

A guide to
Kinship
Care



Hampshire
County Council

What is Kinship Care?

Kinship Care is when close relatives of a child – grandparents, aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers, or step-parents – come forward to care for that child when the child is no longer able to live with his/her birth parents.

If relatives do not come forward to offer care for the child, then that child would need to come in to the care of the Local Authority. They may then be looked after by foster carers, placed in residential care, or be adopted.

Children tell Children's Services that they prefer to be cared for within their own family when they can't live with their parents. They feel more secure and feel they 'belong'.



The families who offer Kinship Care want to 'keep the family together'. Being in Kinship Care also helps children and young people keep in contact with their wider family.

Kinship Carers make a major commitment when offering the child a home for as long as she/he needs it.

Hampshire

Children's Services are able to support and help Kinship Carers in most situations where the Children's Services Department has been involved with the family and the child.



I am a relative how can I receive help from Children's Services?*

* Either a grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother, sister or step-parent to the child I am caring for.

To find out whether you, as Kinship Carers, are eligible for help, Children's Services will need to assess that the child you care for, or are planning to care for, is a child for whom services need to be provided.

Once it is determined by Children's Services that the child needs a service then you, as the child's Kinship Carers, will be offered a Kinship Carers' Assessment.

The purpose of this assessment is for Children's Services to find out from you what help you need in order to care for the child. Children's Services have a duty to make sure any child they are providing services for is safe and well-cared for, so they will discuss with you how you are going to look after the child.

Children's Services will also ask your permission to carry out all the checks – such as police checks, which we are legally obliged to make when someone is looking after a child who is not their own.



If you are in financial need because of caring for the child, you can request a financial assessment. Your financial circumstances will determine your eligibility for financial assistance from Children's Services.

When all Assessments are completed, you, the child's birth parent(s) and Children's Services will sign an Agreement which will say what everyone involved is going to do in order to make sure the child is well-cared for.

What help can Children's Services provide for Kinship Carers?

Children's Services can provide:-

- A Kinship Care Support Worker to visit you, or keep in touch to give you advice, information and support.
- Assistance in requesting other services for the child, for example, from Education or from Health services.
- Financial assistance, if you are eligible after completion of a Financial Assessment.
- Opportunities to attend training events and meetings with others who are caring for children.
- Support Groups where you can meet other Kinship Carers.
- Social events, newsletters and information evenings for Kinship Carers.

What happens if I have worries or concerns?

Having a child come to live in your family, even when you are a relative and know the child well, is likely to create changes in all the family relationships and it will take time for adjustments to be made. Kinship Care Support Workers are available to offer you advice and support.

Sometimes care arrangements are in danger of breaking down. If this is the situation, you can discuss this with your Kinship Care Support worker. A referral may then be needed for a Family Group Conference, in which the family and others who have a significant relationship with the child can come together to make new plans for the child. Your Kinship Care Support worker and Children's Services would support you and the child throughout this time. Most difficulties can be sorted out and Children's Services will help and support you to do this.

As a Kinship Carer, what legal rights do I have for the child?

The child's birth parent(s) retain legal responsibility for the child.

The child's birth parent(s) will be asked to make an agreement with you about how the day-to-day responsibilities for the child are to be carried out, for example dental and medical appointments and who will attend school meetings etc.

In most Kinship Care arrangements it is important for the child to keep in contact with his/her birth parent(s) and other family members and Children's Services will support Kinship Carers to promote this contact.



Why is Kinship Care encouraged?

In Hampshire, we have been promoting Kinship Care as one of the ways we support children who cannot live with their birth parents for many years. Our experience is that the commitment from Kinship Carers is something that gives a child great security, the children feeling loved and comfortable within their own family environment. This experience has led us to value, promote and support Kinship Care even more, so that children who cannot live with their birth parents are given every opportunity to thrive and be happy.

If you have any further questions
about Kinship Care, please contact:

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Upon request, the information in this leaflet can
be produced in other formats (eg. large print,
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