

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 09 June 2026

Report Title

Update on Kinship Local Offer

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

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report

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

Report Author

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

On 7th July 2025, Cabinet approved the Kinship Local Offer. Improving Lives Select Commission scrutinised the Kinship Local Offer on 17th June 2025 prior to Cabinet approval and recommended that an update was presented to Improving Lives after the first annual review of the Kinship Local Offer.

Recommendations

1. That Improving Lives Select Commission note the progress made in developing and implementing the Kinship Local Offer.

Background Papers

1. [Cabinet Report 07.07.25 - Kinship Local Offer](#)
2. [Appendix 1 - Kinship Local Offer](#)

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Update on Kinship Local Offer

1. Background

- 1.1 In October 2024, the Government issued statutory guidance on 'Kinship Care', which included a definition 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 each local authority to publish a Kinship Local Offer. 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. 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. The requirement to publish the Kinship Local Offer was enshrined in primary legislation through Clause 5 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026.
- 1.3 In July 2025, Cabinet approved the publication of the Council's Kinship Local Offer. The Kinship Local Offer was adapted to be an interactive, online offer which was made available online in October 2025. This report outlines the progress in developing and implementing the Kinship Local Offer to date.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Kinship Care Delivery Group (KCDG)

The named senior manager to lead the Kinship Local Offer, Chris MacDonald, chairs the Kinship Care Delivery Group, a bimonthly multi-agency working group which reports into the Family Help Partnership Group, chaired by the Service Director for Family Help, Kelly White. The Family Help Partnership Group reports into the Families First Delivery Group, which is chaired by Executive Director for Children's Services, Nicola Curley.

- 2.2 The Kinship Care Delivery Group includes organisations from across different services, such as:
 - Locality in Children's Social Care – where many kinship arrangements are first made.
 - Integrated Front Door in Children's Social Care where Kinship Navigators are based.
 - Family Help – where kinship families receive a universal and/or targeted service.
 - Fostering – where kinship foster carers are supported including under Regulation 24 (Reg 24) of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 which allows local authorities to immediately place a child with a family member or friend (a connected

person) as a temporary foster carer, even if they haven't been formally assessed as foster carers yet

- Empower – where kinship families experiencing acute instability receive interventions and Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund applications are made.
- Virtual School – where there is a duty to advance the educational attainment of kinship carers.
- Education Safeguarding Lead – recognising many kinship children experience additional barriers to achieving in school, and some kinship children may go undetected initially.
- Access to Education – recognising some kinship children have priority in applying for schools and that exclusions are elevated for kinship children.
- Early Years – recognising that the importance of early years education is increased for kinship children who may experience change and upheaval before starting in nursery/early years provision.
- SEND – recognising that kinship children are over-represented in the cohort of children with SEND.
- Housing Options – recognising some kinship carers report barriers or challenges in caring for kinship children due to space.
- Integrated Care Board (ICB) Safeguarding – recognising that kinship children are more likely to have health needs and require NHS commissioned services, and kinship carers are more likely to have chronic health needs and/or a disability.
- Looked After Nurse – where many kinship children begin their journey towards a kinship arrangement, or within a kinship arrangement.
- The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust (TRFT)– recognising that there are many kinship children who receive a universal or targeted health offer within 0-19.

2.3 The objectives of Kinship Care Delivery Group are:

- a. To coordinate activity to support kinship carers between services within the Council and between partner agencies.
- b. To ensure compliance with relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including the requirement to publish and maintain a Kinship Local Offer with multi-agency input.
- c. To promote the well-being and stability of children in kinship care arrangements, closing the gap on educational attainment, health outcomes or any other areas of adversity or disadvantage.
- d. To establish pathways to access resources, training, and support for kinship carers.
- e. To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of services which kinship carers use and make recommendations for improvement.

