



Kinship Carers

Information Pack



For Kinship carers being assessed





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Definitions used in this Information Leaflet:

Parental Responsibility means all the rights, powers, duties and authority that the law gives to a parent in relation to a child.

Kinship care means: Kinship care is when a child lives full-time or most of the time with a relative or close family friend, usually because their parents are not able to care for them. Grandparents are the most common kinship carers, but older siblings, aunts, uncles, and people who know the child well can also take on the role. You might see kinship carers referred to as 'family and friends carers' or 'connected people' by local authorities and in some documents.

Kinship Care



In the UK, the legal definition of kinship care refers to the arrangement where a child who cannot live with their parents is cared for by relatives or family friends. Kinship care can take various forms, including formal arrangements through local authorities or informal arrangements made within the family network.

The Children Act 1989, as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014, provides the legal framework for kinship care in England and Wales. It defines kinship care as arrangements made by local authorities for children to be cared for by relatives, friends, or other connected persons.

Manchester Fostering Service recognise *"Kinship carers play a unique role in enabling children and young people to remain with people they know and trust if they cannot for whatever reason, live with their own parents."* (Department of Education 2010)

The benefits of Kinship care

Although there may be challenges for kinship carers who may have to consider changes in routine, employment and family relationships in order to care for a child on a long term basis, there are many benefits to children remaining with people known to them.

The Family Rights Group have provided information on the National Kinship Care picture:

The benefits of kinship care:

- Children who grow up in kinship care are likely to have better outcomes than children who grow up in other types of non-parental care.
- Greater sense of identity and report feeling loved
- Better social & emotional wellbeing and physical health
- More likely to be living with their siblings
- More like to have a stable, permanent home
- Have higher levels of employment later in life

Kinship foster care

When Manchester Children's Services is involved with a child or children who can no longer live with their own parents they have to decide, in consultation with anyone involved, what is best for that child. This may be when the child is at risk of harm and their welfare needs protecting.

One of the decisions that can be made is for a child to become "looked after" and placed with a person who is related or connected to them. Manchester will give preference to placing the child with a person connected to them if it is the most appropriate arrangement and promotes the child's welfare.



In order for a connected person to care for a looked after child, they must first be assessed and approved as a local authority Kinship foster carer. (Please see Appendix for what to expect when welcoming a child.)

When the child becomes looked after he or she will be cared for either on a care order or a voluntary accommodation agreement with the birth parents.

If the child is looked after voluntarily, **Parental Responsibility** remains with the birth parents, otherwise the Local Authority will share parental responsibility with the birth parents.

Kinship carers sometimes begin to care for a child in a crisis or emergency. Sometimes, the care is short-term and children may return to live with their parents if the situation, which gave rise to their leaving, improves.

At any stage of the assessment process where it is considered in the child's best interests and where it will promote the child's welfare and secure permanency, Manchester Local Authority will consider supporting the foster carer to apply for an appropriate legal order giving them parental responsibility through a **Child Arrangements Order, Special Guardianship Order or an Adoption Order** especially when the child does not need to continue to be looked after. (For details, please see page 9.)

Assessment of Kinship foster carers

Kinship carers who apply to become foster carers will undergo a fostering assessment. Manchester Fostering Service will arrange for an assessing social worker to visit the carer at their home address.

This will usually happen before the child moves but, in some situations, such as in an emergency, this may begin on the day the child has moved in.

If the child has been placed in an emergency the local authority will first temporarily approve the carer as a foster carer for up to 16 weeks to enable the full assessment to be completed.

Kinship carers are fully assessed under the Fostering Service Regulations and National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011. The assessing social worker will carry out an in-depth assessment which will decide whether the carer is able to meet the needs of the child concerned.

The child's social worker will also be involved in this assessment and will provide information on the child's needs and the birth family and gain their wishes and feelings.

The assessment will look at whether the child should move or is to remain with the carers on a fostering basis or whether it will be in the child's best interests for



the carer to be approved as a Special Guardian or holder of a Child Arrangements Order, or in some circumstance by Adoption.

