



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

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Kinship Local Offer 2026-2028



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Introduction to Kinship Care

Children may be brought up by members of their extended family, friends or other people who are connected with them, for a variety of reasons and in a range of different arrangements. Kinship care (sometimes called family and friends care) is the term used when this is the case.

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 parents. Many children living with Kinship Carers achieve their dreams and fulfil their potential, but often they can have experienced trauma and hardships which mean they require support to do so. Many Kinship Carers both want and need support to enable them to provide the best possible care and support to the child they are looking after.

Kinship Care is supported and regulated by a set of legal frameworks, statutory guidance, and policy documents. These define the responsibilities of local authorities, the rights of kinship carers, and the legal status of children living in kinship arrangements.

The Westmorland and Furness Council Kinship Offer has been developed in accordance with the relevant statutory guidance, policy documents, and best practice frameworks.

Statutory Guidance:

- [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance](#)
- [Children's social care national framework \(December 2023\)](#)
- [Kinship care: statutory guidance for local authorities \(October 2024\)](#)

Policy Document:

- [Championing Kinship Care: The National Kinship Care Strategy \(December 2023\)](#)
- [Children's Social Care: Stable Homes, Built on Love consultation response \(September 2023\)](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive \(November 2024\)](#)

Guidance:

- The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme Guide (March 2025)

Kinship carers play a crucial role in helping babies, children and young people remain within their wider family when they cannot live with their parents. While many children in kinship care thrive, some may have experienced significant adversity and require additional support to reach their full potential. Kinship carers themselves often need more focused guidance, resources, and practical support specifically around the needs and experiences of children who have experienced trauma, loss and separation from birth parents, to enable them to provide the best possible care for the children in their care.

[Kinship care: statutory guidance for local authorities](#) (October 2024) states that children who are unable to live with their parents should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare, whether or not they are cared for by the Local Authority.

Definition and Types of Kinship Care

Kinship care can take many different forms, and many people do not always realise that they are kinship carers. The definition of Kinship Care is any situation in which a child is being raised in the care of a friend or family member who is not their parent. The arrangement may be temporary or longer term.

The following are types of Kinship Care Arrangements:

- **Informal Kinship Care:** Private family arrangements where the child lives with a close relative without local authority involvement or a court order
- **Short-Term Private Arrangements:** Where a child under 16 stays for fewer than 28 days with someone who is not a close relative
- **Private Fostering:** Where someone who is not a close relative for a child aged under 16 looks after the child for 28 days or more, as defined under Section 66 of the Children Act 1989
- **Child Arrangements Orders:** Orders placing a child with a friend or family member who is not a parent. This can be a full (long term) or interim (temporary) order.
- **Special Guardianship Orders:** Where a court order has appointed a friend or family member as the child's special guardian
- **Kinship Foster Care:** Where a child is looked after by the local authority and placed with a friend or family member who is an approved foster carer (just for that child or children)
- **Adoption by Relatives or Friends:** Where the adopter was a friend or family member prior to the adoption order.

Who Can be a Kinship Carer?

- Close relative of the child (this includes anyone who is defined as a relative under the Children Act 1989 such as 'a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, stepparent)
- Close relative of the child's half-siblings
- Former stepparents or partners of the child's parent (they may or may not have parental responsibility for the child)
- A close friend of the child, or of the child's parent(s)
- 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 (for example, a teacher, youth worker, childminder or former foster carer)

To hear more about what life is like as a kinship carer, listen to... [Paul's story](#)



Our Vision

'Our vision is for every child and young person in Westmorland and Furness to have the best start in life, to grow, thrive, and be prepared for a successful adult life. We are ambitious for our cared-for and care-experienced children and young people, ensuring they are safe, happy, and healthy, able to enjoy life and realise their potential.'

Our approach is that it is imperative for every child to have the best. Our goal is for them to grow up in a happy, loving, and caring home. We will always seek to keep children and young people within their family networks, doing all that we can to enable families to stay together. In some situations, we take the difficult decision to place a child in our care. When that does happen, we take a strengths-based approach focussing on identifying the strengths, or assets, as well as the needs and difficulties of children, young people, and families. Whilst in our care, we prioritise maintaining relationships with their families and friends, working towards safe and timely reunification.

Our vision is that kinship carers receive consistent, high-quality support tailored to their needs and those of the children in their care.

Named Lead Officer: Ali Wellman (Senior Manager) oversees kinship care and ensures strategic coordination of our Local Offer.

Principles

The Westmorland and Furness Council Children and Families Directorate's Together in Practice Framework will underpin the approach to supporting children and families through the Kinship Care Local Offer.



In addition to this, the Overarching Principles for Kinship Care:

- Support should not depend solely on the legal status of a child
- No child should become or remain 'cared for' by the Local Authority solely to access financial, practical or emotional support for their carers
- Assessments will be conducted in a sensitive manner recognising the emotional impact
- Promote permanence – children should have stable, secure, and lasting relationships. Kinship care (through child arrangements, special guardianship, or adoption) is often a preferred route to permanence when returning home is not possible.

Evidence Base

What Works for Children's Social Care – “Kinship care” evidence summary:

- Overall, kinship care showed a positive effect on placement stability, and this was based on high strength evidence
- Children in kinship care were more likely than children in foster care to achieve permanence through a court order, less likely to need to be adopted and less likely to have social and emotional problems

Family Rights Group

- Outcomes are positive for most children living in kinship care, and considerably better than for children in unrelated foster care, e.g. the children are more securely attached to their carers, feel that they belong with their carers, and are confident they will be staying.

Coram Voice & The Rees Centre – “Views of Children and Young People in Kinship Foster Care

- In the first analysis of its kind, The Views of Children and Young People in Kinship Foster Care on Their Well-being finds that on a number of wellbeing indicators, children (4-10 years) and young people (11-18 years) in kinship foster care were doing better or at least as well as those in unrelated foster care and that on some indicators they scored the same or better than their peers in the general population.



Local Context

Not all kinship carers are involved with Children's Social Care, as some private arrangements occur without the Local Authority or Courts knowing or being involved. This creates a challenge in fully understanding the local demographic of kinship carers. Based on the information available, we do know that:

- Carers are predominantly older adults, often grandparents or extended family members. Many are in their late 50s, 60s, and 70s, indicating that caring responsibilities are frequently taken on later in life.
- There is a mix of female and male carers, although there appears to be a higher proportion of female carers across the county.
- Most carers are from White British backgrounds, reflecting the wider local demographic, with limited ethnic diversity recorded.

The Legal Context: Types of Arrangements and Processes

Types of Kinship Care	Legal Frameworks	Legal Status of Carer
Informal kinship care (arranged privately within family)	Children Act 1989	Parents retain parental responsibility
Private Fostering (child under 16—or under 18 if disabled—living with non-relative for 28+ days without parental responsibility)	Children Act 1989 Children Act 2004 National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering (2005) Statutory Guidance: "Private Fostering: Safeguarding Children – Guidance for Local Authorities" (DfE, 2005; updated 2010)	Parents (or anyone else with parental responsibility, such as through a court order) retain full parental responsibility
Child Arrangement Order	Children Act 1989	Shared parental responsibility with parents
Special Guardianship	Children Act 1989 Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 Statutory Guidance on Special Guardianship (DFE, updated 2017)	Special guardian has superseding parental responsibility, parents retain parental responsibility
Kinship foster care (child is cared for by local authority but placed with Kinship Carers)	Children Act 1989 Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010	Local authority holds full parental responsibility if Care Order is granted
Kinship Adopters	Adoption and Children Act 2002	Adoptive parent(s) have full parental responsibility

Types of Kinship Carers and Assessment Process

Below is an overview of the different types of kinship care arrangements, the role and responsibilities of the local authority, and the assessment processes that may be involved.

Within the Children and Families Together in Practice framework, family networks are identified at the earliest opportunity and are actively involved in planning and support. We will prioritise exploring family options before considering alternative care arrangements.

The Children and Families Directorate Kinship Team have responsibility for assessing family and friends' carers when children are subject to care proceedings, or when notification is received of an individual's intention to apply for a Special Guardianship Order.

Informal Kinship Carer

Informal kinship care refers to private arrangements where a close family member steps in to care for a child on a temporary or permanent basis, through family agreement rather than official processes. Under the Children Act 1989, a close relative is defined as a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or sibling (whether by full or half blood, marriage, or civil partnership).

Key characteristics of informal kinship care:

- The arrangement is made privately between the child's parents (or those with parental responsibility) and the relative
- Parental responsibility remains with the child's parents
- There is no statutory duty for the local authority to be involved unless there are safeguarding concerns.

Private Fostering

A private fostering arrangement occurs when a child under the age of 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not a parent or close relative, for 28 days or more, and the arrangement is made without local authority involvement.

Important distinctions:

- Private foster carers may include extended family members such as cousins or great-aunts, but not those defined as close relatives under the Children Act 1989 (e.g., grandparents, siblings, uncles, aunts, or stepparents)
- The arrangement must be continuous, although occasional short breaks do not interrupt this continuity
- The day-to-day care of the child is the responsibility of the private foster carer, but legal responsibility remains with the parent or person with parental responsibility.

Local Authority Responsibilities:

- Local authorities do not approve or register private foster carers, but they have a legal duty to ensure the child's welfare is safeguarded and promoted
- The local authority where the child resides must be notified in writing at least six weeks before the arrangement begins (or immediately if already in place)
- Anyone involved in arranging or becoming aware of a private fostering arrangement is legally required to notify the local authority.

Assessment and Monitoring:

- Upon notification, the local authority will conduct a Private Fostering Assessment
- Regular visits will be made to monitor the child's welfare and offer support to the child, carer, and parents.

In accordance with Regulation 8 of the Private Fostering Regulations 2005, visits must occur:

- At least every six weeks during the first year of the arrangement
- At least every twelve weeks in subsequent years.

Kinship Foster Carers – temporarily or fully approved

Kinship foster care occurs when a child is cared for by a relative or someone with a prior connection to the child and is placed with them by the local authority under fostering arrangements.

