



Hampshire County Council's Children's Services Hampshire Kinship Local Offer - Guide for kinship carers, special guardians and their families



Welcome to Hampshire County Council's Kinship Local Offer. This offer sets out the support available to Kinship Carers living in Hampshire. This offer has been developed to provide information and advice on accessing services for Kinship Carers and signposting to information for professionals working with Kinship Carers. The offer will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the information is up to date.

The senior manager responsible for the Kinship Local Offer is Sarah Smith, Service Manager for Fostering.

What is kinship care?

Kinship Statutory guidance published in October 2024 defines Kinship Care as: "...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."

[Kinship care: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

The types of informal, and formal kinship care which are explained below are:

Private fostering

Private fostering is a private arrangement where a child is cared for by someone who is not their parent, does not have parental responsibility, and is not a close relative. The arrangement lasts for 28 days or more, or is intended to last that long.

A close relative means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (by full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or a step-parent.

The Local Authority have a duty to assess these arrangements and regularly visit the child whilst they are living there. This may include situations such as language or holiday schools. Children under 16 who spend more than 2 weeks (i.e. over 14 days) in residence during holiday time, in a school not run by a local authority, become privately fostered children for the purposes of the legislation during that holiday period.

[Caring for children – responsibilities | Children and Families | Hampshire County Council](#)

<https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/advice-and-information/private-foster-care/>



Informal Family care

In these arrangements, the family have decided between themselves (without the involvement of the local authority) for a close relative to care for the child, but they do not have parental responsibility.

This may be due to concerns from a relative about parent's care of the child, the death of a parent or there may be an agreement between relatives due to various family circumstances.

The Local Authority will only become involved if they are worried about the welfare of the child, but you do not have to notify Children Services of family arrangements. If the child is open to Children Services under a Child in Need (CIN) or Child Protection (CP) plan, or is subject to Public Law Outline (PLO), Hampshire Children Services would expect parents to notify the child's social worker of the living arrangements.

Kinship foster care (also known as Family and Friends Foster Care or Connected Foster Care)

This arrangement is when a child who is looked after by the local authority and has been placed with the kinship carer, because the person who had been caring for the child was deemed not to be providing suitable care.

As the child is looked after, the Local Authority must assess and approve the kinship carer as a Local Authority foster carer.

The child may be accommodated voluntarily with the agreement of the parents under section 20 Children Act 1989 or may be subject to an Interim Care Order (s.38 of the Children Act 1989) or Care Order (section 31 Children Act 1989).

For more information about Kinship Fostering, please visit [Hampshire County Council Fostering Service | Health and social care | Hampshire County Council](#)

Child Arrangement Order (CAO)

Child arrangements orders (CAO) regulate with whom a child is to live, spend time or otherwise have contact and when a child will live, spend time or otherwise have contact with a person. In this circumstance, this is an order granted by the court which details where the child should live and gives parental responsibility to the person caring for the child(ren) under the order.

Some kinship carers may have a Residence Order. Residence Orders were replaced on 22nd April 2014 by Child Arrangement Orders.



This order may be sought by a Kinship Carer in circumstances such as:

- The child may be at risk of becoming 'looked after'
- The child may have been 'looked after' and their foster carer or other relative/ friend applies for an order.
- The kinship carer wants to formalise the child's living arrangements and be granted parental responsibility. This may be with agreement from the parent, or a parent may have passed away.

Who can apply for a child arrangement order?

- The child's parent, guardian or special guardian.
- The child's step-parent or any person who has parental responsibility for the child under a parental responsibility agreement or order.
- Any person named as the person with whom the child is to live in a CAO that is in force.
- Any person in a marriage or civil partnership (whether subsisting or not) in relation to whom the child has been treated as a child of the family.
- Any person who the child has lived with for three years. This period need not be continuous but must not have begun more than five years before and ended three months before the application being made.
- Any person who has the consent of each person(s) named in a CAO that is in force, as the person(s) with whom the child is to live.
- Any person who has the consent of the local authority where the child is in local authority care.
- Any person who has the consent of each person(s) with PR for the child.
- Any person (who is not the child's parent or guardian) who has PR for the child by being named in a CAO as the person with whom the child is to spend time or otherwise have contact.

