	6
2.2.6 Special Guardianship Order	6
2.2.7 Kinship Foster Care / family and friends Foster Care.....	8
2.2.8 Adoption	10
3. The Local Offer for Kinship Carers	10
3.1 What should be included in the Local Offer for Kinship carers?	10
4. The Types of Support that can be provided within our Local Offer for Kinship Carers:	11
4.1 Support Groups and Training	11
4.2 Financial Support	12
4.3 Supporting Kinship Carers to stay in work	12
4.4 Accommodation	12
4.5 Education	13
4.6 Supporting Family time.....	14
4.7 Family Group Decision making.....	14
4.8 Legal Support	15
4.9 Therapeutic support.....	15
Local Offer Guidance	15

1. Introduction

In February 2023, the Government set out its ambition to reform Children's Social care through the publication of [Children's social care stable homes built on love consultation](#). Central to Stable Homes, Built on Love is the belief that every child deserves to grow up in a safe, stable and loving home. This is underpinned by the fundamental principle of the Children Act 1989 that children's welfare is paramount, and the best way of promoting children's welfare is very often by supporting children's families and the loving relationships around them. The focus of the reform was to ensure that children's social care is able to put love and stable relationships at the heart of what it does. Six pillars of reform were identified:

Pillar 1: Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families

Pillar 2: A decisive multi-agency child protection system

Pillar 3: Unlocking the Potential of family networks

Pillar 4: Putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care

Pillar 5: A valued, supported and highly-skilled social worker for every child who needs one

Pillar 6: A system that continuously learns and improves and makes better use of evidence and data.

In December 2023, the Government introduced the National Framework for Children's Social care which is statutory guidance from the Department for Education.

[Children's social care national framework](#)

Central to the National Framework is a belief that the lives of children, young people and families can be different, and that it is the role and responsibility of those who work in and with children's social care services to hold tight to this belief. Having high aspirations for families will not be enough. Everyone needs to ask themselves how those aspirations are shaping their practice and informing the work they do.

The National Framework brings together the purpose of local authority children's social care, the principles by which children, young people and families should be supported, the enablers that should be in place so the system is effective, and the outcomes that should be achieved so that children and young people can grow up to thrive.

There are four outcomes described in the National Framework:

- Outcome 1: children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need

- Outcome 2: children and young people are supported by their family network
- Outcome 3: children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes
- Outcome 4: children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes.

In October 2024, the Government updated guidance on Family and Friends Care by setting out a framework for the provision of support to kinship families, and how family networks can be engaged to support the needs of children throughout the children's social care system, including those who are unable to live with their parents. This updated guidance is called Kinship Care

[Kinship Care - statutory guidance for local authorities October 2024.pdf](#)

The aim of the Kinship Care statutory guidance is to improve outcomes for children and young people who, because they are unable to live with their parents, are being brought up by members of their extended families, friends or other people who are connected to them. This is referred to as kinship care. The arrangement may be temporary or longer term. The guidance also outlines how family networks can be engaged to support the needs of children throughout the children's social care system, including those who are unable to live with their parents.

The statutory guidance sets out how local authorities and partners should provide services for children and young people in various kinship care arrangements. This includes: informal arrangements, temporary arrangements, private fostering, kinship foster care, child arrangements orders, special guardianship orders, and arrangements leading to adoption. The guidance requires each local authority to publish a kinship local offer setting out the support available to kinship children and their carers and how we will meet the needs of these children and their carers.

The Head of Service for Children in care holds overall responsibility for the kinship local offer. This is to ensure that the kinship local offer meets the statutory requirements and is responsive to the identified needs of children and carers.

2. DEFINITIONS OF KINSHIP CARE

2.1 Who are Kinship Carers:

Kinship carers can be:

- A close relative of the child e.g. grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle or step-parent. A close relative does not need to be a full or half-blood relative and can be related through marriage or civil partnership. (as defined by Children Act 1989)
- A close relative of the child's half-blood brother or sister
- Some-one who used to be child's step-parent (even if they do not have parental responsibility for the child)
- Some-one who previously cohabited with the child's parent and whose relationship with the child was like that of a child of the family
- A close friend of the child, or of the child's parent
- A close friend of the child's close relative
- A person with a prior connection to the child who does not otherwise fall within one of the other categories above (such as a teacher, youth worker, child minder or former foster carer)

2.2 What is Kinship Care:

Kinship care is defined within the Statutory Guidance as “any situation in which a child is being raised in the care of a friend and family who is not their parent. This arrangement may be temporary or longer term.