Important distinctions:

- Kinship foster carers are typically close relatives (such as grandparents, aunts, uncles or siblings) or family friends; however, the strength of the child's relationship with the carer is more important than biological ties.
- The child is 'cared for' by the Local Authority and their placement with a family member has been formally approved.
- The arrangement may be temporary or long term
- Day-to-day care is provided by the kinship foster carer, while the local authority shares responsibility for the child's care and planning with the parents or others who hold parental responsibility.

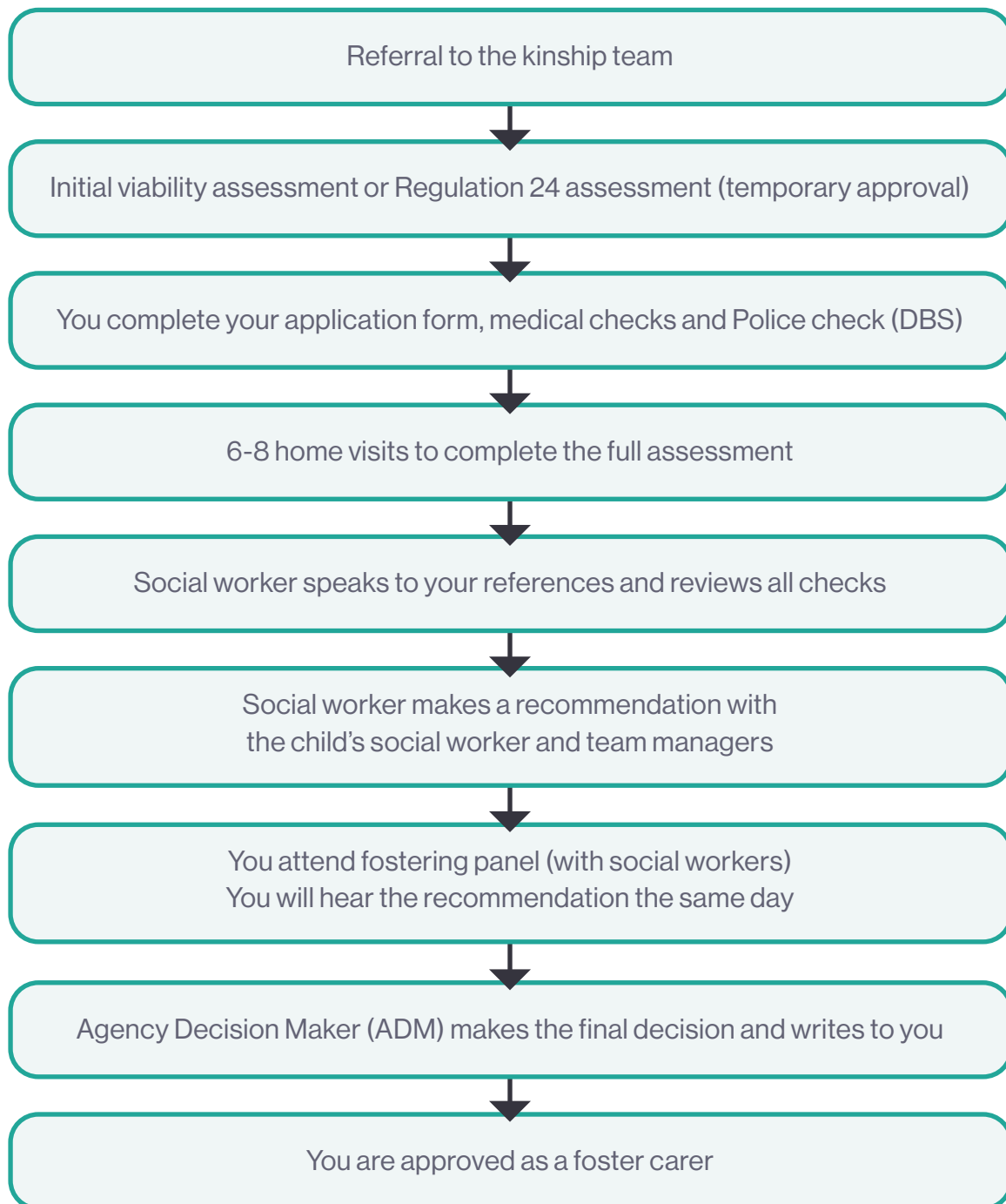
Local Authority Responsibilities:

- The local authority must assess, approve, and support kinship foster carers in line with Fostering National minimum standards and Fostering Regulations.
- A care plan must be in place and reviewed regularly
- Financial allowances, training, and support must be provided in line with fostering regulations
- Kinship foster carers are supported by a Kinship Social Worker, who visits them and offers advice and guidance to support them in caring for the child.

Assessment and Monitoring:

- Kinship foster carers undergo intensive assessments, which may grant temporary or full approval.
- Kinship foster carers need to be approved by the fostering panel.
- Statutory visits are carried out by the child's social workers to monitor the child's welfare and support the placement.
- The child will remain 'cared for' by the Local Authority, there will be ongoing involvement with social workers, including regular visits and meetings, to support the child while they are living with their kinship foster carers.
- Kinship foster carers undergo an annual review with the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to assess their fostering role, approval status, and any support or training needs. The initial review, and every third review thereafter, is presented to the fostering panel to consider ongoing approval.

Flowchart for assessment process



Kinship Adopters

Kinship adoption occurs when a child is legally adopted by a relative or someone with an existing relationship with the child, following involvement from the family courts (care proceedings) to help secure a permanent home.

Important distinctions:

- Adoption permanently transfers parental responsibility to the adopter(s)
- Once the adoption order is granted, the child is no longer cared for by the local authority
- Birth parents' parental responsibility is extinguished
- The arrangement is lifelong and legally permanent

Local Authority Responsibilities:

- The local authority must assess and approve prospective kinship adopters
- Adoption support plans should be created, including contact with birth parents and post adoption support
- The local authority supports the child and adopters up to and following the adoption order, in line with adoption legislation

Assessment and Monitoring:

- A full adoption assessment is completed by a Social Worker
- Statutory visits take place prior to the adoption order
- Post adoption support may be offered, but routine monitoring ceases once the order is made

If you are thinking about adopting a child, please contact Adoption Cumbria [Start your adoption journey here](#) | [Adoption Cumbria](#)

Child Arrangement Order

A Child Arrangements Order is made by the court and determines where a child lives and who they spend time with, which may include living with a relative or family connected person.

Important distinctions:

- The child may live with a relative without being cared for by the Local Authority
- Parental responsibility may be shared, depending on the order
- The arrangement is decided by the court, often following private law proceedings
- The order usually lasts until the child is 16 (or 18 in limited circumstances)

Local Authority Responsibilities:

- The local authority may be asked to provide assessments or reports to the court
- Once the order is made, the local authority generally has no ongoing statutory role
- Support may be accessed through Family Hubs, or universal services, where appropriate

Assessment and Monitoring:

- Assessments are court directed rather than through statutory cared for processes
- There is no routine monitoring once the Child Arrangements Order is in place
- Further involvement occurs only if concerns about the child's welfare arise

Special Guardians

A Special Guardianship Order means a child lives with and is cared for long term by a relative or someone they know well, giving them a stable and secure home while keeping important links with their birth parents.

Important distinctions:

- Special guardians gain enhanced parental responsibility, allowing them to make most day to day decisions
- Birth parents still have parental responsibility, but only in a limited way.
- The order lasts until the child is 18, unless discharged earlier
- The child is no longer cared for by the Local Authority once the order is granted

Local Authority Responsibilities:

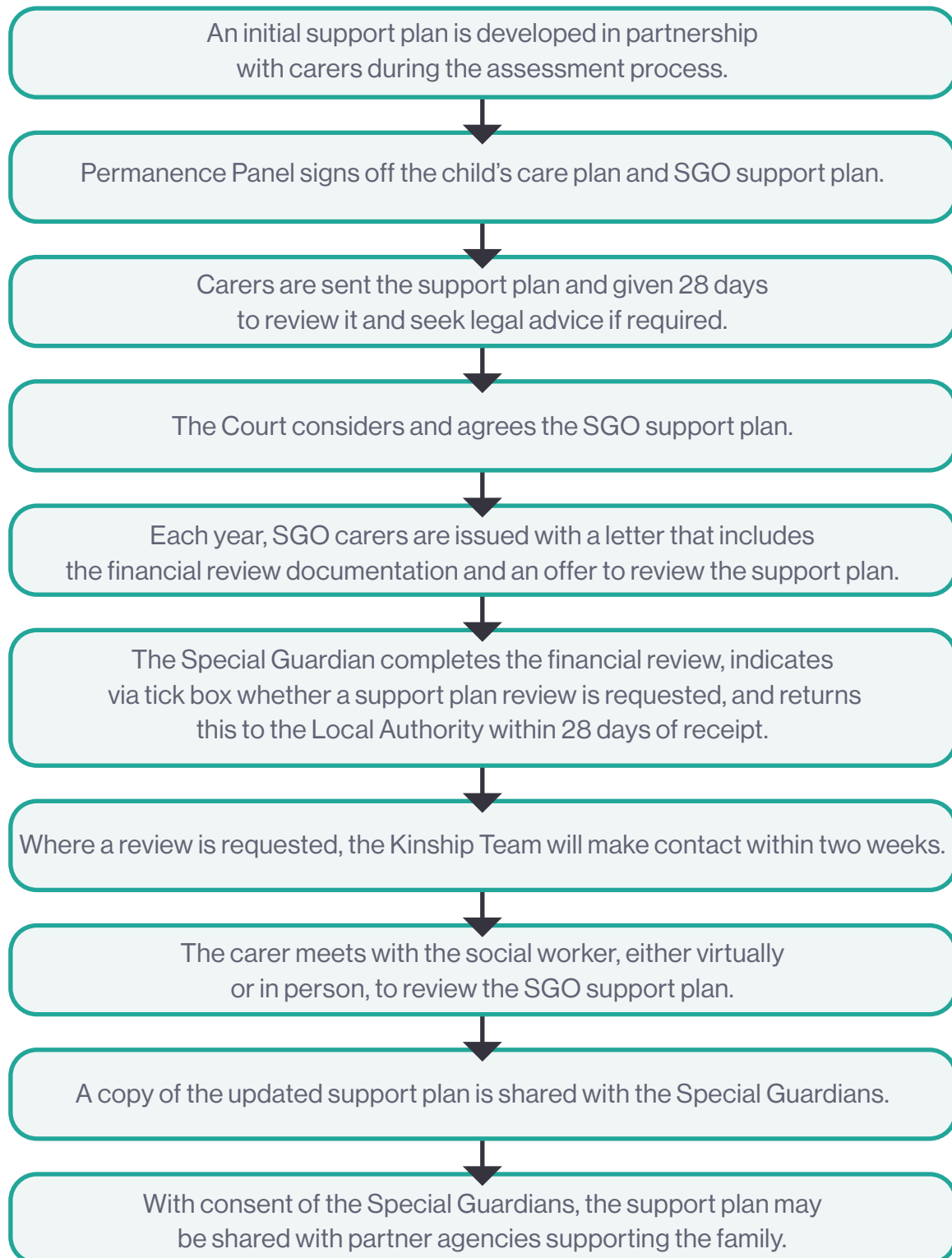
- The local authority must carry out a formal assessment, to assess the applicant/s suitability to provide long-term, stable care for the child.
- Support plans are developed and shared with carers, the support plan may include financial support, therapeutic services, and contact arrangements
- Ongoing support is offered as set out in the Special Guardianship Support Plan
- The assessments are presented to the court, so that the court can make the decision about the right order for the child.

