



One minute guide

Kinship Care

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What is Kinship Care?

When children are brought up by members of their extended families, friends or other people who are connected with them, for a variety of reasons, and in a range of different arrangements, we call this Kinship Care (and sometimes family and friends care).

Kinship care arrangements come about because children are separated from their parents or their parents are unable to provide the care and support the child needs. Common reasons for children being in kinship care include parental drug or alcohol abuse, neglect, domestic violence or the death of a parent. The kinship arrangement may be permanent or temporary. Sometimes the arrangement is made by the local authority but more often it is arranged within the family network only. Sometimes these arrangements are identified through Family Group Conferences.

Many people become kinship carers and they include: grandparents, brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles or other relatives, godparents, step-grandparents, or other adults who have a relationship with or connection to the child. These carers are often referred to as 'kinship carers', 'family and friends carers' or 'connected persons.'

What kinship arrangements are there?

The various kinship arrangements include:

Arrangements made within the family only – the parent makes the arrangement or a close family member (defined as grandparent; brother; sister; uncle; aunt; or step-parent only) steps in because the parents were not available. The length of the arrangement is decided by the person with [parental responsibility](#) (PR) or someone who has taken out a legal order to care for the child;

[Private fostering](#) - the parent makes the arrangement or a carer steps in because the parents were not available. The carer is not a close family member. If the arrangement is intended to last for 28 days or more as decided by the person with PR, the arrangement needs to be approved by the local authority;

[Child Arrangement Order](#) (previously known as a Residence Order) and [Special Guardianship Order](#) – a family member, friend or the family or a non-related foster carer has been awarded this legal order. The local authority may have placed the child or the parent made the arrangement or a carer stepped in because the parents were not available; and

Arrangements made for looked after children where the child is placed by the Local Authority and they approved the carer. The carer is a relative or friend of the family and is called a kinship foster carer. The child remains looked after unless a Child Arrangements Order or Special Guardianship order is made. Where the child remains looked after, the carer remains as a kinship foster carer.

What do we have in Leeds to support Kinship Carers?

Where it is safe and appropriate to do so, the city council actively encourages kinship care as a positive alternative to children becoming looked after. The majority of kinship arrangements work well and meet the needs of the child with the support of universal agencies such as health and education and housing services.

It is important, however, that any difficulties are responded to early and the Kinship Care Service are now part of Early Help in Leeds to ensure that carers are supported to access support at the earliest opportunity. Families may need advice and assistance during the early stages of considering whether to care for a relative or a friend's child, in order to weigh up the options and to consider what support services they might require. This advice can be obtained from a variety of sources, including the [Family Rights Group](#) and [Grandparents Plus](#). Family Group Conferencing can also be a valuable service in terms of identifying family members around the child to avoid them needing to become Looked After. There are a wide range of resources available to support kinship placements within [Early Help](#); including Cluster Services, Parenting Support, Family Group Conferencing and Early Help Hubs.

Within Children's Services, there are three Kinship Care Teams who can provide information, advice and support to kinship carers and special guardians. Support for kinship carers is set out in full in the [Kinship \(family and friends\) Care Policy](#) and includes a wealth of information about local and national organisations that provide support and advice. Kinship carers' support and advice needs include: benefits, legal assistance, disability, short breaks from caring, dealing with birth parents and contact.

What should agencies and practitioners do?

Agencies working with kinship carers should acknowledge not only the joy and fulfilment experienced, but also the personal cost and sacrifice that many kinship families make in order to care for children, often having to change their lifestyle and plans for the future, and take this into account when working with them.

Practitioners should encourage kinship carers to access all the universal services available to them, both locally and nationally including any universally available benefits and allowances, and to seek advice when the child's needs exceed these by contacting the Kinship Care Team.

More information and key contacts

You can find out more from the [Kinship Care Guide for England](#) and from the Leeds [Kinship Care web page](#)

You can also read '[The Poor Relations—Children & Informal Kinship Carers Speak Out](#)' (2013)

Key contacts are:

Leeds Kinship Service Duty Line tel: 0113 378 3537

kinshipcareadmin@leeds.gov.uk and specialguardianship@leeds.gov.uk

Duty and Advice for the public (Private Fostering Queries) tel: 0113 222 4403

Grandparents Plus tel: 020 8981 8001

Family Rights Group tel: 020 7923 2628