The below are all examples of different types of kinship care arrangements:

2.2.1 Informal Kinship Arrangements

(not approved foster care) for example:

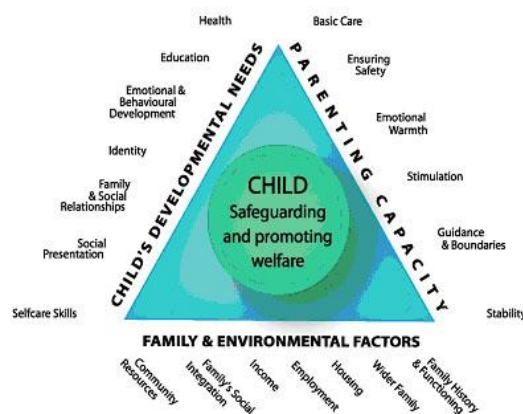
- (i) a private family arrangement where a close family member (but not some-one with parental responsibility) raises the child, and where the local authority has no major role in making this arrangement and where the court has not made any order in respect to the care of the child.
- (ii) Where a child aged 16 or 17 is being provided with accommodation by an individual who is not a close relative in their own home.
- (iii) Where a child aged under 16 is being provided with accommodation for less than 28 days by an individual in their own home who is not a close relative.

Most informal kinship carer arrangements provided by a relative of the child (as defined by s105 Children Act 1989) or some-one with parental responsibility do not require the local authority to be notified of the arrangement and most such arrangements remain entirely private without the need for the involvement of children's social care services.

Parents will retain their parental responsibilities for the maintenance of their children placed with informal kinship carers, however the carers may experience significant financial difficulties as a result of taking on the care of a child or children.

2.2.2 Assessment Process

The local authority does not have a duty to assess informal kinship care arrangements, unless it appears to the authority that services may be necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child in need in their area. The assessment should be undertaken using the Assessment Framework Triangle (see below).



Assessments will be completed in accordance with Barnsley's Assessment and Support Protocol.

2.2.3 Child in Need

There will be some children in informal kinship arrangements whose needs meet the threshold for section 17 support. Support should not be withheld just because the child is living in an informal rather than formal kinship care arrangement.

Effective use of section 17 of the Children Act 1989 will ensure that wherever possible children's needs are met through the best use of resources designed to safeguard and promote their welfare. This will help ensure that children do not become looked after by the local authority unless to do so is the most appropriate way to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

Where a child is deemed to be a Child in Need, local authorities must seek to provide any necessary support services without the child becoming looked after unless the child meets the criteria at section 20(1) or section 20(3) of the Children Act 1989 and requires accommodation.

2.2.4 Private Fostering Arrangement

Where some-one who is not a close relative of the children under the age of 16 cares for the children for 28 days or more (s.66(1)(a) and (b) Children Act 1989)

Private Fostering is defined by the Children Act 1989 as an arrangement that lasts for 28 or more, or is intended to do so, where the carers of a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled) do not have parental responsibility for the children and are not the child's grand-parent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent.

The Children (Private arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 will apply in respect of the assessment and support of Private Fostering Arrangements.

A child who is privately fostered may also be assessed as a child in need, and be provided with support under section 17 of the 1989 Act.

If the child continues to live in the private fostering arrangement beyond the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled) then the arrangement will be regarded as that of informal kinship care.

2.2.5 Child Arrangements Order

That specifies where the child lives with a family member or friend (but not the child's parent)

2.2.6 Special Guardianship Order

Granted to a friend or family member

Where a relative, friend or other connected person wishes to make a long-term commitment to caring for a child, they may apply for a child arrangements order or a special guardianship order. The effect of either such order will be to give the person in whose favour the order is made parental responsibility for the child.