Assessment and Monitoring:

- Statutory Form K assessment is required before the order is made, this will be shared with the people being assessed
- There is no routine statutory visiting once the order is granted
- The Local Authority will write to you and review the financial assessment annually. They will also ask if the support plan needs to be reviewed at this time.
- Carers may also request a review from the Local Authority at any time if there is a significant change in circumstances.



Support Plan Development & Review Flowchart



Equality and Diversity

Our approach to kinship care is grounded in equality, diversity, and inclusion. We recognise the varied experiences of kinship families and are committed to delivering support that is accessible, respectful, and responsive to individual needs.

Considerations for Specific Circumstances in Kinship Care

- **Increased Vulnerability During Transitions and Pregnancy** - Periods of transition - such as a child coming into kinship care, changes in legal arrangements, or during pregnancy - can increase stress and vulnerability for families. Practitioners should remain alert to safeguarding concerns, emotional wellbeing, and practical support needs, ensuring timely access to appropriate services.
- **Disability, SEND, Neurodiversity, and Mental Health** - Where a child, young person, or kinship carer has a disability, special educational needs, neurodiverse profile, or mental health need, practitioners must consider how this may affect communication, understanding, capacity, and access to support. Reasonable adjustments should be made to ensure services are accessible, inclusive, and responsive, while avoiding assumptions or misinterpretation.
- **Cultural and Religious Identity** - Kinship care exists across all cultures, faiths, and communities. Practitioners must be aware of their own conscious and unconscious biases and ensure cultural and religious values are understood and respected. Support should be delivered sensitively, while ensuring that the safety, wellbeing, and rights of children and young people remain central.
- **Socio Economic Circumstances and Financial Pressure** - Many kinship carers experience financial strain, particularly where care arrangements are informal or unplanned. Practitioners should take account of socio economic challenges and ensure families are supported to access financial advice, benefits, and wider practical support, including signposting to DWP and community services.
- **Armed Forces and Veteran Families** - Kinship families with a connection to the Armed Forces or veteran community may face additional challenges, such as mobility, separation, or the impact of trauma. Practitioners should recognise these factors, ensure proportionate assessment, and support access to appropriate services while maintaining a child centred focus.

Permanency

What do we mean by Permanency?

Permanency is about belonging, stability, and continuity. It focuses on giving children confidence about where they will live, who will care for them, and who will make decisions about their lives, both now and in the future.

Children's Services' primary aim is to support children and young people to remain living safely with their parents wherever possible. Where this is not achievable, permanency may be secured through legal orders such as Special Guardianship Orders, Child Arrangements Orders, or adoption, providing long term stability, clarity, and security.

Considering a Return Home: Is It Safe for the Child?

We recognise that parents can make positive changes at any point in a child's life, which may mean they are better able to care for their child.

If you are currently caring for someone else's child and believe the parent(s) have made meaningful improvements to their lifestyle or parenting, giving you confidence that they may be able to safely resume care, please discuss these with your social worker if you are a foster carer or the child's social worker if they have one. During the annual review of the Special Guardianship support plan, carers should speak out and let us know if they feel unable to continue caring for the child, so that appropriate support can be put in place.

If there is no current social work involvement, you can complete a [Single Contact Form](#) via the Multi-Agency Children's Hub (MACH), requesting an assessment of the child's care arrangements

This will ensure that an assessment is carried out to determine whether it is safe, appropriate, and in the child's best interests for them to return to a birth parent and/or to explore other options for the child's care.

Support for Children and Young People

Children and families can access everyday support available to all families in the community. Kinship families may sometimes need additional support, especially where children have experienced difficult or traumatic circumstances before living with their kinship carers.

Healthy Child Programme (0–19)

The Healthy Child Programme (0–19) supports children and families from pregnancy through to age 19, helping children to grow, develop, and stay healthy.

Support may include health checks, immunisations, developmental reviews, and advice to support parenting and healthy choices.

In Westmorland and Furness, the programme is delivered by Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT) through:

- The Health Visiting Team (ages 0–5)
- The 5–19 Public Health Team (ages 5–19)

More information and contact details are available on the [HDFT Children's Health Service website](#).

You can also [download the Growing Healthy app](#)

E-School Nurse

The 5-19 Public Health Team also offer E-School Nurse video clinics which are available on a Tuesday and Thursday.

These are online health support and advice appointments for parents, carers and professionals who are supporting children or young people aged 5-19 years old and are worried about their health and wellbeing.

You will be able to talk to the nurse over a live video link using Attend Anywhere. The link is private, secure, confidential and convenient.

You can telephone for an appointment on 01228 603973, Monday to Friday, from 8am to 4pm.

Holiday activities and food (HAF) programme

If you receive free school meals for your child, or you care for a relative's or friend's child (meaning you're a kinship carer under any of the definitions above), you can access and book free holiday activities and events.

Holiday activities and food (HAF) programme | Westmorland and Furness Council

Online safety

It can be hard to keep up with new social media apps, emojis, and trends. For tips on helping your child stay safe online, visit: [Online safety | Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

Best Start Family Hubs

Best Start Family Hubs offer a wide range of groups, activities, and support for families, from pregnancy through to the teenage years. As well as parenting and wellbeing support, Best Start Family Hubs can help you access information and guidance on financial support, benefits, and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) services.

To find out more about what's happening at a Family Hub near you, please visit their website [Family Help | Westmorland and Furness Council](#) or find them on Facebook [Family Hubs in Barrow-in-Furness | Barrow in Furness | Facebook](#).

Alternatively, email/telephone contact details:

slakesfamilyhubs@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk / 01539 713070 (Kendal West)

barrowfamilyhubs@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk / 01229 407384 (Barrow Library) 01229 408190 (Ormsgill)

edenfamilyhubs@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk / 01768 899901 (Penrith)

We are integrating kinship carer support groups into Best Start Family Hubs. Further discussions will take place between Best Start Family Hub staff and kinship carers to better understand their needs and how the hubs can provide effective support. Details of the support groups will be published on [Kinship care | Westmorland and Furness Council](#) or alternatively you can email the kinship team sgosupport@cumbria.gov.uk for information.

Kooth

Kooth is a free and confidential, anonymous online counselling service for young people aged 10-19 across Westmorland and Furness.

It is a safe place for children and young people to go and explore a variety of emotional health and wellbeing issues. It offers a range of support including supervised forum, magazines, articles, a chat function with counsellors or booked sessions with counsellors.

To find out more visit the website: [Home - Kooth](#)

Specialist Support

Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund

The Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) provide funding for therapeutic support for adopted children and young people, and for those living under Special Guardianship Orders or Child Arrangements Orders who were previously cared for by the Local Authority. Support can include therapeutic parenting support, individual or family therapy, and specialist assessments. The fund is available for eligible children and young people up to age 21 (or 25 if they have an Education, Health and Care Plan).

The Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund is available for children up to and including the age of 21, therefore the application needs to be made, submitted, approved and therapy started before the young person's 22nd birthday.

A young person over the age of 21 is eligible for the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) if they have ever had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), regardless of them being in education or not. The level of education also does not affect their entitlement. To be eligible, the application must be approved by the ASGSF **and** therapy must commence before their 26th birthday. Please select 'yes' when asked if they have an ECHP in the application form, regardless of whether the plan is current.

Families cannot apply directly to the fund. Instead, they can request an assessment of support needs from the Kinship Team by emailing sgosupport@cumbria.gov.uk.

The Kinship Team will then make a referral to the Multi-Agency Children's Hub (MACH), where a Support and Protect Social Worker will be allocated to complete the assessment of support needs.

If therapeutic support is recommended following the assessment, the local authority or relevant agency will submit an application to the fund on the family's behalf.

More information is available on the government website: [Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund \(GOV.UK\)](#).

Neurodiversity

ADHD North West – South Cumbria

ADHD North West provides support and training for families, offering free, personalised services to improve wellbeing, build confidence, strengthen mental health, reduce isolation, and increase understanding of ADHD and related conditions.

More information is available at: [ADHD North West](#)



Autus Cumbria- South West Cumbria

Autus Cumbria supports autistic people by offering social opportunities, support, training and advocacy.

Offer:

- Social Activities & Groups for Adults
- Support for autistic adults who are looking for employment
- Support & Advice for Parents/Carers
- Responsive Communication Sessions
- Home consultations and one-to-one sessions
- Autism Talks, Training & Workshops
- Support for autistic children (7-17) by offering home consultations and one-to-one sessions to support them and their parents/carers.
- Responsive Communication sessions for young people and their parents/carers to help people communicate without spoken language.

