



Kinship Local Offer

Kent County Council aim for all children in its care to live in a safe and caring family environment and wherever possible, this will be within the child's own family or community network.

WELCOME TO THE KINSHIP SERVICE

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The Government continues to place a high priority on the assessment and support of kinship carers (formally known as connected persons). Kent County Council's Kinship Service provide assessment and support services for all types of formal kinship care which includes Kinship Fostering and Special Guardianship arrangements. The Service plays a vital role in supporting children who cannot live with their birth parents by assessing and supporting their relatives or close family friends to care for them. This helps children maintain close links with both their families and their communities which in turn supports them with their identity, culture and ongoing sense of belonging.

Aims of the Kinship Service

- Prioritise family-based care.
- Provide a timely and specialist assessment service which ensures that those families close to the child are able to offer high standards of safeguarding and care which meets the child's individual needs.
- Improve the information, knowledge, and confidence of carers so that there is clarity about what is involved both in regard to having a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or becoming a kinship foster carer.
- Ensure that there is dedicated help and support for kinship foster carers and special guardians.
- Help prevent the disruption of kinship foster care and SGO arrangements.
- Support families with an SGO for children who are care experienced to access therapeutic support for children through the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF).

Kinship Foster Care

Kinship foster carers will be supported by the Kinship Fostering Support Team. The team offer a wide range of services to ensure that as a foster carer you are well equipped and supported to meet the needs of the specific child or children you are caring for. All practitioners working for Kent Integrated Children's Services are there to support children and families, to promote children's safety, development, and overall health and well-being.

Support for Kinship Foster Carers

- You will be allocated a Fostering Social Worker (FSW) who will undertake home visits to see you at least once every four to six weeks or more frequently should this be needed. They will be able to offer guidance, emotional support, and practical advice throughout your role as a foster carer as well as supporting you in meetings and accessing other services. You will have round the clock support for emergencies through the Out of Hours Service so that you are never alone during difficult periods.
- You will also have access to peer support and mentoring with regular support groups to share experiences and advice and to help you build your support network.
- You will receive a financial package which is reviewed annually (<https://handbook.kentfostering.co.uk/during-a-placement/money-and-expenses/fostering-payments>)
- You will have support to help ensure that children succeed in school and transition to independence, through Education Advisors, Social Workers and a Personal Advisor to support planning into adulthood. To find out more about the support they can provide, read [An introduction to the 18+ Care Leavers Service \(PDF, 1.5 MB\)](#).
- You will have access to a wide range of different training courses to support your knowledge and understanding, including Attachment, Trauma and Loss. Training courses will also include information about behaviour management, safeguarding, the role of a foster carer and First Aid.
- [Course Catalogue – Kent Fostering E-learning Website](#) Before you can join a course you'll need to complete the following Foster Carer & Kent Supported Homes (KSH) e-Learning Application form <https://forms.office.com/e/tA5wNnm9tK>
- Support for foster carers own children is available and if needed, your fostering social worker will be able to discuss any concerns that they have about kinship fostering. Children will have access to groups and activities arranged by our Participation Team who work closely with children to gain their views, to inform our practice development and the design of our services.

Kinship Local Offer for Special Guardians

Kent County Council recognises the vital role special guardians play in providing stability, love and care for children who can no longer live with their birth parents. Our Special Guardian Support Team offers a comprehensive package of support to help families.

Eligibility

In order to offer support to families, a current SGO must be in place with the child(ren) the order relates to, still in residence. We will need to know:

- Was the SGO granted in Kent?
- Was the SGO granted in another Local Authority but over 3 years ago and you live in Kent?
- Do you think you would benefit from support and give consent for this?

If the answer to these questions is yes, we are then able to offer you the following support:

- As a Special Guardian seeking support you will be allocated a Social Worker Assistant (SWA) who will undertake an Assessment of Need for your family including exploring the child's emotional, behavioural, educational and therapeutic needs as well as the support requirements of the guardians.
- We will review your Support Plan, usually completed as part of the original SGO assessment to see what you are entitled to and to ensure that it remains responsive to both the child's and the families' current needs.
- You can receive 1:1 support from your SWA's in relation to Therapeutic Parenting if this is something you feel you would benefit from.
- 1:1 support for children/young people from SGO SWA's in areas such as emotional recognition & regulation strategies, understanding the child's history and experiences and how these could impact on their current behaviour. This will include support to special guardians in understanding and implementing any therapeutic parenting strategies.
- Support in negotiating Educational Needs with schools and Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCO), through the Virtual School Kent (VSK) Advisory Team or the Social Work Assistant who are Local Authority champions, to promote the progress and school attainment of children and young people. **(See below for more information)**
- Support in liaising with other professionals in schools and Health Departments, including Children and Mental Health Services (CAMHS), to ensure children's needs are met.
- Support in making referrals to the VSK Advisory Team.

- You will be able to get support in relation to information on Special Educational Needs (SEND) and where appropriate, referrals to other agencies such as CAMHS and Mind & Body.