Full assessments can take up to four months to complete.

The fostering assessment

The assessment will gather information to enable the local authority to:

- Obtain criminal records, health and statutory checks.
- Decide whether the carer can be approved as a foster carer
- Decide what support is needed in connection with caring for the child.
- Obtain references from carers current and previous employers, birth children, personal references and significant ex partners.

The assessment will consider:

- The stability of the carer's family and circumstances, including finances.
- The carer's ability to care for a child or children..
- The strengths and limitations of the carers in relation to their proposed role.
- Whether the carers can meet the child's needs.
- Whether the carers can offer care safely.
- How the carers will manage family time between the child or children and their birth parents.

The assessment will include discussions and interviews with the carer's immediate and extended family and all members of their household. Additionally, permission is requested to conduct interviews with significant people whom carers have shared past relationships.

Carers may not be considered suitable if:

- They do not have the bedroom space in their home to look after the child.
- The home environment is not sufficiently safe and secure to care for a child.
- They do not have legal right to remain in the UK.
- Members of the household have a conviction for a serious criminal offence against a child or fail to declare a criminal offence.
- Child protection agencies have expressed concerns about suitability.
- Health assessments are unsatisfactory in the opinion of a qualified medical practitioner.



- They are unwilling to work within the policies and procedures outlined by Manchester Children's Services.

The next step – the Fostering Panel

The assessing social worker will complete a report and present this to the Fostering Panel which is made up of people who have not been involved in the assessment process but who are responsible for making recommendations about approvals. The carer will be invited to attend the Fostering Panel with the child's social worker and the assessing social worker.

The Fostering Panel can make the following recommendations:

- To approve the carer as a fully approved foster carer for a specific child or children.
- Not to approve the carer as a fully approved foster carer for a specific child or children.
- To approve subject to any specific conditions identified in the assessment.

The Agency Decision Maker who has not been involved in either the assessment or the Fostering Panel will take account of the recommendation and make a decision. In Manchester the Assistant Director of Provider Services is the Agency Decision Maker.

Carers will be notified of the decision in writing by the Fostering Service and how to appeal if the decision was not to approve.

Support

Temporary and fully approved foster carers receive home visits from the child's social worker and a supervising social worker from the Fostering Service.

The child's social worker has a duty to visit the child within the first week of them moving in and then every four weeks for the first year. For children placed with temporarily approved foster carers, visits will be additionally, every week until the child's first review when it will be four weekly.

Each Foster Carer in Manchester will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker who will support them in their role. We provide a minimum of 1 supervision every 6 weeks. The supervising social worker will visit the carer and their family and discuss how the arrangement is progressing and assess the carer's training and support needs.

The supervising social worker will also arrange for foster carer's approval to be reviewed within the first six months of full approval and every year thereafter.

Support Groups



Our support groups are held alternately each month in the form of a Kinship Drop in and Kinship activity event. These are held city wide within our family hubs, facilitated by Senior supervising social workers from the Kinship team. (*Events calendar and booking details are available from your allocated supervising social worker.*)

Kinship Drop in: this offers an additional point of contact with Supervising social workers and other kinship carers as an informal support mechanism.

Kinship Activity sessions: are family-based events whereby carers are invited to bring children along to socialise and connect with other children and families sharing similar experiences. This is also facilitated by members of the Kinship Team.

Kinship Compass: As well as Manchester support all of our Kinship Carers have access to the National 'Kinship' charity. Kinship Compass provides a free advice line, support groups and lots of free workshops which address some of the common difficulties that families face. Below are links to the free resources and support available.