More information is available at: [Autus Cumbria | Understanding Autism](#)

Neurodiversity and Emotional Wellbeing Service- Eden

Kinship families in the Penrith area can access the Neurodiversity and Emotional Wellbeing Service through Cumberland Family Hubs.

This service is being piloted for an initial 12-month period from November 2025 across the Cumberland and Eden areas. It has been developed in partnership with SENDAC, the statutory parent/carer forum for Cumbria.

SEND partnership Drop In

An informal drop in for parents and carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities. The Family hub team will provide activities and crafts for families attending with children.

The SEND Team, Children with Disabilities Team, SEND IAS, SEND Engagement & Development Officer, Adult services transition team and ADHD North West, Family Action and the Autism Pathway Navigator will be available to answer your questions.

To find out when the next drop in is happening near you: [SEND Partnership Drop In | Westmorland and Furness Family Hubs](#)

Teenage brain

Learn more about your teenager's brain by visiting your local Family Hub or accessing the online course.

Course aims:

- Understanding your teenager's brain development in adolescence.
- Reading your teenager's behaviour and understanding their feelings.
- Reflecting on the importance of your relationship and how to nurture your teenager's mental health.

[Understanding your teenager's brain | Westmorland and Furness Family Hubs](#)

Emotional Health and Wellbeing Team

Westmorland and Furness Emotional Health and Wellbeing Team offer advice, information and signposting, as well as training and group work to support children being supported by a social worker.

This support includes online consultations and review sessions that use the Signs of Safety and Secure Base approaches, with a focus on emotional wellbeing. Parents, carers and schools may sometimes be invited to join these sessions, depending on the child's needs and at the discretion of the social worker.

Following a consultation, parents and carers may be signposted to group training sessions. These sessions are mainly attended by Special Guardianship Order (SGO) carers, foster carers, and residential staff.

For families who have already accessed universal emotional health and wellbeing services and need additional support, please contact the Kinship Team for advice on next steps: sgosupport@cumbria.gov.uk

Where your family is receiving support from a Children's Services social worker, please discuss accessing this support with them.

In certain circumstances, therapeutic work may be provided by the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Team through the Adoption and special guardianship support fund.

The Emotional Health and Wellbeing Team also offer Emotion Coaching training to any kinship carers, upcoming dates are shared through the Kinship mailing list. Email sgosupport@cumbria.gov.uk for further information.

Services and resources available for supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people

[Emotional health and wellbeing directory | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

SPACE- Support and Protect Against Child Exploitation

Where you, or a professional supporting the child, are worried that they may be at risk of exploitation, a checklist can be completed by a professional working with your family, such as the child's school. This information may be shared with Family Help, and intervention workers within the SPACE team will provide support and direct work to the child and your family.

For more information on the offer of support from the SPACE team please visit: [Exploitation and missing | Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

Unsure if your child's relationship is healthy?

If you have concerns that your child is experiencing domestic abuse in a relationship, this can be very distressing, but you are not alone and support is out there.

If you or your child has a social worker from Children's Services:

They can seek advice from the Children's Services specialist domestic abuse team. This team can offer guidance and support to you as a carer on how best to help your child, as well as support for your child to understand power and control in relationships and to put a safety plan in place.

If you do not currently have involvement with Children's Services:

You can speak to your child's school or another professional who supports your child. They can offer advice and guidance about services available in the local community. If they are particularly concerned about your child's safety or wellbeing because of the relationship, they can contact the Multi Agency Children's Hub to seek additional support.

Our Family Hubs offer a 'Real Love Rocks' programme for young people.

Real Love Rocks is an innovative education and awareness programme developed by Barnardo's Safer Futures Trauma Services. It focuses on promoting children and young people's rights to healthy, consensual, and safe relationships with peers, partners, family members, and within their wider community.

To find out more or access the programme, please contact or visit your local Family Hub. [Best Start Family Hubs | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

Useful contacts:

Victim Support (Cumbria wide)

Confidential support for children and young people affected by domestic abuse, crime, or harassment.

0300 3030 157 (local) or 0808 1689 111 (24/7)

Springfield (South Lakeland)

Community based support available for men, women and children email: help@springfieldsupport.org.

Women Community Matters (Barrow and South Lakeland)

Community based support available for men, women and children. Telephone: 01229 311102. Email: reception@womenscommunitymatters.org

Safety Net (Cumbria wide)

For women, men and children 01228 515859.

The Birchall Trust (Cumbria wide)

For women, men and children. Email: enquiries@birchalltrust.org.uk. Telephone: 01229 820828.

Life Story work

If you live with family members or carers and a social worker was involved before in arranging this, they may have done something called life story work. This helps you understand your story and your parent or carer may have a copy, if this was provided. Your carer should be able to help answer questions you might have as you grow up. Sometimes, though, there may be questions they can't answer.

We are developing life story resources that will be available from our Best Start Family Hubs. Alternatively, you can contact sgosupport@cumbria.gov.uk for support in responding to your questions.

Supporting Young People Through Transitions to Adulthood

Families tell us that moving between children's and adult services can be a challenging time. Whatever the need, if you are struggling during this transition or finding it difficult to navigate services, you can speak to our Kinship Team SGOsupport@cumbria.gov.uk.

Young people aged 16–17 remain eligible for support from Children's Social Care where appropriate. In these circumstances, please contact the Multi-Agency Children's Hub to explore what support is available.

Care Leaver

Some children in kinship care were previously in the care of the local authority and may be entitled to care leaver support. Care leaver status usually only applies where a child or young person was cared for by the local authority from age 14 onwards.

In the care of the Local Authority/Cared for by the local authority means a child or young person was looked after by Westmorland and Furness Council Children's Services, for example by living with foster carers or in a children's home, under a care order or a Section 20 agreement.

In some situations, a young person may no longer be eligible for the full care leaver offer. For example, if they leave care through a permanent arrangement such as a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or adoption. For families caring for a child under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), the young person may still qualify for leaving care support as a qualifying care leaver between the ages of 16 and 25. This applies if the young person was cared for by the local authority immediately before the SGO was made. If a young person has returned home, and no longer cared for by the local authority, for a period of 6 months before their 18th birthday, their care leaving status is one of a qualifying care leaver.

You can find out whether the young person you care for is eligible for care leaver support by reading the information below:

Eligible Child (Age 16–17)

A young person who:

- Is still cared for by the Local Authority.
- Has been in the care of the Local Authority for at least 13 weeks since age 14.
- Is still cared for by the Local Authority on or after their 16th birthday.

Entitlements:

- Ongoing support from a Personal Adviser up to age 25 (21-25 depending on need)
- Needs Assessment- to talk about what is going well for the young person and what support they may need.
- Pathway Plan- the young adult's plan for the future, showing their goals and the support to help them reach them. This plan is regularly reviewed.
- Access to Westmorland and Furness care leavers local offer for relevant young people
- Social Worker whilst still cared for by the Local Authority

Relevant Child (Age 16–17, no longer cared for by the Local Authority)

For example, this could include a situation where a grandmother fostered her grandchild and the care order was later ended when the young person was 16 or 17, with a Child Arrangements Order put in place, or no court order at all.

A young person who:

- Has been cared for by the Local Authority for 13 weeks since age 14, including time after age 16.
- Has since left the care of the Local Authority but is still 16 or 17.

Entitlements:

- Ongoing support from a Personal Adviser up to age 25 (21-25 depending on need)
- Needs Assessment- to talk about what is going well for the young person and what support they may need.
- Pathway Plan- the young adult's plan for the future, showing their goals and the support to help them reach them. This plan is regularly reviewed.
- Access to Westmorland and Furness care leavers local offer for relevant young people

Former Relevant Child (Age 18–25)

A young person who:

- Was previously eligible and/or relevant.
- Is now 18–25.

Entitlements:

- Ongoing support from a Personal Adviser up to age 25 (21-25 depending on need)
- Needs Assessment- to talk about what is going well for the young person and what support they may need.
- Pathway Plan- (21-25 depending on need) the young adult's plan for the future, showing their goals and the support to help them reach them. This plan is regularly reviewed.
- Access to Westmorland and Furness care leavers local offer for relevant young people

Qualifying Care Leaver (Age 16–25)

For example, this could include a situation where a grandparent fostered their grandson between the ages of 15 and 16 for less than 13 weeks, and the care order was later ended, or a Section 20 arrangement was withdrawn.

A young person who:

- Was cared for by the Local Authority on or after their 16th birthday
- Spent less than 13 weeks in the care of the Local Authority since age 14
- Does **not** meet the eligible/relevant/former relevant criteria

Entitlements:

- Advice and guidance from children's social care- contact: 01229 408100

A Care Experienced Housing Tenancy Drop-In is held every Tuesday from 4–6pm, with no booking required and open to all care-experienced young people regardless of how long they have been in or out of care. Please check the session is running before attending by contacting [01229 408100]. For any queries from carers or young people about the support available, please contact the Care Experienced team on [01229 408100].

For more information visit: [Care leavers local offer | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

Care Leavers and 'Staying Put'

The Local Authority is committed to young people staying with their kinship foster carers after the age of 18 and has a 'Staying Put' policy. Staying Put is the name that the government has given to arrangements whereby a young person aged 18 and above, remains living with their former foster carer. The aim of Staying Put is to help young people make the transition to independence and adulthood at a pace, and within a timescale that suits them, rather than having to move when they reach the age of 18.

Planning for a Staying Put arrangement starts to take place before a young person reaches the age of 16. The young person's social worker will meet with the carer and young person prior to the young person's 16th birthday to explain the Staying Put policy and to discuss options. The Young Person's Advisor from the Care Experienced Team will provide guidance and support to the young person and their carers, who will have their own social worker.

Post 18+

Adult Social Care

To find out more about whether a young person may be eligible for support from Adult Social Care, please visit the Westmorland and Furness Council website:

<https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/adult-social-care>

Support for Kinship Carers

Support groups

Taking on the care of a child through kinship can sometimes feel lonely, especially when children have experienced difficult or upsetting situations. It is completely understandable to feel overwhelmed at times. Connecting with other kinship carers who have lived through similar experiences can offer comfort, understanding, and reassurance, and remind carers that they are not alone.