To support the stable placement of children within their families, relatives can apply for a child arrangements order or special guardianship order without the permission of the court after caring for the child for one year.

Where a person intends to apply for a special guardianship order they must give notice to the local authority who will investigate and prepare a report for the courts.

A special guardian is responsible for all aspects of caring for the child or young person and for taking decisions to do with their upbringing. A special guardian may exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of all others with parental responsibility (although there are things the special guardian cannot consent to, including the adoption of the child, causing the child to be known by a new surname or removing the child from the UK for a period of three months or more).

A person with a child arrangements order is responsible for making decisions about the child's day-to-day care and upbringing, though they share parental responsibility with others who have it. Unlike special guardians, they cannot make decisions to the exclusion of others with parental responsibility. However, they can make routine decisions without needing permission from others.

If a child was looked after immediately prior to the making of a special guardianship order, the child, special guardian or parent has a right to receive an assessment by the local authority for support services, which may include financial support.

The special guardianship statutory guidance makes it clear that it is important that children who were not looked after should not be unfairly disadvantaged by this approach, as in many cases the only reason that the child was not looked after is that a relative has stepped in quickly to take on responsibility for the child when the parent could no longer do so.

[Special guardianship guidance - GOV.UK](#)

In the case of a special guardian who was previously the child's foster carer, financial support may include not only an allowance but also an element in lieu of a fostering fee for up to two years, or longer if the authority considers this to be appropriate. In its calculation of any ongoing special guardianship financial support, the local authority should have regard to the fostering allowance that would have been paid if the child was fostered.

There is no similar right to an assessment for support for people who have been granted a child arrangements order, but local authorities have the power to pay

a child arrangements order allowance where this is the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

Children who were looked after by a local authority immediately before the making of a special guardianship order may qualify for a range of support under the 1989 Act, to support them in making the transition to adulthood. The fear of losing support should not be allowed to become an obstacle to kinship carers taking over responsibility for the long term care of a looked after child through applying for a child arrangements order or special guardianship order.

2.2.7 Kinship Foster Care / family and friends Foster Care

Where a child is 'in care' either voluntary arrangement (s.20 Children Act 1989) or through an interim or final care order and

- (i) The child is being cared for by a friend or family member who is not their parent, and
- (ii) The friend or family member is approved as a local authority foster carer either on a temporary basis or following full assessment.

The Children Act 1989 reflects the principle that all children, including looked after children, should be cared for within their family network wherever possible. It is also intended that children placed with relatives do not automatically lose their looked after status. Section 22C of the 1989 Act also makes it clear that if a looked after child is placed with a family member, friend or any other person who is connected with the child, then the carer must be approved as a local authority kinship foster parent.

Many children benefit from placements with kinship carers because these can provide more continuity than placements with previously unknown carers. Living with relatives preserves a child's sense of belonging to a wider family network, a close attachment is more likely to exist already or to develop, and there is also some evidence to suggest that relatives are more likely to persevere with a placement if difficulties arise. However, not all relatives are able to safeguard and promote a child's welfare, and their parenting capacity should be rigorously assessed before approval as kinship foster carers.

Sometimes there will be an urgent need for a placement for a looked after child, and the most appropriate placement is with a connected person. In these cases, it may not be possible to fulfil all the requirements of the 2011 Regulations in approving the person as a foster carer before placing the child. Regulations 24 and 25 of the 2010 Regulations set out arrangements for the temporary approval of a connected person as a kinship foster carer to allow an immediate placement. The authority must be satisfied that the placement is the most

appropriate placement for the child, and it's necessary for the child to be placed there before the full approval process is completed. A person approved under the 2010 Regulations is in all respects a local authority kinship foster carer, other than that the approval is made on a temporary basis.

Whilst many kinship placements are made in an emergency, provisions relating to temporary approval are intended to be used exceptionally and in circumstances which could not easily have been foreseen, when it is not possible to undertake a full foster carer assessment prior to placement. The power will be most useful where it is clearly in the child's interest to be placed with or remain in the care of a familiar figure in reassuring surroundings. Before making such a placement the authority should satisfy itself as to the reasons for the carers coming forward to offer a placement, and that there is no obvious barrier to undertaking a foster carer assessment.

