

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 07 July 2025

Report Title

The Local Offer for Kinship Carers

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

Report Author(s)

Monica Green Assistant Director for Social Care

Monica.green@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The report presents the Kinship Local Offer, attached at Appendix 1, for approval. The Kinship Local Offer is a guide to all the support available to kinship carers in Rotherham. The report outlines how the offer addresses the Council's statutory obligations to kinship carers and its commitment to keeping families together and providing timely, needs-led support to kinship carers.

Recommendations

That Cabinet agree and approve the content and publication of the Kinship Local Offer.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Kinship Local Offer
- Appendix 2 Part B – Equality Analysis Form
- Appendix 3 Climate Impact Assessment

Background Papers

- [Kinship care: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)
- [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)
- [Foundations - Summary for Elected Members \(Kinship Practice Guide\)](#)
- [Children's social care: stable homes, built on love - GOV.UK](#)
- [Children's social care: national framework - GOV.UK](#)
- [Families First Partnership Programme guide](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Improving Lives Select Commission – 04 March 2025

Improving Lives Select Commission – 17 June 2025

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

The Local Offer for Kinship Carers

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 the Government's *Stable Homes Built on Love* 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 plank 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.
- 1.6 An existing statutory framework governs the support provided to carers who look after a kinship child subject to a Special Guardianship Order (SGO). Within Children and Young People's Services, Empower is a specialist service to help children in care or in kinship care to live in stable homes. Within Empower, the Post-SGO Support Team provides support to Special Guardians and the Fostering Service provides support to kinship foster carers, but there is no cohesive pathway for all kinship carers and some forms of kinship carer have no specific point of contact for help and advice.
- 1.7 On 18th November 2024, Cabinet approved the adoption of the Department for Education's model for means testing allowances for eligible kinship carers who hold Special Guardianship Orders or Child Arrangements Orders from 1st

January 2025. This led to an uplift in the allowance for the majority of families who are means tested.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The statutory guidance sets out that the Kinship Local Offer must:
- 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 new Family Help Navigators who will act as the first point of contact for kinship carers. These Navigators will be specialists 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.

- 2.8 Where a kinship family is fostering a kinship child as a Child in Care, the expectations, and the statutory entitlement to support are unchanged. Where a safeguarding concern arises in relation to a kinship child, the statutory safeguarding response is also unchanged.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to agree and approve the Kinship Local Offer for publication. This will provide kinship families with clear and accessible information and guidance on the support that is available. This will ensure that the Council is compliant with the recent legislative and policy changes, and it is able to deliver its commitment to ensure effective services are in place for children and young people in kinship families in the borough.
- 3.2 The alternative option is not to note and approve the Kinship Local Offer. This would result in non-compliance with the government's legislative and policy requirements including the statutory guidance on Kinship Care.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 Kinship carers were consulted on the Kinship Local Offer and the potential reshaping of the service for Special Guardians through an online survey (shared via the Post-SGO Support Team mailing list (183 people) and Facebook group (167 people)) and meeting with kinship carers at an established forum. 14 responses were received from the survey and 6 kinship families participated in the forum. Further details of the consultation undertaken have been included in Appendix 2 – Equality Analysis.

- 4.2 The consultation highlighted:

- Kinship carers valued knowing where to go for support but also valued someone to advocate for them who understood the kinship experience. The carers appreciated consistency of relationships with professionals.
- Most would appreciate and use a Kinship Local Offer, and some had used the SEND Local Offer, but there were others who felt that individual signposting and discussion was needed too due to the typical age and computer literacy of some Special Guardians.
- Parenting support tailored towards caring for children who experienced early trauma or disrupted attachment was valued.
- Support groups had been a 'lifeline' and the opportunities for kinship children to play together had been beneficial for the carers and children.
- Some carers described disparity of support depending on the legal status of the children in their care and whether the children had been in Care prior to living with them. Some carers expressed frustration at the existing offer.