Across Westmorland and Furness, Kinship Support Groups are available in Penrith, Kendal and Barrow. To subscribe to our mailing list and stay up to date with the latest training opportunities and support groups, please email sgosupport@cumbria.gov.uk.

We are keen to develop these support groups so that they are led by kinship carers themselves. If you would be interested in helping to shape or be involved in these peer support groups, please get in touch with sgosupport@cumbria.gov.uk.

Carers have told us how valuable it would be to stay connected through peer-led WhatsApp or Facebook groups, offering shared understanding, encouragement, and advice from others with lived experience.

If this is something you would be interested in leading — by helping to set up and manage social media groups for Westmorland and Furness kinship carers — please get in touch with sgosupport@cumbria.gov.uk.

National Kinship Charity

Someone Like Me is a free service where you can speak to a specially trained kinship carer volunteer on the phone. Speak to someone like you - Kinship

The Kinship Advice Team specialises in supporting kinship carers across England and Wales. They understand that every kinship journey is different and can offer support wherever you are on that journey — from first considering kinship care to supporting you as you care for your kinship child or children. [Contact the Kinship advice team | Support for kinship carers](#)

Family Rights Group (FRG)

Family Rights Group is a charity that provides advice and support to kinship carers, as well as parents, relatives and friends involved in children's care where social workers or courts are making decisions about a child's welfare.

They offer a range of services to support families, including online advice through accessible guidance pages, factsheets, and template letters; online forums where families can connect and share experiences; and a free confidential telephone advice line available Monday to Friday, 9:30am–3:00pm (excluding Bank Holidays). Families can also access a webchat service to speak directly with an adviser and receive tailored information and guidance, as well as support to advocate for themselves.

Further information and support can be accessed via: <https://frg.org.uk/>

Training

Kinship Foster carers — whether temporarily approved under Regulation 24 or fully approved as foster carers have access to a wide range of training opportunities. A similar training offer is available to all kinship carers, recognising the shared experiences and challenges of kinship care.

Training is designed to help carers build confidence, develop practical skills, and feel more supported in responding to the unique needs of the children they care for. It also provides valuable opportunities to meet other carers, share experiences, and learn from one another.

As part of the assessment process, kinship carers are offered the opportunity by their social worker to attend the Skills to Foster course, even if they do not plan to become foster carers. The course covers key areas including; the role of foster carers, identity and life chances, working with others, understanding and caring for children, safer caring, transitions, attachment, children's histories, and the reasons children come into care.

The Fostering Network

If you are assessed or approved as a Family and Friends foster carer, you are eligible for support from the Fostering Network. This is a free and confidential service where you can receive independent support and advice.

If you have been a family and friends foster carer and have been granted a Special Guardianship for the same child, you are still entitled to support from the Fostering Network after the SGO is granted.

24 hour legal, medical and stress counselling helpline **0844 581040**

Fosterline England **0800 0407675**

Training for all Kinship Carers

The Kinship Team provides regular updates via email on training opportunities available to all kinship carers. Contact **SGOsupport@cumbria.gov.uk** to sign up to the mailing list.

Throughout the year, a variety of training topics are available, including online safety, supporting children to understand their life story, and helping young people to develop healthy relationships.

Kinship carers have access to a range of e-learning courses, which are also available to foster carers. For further information, please contact **SGOsupport@cumbria.gov.uk**

Coram Family Lives

Coram Family Lives offer a wide range of free online parenting courses, to find out which courses are available, please visit: [Coram Family Lives Online Parenting Courses](#)

A sample of the online courses available can be seen below:

- **Parenting Neurodivergent Children online course** - This course is aimed at parents and carers of neurodivergent children, teens and young adults, whether there is a diagnosis or not. The course covers responsive and low demand parenting strategies, managing change and transitions, communication, distressed behaviours, sensory issues, carer burnout, looking after yourself and more. To register for a place, please visit: **[Parenting Neurodivergent Children online course - Coram Family Lives.](#)**

- **Parenting Teens online parenting course** - This course is designed for parents and carers of young people aged 11–18 and is also suitable for those whose children are approaching their teenage years. It has been developed by experienced family support workers and covers key topics including setting boundaries, managing behaviour, and improving communication. To register for a place, please visit: [Parenting Teens online parenting course - Coram Family Lives](#)
- **Challenging Behaviour in Teens online course** - This parenting course is suitable for parents and carers of young people aged 11–18 who may be finding it challenging to manage behaviour during the teenage years. To register for a place, please visit: [Challenging Behaviour in Teens online course - Coram Family Lives](#)

Kinship

Kinship runs a wide range of free training sessions, events, and roadshows for kinship carers, both in-person and online.

To view the current list of training and workshops, please click here:

<https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/training-and-events/>

E-Learning

Kinship carers can access a wide range of training opportunities through the Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership. To take part, carers can visit the Partnership's website and create an account on the training page, which will allow them to view and book onto courses designed to support them in their caring role.

The current eLearning offer includes:

- Level 2 Safeguarding Children
- Child Exploitation and Extra Familial Harm
- Understanding the Impact of Domestic Abuse
- Radicalisation and Extremism (Prevent)

[E-learning | Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

Family Action PAC-UK

The PAC UK Special Guardianship Support Service, commissioned by Westmorland and Furness council provides free, confidential, easy to access advice, information, and support to special guardians and the professionals who work with them. It includes a helpline, online resources, support, and training sessions to help carers manage challenges and improve outcomes for children in their care, all delivered by a team experienced in therapeutic care.

To access this support, you can scan the QR code or get in touch with PAC-UK by email or telephone.

Westmorland and Furness Family Hubs have a range of workshops, to find out more visit: [Learning zone | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)



PAC-UK
Special Guardian Support Service

Advice Line: 0300 1800 090
Email: advice@pac-uk.org
www.specialguardiansupport.org.uk



Breaks for Kinship Carers

If you feel you would benefit from a planned break in your caring role, please contact the kinship care team at SGOsupport@cumbria.gov.uk to discuss the options with you.

Financial support

Kinship carers (family members, friends or connected persons raising a child) may need financial support to help meet the costs of caring. Financial support is not automatic and will depend on the child's needs, your circumstances, and the type of legal arrangement in place. In most situations, support is means tested, subject to assessment, and reviewed regularly.

Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)

If you have or plan to have a Special Guardianship Order, you may be entitled to financial support from the Council. You can request an assessment for Special Guardianship financial support. In some situations an assessment must be undertaken following a written request. In other situations (normally where the child was not previously looked after by the local authority) the local authority has discretion whether to agree an assessment.

Financial support may be provided in the following circumstances:

- Where financial support is necessary to ensure that the special guardian or prospective special guardian can look after the child
- Where the child needs special care which requires a greater expenditure of resources than would otherwise be the case because of illness, disability, emotional or behavioural difficulties or the consequences of past abuse or neglect
- Where the local authority consider that it is appropriate to contribute to any legal costs, including court fees, associated with the making of a special guardianship order or any application to vary or discharge such an order, an application for an order under section 8 of the Act (a contact order, a prohibited steps order, a residence order or a specific issue order), or an order for financial provision to be made to or for the benefit of the child
- Where the local authority consider it appropriate to make a contribution to the expenditure necessary for the purpose of accommodating and maintaining the child, including the provision of furniture and domestic equipment, alterations to and adaptations of the home, provision of means of transport, and provision of clothing, toys and other items necessary for the purpose of looking after the child.

Financial support may include:

- Regular periodic payments (a special guardianship allowance)
- One-off setting up or settling in costs such as furniture or clothing.
- Ongoing payments to meet specific needs relating to the child's condition, for example where the child requires a special diet or items such as shoes, clothing or bedding need to be replaced at a higher rate than would normally be the case due to a serious and long-term condition.

In most situations, the financial circumstances of the special guardian must be taken into account when deciding whether to provide financial support. In some situations, the special guardianship allowance may be paid without a means test for at least the first two years of the special guardianship order if the child was looked after by the local authority immediately before the order was made.

Payment is calculated having regard to the amount of fostering allowance which would have been payable if the child were fostered.

Support is set out in a written support plan, reviewed at least annually and sometimes time limited.

In addition:

- You may be entitled to non-financial special guardianship support services.
- The child may be eligible for the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund for therapeutic services where criteria are met
- You will usually be able to access mainstream benefits (such as Child Benefit and Universal Credit) in line with usual claimant criteria.
- You may be entitled to child maintenance from the child's parents.

Child Arrangements Orders (CAO)

If you care for a child under a Child Arrangements Order, financial support may be available but is less common than for SGO. You can request an assessment for financial support.

This may include:

- A child arrangements allowance. This is discretionary and means tested
- Financial support for a child assessed as being "in need" (known as "section 17" payments).

Support is discretionary and is more likely where the child is or was supported by children's services. In most cases, the parents retain financial responsibility, and carers may need to seek child maintenance.

Allowances are individually assessed and usually reviewed annually, unless agreed for a time limited period (see types of payment below).

Informal Kinship Care (Family and Friends Care)

Where you are caring for a child without a court order there is no automatic financial allowance. However, you may be able to access:

- "Section 17" financial support where the child is assessed as 'in need'
- One off payments for essential items or specific needs

Support will depend on the child's circumstances, your financial situation and an assessment by children's services.

You can also apply to claim mainstream welfare benefits, including Child Benefit and Universal Credit and you may ask for, or apply for child maintenance [**Child Maintenance Service: Contact the Child Maintenance Service - GOV.UK.**](#)

Private Fostering

Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 has been or will be cared for by someone who is not a close relative for 28 days or more.

The Council must:

- Satisfy itself that the welfare of the child will be safeguarded and promoted in private fostering
- Secure such advice as appears to be needed

In normal circumstances the financial arrangements for care and maintenance of the child are a matter for the parents and private foster carer.

Where appropriate, the local authority will establish if the parents and foster carer have agreed financial arrangements and whether those arrangements are working.