Before the child is placed with a temporary foster carer, the local authority must assess the suitability of the connected person to care for the child, taking into account the matters set out in Schedule 4 to the 2010 Regulations.

Certain assessment requirements must be met before a child can be placed under these arrangements, as outlined in regulation 24 of the 2010 Regulations. These requirements serve as the minimum standards for evaluating the suitability of the connected person within a potentially short time frame. Every effort must be made to maximise the level and quality of information available to support the decision as to whether the person should be temporarily approved.

The connected person may be approved as a local authority kinship foster carer for a period not exceeding 16 weeks. This time period has been set to allow sufficient time for a foster carer approval process to be undertaken, including any criminal records checks required. Regulation 25 of the 2010 Regulations sets out the circumstances in which, exceptionally, the period of temporary approval may be extended with approval from senior officer within the authority.

A person temporarily approved as a foster carer under the 2010 Regulations will be entitled to the same support and services as are available to mainstream foster carers, including relevant fostering allowances and any fees for which they meet the criteria set by the particular fostering service. Temporarily approved foster carers should receive the training and support they need to provide an appropriate level of care to the child. As the placement will have been made without the benefit of a full fostering assessment, the visiting requirements are higher than for other foster placements.

Information about the assessment and approval process for kinship carers who apply to be foster carers for a specific looked after child and details about services for them are covered in the kinship local offer.

2.2.8 Adoption

(Where the adopter was a friend or family member prior to the adoption order being granted).

Where a child is already living with a kinship carer it may also be possible for them to apply for an adoption order. This would end the parental responsibility of the birth parents. Local authorities are required to make a range of adoption support services available in their area to meet the needs of people affected by adoption. Adopted children and adopters have the right to be assessed for certain support services, the details of which are set out in the relevant regulations and statutory guidance. These are now normally delivered through Regional Adoption Agencies. Our Local Offer will ensure that Kinship carers will have sufficient information about the consequences of obtaining an adoption order, including their right and entitlements under such arrangements.

3. THE LOCAL OFFER FOR KINSHIP CARERS

3.1 What should be included in the Local Offer for Kinship carers?

Our local offer for Kinship Carer is underpinned by the principle that support should be based on the needs of the child rather than merely their legal status. The kinship local offer will provide kinship families with support to ensure that children do not become looked after or remain looked after longer than is needed.

Our kinship local offer is being developed in collaboration with local partners and will address the needs of children in kinship care, whether or not they are looked after children.

We know that Kinship carers often struggle to obtain information which will assist them in their caring role, particularly when they have taken on the care of a child in an emergency. It is important that they know what resources are available to support both children in the local area and themselves if they become a kinship carer. This includes information about universal services such as early years provision and out of school services, schools and colleges, health services, leisure facilities and youth support services.

Kinship carers may be less aware of local services for children than others who are bringing up children, particularly if they have not previously had children or are of a different generation to most birth parents. Our Kinship local offer will help address this gap by ensuring that information about local services is provided and is easily accessible by, kinship carers.

Our Kinship Local Offer will be clearly expressed, regularly updated, made freely and widely available, including on our website and publicised by relevant means, such as websites and leaflets.

Early years providers, family hubs, schools and colleges, health visitors, advice agency staff and other front line workers will often be the people who first come into contact with children living with kinship carers, and should be aware of the challenges they may face. Our kinship local offer should provide such workers with information to signpost carers to relevant services. Given the specific needs of many children growing up away from their parents, carers will also need to know how to access targeted and specialist services which may be required, such as special educational needs services and CAMHS.

Our kinship local offer will explain the relevant legal framework, in a format which is accessible to kinship carers and for parents. This will include an explanation of the authority's powers and duties in relation to children in need and looked after children, and address the effect of a child arrangements order, special guardianship order or adoption order. This is to ensure that potential kinship carers have the necessary information to make informed choices about the most appropriate route for them to follow. Information will be provided about the meaning and implications of different arrangements, including those in informal arrangements, the rights of carers and of the children's parents, and the nature of decisions which kinship carers will be able to make in relation to the child.

