

BRIEFING	TO:	Improving Lives Select Commission
	DATE:	17 th June 2025
	LEAD OFFICER:	Chris MacDonald Service Manager Central Locality, Children and Young People's Services
	TITLE:	Kinship Local Offer – Pre-Decision Scrutiny
1. Background		
1.1	In October 2024, the Government issued statutory guidance on 'Kinship Care', which included a definition (now enshrined in the draft Children's Wellbeing and Schools bill before Parliament) of kinship care: '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'. This covers a wide span from informal arrangements and private fostering, to Children in Care fostered by family or friends, and children subject to Court orders proving their family or friends with parental responsibility.	
1.2	The October 2024 statutory guidance requires that each local authority publishes a Kinship Local Offer. It also extends the role of the Virtual School Head to champion the attainment, attendance and progress of children in kinship care, and extends the role of the Virtual School to provide advice and information to kinship carers. Within the Children's Wellbeing and Schools bill, both the expectation of the local offer and the role of the Virtual School Head are included. A senior manager must be nominated to ensure the kinship local offer meets statutory requirements and that it is responsive to the needs of kinship children and their carers.	
1.3	The priority for kinship care sits firmly in Government's <i>Stable Homes Built on Love</i> and the Children's Social Care National Framework which expects that children are supported by their family network. The Families First Partnership programme guide similarly highlights the critical role of family group decision-making at all stages of a child's journey through the service.	
1.4	There is a firm legal foundation through Children Act 1989 and subsequent regulations, statutory guidance and case law that children should be raised within their families wherever it is consistent with their welfare to do so, and that it is incumbent on the Council to do what it can to make this possible.	
1.5	Supporting extended family and friends to care for children and young people when their parents are unable to do so has been a consistent pillar of the Council's successful long-term strategy to reduce the numbers of children who come into care and the Council is committed to continually improve on this offer.	
2. Key Issues		
2.1	The statutory guidance sets out that the Kinship Local Offer must: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Set out services available to each kinship arrangement.	

- Provide support based on the needs of kinship children rather than legal status.
- Be developed in collaboration with partner agencies.
- Be well-publicised.
- Mitigate against potential barriers to accessing support.

2.2 The Kinship Local Offer is expected to address:

- Support groups and training.
- Financial support.
- Help to stay in work.
- Accommodation.
- Education.
- Supporting family time.
- Family group decision making.
- Legal support.
- Therapeutic support.

2.3 Each area in the statutory guidance is addressed within the Kinship Local Offer.

2.4 Research shows that kinship carers find it difficult to navigate services and some benefit from a direct relationship with a professional with specific expertise in the needs of kinship families. There is also evidence that kinship carers can become excluded from mainstream and community services.

2.5 As part of the revised offer, a Virtual Kinship Hub will be established within the Integrated Front Door, with Family Help Navigators who will act as the first point of contact for kinship carers. The Navigators will be specialised in the Kinship Local Offer and provide advice and guidance to kinship carers and professionals working with kinship carers. The Navigators will facilitate support groups and peer networks for kinship carers and their kinship children. Signposting and referrals to other agencies will be provided, with a direct route into the Family Group Conferencing service in order that all kinship families can request a Family Group Conference.

2.6 Where kinship families need targeted help, this will be led by a lead professional from a partner agency or from Family Help, with the continued support of the Family Help Navigators who are specialised in kinship care.

2.7 Where kinship families need help to meet complex emotional needs for a kinship child, the Empower service will have a dedicated offer to kinship families to either work directly with them or assess eligibility for an application for the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund, with the aim of providing help and intervention to stabilise circumstances at home and support an attuned carer-child relationship.

3. Key Actions and Timelines

3.1 The Council is expected to publish the Kinship Local Offer within two months of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools bill becoming law.

3.2 Cabinet will be asked to approve the Kinship Local Offer on 07.07.25.

3.3 Once the Kinship Local Offer has had formal approval, it will be published online as a document and as an interactive website, with a lead-in time of four weeks for the website to be built. It is the responsibility of the named senior manager for kinship to ensure it is accurate and regularly updated.

3.4	The Kinship Local Offer will be dynamic and be updated, at least annually but more frequently during this transitional period for service provision.
3.5	The statutory guidance for Kinship Care and the Council's obligations in the Kinship Local Offer were considered at Improving Lives Select Commission in March 2025. CYPS was asked to return to Improving Lives Select Commission in June 2025 with a draft of the Kinship Local Offer for pre-decision scrutiny.
4. Recommendations	
4.1	<p>Improving Lives Select Commission is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Consider the content of the draft Kinship Local Offer and associated presentation and acknowledge the updates to practice. (ii) Consider the content of the Kinship Local Offer and advise on the accessibility of the language in the offer.