An application can be made without the support of the parents or the Local Authority. For more information about who is eligible to apply please visit [Child arrangements orders - Kinship](#). If you do not meet any of the criteria, you can apply to permission to the Court.



Special Guardianship Order (SGO)

This is an order granted by the court which grants overriding parental responsibility to the Special Guardian, so that they can make decisions in the best interest of the child.

If the child is known to the Local Authority and there are concerns for their welfare, you could be asked to be assessed as a Special Guardian for the child.

Who can apply for a Special Guardianship Order?

- you're already the child's legal guardian
- the child lives with you because of a [child arrangements order](#)
- the child has lived with you for 3 of the past 5 years
- you're the child's relative or a foster parent, and the child has been living with you for at least 1 year
- you have the agreement of anyone named in a child arrangements order as someone who the child will live with
- you have the agreement of all the people with [parental responsibility](#) for the child
- you have the agreement of the local council, if the child is in care

If you do not meet any of the criteria, you can ask the court for permission to apply. More information can be found here [Become a special guardian: Who can apply - GOV.UK](#)) If you intend to make your own application, you need to notify the Local Authority 3 months prior for the assessment to be undertaken.

Adoption

Looked after children: the Local Authority may decide that the child should be placed for adoption. They can only do so with the consent of the birth parent or under a placement order made by a court.

An approved foster carer can apply for an adoption order after a year of caring for the child. Other informal carers could apply for an adoption order if the child has lived with them for a period of 3 years within the last 5-year period.



Support available to all Kinship Carers

Kinship

Kinship is a Kinship Care charity who offer support, advice, training and peer support groups to all kinship carers. You do not have to be open to Children Services or have a formalised Kinship arrangement.

You can access their support online

[Kinship: Home | The Kinship care charity | England and Wales](#)

Family Rights Group

Family Rights Group are a specialist child welfare charity who have a wealth of resources on Kinship Care. They also have an advisory service via telephone or email.

You can access their support online

[Helping families Helping children - Family Rights Group](#)

Hampshire Libraries

Anyone who lives, works or studies in Hampshire can [join](#) the library service for free. You do not have to be a member to attend and participate in events and activities, but membership enhances the offer with access to a huge range of books available in physical, digital, and audio formats, as well as newspapers and magazines.

Libraries provide a wide range of free or low-cost activities, [events](#), learning and networking opportunities for children and families, and they have a great collection

[When a book might help](#) which enables story sharing about various situations to help put a child's mind at ease and make transitions and new experiences more understandable for everyone. An emergency membership category is available to remove all barriers to use when required, this provides easy and immediate access for children and families, with books and any necessary signposting, both physical and digital, sourced and provided in a variety of languages.

[Family Information and Services Hub | Get Support From Your Local Library](#)

Community Hubs

Hampshire County Council's Community Hubs are places in the local community where people can meet, socialise, and access a variety of local preventative and reactive social care services in a neutral, welcoming, and safe environment. These services will be delivered by Children's Services, Adult's Health and Care, and other partners. Where services cannot be provided directly, individuals and families will be signposted to other organisations, charities and websites, as appropriate.



Hampshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

Hampshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is a specialist NHS service that aims to help young people aged 5 -18 years and their families who are finding it hard to manage their emotional and psychological health, and who are suffering with acute, chronic and severe mental health problems.

They have leaflets available online on a variety of topics such as anxiety, ADHD, autism and children in care. Carers, parents and professionals can make a referral into CAMHS requesting support.

Their website can be accessed here - [CAMHS](#)

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust provides a range of services for children, young people and their parents, across the whole of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Their website provides information about the support that you can access and the relevant contact details - [Children and families services :: Hampshire and Isle of Wight NHS Foundation Trust](#)

Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnerships (HSCP)

Provide information support on a variety of specific needs, such as Domestic Abuse, Online Safety and more. The HSCP website has useful links to organisations who can provide advice, support and resources - [Organisations that can help - Hampshire SCP](#)

Support for Special Guardians

Special guardians and their families can access post SGO support via Hampshire County Council from the Family Connections Service if:

- Your child was 'looked after' by Hampshire County Council prior to the Special Guardianship Order being made, or
- The Special Guardianship Order was granted following assessment by Hampshire County Council and the court, or
- The order was made by another Local Authority, but you live in Hampshire (excluding Southampton and Portsmouth City Council) and it has been three years since the order was granted.