In formulating our local kinship offer, we will ensure we comply with legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act 2010 puts a duty on public authorities, in exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those persons who do not share it, as well as foster good relations between those persons. Any potential barriers to accessing services should be considered and mitigated where appropriate and able. This is important because of the differences in the support available depending on the type of kinship arrangement.

Our kinship local offer will also explain how children, kinship carers and other relevant people may make a complaint about the service.

4. The Types of Support that can be provided within our Local Offer for Kinship Carers:

4.1 Support Groups and Training

A range of support groups catering to the specific needs of the different types of kinship care arrangements. Support Groups will provide opportunities for discussions, advice, guidance, training as well as social activities for children and carers.

Support groups for special guardians and prospective special guardians, children subject to special guardianship orders and their parents are included in services prescribed by the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 for which the local authority must make arrangements.

In the case of children placed by an adoption agency, local authorities are required by the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 to provide support groups for adopters, adopted children and birth parents.

4.2 Financial Support

Our Kinship local offer will set out the eligibility criteria for any financial support available, how kinship carers can apply for financial support, and any means testing that will apply. Financial support may be a one-off payment or may be an ongoing arrangement. When financial support is offered, a written agreement will be drawn up detailing the level and duration of the support that is to be provided and the mechanism for review.

Carers in different circumstances need to be aware of their entitlement to any state benefits and allowances, such as child benefit and child tax credit, and how to apply for any discretionary financial support which may be available.

Financial support for children in need (as defined by the Children Act 1989) can be made under section 17(6) of the Children Act 1989.

Financial support for special guardians can be made under section 14F of the children Act 1989.

4.3 Supporting Kinship Carers to stay in work

Immediate short term financial support may be needed to enable carers to take on the care of children in an emergency. Where carers are employed, the employer will be able to provide information about any relevant parental leave.

4.4 Accommodation

Kinship carers may need support with accommodation, as their homes may not be of sufficient capacity to take on the care of a child or possibly a sibling group of children. Living in cramped conditions may add to the pressures of caring for a child. We will engage with Housing authorities and registered social landlords to ensure that their policies recognise the importance of the role performed by kinship carers, and that whenever possible kinship carers living in social housing are given appropriate priority to move to more suitable accommodation if this will prevent the need for a child to

become looked after. Our Kinship local offer will help to ensure that housing and social care services work in partnership to support the housing needs which may face kinship carers across the range of legal circumstances.

Local authorities have the power under section 17 of the 1989 Act to give financial support towards accommodation costs where they assess this as the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote a child's welfare.

4.5 Education

Kinship children often face unique educational challenges that require targeted support. The virtual school head role has been extended on a non-statutory basis to specifically include championing the attendance, attainment, and progress of all children in kinship care. This means that all children in kinship arrangements, regardless of legal status, will benefit from the adaptation of the strategic role. Kinship families with a special guardianship or child arrangement order, regardless of whether the children were previously in local authority care, will also benefit from advice and information, upon request, from the virtual school to help them navigate the education system.

When children cease to be looked-after, their educational needs are unlikely to have changed significantly simply because their care status has changed. To support the educational attainment of children who left local authority care through special guardianship or child arrangements order:

- The virtual school head has a statutory duty to promote the educational attainment of pupils who are no longer looked after because they are the subject of adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangements order through the provision of information and advice to their parents, educators, and others they consider necessary
- all maintained schools and academies must appoint a designated teacher, who has a leadership role in promoting the educational achievement of every previously looked-after child on the school's roll. This includes making sure that all staff have high expectations of their learning and understand the importance of involving the child's parents or guardians in decisions affecting their child's education
- previously looked-after children attract Pupil Premium Plus funding, which is provided to help improve their education outcomes and close the attainment gap between them and their peers. It is paid to and managed by the school, with allocations based on the number of previously looked-after children recorded in the school's October school census return to the Department for Education
- previously looked-after children have top priority in school admissions and should be placed in good or outstanding schools. e. previously looked-after children and those in formal kinship care arrangements are also eligible to be

secured a school place through Fair Access Protocols. This is the mechanism which ensures that unplaced and vulnerable children who are having difficulty securing school places in-year are allocated one promptly.