Exceptionally, financial support by the local authority could be considered to assist the private foster carer through a short period of financial hardship which coincides with a fall in maintenance payments. Such payments can be recovered. Any state entitlements should also be taken into account.

Where there is an identified need for support, which is not available from other agencies, the local authority will consider whether this support should be provided under section 17.

You may apply for mainstream benefits. Where appropriate the local authority will provide basic advice to private foster carers on access to child benefit and other benefits.

Approved Kinship Foster Carers

Where you are formally approved as a foster carer for a child, you will receive:

- A weekly fostering allowance
- Additional payments depending on the child's needs

Types of discretionary payment

There are three categories of payment, which the local authority has discretion to consider. One or more of these may be applicable, depending on the particular circumstances of the case:

- **Subsistence crisis (one-off) payments** - These should be used to overcome a crisis, following the best assessment that can be achieved in the circumstances;
- **Setting-up** - These are for such items as clothing, furniture, or bedding. The Social Worker must be satisfied that the carers' financial position justifies the payment through a financial assessment. Assistance may be given subject to conditions, including repayment in certain situations. However, in most situations, it will be inappropriate for the local authority to seek to recover money provided under these circumstances
- **Weekly living contribution** - It is possible for the local authority to make regular payments where family members or friends care for a child whether or not the child is not Cared for. Where regular payments are to be made, relative carers should be assisted to maximise their Income/Benefit as regular payments may adversely affect an individual's claim to Universal Credit.

In all cases where regular financial support is agreed, a written agreement will be drawn up detailing the level and duration of the financial support that is to be provided, and the mechanism for review.

The following criteria will be applied to all such payments:

- The purpose of the payments must be to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child
- As part of the assessment, a view should be taken as to whether the carers need financial support based on their reasonable requirements in taking on the care of the child
- There are no other legitimate sources of finance
- Payments will be paid to the carer, not the parents
- The payment would not place any person in a fraudulent position

Other Sources of Financial Support

Depending on your circumstances, you may also be able to access:

- Universal Credit or other benefits
- Child Benefit
- Guardian's Allowance (in some circumstances)
- Support from the child's parents (including Child Maintenance)
- Grants from charitable organisations

How to Access Financial Support

- For any enquiries, please contact **SGOsupport@cumbria.gov.uk**.
- To proceed, please request a financial assessment

You will receive decision based on eligibility and need a written support plan where ongoing support is agreed. The Council will support carers to access both local authority and national sources of funding.

Energy Bills

To find out if you're eligible for grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills visit: [Grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills - Citizens Advice](#)

Free Will Writing Service

The Taylor Lucas Partnership are Estate Planning & Will specialists, they provide a free Will Writing service for all staff members, Kinship Carers and Foster Carers of Westmorland & Furness Council.

They pride themselves on providing outstanding customer service and adhere to the Institute of Professional Will Writers (IPW) code of practice through their professional affiliation.

[Link to Free Will Writing Service](#)

Supporting kinship carers to stay in work

Useful resources:

Kinship – time off work for kinship carers

www.kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/advice-and-information/time-off-work-for-kinship-carers/

Family Rights Group – Can kinship carers get parental leave from work when taking on the care of a child?

www.frg.org.uk/get-help-and-advice/who/kinship-carers/can-kinship-carers-get-parental-leave-from-work-when-taking-on-the-care-of-a-child/

Health and Wellbeing

Everyone can experience stress or emotional difficulties at times. Kinship carers may be managing court proceedings, assessments, and the day-to-day care of a child who may have experienced trauma. Having the right support can help carers cope with these pressures, look after their own wellbeing, and provide the best care for the child.

Qwell: A digital mental health platform

Adults across Westmorland and Furness can access free, anonymous and confidential mental health support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year from 1 April 2026.

Qwell is an interactive digital mental health platform, where users can access a range of support online including:

- Connecting online with qualified professionals via drop in and pre-booked sessions
- Moderated community support - talking to someone with similar experiences
- Self guided resources - articles and interactive tools

Qwell offers flexible, clinically moderated support designed to reduce barriers to accessing mental health support. The service is free to use with no waiting lists, no referrals and no thresholds, providing immediate access whenever it is needed.

[Access the Qwell service](#)

Westmorland and Furness Health and wellbeing service

The Health and Wellbeing Team provides health coaching to help you address any health and wellbeing issues that you may have. They'll support you to develop a plan to address issues that influence your health and wellbeing.

They also have a range of health and wellbeing sessions available across Westmorland and Furness. Some are run on a drop-in basis; some sessions are by appointment only.

To find out more information, visit the website: [Health and wellbeing service | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

NHS England

Have a short collection of videos designed to provide you with simple tools and techniques to reduce stress wherever you are and effectively using what little time you may have to attend to it.

[NHS England » Guided Meditation](#)

[Mindfulness and Relaxation Resources](#)

Mind

[Mind website](#)

Mental health information, advice and local services.

Samaritans

[Samaritans website](#)

Telephone: 116 123

A listening service if you're struggling with your mental health.

Housing

Kinship carers tell us that managing housing applications, alongside the practical changes that come with a child moving in, can feel like a juggling act. This often happens alongside caring responsibilities, court proceedings, and navigating family relationships.

This section is designed to help make things clearer, providing straightforward information about the housing support available to you and how to access it.

Cumbria Choice is a sub-regional partnership between the 2 Unitary Councils and 6 Housing Associations across Cumbria. The partnership was formed to create a single platform where customers can apply for available social housing and be assessed using one policy.

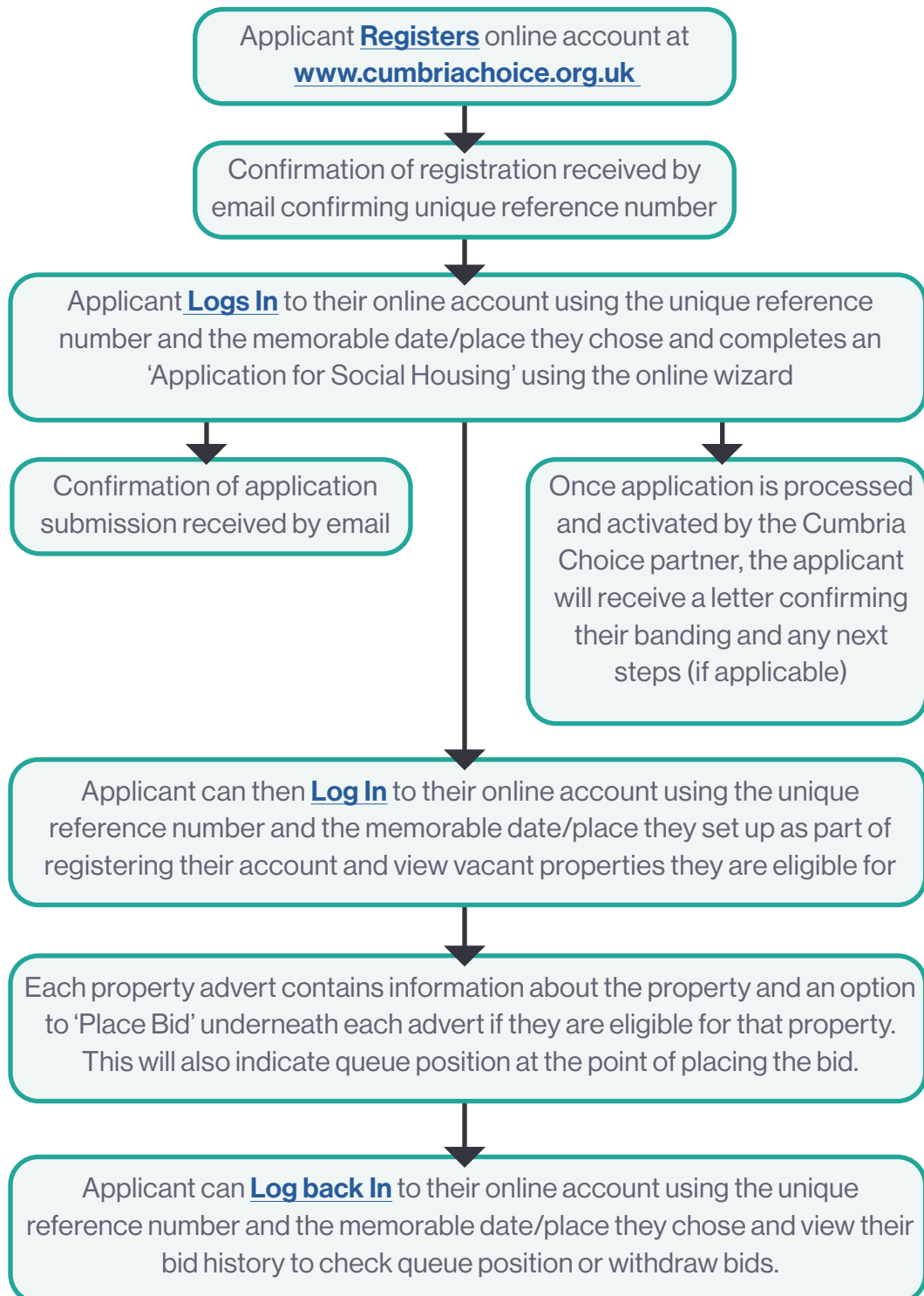
Kinship Carers are recognised within the policy through the provision of Band A priority if an applicant is nominated by Children's Services on the basis that they are foster carers and there is a need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child (this would not apply where the home required would be 4 bedrooms or more). This would be by exception only if there was a safeguarding or safety concern associated with the addition of another child/ren into the household sharing existing bedrooms.

Overcrowding would be the more typical reason for kinship carers seeking a transfer or move to a larger property and there is an allocated banding priority for this (Band B) for applicants who are overcrowded.

There could be other reasons for priority banding arising for kinship carers, including those not related to their kinship responsibilities, such as medical need and this would be assessed as per the policy. The children they care for may also be eligible for priority banding based on a medical or welfare need.