[Kinship Compass | Independent information hub for kinship carers](#)

[Kinship Compass | Independent information hub for kinship carers](#)

[North West Kinship Group - Kinship Compass](#)

[Events Archive - Kinship Compass](#)

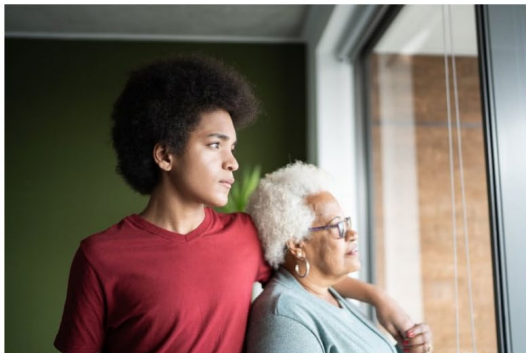
Foster Talk Membership: During assessment you will be provided with pre-approval membership which includes:



FEATURES OF THIS MEMBERSHIP

- **Cover for your whole household**
- Social Work Advice Helpline
- **24/7 Legal Helpline**
- Tax, Benefits & NI Advice
- **Discounted Tax Return Service**
- 24/7 Counselling Support
- **24/7 Medical Helpline**
- Members Magazine & Newsletters
- **The FosterTalk Spotlight Awards**
- Specialised Home, Car & Business Insurance Quotes
- **Education Advisory Services**
- Financial Advice
- **Free Online Events**
- Shopping & Lifestyle Discounts

Once the assessment is completed if you are approved to become a Kinship Foster Carer or Special Guardian you will be provided with full Foster Talk Membership which includes:



FEATURES OF THIS MEMBERSHIP

- **For Kinship/Connected Carers**
- Cover for your whole household
- **Foster Care, Supported Lodgings & Staying Put**
- Legal Insurance
- **Social Work Advice Helplines**
- 24/7 Legal Helpline
- **Tax, Benefits & NI Advice**
- Discounted Tax Return Service
- **24/7 Counselling Support**
- 24/7 Medical Helpline
- **Shopping & Lifestyle Discounts**
- Members Magazine & Newsletters
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- Specialised Home, Car & Business Insurance Quotes
- **Education Advisory Services**
- Financial Advice
- **Free Online Events**

Fostering Friendly HR Policy if you are employed by Manchester City Council.

If you work for Manchester City Council, the Council is supportive of Looked After Children and the foster carers who look after them. The Council understands that foster carers who work in addition to fostering need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order to meet the needs of their fostered child and to maintain their own well-being. We want to encourage staff to consider fostering for the Council and when they do, to provide appropriate support. We will do this, wherever possible, by creating a fostering friendly organisation that offers flexible



working arrangements which respond to the needs of all approved foster carers or approved kinship carer employees.

Up to ten days' paid special leave in any 12 month period will be authorised to support employees who are:

- going through the application process to become a foster carer, as part of the fostering assessment process.
- foster carers in order to attend training related to their position as foster carers, or during the process to become a foster carer
- called to attend to an emergency regarding a looked after child in their care and/or
- called to attend meetings, panels, hearings, support groups or any other key events or activities in support of foster children and young people in their care.

Any reasonable request for unpaid special leave from foster carers and prospective foster carers in relation to their care of a looked after child, or during the process to become foster carers, should normally be authorised. The Council also recognises that when employees are going through the fostering approval process or fostering, they may need additional flexibility, especially when a child is initially placed and when issues arise. We have lots of ways of supporting and the following can be considered as appropriate:

- Flexi-Time Scheme
- Flexible Working.
- Remote Working.
- Career Break.
- Annual Leave Purchase Scheme

Preparation and Training

As part of the assessment and approval process for fostering, Kinship foster carers are required to attend carer preparation groups. The groups consist of day or evening sessions (online or face to face) and provide carers with the information needed to carry out their roles to care for the child on a more permanent basis.

Kinship preparation groups are also open to temporarily approved foster carers who intend to apply for Special Guardianship and Child Arrangement Orders.

Separate preparation groups are available for prospective adopters.

Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) Training, Support and Development Standards for Kinships Foster Carers



The CWD Council is responsible for ensuring that people working with children, young people and their families have the best possible training, qualifications, support and advice.