4.6 Supporting Family time

The emotional ties and complex family dynamics can make managing family time challenging for kinship carers. Local authorities are under a duty to promote contact for certain children in need, although there are differences in the way that duty is expressed depending on whether or not the child is looked after.

Information will be made available to kinship carers about local contact centres and family mediation services, and how to make use of their services. Family mediation can help parties to communicate better and resolve disputes taking account of the child's wishes in a supported environment.

Where there are safeguarding concerns there may be a need for the involvement of children's social care services to support safe family time arrangements. Our Kinship Local Offer will identify services available to kinship carers to support the management of family time arrangements, and where necessary to offer independent supervision.

4.7 Family Group Decision making

A family network is a group of people close to a child made up of relatives, including parents and non-related connected people, such as step-parents, siblings, grandparents or close family friends. Family networks can be an essential support network to help families stay together and thrive.

We will seek to empower families by prioritising family-led solutions, working collaboratively with family networks to support parents or carers to make and sustain positive changes, hopefully leading to de-escalation of need or no further involvement with statutory services. We will engage with family networks from early help, and at every point throughout the children's social care system, as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

Family group decision making (FGDM) is an umbrella term for a family-led forum where parents and the family network make a plan in response to concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing. FGDM can help identify the support and resources the wider family network can provide to the parents and child. Our Kinship Local Offer will identify the arrangements we have in place to offer FGDM, such as Family Group Conferences (FGCs) and Family Network Meetings (FNMs).

FGDM, including FGCs and FNMs, will be used at different stages in the children's social care system to include family networks in decision-making. If a child becomes looked after, perhaps following an emergency, without an FGDM or FGC / FNM forum

having been held, then we will still consider this as an option later, including as a route to reunification with the parents or family network where appropriate. FGDM can be offered repeatedly during a family's journey through the children's social care system.

4.8 Legal Support

Our kinship local offer sets out the legal support that may be available to kinship carers and potential kinship carers, including the eligibility and extent of that support. This covers any legal support provided by the local authority, partner organisations or the voluntary sector as well as eligibility for Legal Aid Agency-provided legal aid.

Legal aid is the system of public funding to help meet the costs of legal advice, representation in court or at a tribunal and family mediation. If a kinship carer has a legal matter that is in scope according to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, they may be able to access legal aid.

In public family proceedings, legal aid is available to prospective kinship carers, or kinship carers in public family law children's cases under the Children Act 1989 and in related proceedings, where they have been joined as a party to proceedings by the court. This includes where prospective kinship carers, or kinship carers wish to make more permanent arrangements, for example, through a special guardianship order. This is subject to means and merits eligibility assessments.

In private family proceedings, legal aid is available for prospective kinship carers and kinship carers for special guardianship orders. This is also subject to means and merits eligibility assessments.

4.9 Therapeutic support

Our Local Offer contains information on the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) which is available to children and families where the children are subject to Special Guardianship Orders, or Child Arrangement Orders and were previously in care. The ASGSF provides funding for therapeutic support for these children and young people up to and including the age of 21, or up to the age of 25 if the child has an education, health and care plan.

LOCAL OFFER GUIDANCE

Informal Kinship Arrangements

Informal kinship carers will need to feel confident that if they come forward to ask for support their views will be listened to and the child's needs will be appropriately assessed. They should know how they will be involved in this process. There will be

some children in informal kinship arrangements whose needs meet the threshold for section 17 support to ensure that wherever possible children's needs are met through the best use of resources designed to safeguard and promote their welfare. This will help ensure that children do not become looked after by the local authority unless to do so is the most appropriate way to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

Private fostering arrangements

The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering require the local authority to have a written statement which sets out its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out. This statement should define what private fostering means, making clear which relatives caring for a child will not be regarded as private foster carers within the meaning of the 1989 Act. Private foster carers may at the same time be kinship carers, and facing the same issues as other kinship carers, and so should have access to the same range of support services as informal kinship carers.