If you would like advice, guidance or support please contact the Family Connections Post SGO service at fcssgo@hants.gov.uk or visit our website [Special Guardians | Children and Families | Hampshire County Council](#)



Support groups and training

There are monthly support groups that are run by Family Connections Service. These are an opportunity to meet with other kinship carers who may be in a similar situation, and to forge new friendships. There is also a member of staff available to offer advice and support during the groups.

The Family Connections Service provides ongoing training available to kinship carers. This ranges from introductory information, through to specialised support such as managing family relationships, and trauma-informed parenting.

Newsletter

There is a bi-monthly newsletter that is sent to Special Guardians via email. This provides relevant information from Hampshire Children Services as well as other local organisations.

Financial support

Payments to Kinship Foster carers

If you are an approved kinship foster carer, you receive a weekly allowance for the child in your care, to meet the costs of caring for the child. These are in line with Hampshire County Council's fostering rates.

Payments to Special Guardians

If you were a foster carer (kinship or Local Authority) for the child prior to the Special Guardianship Order being granted you will receive a weekly allowance at the same rate as a foster carer for 2 years. This allowance usually deducts the equivalent amount of child benefit as you are entitled to claim this as a Special Guardian. However, if you are in receipt of universal credit this may not be deducted.

After the initial 2 years or if you were not a foster carer prior to the Special Guardianship order being granted, a means tested assessment will be undertaken. This is completed on an annual basis, and you are required to provide details of your income and outgoings, to assess the level of support that may be offered. Any allowance payable by Hampshire County Council will be deemed as necessary to ensure that the Special Guardian can look after the child.

Regular and ongoing payments to other Kinship Carers not listed above

Means tested financial support is available to kinship carers across the different types of kinship care as outlined above. This is to ensure that a child is not prevented, solely



for financial reasons, from being placed under the appropriate legal framework with a kinship carer who can best meet their needs.

Means tested allowances may be available to Kinship carers caring for children who are not looked after following an assessment of need.

All means tested allowances payable to kinship carers are reviewed annually and following a change in circumstances.

In the first instance please contact the child's allocated worker to explore the financial support that may be available. If there is no allocated worker, please contact fcssgo@hants.gov.uk who will undertake a financial assessment.

Other financial support

There may be other situations (such as accommodation, childcare or legal costs) in which the Local Authority may deem it appropriate to provide financial assistance. In these situations, a financial assessment will be undertaken, and each situation is assessed on an individual basis. Financial support is determined on criteria and where the child's welfare requires it, for a set period of time.

Benefits (not kinship foster carers)

As a kinship carer you can claim child benefit and may be entitled to universal credit if not being paid to parent. However, if parents are in receipt of these benefits, then they must pass the full amount (or more) onto the carers.

Guardians Allowance is payable if both parents have died or the only surviving parent cannot be found or is serving 2 years or more prison sentence.

Further advice is available from Kinship [Financial support and benefits advice collection - Kinship](#) and Family Rights Group [2h-Welfare-benefits-for-kinship-carers-120922.pdf](#)

Supporting kinship carers to stay in work

We recognise that being a kinship carer can impact on your work. As a working carer you can seek advice about your rights, for example time off or flexible working requests.

Working Families is a national charity for working parents and carers - [Working Families Index - Working Families](#)

Childcare funding

There are a range of schemes available to support with childcare which can be found here [Childcare support available | Childcare Choices](#)

For working families, you may be entitled to claim funding for childcare. You may also be able to claim for Tax Free Childcare to help towards the cost of childcare.



If you are in receipt of certain benefits or the child is currently looked after or was looked after prior to an SGO being granted, you may be entitled to claim for funding.

Kinship also have advice about childcare support that is available - [Childcare and education advice collection - Kinship](#)

Accommodation

We understand that accommodation may be a challenge when you are a kinship carer and have not expected to take on the care of another child.