The Training Support and Development Standards for Kinship Foster Carers have been developed especially for Kinships foster carers. They set out clearly what a Kinships foster carer should know, understand and be able to do. Newly approved Kinships foster carers must show that they meet the standards within 18 months of their approval. The six standards are:

- Standard 1 – Understand your role as a Kinships foster carer
- Standard 2 – Know how to provide a safe environment and healthy care
- Standard 3 – Know how to communicate effectively
- Standard 4 – Understand the development of children and young people
- Standard 5 – Keep children and young people safe from harm
- Standard 6 – Develop yourself

If the foster carer has had previous experience of working with children, they can use their learning and experience to evidence that they have met the standards.

Completion of the standards will provide an opportunity for Kinships carers to gain support in their caring role, to take part in training and to meet other foster carers in similar situations.

At the preparation group or early in the assessment, carers will be given a Training, Support and Development Standards workbook and a folder in which to keep their written work and guidance to assist with completing the Standards.

It is not expected that carers will complete **all** of the Standards before they are approved, but they will be expected to show that they have worked on and provided some evidence for each of the Standards before going before the Fostering Panel.

The assessing or supervising social worker will be there to help and guide the carer through the process.

When all the standards have been successfully completed the carer will receive the CWDC Certificate of Successful Completion

Allowances and Further Training

During the assessment process you will be entitled to a 'basic allowance' and support with any initial equipment costs.



Kinship foster carers have the same entitlement to allowances, equipment, training, supervision and support as recruited and approved Manchester foster carers. (See Fostering allowance handbook 2024-25 for current rates on additional one off payments available.)

Manchester operates a “Training for Skills” programme which means that carers who attend further training are entitled to enhanced allowances. (See Appendix for current rates).

Independent Advice and Support

Foster Line

'Foster line', operated by The Fostering Network and funded by the DfES, provides an impartial source of information and advice for prospective and existing foster carers in England. The advice provided covers financial issues such as allowances and benefits, as well as other subjects such as allegations of abuse, benefits, training, unplanned endings, and matters relating to the legal position of carers. The advice line is open between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. The freephone number is 0800 040 7675.

Manchester Fostering Service also have an independent membership service for kinship carers facilitated by Foster Talk. This is available for kinship carers at all stages of their caring journey. As above the advice provided covers financial issues such as allowances and benefits, as well as other subjects such as allegations of abuse, benefits, training, unplanned endings, and matters relating to the legal position of carers. Foster Talk can be contacted on 0121 758 5013, email enquiries@fostertalk.org with further information available at www.fostertalk.org.

The Kinship foster carer's role

All temporarily approved and fully approved Kinships foster carers are asked to sign a Foster Care Agreement which explains the expectations and responsibilities of being a foster carer.

These are:

- To be responsible for the day to day care of children.
- To keep children safe from harm.
- To work jointly with Manchester Children's Service and all those involved (social workers, teachers and other professionals) in the best interests of the child.
- Manage difficult behaviour without using physical sanctions such as smacking or restraint.
- To help children understand their past.



- To help children keep in contact with their birth families.
- Support children to move back to their birth families if that is the plan.
- Keep written records and keep information confidential.
- Attend and take part in meetings about children's progress.
- Support children to do well in education.
- Care for children's health.
- Understand the responsibilities of being a foster carer for Manchester.
- To attend further training and foster carer support groups.

In what other ways, can Kinships foster carers continue to care for the child?

The supervising social worker and the child's social worker and the carers will discuss which legal options are best for the child including Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Orders. The final assessment report can be presented to the court as the application for one of these orders.

If the child is already placed with the carer on a temporary fostering basis, then the assessment will have begun exploring the above legal options of permanency for the child. If the child is not yet placed, the carers will be undergoing a full assessment as a foster carer to enable the child to be placed once they are approved.

If Adoption has been considered as a suitable option for both the carer and the child, a suitability report will be prepared by the Local Authority and the carer will be re-assessed as an adopter.