How to apply to Cumbria Choice



If you need support completing your Cumbria Choice application, please speak to your allocated social worker or contact the kinship care team at SGOsupport@cumbria.gov.uk.

Face-to-face appointments to help customers complete application forms are available in exceptional circumstances. Please note that accessing this support may delay your application, as only a limited number of appointments are available.

To arrange an appointment, please contact the relevant partner organisation via the Cumbria Choice website: [Contact Us – Cumbria Choice](#).

For further detailed information read: [Housing and Kinship Care- A Briefing Paper May 2026.docx](#)

Homelessness

If a kinship carer applies as homeless, the fact they have dependent children in their care creates an automatic priority need and this would include children they are caring for.

If a kinship carer's accommodation became unsuitable or unstable (e.g. if notice was served by the landlord) or they became homeless, the council's statutory homelessness duties would arise, with them being owed a prevention or relief duty to support them to access other, more suitable housing.

If they were homeless on application, they would be provided interim accommodation pending a homeless decision and officers would work with them to relieve their homelessness.

How to access Homelessness Support:

Email: dutytorefer1@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Self referral online: <https://hpa2.org/refer/WAF>

By phoning the relevant Triage Service :

Furness: 01229 876599

Eden: 01768 861428

South Lakes: 01539 793199

Additional support is available from:

Shelter

www.shelter.org.uk/

Which offers:

- Personalised local advice.
- Online resources.
- Emergency helpline.
- Free legal aid for housing issues.

Citizens Advice

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/

Telephone: 0800 144 8848

Which offers:

- Confidential, impartial and independent advice online, over the phone and in person, for free.



Education Support for Kinship Families

The local authority recognises the importance of educational stability and success for children and young people in kinship care. A range of advice and guidance is available to help carers access the most appropriate educational services and support.

Childcare Provision

From September 2025, funded childcare is expanding to include more support for eligible working families with children aged 9 months to 4 years.

www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/whats-new

Increase in the number of Wraparound Childcare Places for school-aged children.

www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/school-aged-childcare

Working families may also be eligible for support via Universal Credit or Tax-Free Childcare for non-funded childcare.

www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/universal-credit-childcare

or

www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/tax-free-childcare **Childcare provision and funding**

Virtual School Support

Westmorland and Furness Virtual School help support the education of children in kinship care, alongside its work with children in care and those who have a social worker. This includes children living with relatives or family friends under special guardianship orders (SGO), child arrangements orders (CAO), or informal family arrangements.

The Virtual School works with families and professionals to help children and young people do well in school by improving their attendance, achievement, and overall educational outcomes.

Advice, guidance and support

A big part of what we do is provide helpful advice and information to kinship carers and the people supporting them. This includes:

- Guidance on choosing schools and supporting children through key transitions
- Advice on attendance, behaviour, and preventing exclusions
- Help understanding your child's progress and learning needs
- Support with navigating SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) processes

We also speak up for children and young people by working closely with schools and other professionals to make sure their needs are understood and supported.

Supporting emotional wellbeing and relationships

We recognise that many children in kinship care may have experienced difficult things in the past. We promote a nurturing, trauma-informed approach to help them feel safe and ready to learn. This includes:

- Training for schools on attachment, trauma, and emotional wellbeing
- Support such as BUSS (Building Underdeveloped Sensorimotor Systems), delivered by trained practitioners, to help with development and school readiness
- Tailored advice to schools on creating supportive and inclusive environments

Working together around your child

We work closely with:

- Schools and designated teachers
- Social workers and family help services
- Families and carers

By working together, we can make sure your child gets the right support and the best possible experience in education.

Support based on your needs

Our support is flexible and based on what each child and family needs. Support is usually provided by phone or email, which is why close partnership working with families and professionals is so important in helping children and young people succeed.

Pupil Premium

Children in kinship care qualify for Pupil Premium if they meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Previously cared for child

If the child was in the care of the Local Authority and is now in a kinship care arrangement under:

- Special Guardianship Order (SGO)
- Child Arrangements Order (CAO)
- Adoption (eligible for Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding)

2. Currently cared for (placed with kinship foster carers)

- Still “cared for” by the local authority, therefore also eligible for PP+

3. Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility

- Any child (including those in kinship care) who is currently eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), or has been at any point in the last 6 years (“Ever 6”), receives the standard Pupil Premium

Some children in kinship care do not automatically qualify for Pupil Premium. This includes children in informal kinship arrangements who have never been cared for by the Local Authority and are not eligible for free school meals (FSM), meaning they do not automatically receive this additional funding support.

Pupil Premium funding is paid directly to schools. While not all kinship children are eligible, schools can use this funding flexibly to support them, particularly as many fall into priority groups such as those with a social worker or social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.

Educational settings have flexibility in how they use Pupil Premium funding to support their full cohort of vulnerable children and young people, including those in kinship care. This can include support for emotional wellbeing, such as access to a trusted adult, mentoring, counselling, or trauma-informed approaches. Schools may also provide academic support like small group or one-to-one tuition, additional classroom support, or help with homework and exam preparation. Funding can also enable wider opportunities, including school trips, clubs, and help with uniforms or equipment, as well as support during key transitions—such as moving schools or returning after absence—to help ensure stability and engagement in education.

The Kinship Team will inform the Virtual School when children enter kinship care arrangements, to ensure appropriate advice and support can be provided to the school where needed.

School Admissions

To find out more about how to apply for a school place or request a change of school for a child or young person, visit the website. It explains when and how to apply, including applications for starting school, moving schools, or changing schools during the academic year.

[Apply for a school place or change schools | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

Home to School Transport

Find out if your child is eligible for free school transport and how to apply visit: [Apply for school transport | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

Free School Meals and clothing Vouchers

Check your eligibility and apply for Free School Meals and clothing vouchers to support your child's nutrition and learning.

[Free school meals and clothing vouchers | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)



Kinship Care and SEND

Send Local Offer

If the child you care for has Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), the Westmorland and Furness SEND Local Offer provides clear and up-to-date information for children and young people (up to the age of 25) and their parents and carers who live in the local area. It brings together details about education, health, social care, and wider support services in one place, helping families understand what support is available and how to access it.

[SEND Local Offer | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

SENDiAS

Offering Free Impartial Information, Advice and Support to families with children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

[Westmorland and Furness SEND IAS Service | Sendiass](#)

Family Networks in Kinship Care

When there are concerns about a child's welfare or safety, the local authority will always explore options within the child's extended network for short- or long-term care.

Parents can continue to play an important role in their child's life and remain a vital part of the wider kinship family. Support for parents, alongside support for kinship carers and children, should be a central element of the Kinship Care Local Offer.

Kinship care often brings significant changes to family relationships, requiring parents, children, and carers to adjust to new roles and responsibilities while learning how to work together in the child's best interests. Access to timely and appropriate relationship support between parents and kinship carers is essential and can make a meaningful difference to outcomes for children.

Family Group Decision Making is the umbrella term for ways of working that bring families together to make decisions and plans for children, with support from professionals where needed.

Where children and families in kinship arrangements are supported by Children's Social Care, they can access Family Network Meetings and/or Family Group Conferences to help families come together, plan support, and make decisions in the child's best interests.

Family Network Meeting

Led by: The Kinship Team or the child's Social Worker

A Family Network Meeting brings together family members and people who are important in the child's life. The aim is to work together to create immediate support plans that help children be cared for safely within their family network.

These meetings focus on:

- Understanding what the child/family needs to best care for the child
- Identifying how family members can offer support
- Putting early support in place as quickly as possible

Family Group Conference

Led by: An independent Family Group Conference Co ordinator

A Family Group Conference is a family led meeting. Families are supported to develop and review their family plans, ensuring they meet the ongoing needs of the child, kinship carers, and parents.

Family Group Conferences aim to:

- Support carers to provide long term, stable care
- Prevent relationship breakdowns within the family
- Involve birth parents in support arrangements where it is safe and appropriate
- Help families work together in the child's best interests

Families are given time and space to make their own plans, with professionals offering guidance and support when needed.

Where families are experiencing high levels of conflict or would find it difficult to come together in the same space, family mediation may be offered. Mediation can help families communicate more effectively, address concerns safely, and prepare everyone to take part in a family meeting in a way that feels more manageable and constructive.

Navigating complex family relationships

When kinship carers take on the care of someone else's child, it can have a significant impact on wider family relationships. Carers often step into the role suddenly, balancing loyalty to the child with long standing relationships with the child's parents and other family members.

Changes in roles and boundaries can create emotional strain, feelings of guilt, divided loyalties, and tension within the family, particularly where there are differing views about parenting decisions. Supporting a child's time with their parents can be complex and challenging for kinship carers, who are often required to manage family time arrangements while prioritising the child's safety, emotional wellbeing, and stability. This can place carers in a difficult position, especially where relationships are already fragile or where there are unresolved family issues.

Attending kinship care support groups can be a valuable way to talk through these challenges, share experiences, and hear from others who are in similar situations.

To join the mailing list and hear about upcoming support groups, please get in touch with the Kinship Care Team at SGOsupport@cumbria.gov.uk.



Supporting Family Time

It can be hard for children to understand why they no longer live with their parent, especially when decisions have been made by a court. Helping children spend time with their family in a way that feels safe, positive, and supportive is really important for their feelings, their sense of who they are, and their understanding that they still belong to their family.

Life Story Work

Life story work helps children understand what has happened in their lives and why certain decisions were made, especially when they first come into care. As children grow, it is natural for them to have new questions about their family, their history, or why they live where they do. Kinship carers play an important role in responding to these questions in an open, honest, and age appropriate way, helping children make sense of their experiences and feel secure, understood, and supported.

There are a range of books available to borrow from Family Hubs to help children understand their experiences and feelings. Advice and guidance on choosing the right books and resources can also be sought from Family Hub staff or professionals supporting your family.

If kinship carers are worried that a child may be finding it hard to understand their life story, or that this is having a significant impact on their emotional wellbeing, they can seek advice and support from the Westmorland and Furness Kinship Team. sgosupport@cumbria.gov.uk

Additional help, guidance, and training can also be offered through kinship care support groups or accessed through the national kinship care charity, to support carers in having these important conversations with children.