Hampshire is split into 11 Local Borough and District Councils who are responsible for housing. You can contact them directly to discuss housing needs. [Family Information and Services Hub | Finding Accommodation](#)

Citizen's advice has support and information on housing - [Housing - Citizens Advice](#)

Education

The [Virtual School](#) Offer

The Virtual School works to:

- develop schools' understanding of different kinds of kinship care arrangements
- support schools to understand the importance of greater focus and visibility for the distinct needs of kinship children and families
- understand the role of the school in identifying and supporting their kinship care families
- learn how schools can support attendance and engagement of kinship children in education
- promote practice that improves the educational attainment of children in kinship care
- signpost to support and resources currently available to kinship care families
- provide advice and guidance to all kinship carers with special guardianship orders and child arrangement orders on education, regardless of whether their child was previously looked after by the Local Authority.

Hampshire's Local Offer for Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities (SEND)

Hampshire have a local offer which details the help and services available for children and young people (aged 0 to 25 years) with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Hampshire.

[Family Information and Services Hub | Hampshire's Local Offer for Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities](#)



Pupil premium

As a child in a kinship care arrangement, the school may be entitled to apply for Pupil Premium funding. This is not money solely for the child but can be used to support pupils who have identified needs. You can discuss with the school whether they can use the pupil premium to meet the child's needs.

Further information can be found on the government website [Pupil premium: overview - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-overview)

Hampshire SENDIASS

Impartial Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support (SENDIASS) in Hampshire. They provide timely confidential, impartial information, advice and support through our online resources, at events and workshops, via our helpline service and through individual casework.

[Hampshire SENDIASS - Special Educational Needs Support](#)

[Kinship care and support with education - Family Rights Group](#)

Supporting family time

A key benefit to children being placed in Kinship care arrangements is the close family links and ongoing relationships. However, we know that this is not always simple and straightforward and can be a source of anxiety or worry.

Hampshire Children's Services can offer support and guidance around managing family time to ensure it is safe and in the best interest of the child. In some situations the court may grant an order which sets out the family time arrangements.

If the child is looked after, this is regularly reviewed within Looked After Reviews. In other arrangements such as SGO or informal arrangements, there may not be ongoing professional involvement. You can approach the Post SGO service (fcssgo@hants.gov.uk) for support and advice. We also provide training and guidance around managing family relationships.

In most situations where supervision of family time is required, the kinship carer is likely to do this themselves. If Hampshire Children's Services deem there to be safeguarding concerns or concerns that there is potential collusion, they may need to become involved in the management, monitoring and supporting of the contact arrangement to ensure it does not become detrimental to the child.



Kinship - have some helpful advice around managing family time - [Contact time with family advice collection - Kinship](#)

Family Group Decision Making

Hampshire County Council is committed to providing families with opportunities for family group decision making. The meetings will recognise the strengths within a family and help to empower them to identify solutions and develop their own family plan to help protect and support the child(ren) within the family.

Hampshire County Council offer families the opportunity to have a family meeting during the pre-proceedings process. It is encouraged that wider family are included in the meetings to fully participate to enable extended support during the decision-making process, this can be anyone that is important to the child(ren) such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, family friends or neighbours.

Families will be supported by the meeting coordinator to plan and prepare for the meeting, they will be involved in agreeing the date, time and venue of the meeting and the coordinator will work with the family to agree an agenda to help structure the discussion. It is important that everyone has an opportunity to have their voice heard in the meeting, including the child(ren). The meeting will also include dedicated private family time, where the family will have time on their own to discuss possible solutions to their current challenges.

The fundamental aim of the family meeting will be to provide a supportive space where wider family are engaged to collectively agree on how to provide a safe and secure home for the child(ren) to ensure the best possible future outcomes.

Mediation

There may be times when you are faced with conflict or disagreement between a parent and kinship carer. The Post SGO service can provide advice and guidance in navigating these family relationships as detailed above in the family time section.