Details of the legal arrangements and support available for Special Guardianship, Child Arrangements and Adoption Orders are as follows:

Child Arrangements Orders

This is a Court order which says who a child should live with and regulates the time the child spends with another person or other persons (family time previously contact).

For some older children, or for those whom adoption is not appropriate, Child Arrangements orders may be a preferred arrangement.

Parental Responsibility is equal to that of the birth parents but the holder can make decisions to protect the child and also about the child's day to day care without the permission of the child's parents.

Child Arrangements Orders cease when the young person reaches 18 years old unless varied or discharged by the court before the child reaches 18 years.



Assessment and Approval

Kinships carers can apply to the Court for an Child Arrangements Order after having the child live with them for a year whether or not the child has been previously looked after by the Local Authority. Carers are advised to seek independent legal advice*.

If the Local Authority is already involved with the child, an assessment of the carer's suitability and how well they can meet the child's needs will take place. The wishes and feelings of the child and their parents will be considered in line with their best interests.

Support

Holders of Child Arrangements Orders are entitled to claim child benefit and if applicable, Universal Credit (working tax/child tax credit). At the discretion of the local authority holders of Child Arrangements Orders may receive a Child Arrangements Order allowance (reviewed annually) and support services, including financial support, if the child is assessed as a child in need.

Special Guardianship

This is a legal order made by the court that places a child or young person with someone permanently until the young person reaches 18 years of age. Older children who are living with Kinship carers and do not wish to be adopted but who wish to retain contact with their birth families may be appropriate for Special Guardianship.

Parental Responsibility is shared with those who held it before the Order was made. Special Guardians can however hold majority Parental responsibility and make significant decisions about the child and their upbringing but cannot change the child's surname or take the child to live abroad for more than three months at a time, without approval.

Assessment and Approval

A person intending to apply for a Special Guardianship Order must give the Local Authority three month's written notice of their intention to apply. Carers are advised to seek independent legal advice*.

If the Local Authority is already involved with the child, an assessment of the carer's suitability and how well they can meet the child's needs will take place. The wishes and feelings of the child and their parents will be considered in line with their best interests.

Once the application has been made to the Court, the Local Authority will make an assessment and prepare a report. The report will include family and background details about the child and the carer, the relationships between family members and how the carer will meet the child's needs. The wishes and feelings of the child or young person will be listened to and considered. Checks



will be carried out on the proposed Special Guardian and members of their household.

A person can apply to be a Special Guardian for a looked after child if the local authority consents or if the person is a foster carer with whom the child has already lived for a year.

Following the granting of a Special Guardianship Order, the child will no longer be looked after.

Support

Special Guardians have an entitlement to assessment for support services; including financial support if they were the child's local authority foster carer the time the order was made.

Support in other circumstances, including financial and leaving care support services is available if the child was previously a looked after child.

Holders of Special Guardianship Orders are entitled to claim child related benefits such as child benefit and if applicable, Universal credit in the form of working tax and child tax credit.

Manchester will support carers to apply for special Guardianship where it is in the best interests of the child and provide advice and assistance to apply for financial support and benefits. Eligibility for support is, however, subject to assessment and regular review. (*Please see Special Guardianship policy 2024 for further information.*)

Our Special Guardianship offer for all our kinship carers and families in addition to financial support includes:

- Two hours of funding available, to access legal advice, independent from the Local Authority. List of approved solicitors will be provided.
- A dedicated SGO helpline and email inbox SGO direct line: 0161 219 6476, specialguardianship@manchester.gov.uk
- Access to ongoing Manchester City Council Foster Carer Training,
- Access to our Commissioned independent advice and support service currently provided by Foster Talk (the service provider is reviewed annually)
- SGO tea and coffee mornings (support groups) run quarterly in the city.
- Support to make Adoption Support Fund applications for children and families to access therapeutic support for the carers and children where there is an assessed need.
- Access to Pupil Premium Plus funding can also be accessed where there is an assessed need.



