



North East Lincolnshire Kinship Local Offer

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What is Kinship Care?

When children are cared for by members of their extended family, friends or other people who are connected to them, we call this kinship care.

Kinship care arrangements are when children are separated from their parents, or parents are unable to provide the care and support a child needs. Kinship care arrangements may happen for a variety of reasons and may be permanent or temporary. Sometimes the arrangement is made by the Local Authority or it can be arranged within the family.

Many people become Kinship carers and they include, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, step parents (who have separated from the birth parent) Step grandparents, great grandparents, friends of the family or other people connected to the child.

It has been estimated (2018, national data) that up to 300,000 children are cared for full time by family and friends, of whom over 7000 are cared for children with Kinship foster carers.

Consideration of a child's welfare and best interests will always be at the centre of the work we do. It is an underlying principle that children should be enabled to live within their families, unless this is not consistent with their welfare. We will therefore work to maintain children within their own families and facilitate services to support any such arrangements, wherever this is consistent with the child's safety and well-being.

We will provide support for any such arrangements based on the assessed needs of the child and will seek to ensure that Kinship Carers are provided with support to ensure that children do not become children in our care of the Local Authority or do not have to remain in care for as longer than necessary.

Legal Framework

The Local Authority has a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need living within its area and to promote the upbringing of such children by their families. The way in which we fulfil this

is by providing a range of services appropriate to those child's assessed needs. This can include for example, financial, practical or other support.

It is important to note that the Local Authority does not have a general duty to assess all arrangements where children are living within their wider family or friends' network rather than their parents, but it does have a duty where it appears that services may be necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child in need.

Other legal arrangements include children in the care of the Local Authority under Section 31 of the [Children Act 1989](#) or via S20 of the Children Act 1989. In both cases the children may be cared for within their family network, if the carers have been approved as Local Authority Foster Carers under the [Fostering Regulations 2011](#) and where the Local Authority can demonstrate they are supporting the carers to meet the requirements of the [National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011](#). This can include using Regulation 24 of the [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010](#), to allow for the temporary approval of a Kinship carer (formally referred to as a connected carer) to the child as Foster Carers for a period of up to 16 weeks, to allow for immediate care and sufficient time for a detailed assessment to be undertaken and presented to Fostering Panel, to consider full approval.

Further legal arrangements for children to live with family and friends include Adoption Orders and Special Guardianship Orders under the [Adoption and Children Act 2002](#); Child Arrangement Orders under the Children Act 1989 and Private Fostering under the [Private Fostering Regulations 2005](#).

What types of Kinship care arrangements are there?

Informal Family Arrangements.

The parent makes the arrangement or a close family member steps in to help support the care of a child. The length of the arrangement is decided by the person with parental responsibility (PR) or someone who has taken out a legal order for the child.

The Local Authority does not have a duty to assess informal family arrangements, unless it appears necessary to the Local Authority that services may be necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child in need. In such cases, the Local Authority has a responsibility under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to assess a child's needs and provide services to meet any assessed needs of the child.

Parental responsibility remains with the birth parents, but the carer may do what is reasonable to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

Private Fostering

A privately fostered child is a child under 16 (or 18 if they are disabled) who is cared for by a carer who is not a parent or close relative. Close relative is defined as a 'grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (where of full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership)'. If the arrangement is intended to last for 28 days or more as decided by the person with PR, the arrangement needs to be approved by the Local Authority. The parent will still hold parental responsibility for the child and agree the decision making arrangements with the private foster carer.

The Local Authority has a duty to assess and monitor the welfare of all privately fostered children and the way in which they carry out these duties is set out in schedule 8 of the Children Act 1989, with a new paragraph inserted by section 44 of the Children Act 2004 and [Private Arrangements for Fostering Regulations 2005](#). North East Lincolnshire will assess these arrangements and where there are no safeguarding concerns at the conclusion of the assessment, case responsibility transfers to the Fostering

Service for ongoing support and monitoring. These arrangements do not qualify for a financial allowance.

If a professional or member of the community feels a child may be privately fostered then they must also report this into Children's services.

Kinship foster Carer.

A kinship Foster Carer is someone who is either being assessed via Regulation 24 of the [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010](#), or has been assessed by the Local Authority Fostering Service to be a Registered Foster Carer for the child (The [Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services](#)). The child in this case would be a Child in our Care.

The assessment and approval process for family and friends who apply to be Kinship Foster Carers for a specific child in our care will be fully explained during the home visit.

Once approved as Kinship Carers, they will be allocated a Fostering Social Worker from within the Fostering Service to provide them with support and supervision. Kinship carers will receive [fostering allowances](#) as per all North East Lincolnshire registered Foster Carers for as long as they are caring for a child in our care.

While the child remains a child in our care, as a Kinship Carer they will be expected to co-operate with all the processes that are in place to ensure that the child receives appropriate care and support, for example: - completing training, working with the child's social worker and contributing to the child's care plan.