[Mind and Body in Kent | WithYou](#)

[Kent & Medway Children & Young People's Mental Health Service \(CYPMHS\) | NELFT NHS Foundation Trust](#)

[Special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\) - Kent County Council](#)

- You can get support with the Right to Choose Pathway for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessments. [Right to Choose - ADHD UK](#)
- If you have obtained an SGO following care proceedings with the Local Authority of Kent, you will be entitled to receive a Means Tested Assessment for financial support until the child reaches 18 years or until they finish full-time education or training if they have an EHCP. This will be reviewed annually.
- Special guardians can access a wide range of foster carer training including Trauma, Attachment, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), Caring for Children with Autism and Caring for Teenagers.
- Special guardians can access face to face & virtual support groups across Kent, facilitated by social work assistants. These groups offer peer support and shared experiences, practical advice and emotional encouragement and when helpful, guest speakers and themed learning sessions.
- We can support applications to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) to fund therapy with both in house therapists or external providers for children who were previously in care as a Looked After Child.

Other Services

Family Group Conferences

We are committed to keeping children and young people connected to their families, working with the child's network who are central to decision-making, to gain the best outcomes for children and young people.

The Social Connections Service provides coordinators who take a neutral role in facilitating Family Group Conferences. They bring together relevant professionals, with wider family and friends to make safe plans for young people at risk of harm. Social workers and special guardianship workers can refer to this Service.

The Kent Social Connections Service will work with you and your family to help to keep children and young people safe. They recognise the importance of connections between children, family, friends and the community to find solutions and solve problems. Referrals to the Social Connections Service support families who need to come together

to make changes for their children. This may be to plan for a new baby or to support you in caring for your child or to make connections with important people in a child's life.

Virtual School Kent (VSK)

The VSK Advisory Team collaborates with schools and other professionals to ensure a universal understanding around the needs of the children and young people we champion. The exceptional circumstances leading to children not living with their birth parents are often associated with adverse childhood experiences and trauma. The effects of these can become a barrier to their learning. Although these children are now living in safe, loving homes, it is important to remember that this does not eliminate their past experiences which can have a lasting impact, particularly on their education.

The Advisory Team at VSK offer advice to families and schools to support the educational provision for children living under a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order. The referral form [Initial Contact Form](#) or an email to VSKAdvisoryTeam@kent.gov.uk can be completed for more information.

The Virtual School website is also full of additional information and guidance to support families, education settings and professionals and can be accessed through the following link: [Home | Virtual School Kent \(lea.kent.sch.uk\)](https://www.lea.kent.sch.uk)

Pupil Premium Funding for previously looked after children

Eligible schools receive **£2,570** Pupil Premium funding for any child who has ceased to be looked after by a Local Authority in England or Wales because of adoption, a Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangement Order (previously known as a Residence Order).

Please note: This is not a personal budget for each child but should be used for the cohort of previously looked after children in line with the school's Pupil Premium Grant planning.

[Pupil Premium for Previously Looked After Children | Virtual School Kent \(lea.kent.sch.uk\)](https://www.lea.kent.sch.uk)

Therapeutic Support via Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)

When an assessment is completed, Kent County Council may identify that therapeutic services funded by the ASGSF would be beneficial to support your family. If this is the case, Kent County Council will apply to the Fund directly. If successful, the ASGSF will release funding to Kent County Council which uses the fund to commission agreed providers of therapeutic services. This will ensure the right support for children and their families at the right time.

Lifelong Links

This Service is a service for young people in care, or being cared for by a special guardian, who want to know more about their wider family, either to help them understand their identity or to reconnect. This is a young person led process. A coordinator will work with the young person to help them identify who they may want to connect with. They will ensure searching is safe and the young person is seeking positive connections who will support them now and when they leave care. Social Workers, Social Work Assistants and 18+ Personal Advisors can refer.

[Social Connections Service - information for professionals - Kent County Council](#)

Kinship Organisations

- Kinship is an independent online information, advice and support hub just for kinship carers. It is the leading kinship care charity in England and Wales and works with all kinship carers, including grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles and family friends who are caring for children when their parents are unable to.
- It supports local kinship peer support groups, offers free workshops, training and events as well as working closely with the Government, Local Authorities and Virtual Schools to champion the needs of these children and their families. Visit their website for more details. [Kinship: Home | The Kinship care charity | England and Wales](#)
- There are many other community services including Family Hubs which can offer advice and support to you. [Kent Family Hub - Kent County Council](#). If you are looking for other support, please speak to your allocated worker who will help to signpost you to a service that can help.



Contact & Accessing Support

To access any of the above services, please contact your allocated SGO Support Worker or refer into Kent County Council's Children's Services. We are here to support you every step of the way.

For more information contact the SGO Support & Advice Line on **03000 419486**.

To make a referral contact the Integrated Children's Services Front Door on **03000 414141**.

- To visit our website, click here: [Kent Fostering Service](#)
- Out of hours emergency support number (from 17:00) **03000 419191**

Complaints or Compliments

You have the right to complain if you are unhappy with the services you receive. We encourage you to try to find a solution with your allocated worker or their team manager in the first instance.

Contact information:

- Email: cscomplaints@kent.gov.uk
- Telephone: **03000 410 304**
- Text: 07860 008 025 – start your message with the word ‘complaint’
- Address: Kent Children's Social Services, Customer Care, Kroner House, Eurogate Business Park, Ashford, TN24 8XU Website: Kent County Council

Further Resources

Government Documentation

Championing Kinship Care. The National Kinship Care Strategy. December 2023, Department of Education. [Championing kinship care: the national kinship care strategy \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Further information regarding KCC Privacy Notices:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/about-the-website/privacy-statement>

Kent Fostering

Tel: 03000 420002

<https://www.kentfostering.co.uk>