- 4.3 The Kinship Local Offer was subject to pre-decision scrutiny at Improving Lives Select Commission on 17 June 2025 to identify the key challenges facing

children, young people, and their kinship families in the borough and to shape and influence the Kinship Local Offer. The recommendations made have been incorporated into the development of the Kinship Local Offer and its communication.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The Council is expected to publish the Kinship Local Offer within two months of the bill becoming law.
- 5.2 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. There will also be short leaflets available, distributed through a range of locations including Family Hubs.
- 5.3 The Kinship Local Offer will be dynamic and be updated, at least annually but more frequently during this transitional period for service provision.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications for approving and publishing the Kinship Local Offer. The proposed Local Offer primarily involves consolidating existing support and services available to kinship families into a single, accessible format – for greater ease in finding information and guidance.
- 6.2 The Kinship Local Offer does not introduce any new financial commitments beyond those already accounted for within current CYPS service provision and resource envelope. The Local Offer includes the recently created Kinship Navigator grant funded roles, which will form part of the Virtual Kinship Hub within the Integrated Front Door and will provide a dedicated point of contact for kinship carers.
- 6.3 The development and publication of the offer is being managed internally, with the content hosted on the Council's existing RMBC website infrastructure. As such, there are no additional costs associated with web hosting, publication, or ongoing maintenance.
- 6.4 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Children Act 1989, section 22c governs the ways in which looked after children are to be accommodated and maintained. This is the legal basis for the principle that children should be brought up in the families and communities if they cannot remain in the care of their parents. Under section 22 c (6), this includes relatives, friends, or other connected persons to the child.

- 7.2 It is also noteworthy that the aim of statutory guidance, Kinship Care: Statutory guidance for local authorities issued in October 2024 is to offer guidance to improve outcomes for children and young people, whether or not such arrangements are temporary or long term. This guidance was previously known as Family and Friends Care statutory guidance which does not place any new statutory requirements but is offered with factual information and a framework for local authorities and partners to assess and provide support which recognises each child's situation is unique. Such arrangements include, "informal arrangements, temporary arrangements, private fostering, kinship foster care, child arrangement orders, special guardianship orders and arrangements leading to adoption."
- 7.3 Statutory guidance concerning Kinship Care is issued under s7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 whereby such guidance should be complied with unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons that justify a variation. Moreover, Local Authorities and health partners/agencies in England must have regard to it when exercising their functions under s10 of the Children Act 2004. Given the circumstances set out in this paper, there appears to be no justification to depart from the statutory guidance.
- 7.4 In regard to the publication of information relating to kinship care, the statutory guidance stipulates that all local authorities must publish information about services that they offer in their area for children in kinship care and their families, and their approach towards meeting the needs of children in these arrangements. The local offer should include information about universal services such as early years provision and out of school services, schools and colleges, health services, leisure facilities and youth support services. Such information is to be known as "a kinship local offer."
- 7.5 Under section 17 of Children Act 1989, the range and level of support services which can be provided by a Local Authority are wide and the statutory guidance states that there should be a clear eligibility criteria in relation to the provision of support services, including financial support to children living in kinship care. Provisions of financial support for special guardians are made under section 14F of the 1989 Act. It is also to be noted that carers have different circumstances and therefore, would need to be aware of their entitlement to any state benefits and allowances, (i.e. child benefit). With this in mind, a Kinship local offer should signpost to local resources such as benefits advice services. Depending on their circumstances, they would need to be aware of how to apply for discretionary financial support which may be available to them. It is noted that this signposting appears in the draft "Kinship Local Offer, Rotherham MBC" attached.
- 7.6 The proposal suggested at para 3.1 is in line with statutory guidance and there are no legal implications in publishing this kinship local offer.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 HR will support the introduction of the Kinship Hub and recruitment of the new positions within the hub as per RMBC recruitment procedures.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 Publishing the Kinship Local Offer should create a direct benefit for children and young people in kinship care through increased awareness of the help and support available to kinship families and greater ease in finding information and advice.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 The Kinship Local Offer will help to alleviate barriers for groups with protected characteristics by simplifying the routes to accessing information and support, and providing a single, seamless pathway to seeing help which adapts to the needs of kinship children and families through offering a number of forms of communication and engagement.
- 10.2 An Equalities Analysis Form (Part B) has been completed and is attached as Appendix 2.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 The Kinship Local Offer collates existing support to kinship carers into a single, simplified document. As a result, it has no direct carbon impact.
- 11.2 Clarity and ease in accessing and understanding the support available has the potential to increase resilience to climate change.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1. Partner agencies were consulted and included in the design of the Kinship Local Offer, including in the support they offer to kinship carers, and the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board has been cited on the development of the Kinship Local Offer.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 There is no risk in publishing the Kinship Local Offer providing the information is accurate. Responsibility for the continued review and monitoring sits with the named senior manager for kinship. Further legal advice may be sought where necessary.

14. Accountable Officers

Chris MacDonald, Service Manager, Central Locality (and named senior manager for kinship)

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	23/06/25
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services	Judith Badger	13/06/25

(S.151 Officer)		
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	13/06/25

*Report Author: Monica Green Assistant Director for Social Care
Monica.green@rotherham.gov.uk*

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