Adoption

Relatives and friends who are not approved local authority foster carers can apply to adopt if they have been caring for a child for a total of three out of five years. The Court may grant leave to do so if this criteria has not been met.

Kinship foster carers may apply for an adoption order for a child who has been living with them for one year.

Local authorities can decide to place a looked after child for adoption but only with consent of the birth parents or with a placement order made by the court.

Parental Responsibility is transferred to the adopters when the adoption order is made and is a permanent life-long relationship between the child and the adopters.

Assessment and Approval

When, Kinship foster carers wish to adopt a child in their care, the Local Authority has to prepare a report about the applicant's suitability to adopt and whether adoption is in the child's best interests.

In most cases it is beneficial for adopted children to maintain some form of direct or indirect contact with their birth families. The local authority will visit the child and the placement until the adoption order is made.

All Kinship foster carers applying to adopt a child in their care have to be re-assessed by the Local Authority and approved as adopters by an Adoption Panel.

Support

The Local Authority will assess the adopter for adoption support services and an adoption allowance for any child previously looked after. The provision of Adoption support for children not previously looked after or placed by an Adoption agency, will be at the discretion of the Local Authority.

Adopters are entitled to claim child benefit and if applicable, tax credits.

***Legal Advice**

The child's social worker will provide a list of solicitors approved to act on behalf of applicants for Child Arrangements Orders, Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders.

Carers can apply for public funding, but the Local Authority may contribute to the legal costs of its specified approved firms, where it supports the application and considers it appropriate.



Any concerns or further questions should be discussed with the child's social worker or if allocated, your supervising social worker.

APPENDIX- Fostering Allowances (Rates from 01/04/ 2024 until 31/03/2025)

Kinship foster carers temporarily and fully approved will receive a weekly fostering allowance when the child is placed.

Basic Rate is paid to Kinship foster carers who are temporarily approved but have yet to complete a full fostering assessment.

Band 1, is paid to kinship foster carers who have been fully assessed and approved following a positive Fostering Panel recommendation. *(Please see Fostering Allowance Document for March 24/25 for the full eligibility criteria for this level of allowance.)*

Band 2, Post Approval & Training/ Diploma Rate is payable to kinship foster carers who have shown that they have completed certain standards through training and further learning. *(Please see Fostering Allowance Document for March 24/25 for the full eligibility criteria for this level of allowance.)*

Illustration of March 2024 allowances as follows:

Basic Rate

Age of the child	Allowance for the child.
0-4 years	£179
5-10 years	£197
11-15 years	£224
16+ years	£262

Band 1

Age of the child	Allowances for the child	Fee for the carer	Total weekly payment.
0-4 years	£179	£116	£295
5-10 years	£197	£146	£343
11-15 years	£224	£173	£397
16+ years	£262	£173	£435

Band 2

Age of the child	Allowance for the child.	Fee for the carer	Total weekly payment
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0-4 years	£179	£232	£411
5-10 years	£197	£263	£460
11-15 years	£224	£290	£514
16+ years	£262	£290	£552

What can I claim as a foster carer?

Tax or Benefit	Can I claim?	Notes
Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit	No	This can only be claimed for a birth child or child on a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order
Universal Credit and Tax Credits	No - not for a fostered child and children.	Foster carers can be eligible for income support for themselves and their families but cannot claim for a looked after child. Income support and Job-seekers allowances are not affected by fostering allowances.
Income-based Job Seekers Allowance/ Universal Credit	Yes – but must be available for work	This can only be claimed if unemployed and actively seeking work, or working less than 16 hours per week (24 hours if in a partnership).
Working Tax Credit (Universal credit)	Yes	Fostering counts as “qualifying paid work” Foster carers can claim but must either be in qualifying paid work for at least 30 hours a week (if you do not have a child of your own). Or You are caring for a child of your own or a child on a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order and you or your partner is in paid work for at least 16 hours per week.



What to expect when welcoming a child into my home?