2.4 Progress against the objectives in the workplan

The Kinship Local Offer was promoted to the public and professionals:

- Posters up in schools, Family Hubs and GPs

- Presentation at all Council forums and targeted internal forums
 - Spotlight on Council's intranet
 - Presentation at targeted partner agency forums, reaching Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools, headteachers
 - Spotlight on partner agency intranet, including NHS, all Family Hubs partners and all schools' communication
- 2.5 Kinship Navigators placed within MASH have been able to be a single point of contact for all kinship carers, responding to enquiries with the option of a home visit and ensuring kinship families understand and can access the support available. The kinship support groups have been maintained at a fortnightly frequency, with a number of guests who routinely attend to share what their services offer, and to co-develop kinship pathways. This includes:
- Early Years – introducing the childcare offer and Early Years connections, including to specialist teachers.
 - Virtual School – introducing both Virtual School headteachers for strategic oversight of kinship children's attainment and outcomes and offering drop-in and ad hoc advice and support.
 - Best Start Family Hubs – introducing outreach, Peep (Learning Through Play) programme, parenting courses, universal youth work offer and other services within the Family Hubs.
 - Talking Therapies – introducing the therapies available via Talking Therapies and exploring group-based CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy).
- 2.6 A five week introductory course covering trauma, safety and attachment is run through the Empower service for kinship carers on a constant rolling basis. All new kinship carers known to the service are invited to attend and it acts as a forum to meet fellow kinship carers.
- 2.7 A single form of assessment and support plan, known as the Form K and produced by Coram-BAAF, was introduced in October 2025 for kinship assessments for approval as a foster carer for a specific child, Child Arrangements Orders and Special Guardianship Orders. This has reduced duplication for families and professionals.
- 2.8 Early Years have also strengthened the offer for kinship children, who are most represented in the 1-4 age bracket at the time of making a Court order and are more likely to be identified as having SEND, through a focus on kinship children in the 0-5 SEND Pathway multi-agency meeting. This will support early identification of emerging SEND.
- 2.9 Kinship children and their educational experiences are tracked using data on suspensions, exclusions, SEND and attendance. The s175 safeguarding self-assessments which schools complete annually now include a prompt about recognising and supporting kinship children.
- 2.10 Kinship children were included in eligibility criteria for Healthy Holidays scheme, entitling school aged children to free holiday clubs.

2.11 Kinship families are referred to Housing Assessment Panel for discretionary decision-making about priority whenever there is an evident housing need resulting from the additional child(ren) in the household. Adaptations to case management systems in Housing will also allow tracking of kinship arrangements as of December 2025.

2.12 The Empower service, who work with kinship families with acute instability and make applications to source therapy through the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund, has two FTE posts equivalent for kinship families and has been able to provide wraparound support to kinship families in crisis.

2.13 **Challenges**

Recruitment of the Kinship Navigators, who are based and line managed within the MASH, has experienced some challenges. This has not impacted on the ability to respond to enquiries but the changes in personnel have slowed progress on the desire achievement of the developmental work.

2.14 **Priorities for the next twelve months**

Check-ins: Kinship Navigators will operate a model of annual check-ins with all kinship carers, including those who have not approached us for support, to minimise barriers to seeking help. The Navigators have begun with kinship children approaching the Primary to Secondary transition in September 2026.

2.15 Training: To build on sessions on the Kinship Local Offer, a programme of training across Family Help and Children's Social Care will seek to grow kinship literacy in the workforce. There will also be sessions open to partner agencies to better understand kinship.

2.16 Support groups: To expand the support group offer based on work with kinship carers to establish what would help most. Whether there is sufficient need for groups in other areas of the borough is being explored.

2.17 Parenting support: To develop a parenting programme specifically for kinship carers to complement the five week introductory course. To exploring how to ensure all kinship children are flagged within NHS systems for 0-19 health services.

2.18 Educational outcomes: A multi-agency audit of fixed term exclusions for kinship children is planned for Autumn Term, in order to identify any opportunities for earlier identification and intervention. The data is tracked and considered in KCDG termly.

3. **Options considered and recommended proposal**

3.1 Members are asked to note the progress made in developing and implementing the Kinship Local Offer.

Accountable Officer(s)

Chris MacDonald, Head of Safeguarding, CYPS

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
The Executive Director with responsibility for this report	Nicola Curley, Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services	12/05/26
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth	19/05/26

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