If you cannot resolve the conflict, you may also wish to explore mediation via the following organisations:

[Home - Family Mediation Council](#)

[What Is Family Mediation And How Can It Help? | 0300 4000 636](#)

[Family Mediation Voucher Scheme - GOV.UK](#)

If you are making an application to court there are occasions when the court will expect mediation to have taken place which is called a Mediation Information & Assessment Meeting (MIAM). This is because court is a lengthy process, and they want to ensure that all other options have been considered. There are exemptions which include domestic



abuse or child protection concerns. More information can be found here [What is a MIAM? - Family Mediation Council](#)

Legal support

In order to formalise Kinship arrangements, you may need to make a court application to seek an order such as a child arrangement order or a special guardianship order. There may be financial support from Hampshire Children's Service to obtain a legal order, such as funding initial legal advice (normally 1-2 hours paid at legal aid rate) and the initial court application. You can make a request for funding and this is a means tested assessment and may be agreed where the child's welfare requires it.

Therapeutic support

Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)

Therapeutic support is available to children who are subject to Special Guardianship Orders or a Child Arrangement Orders and were previously a looked after child, via the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF).

The ASGSF provides funds to local authorities and regional adoption agencies (RAAs) to pay for essential therapeutic services for eligible adoptive, special guardianship order (SGO) and child arrangement order (CAO) families. Some of the therapies that can be funded through the ASGSF include:

- Creative therapies
- Play therapies
- Therapeutic Life story work
- Psychotherapy
- Family therapies

The ASGSF **cannot** fund assessments for the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) etc.

The ASGSF is available for children and young people up to and including the age of 21, or 25 with an education, health and care plan, who:

- are living (placed) with a family in England while waiting for adoption
- were adopted from local authority care in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland and live in England
- were adopted from abroad and live in England with a recognised adoption status



- were in care before an SGO was made
- left care under a special guardianship order that was subsequently changed to an adoption order, or vice versa
- are under a residency order or child arrangement order (CAO) and were previously looked after
- were previously looked after but where the adoption, special guardianship, residency or CAO placement has broken down, irrespective of any reconciliation plans

The ASGSF have a Fair Access Limit per child, for 2025-2026 this is £3000 per child.

The ASGSF will currently continue to offer support until **March 2026**. We will announce further updates once confirmed by the Department for Education.

More information about the ASGSF can be found on their website.

[Adoption and special guardianship support fund \(ASGSF\) - GOV.UK](#)

If you believe you meet the criteria and would like to access therapy, please contact fcssgo@hants.gov.uk who will be able to support you.

Care Leavers

Hampshire Care Leavers service helps and supports young people leaving care. They are committed to doing the best to help care leavers be happy, healthy and successful.

A care leaver is someone who at 16 years old:

- Is in care or
- Was privately fostered until they turned 16 or
- Was in care immediately before a Special Guardianship Order was made or
- Had a short time in care between the ages of 14 and 17 years.

If you are a Hampshire care leaver, you will have certain rights set out in legislation. Your entitlements are dependent on your care leaver status. There are different types of care leaver status, which apply dependent on your situation. These are 'eligible', 'relevant', 'former relevant' and 'qualifying'.



Hampshire County Council's Care Leaver's Local Offer including your entitlements and eligibility status, and contact details can be found here - [Family Information and Services Hub | Hampshire County Council - Care Leaver's Information, Support and Local Offer](#)

Post Adoption Support

If you adopted a connected child then Adopt South can provide post adoption support including access to an advice and support line, in person support and guidance from a specialist post adoption social worker or support worker, access to a wide range of workshops, guest speaker webinars and therapeutic parenting programmes, family events and parent online meet ups, and support around education needs.

[Adoption support for families and young people | Health and social care | Hampshire County Council](#)

Complaints

Whilst we try to ensure that everyone has a positive experience of working with Hampshire County Council, there may be times that you are not satisfied. You can raise a concern or complaint here

[Making a comment, suggestion or complaint | About the Council | Hampshire County Council](#)

Equal Opportunities

In implementing the Kinship Offer, Hampshire County Council under the Equality Act 2010 will have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those persons who do not share it, as well as foster good relations between those persons. Any potential barriers to accessing services will be considered and mitigated where appropriate and able.

In developing this offer Hampshire County Council have consulted with Kinship Carers and partner agencies.