Specific support may be required for Kinship Carers to ensure that they can meet the day-to-day requirements of being a registered Foster Carer. Support may include 1-1 support from a Fostering Social Worker on areas such as child play, support and guidance on areas such as housing, understanding of children needs where they have suffered trauma, support

to attend groups and activities with a child alongside attendance at or 1-1 bespoke training.

Authority for day-to-day decision making about the child should be delegated to the carer, unless there is a valid reason not to do so. During the initial planning meeting delegated responsibilities and what is delegated to who, is discussed in more detail.

Child Arrangement Order

A Child Arrangement Order (CAO) is a Court Order which sets out the arrangements as to when and with whom a child is to live and spend time with. A CAO may give parental responsibility to the person in whose favour it is made, Parental Responsibility is shared with the parents.

Authority for the day-to-day decision making about the child should be delegated to the carers, unless there is a valid reason not to do so.

Child Arrangement Orders may be made in private family proceedings in which the Local Authority is not a party nor involved in any way in the arrangements. However, a CAO in favour of a relative or previous Kinship carer with whom the child was living with may be an appropriate outcome as part of a plan of permanence for a child in our care.

Should a carer with a Child Arrangement Order feel they require further support and advice then they should contact Children services asking for an assessment of support needs.

Should the child have been a child in our care immediately before the making of the order, then the [Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund \(ASGSF\)](#) may be accessed for therapeutic support for the child. This will be something which is discussed via the assessment of support needs that will be completed with the carer by a social worker.

Special Guardianship Order

[Special Guardianship](#) offers a further option for children needing permanent care outside their birth family. It can offer greater security without absolute severance from the birth family as in adoption.

Relatives may apply for a Special Guardianship Order after caring for a child for one year, however, if a Special Guardianship Order is part of the Local Authorities plan of permanence for a child, then the length of time caring for a child can be shorter, depending on the circumstances.

Special Guardians will have parental responsibility for the child which, while it is still shared with parents, can be exercised with a greater autonomy on day-to-day matters than where there is a Child Arrangements Order.

Where the child was a child in our care immediately prior to the making of the Special Guardianship Order, the Local Authority has a responsibility to assess the support needs of the child, parents and special guardians, including the need for financial support.

Once the Special Guardianship assessment is complete recommending a Special Guardianship Order for the child, a support plan will be devised by the allocated social worker for the child, outlining what support is available post order. A Special Guardian can contact the Fostering Service and ask for an Assessment of Support Needs at any point up until the child is 18 years of age, as long as the special guardian remains residing in NELC. If the Special Guardian does not live in NELC post 3 years of the order being granted, they can request support from the Local Authority in which they reside.

Upon the completion of a positive full assessment for a Special Guardianship Assessment, then North East Lincolnshire Council will provide carers with a letter outlining how they can access two hours of free legal advice with a solicitor of their own choosing.

Post Order support may include 1-1 support from a Support Worker on areas such as family time, life story work, support and guidance on areas such as housing, understanding of children needs where they have suffered trauma, support to attend groups and activities with a child alongside attendance at training.

The service has two Special Guardian Coordinators who offer monthly support groups to Special Guardians. This is promoted via a letter/ e mail and also on our social media platforms. This is an opportunity for carers to

come together and share their experiences but is also an opportunity to get to know the Special Guardian Coordinators and also hear from guest speakers who may attend.

Should the child have been a child in our care immediately before the granting of the order than the [Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund](#) (ASGSF) may be accessed for therapeutic support for the child. This will be something which is discussed via the assessment of support needs.

Adoption Order

Adoption is the process by which all parental rights and responsibilities for a child are permanently transferred to an adoptive parent by the court. As a result, the child legally becomes part of the adoptive family.

An Adoption Order in favour of a relative or foster carer with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a child in care.

Should the child have been a child in care immediately before the granting of the order then the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) may be accessed for therapeutic support for the child.

What support is on offer to Kinship Carers within North East Lincolnshire

The Majority of Kinship Care Arrangements work well and meet the needs of the child with the support of universal agencies such as health, education and housing services. Where kinship carers do require some additional support or advice then they can contact the Fostering service and or the Special Guardianship Coordinators based in NELC council.

There are also a wide range of resources available to support children in the local area, including local family hubs, day care and out of school services, schools and colleges, health services and leisure facilities. Kinship carers are encouraged to access all the universal services available both locally and nationally.

Carers can also access support via the Kinship Care Charity, Family Rights Group and by seeking their own independent legal advice. NEL also has a list of solicitors that offer free advice to carers, once a positive Special Guardianship assessment has been completed. This ensures carers get the opportunity to consider what is the right legal order for them and their family. An assessing Social Worker will guide carers through this process at the appropriate time.

The [Kinship Care Charity](#), is the leading kinship care charity in England and Wales. They work with all Kinship Carers who are caring for children when their parents can't. Kinship aims to provide support, advice and training to all Kinship Carers irrespective of under which Kinship Care arrangement they are in.

[Family Rights Group](#) are a charity that advises parents, grandparents, relatives and friends about their rights and options when Social Workers or courts make decisions about their child's welfare.