Facilitating Family Time

Kinship carers have told us that family time can place a significant strain on the wider family, particularly where arrangements feel difficult to manage or when the frequency of family time does not feel right for the child. Any time a child spends with their parents should always be in the child's best interests and support them to maintain important relationships in a way that feels safe, supported, and emotionally manageable.

Where a child is being cared for with the involvement of the Local Authority, it is important that kinship carers feel able to be open and honest about any challenges family time may be creating for the child. Sharing these concerns will not jeopardise the outcome of an assessment. Instead, it helps social workers understand what the child needs, offer the right support, and work together with the family to plan safely and positively for the future.

Where a court order is in place that sets out how often a child should spend time with their parent, and a kinship carer is worried about the impact this is having on the child, there are options. If the kinship carer holds parental responsibility, they may review how the arrangements are working and make changes to the frequency or duration to better meet the child's needs. In these circumstances, carers do not usually need to return to court, but advice can be sought from the Kinship Team or professionals supporting the family.

Where a child has siblings who live with foster carers or adoptive families, the Kinship Care Team can help to signpost carers to adoption support services and advise on who can help with managing and supporting sibling contact.

Kinship carers have also shared practical ideas that they have found helpful when managing family time, including:

- Using a separate phone to communicate with parents, particularly where communication can feel difficult or overwhelming
- Asking another trusted family member or friend to help arrange or support transport and plans
- Agreeing costs for activities with parent/s in advance, or planning free or low cost activities where finances may be a challenge
- Preparing children for contact on social media and supporting safe boundaries if parents reach out directly

Carers are encouraged to seek support if family time is feeling difficult. You do not have to manage this alone, and help is available to support both the child's wellbeing and the wider family relationships. Some carers find it helpful to attend kinship support groups, where they can hear from others about how they have managed family time. If challenges persist, carers are encouraged to contact the Kinship Team for further support: sgosupport@cumbria.gov.uk

How best to support family time

There are different levels of supervision for family time. These may be recommended, or put in place if needed, to help keep children safe and support their health and wellbeing. As children grow and situations change, kinship carers may also need to make decisions in the future about what level of support feels right for the child.

- **Unsupervised family time** - Unsupervised family time is when the child spends time with their parent on their own, without a worker present.
- **Facilitated family time** - Facilitated family time is when someone safe and trusted helps organise or support the start or end of the time together but does not stay throughout. This support can include quietly checking that everything feels safe and settled before the child spends time with their parent.
- **Supervised family time** - Supervised family time is when a worker stays with the child and parent during their time together to help keep everyone safe and supported.



Legal support

Kinship arrangements can involve complex legal responsibilities. Parental responsibility may lie with the kinship carer, the birth parents, or the local authority, depending on the legal order in place.

Kinship provides a helpful guide to legal support, including:

- Understanding your legal rights and responsibilities
- Finding a solicitor
- Accessing legal advice.

www.kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/advice-and-information/legal-help-for-kinship-carers/

Coram children's Legal Centre

Coram Children's Legal Centre (CCLC) specialises in law and policy affecting children and young people. Lawyers and professionals, with experience in child law give free legal information, advice and representation to children, young people, their families, carers and professionals.

www.childrenslegalcentre.com Helpline 0300 330 5480

Childrens Social Care Involvement and Legal Support

Social workers can request approval for funding to support kinship carers who are making private law applications. This is a one-off contribution intended to enable access to legal advice.

The funding can be used to obtain advice and support with completing a private law application, including where this is being considered as an exit route at the conclusion of Public Law Outline (PLO) proceedings.

This support is typically intended to cover a single session of legal advice and assistance with completing the application, rather than ongoing legal representation at court hearings.

During care proceedings, where a kinship carer receives a positive assessment, funding will be provided for a one-off legal consultation to support the review of the Support Plan.

Your Voice Matters

Capturing the voices of children, young people, and families is incredibly important to us. Your feedback helps us understand what is working well and where we can improve, so we can continuously develop our service to better reflect the needs of people in our local area.

We truly value your experiences and views, as they help shape the care and support, we provide now and in the future.

To share your feedback, please click on the following link or scan the QR code:

[Kinship Care survey - Westmorland and Furness Council](#)



Participation

We have a range of youth participation groups. If you know a child or young person who would like to join a group with others who share similar experiences, passions, and interests, and who want to support positive change for kinship care, we'd love to hear from them.

Email: rightsandparticipation.waf@cumbria.gov.uk

Compliments/Complaints

You can make a compliment/complaint by using our online form.

[Make a compliment/complaint online](#)

You can also make a compliment/complaint by:

Email: complaints@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Telephone: **01539 637 437**

Post: Information and Case Management Team

Westmorland and Furness Council

South Lakeland House, Lowther Street, Kendal LA9 4DQ

Please contact us if you need adjustments or have additional needs to make a complaint. For example, if you need information printed in Braille or translated into another language. We'll discuss this with you to agree how we can best help.



Useful contacts

To find out more about the Kinship Care Local Offer and the support available, please visit our website: [Kinship Care Local Offer](#)

Family Hubs offer a wide range of groups, activities, and support for families, from pregnancy through to the teenage years. As well as parenting and wellbeing support, Family Hubs can help you access information and guidance on financial support, benefits, and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) services.

To find out more about what's happening at a Family Hub near you, please visit their website [Family Help | Westmorland and Furness Council](#) or find them on Facebook.

Contact Westmorland and Furness Kinship Team on: sgosupport@cumbria.gov.uk

Useful organisations and information for kinship carers

For an up-to-date list of organisations and information to support kinship carers, please visit the national kinship care charity website. [Kinship: support and advice](#)



Glossary of Terms

Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)

A government fund that provides access to therapeutic support for eligible adopted children and those living under Special Guardianship Orders or Child Arrangements Orders who were previously cared for by the local authority.

Care Leaver

A young person who was previously cared for by the local authority and may be entitled to additional support as they move into adulthood.

Child Arrangements Order (CAO)

A court order that decides where a child lives and who they spend time with. Parental responsibility may be shared depending on the order.

Connected Person

An adult who already has a relationship with the child, such as a relative, family friend, teacher, or former foster carer, who may care for them.

Emotional Health and Wellbeing (EHWB) Team

A service offering advice, consultation, training, and therapeutic support to help improve children and young people's emotional wellbeing.

Family and Friends Care

Another term used to describe kinship care, highlighting care provided by relatives or close connections rather than unrelated foster carers.

Family Group Conference (FGC)

A family led meeting supported by an independent coordinator, where families create and review plans to meet the child's long term needs.

Best Start Family Hub

A local hub offering information, support, and services for families from pregnancy through to adulthood, including parenting support, wellbeing services, and help with finances and benefits.

Family Network Meeting

A meeting led by professionals that brings together family members to make plans and identify support to keep a child safe within their family network.

Family Time (Contact)

Time a child spends with their parents or wider family. This may be supervised, facilitated, or unsupervised, depending on the child's needs and any court orders.

Informal Kinship Care

A private family arrangement where a child lives with a relative or friend without a court order and without the child being cared for by the local authority. Parents retain parental responsibility.

Kinship Care

When a child is cared for by a family member, friend, or someone they already know because they cannot live with their parents. Kinship care can be short term or long term and includes a range of legal and informal arrangements.

Kinship Carer

A relative, friend, or connected person who provides day to day care for a child who cannot live with their parents.

Kinship Foster Carer

A kinship carer who has been assessed and approved by the local authority to care for a child who is looked after. The local authority retains parental responsibility if a care order is in place.

Kinship Local Offer

Information provided by the local authority setting out the support, services, and advice available to kinship carers and children in kinship care.

Life Story Work

Support that helps children understand their life experiences, family relationships, and why decisions have been made about their care, in an age appropriate and sensitive way.

Looked After Child (Cared for by the Local Authority)

A child who is in the care of the local authority, for example under a care order or a voluntary agreement (Section 20), and who may be living with foster carers, including kinship foster carers.

Parental Responsibility (PR)

The legal rights and responsibilities to make decisions about a child's care, education, health, and welfare.

Permanency

A long term and stable living arrangement that gives a child a sense of belonging, security, and continuity in their care and relationships.

Previously Looked After/Cared For Child

A child who was formerly cared for by the local authority but has since left care through adoption, a Special Guardianship Order, or a Child Arrangements Order.

Private Fostering

When a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) lives for 28 days or more with someone who is not a parent or close relative, without local authority involvement. The arrangement must be notified to the local authority. **Qualifying Care Leaver**

A young person aged 16–25 who was cared for by the local authority on or after their 16th birthday but does not meet the full criteria for care leaver status. They may still receive advice and assistance.

Regulation 24 (Temporary Approval)

A temporary approval that allows a connected person to care for a child cared for by the Local Authority while a full fostering assessment is completed.

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

A term used to describe children and young people who need additional support with learning, communication, physical needs, or emotional wellbeing due to a disability or learning need.

Special Guardian

The person granted parental responsibility under a Special Guardianship Order, responsible for making most decisions about the child's upbringing.

Special Guardianship Order (SGO)

A court order that gives a special guardian parental responsibility for a child until they are 18. It provides long term stability while maintaining links with the birth family.

Staying Put

An arrangement that allows a young person who was previously in foster care to remain living with their foster carer after turning 18, to support a gradual transition to adulthood.



Translation Services

If you require this document in another format (e.g. CD, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone: **0300 373 3300**.

للوصول إلى هذه المعلومات بلغتك، يرجى الاتصال **0300 373 3300**

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে 0300 373 3300 নম্বরে টেলিফোন করুন।

如果您希望通过母语了解此信息，
请致电 **0300 373 3300**

Jeigu norétumète gauti šią informaciją savo kalba,
skambinkite telefonu **0300 373 3300**

W celu uzyskania informacji w Państwa języku proszę
zatelefonować pod numer **0300 373 3300**

Se quiser aceder a esta informação na sua língua,
telefone para o **0300 373 3300**

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde görmek istiyorsanız lütfen
0300 373 3300 numaralı telefonu arayınız