Kinship foster carers

Kinship local offers should include information about the local authority's powers and duties including circumstances in which a child may become accommodated by the local authority or in which care proceedings may be instigated, and how and by whom such decisions are made.

The Statement of Purpose for the local authority's fostering service, prepared in accordance with regulation 3 of the 2011 Regulations, must spell out the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the services and facilities provided by it. The kinship local offer should incorporate this information in so far as it relates particularly to kinship carers who are approved as foster carers. Fostering services should deliver services in a way which ensures that kinship foster carers are fully supported to care for children placed with them and are not disadvantaged as a result of their prior relationship with the child. This includes access to training to support them in their role.

Kinship carers may benefit from some services being delivered in a different way, but there should be equity of provision and entitlement. It is not acceptable to discriminate against kinship foster carers on the basis that they have a pre-existing connection with the child they are caring for. Fostering services should ensure that all foster carers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the care needs of children placed with them, and to achieve at least the minimum level of knowledge and skills outlined in the Children's Workforce Development Council's (CWDC's) Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards²⁹. Given that the TSD Standards are designed to equip foster carers with the knowledge and skills to provide an acceptable level of care to the children they look after, it is in the interests of looked after children that they should be achieved by all foster carers.

In recognition of the fact that the context of kinship foster care differs from other types of foster care, kinship foster carers will work towards an amended set of standards and are given additional time to demonstrate achievement of the Standards. The TSD

Standards provide an opportunity to identify any gaps in skills and knowledge, as well as support needs. Foster carers achieving the Standards need to show also that they understand their role, responsibilities and obligations. They need to show an awareness of other professionals and services involved in the child's life and how they are meeting the health and wellbeing needs of the child they are looking after. Working to achieve the Standards can also provide a focus for the work of support groups and provide opportunities for kinship foster carers to meet other foster carers. Authorities should ensure that the TSD Standards are framed and delivered in such a way that carers can see how they support them in their caring role, building upon any areas for development identified in the assessment.

Once approved as foster carers, the extent to which kinship carers wish to be involved in training and formal support varies greatly. Authorities should consider how training and support can be delivered to kinship foster carers in a way which recognises their particular circumstances, needs and perspectives, helps them to understand the relevance and importance of participating in learning and development and makes it as easy as possible for them to engage. There are benefits to incorporating training into support groups or providing specific training for kinship foster carers. Evidence of learning and development may be available through the family and parenting support offered to kinship carers and through their relationship with their social worker. The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services cover fostering services' responsibilities with respect to all their foster carers, including those who are foster carers.

Fostering services should deliver services in a way which ensures that kinship foster carers are fully supported to care for children placed with them and are not disadvantaged as a result of their prior relationship with the child. Fostering allowances to foster carers must be sufficient to meet the cost to the carer of caring for the child and should be at least the minimum set annually by the Department for Education. The allowances paid by a fostering service must be calculated for kinship foster carers on the same basis as for all other foster carers, and any variations should relate to the child's needs, the skills of the carer or some other relevant factor that is used as a criterion for all of the service's foster carers. A judicial review of Manchester City Council's policy on payments of allowances to kinship foster carers in 2001 (the Manchester City Council judgment) held it was unlawful to discriminate against kinship foster carers by paying them a lower allowance than nonrelative foster carers. There is no requirement to pay a fee to reward a carer's time, skills, commitment, etc in addition to the allowance. Where a fee is paid, it must be payable to those foster carers who meet the criteria set out for the scheme, including foster carers who are family or friends.

Special guardianship, child arrangements orders and adoption

Local authorities should identify in their kinship local offer where further information can be found in relation to people in whose favour a special guardianship order, child arrangements order or adoption order has been made, and by what means these kinship carers may seek support services. Advice and guidance should be made available to kinship carers regarding the respective implications of orders which give

them parental responsibility, so that they fully understand the implications if applying for such an order