North East Lincolnshire Council have Special Guardianship Coordinators who take responsibility for being the point of contact for Special Guardians within the council.

What should agencies and practitioners do?

Agencies working with Kinship carers should acknowledge not only the joy and fulfilment of their experiences, but also the personal cost and sacrifice that many kinship families make in order to care for children, often having to change their lifestyle and plans for the future and take this into account when working with them.

Practitioners should encourage kinship carers to access all the universal services available to them, both locally and nationally, including any universally available benefits and allowances, and to seek advice when the child's needs exceed these by contacting either the fostering service or SGO Coordinators, 01472 325545 or email sgocoordinators@nelc.gov.uk

Family group conferences

Where there are support needs or concerns about children's welfare and those at risk of harm, NEL will always look within the child's network for a short-term and/or permanent solution for the child and a Family

A Family Group Conference may be considered in order to achieve this. Family Group Conferences are meetings with family members, which aim to achieve the best outcomes for children.

A Family Group Conference (FGC) is arranged by a specialist worker within NEL who has experience of such meetings and has a level of independence. They visit the child, their parents, and members of the child's wider family

FGCs are intended as a respectful and empowering process in which parents, children and members of the wider family are given clear information about the worries and are asked to produce a plan which addresses those worries and answer specific queries. This plan may involve extended family members supporting the child and parents but it may also involve the child living with a member of their extended family/friends.

Accommodation

It is recognised that when Kinship Carers take on the care of a relative or friends' child that the space in their home is a big consideration. The Fostering Service /Special Guardianship Coordinators will work with carers alongside housing colleagues to look at realistic options should housing be an issue they are facing.

Financial support

When considering providing financial support, North East Lincolnshire Children's Services will consider: the financial resources of the prospective Special Guardians (including any financial benefit arising from the placement of the child e.g. child benefit, tax credit, Universal Credit, maintenance payments and any benefit which has been or can be claimed for that child); the amount required by the special guardian in respect of their reasonable outgoings and commitments and the

financial needs that relate to the child, excluding mobility/attendance allowance/benefits related to disability.

The maximum level of payment in respect of Special Guardianship Support is linked to the Governments National Minimum Allowances. As a guide, the age-related allowances for 2025 / 6 are, 0 – 4years £176, 5 – 10 years £194, 11 – 15 years £220, and for 16 plus years £258.

The actual level of payment made in each case will be determined by a financial assessment (means test). All final Special Guardianship Payments will be minus Child Benefit (Special Guardian must apply for this) and minus 'holiday payment, birthday and Christmas payments' which Local Authority foster carers are entitled to.

North East Lincolnshire Children's Services uses the Department for Education recommended standardised means test model for a financial assessment.

In circumstances where parents seek to care for their child following the making of an SGO. They would need to seek legal advice and a notification may made be made to Childrens services to request an updated assessment of parents. The SGO coordinators /Fostering Service may in these circumstances offer some support to the carer at that time.

Education

NEL recognises the importance of continuity of education for children and young people. Advice and guidance on educational matters for children cared for by kinship carers will be provided, by advising carers of the most appropriate services.

Young people aged 16–19 in kinship carer arrangements may be entitled to the Government funded bursary scheme. Priority schools admissions are available for those children who have been cared for but who are now living with their family under a Child Arrangements Order, Special Guardianship Order or Adoption Order.

Currently from the age of two years, children who have had a previous cared

for experience, are entitled to up to 15 free nursery hours per week for 38 weeks of the year, from the term after their second birthday. Carers would speak to their nursery provider regarding this.

Supporting family time with birth parents (often referred to as contact)

Family time when it works well can reassure children that their family members are alright and still care about them. It can help them process why they no longer live with them and come to terms with their past. It can help them to continue to develop relationships with siblings and their wider family network which may be very important to them as they get older.

The Local Authority is under a duty to promote family time for all children who are in the care of the Local Authority 'unless it is not practicable or consistent with the child's welfare'. The overall objective of the family time arrangements will be included in the child's care plan and will be regularly reviewed.

Where a child has a plan of permanence via either a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order then the level of family time for the child and parents will be specified by within the final orders. Following the granting of a Special Guardianship Order it is up to the carer to follow the plans set by the court however, family time must always be reflective of what is in the best interests of the child and can be changed. It is the responsibility of the Special Guardian to review the family time arrangements in line with the best interests of the child and make decisions regarding appropriateness of this moving forward.

Support for Kinship Carers who have a legal order such as a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order can contact the SGO Coordinators /Fostering Service for further advice and support around family time on 01472 325545.

Children who share group

This takes place 3 times a year in the school holidays, each session is two hours long. This group is for children who share their home. We extend this invite to grandchildren of foster carers who are heavily involved in fostering. The purpose of the group is to provide children who share with a voice, to meet other children who share, enabling them to share their experiences with each other. This enables opportunities for connection with peers, it enables the fostering team to get to know the children who share. There are opportunities to discuss service developments gaining the children's voice on how this can be achieved and how they can be involved. It also allows an insight into the homelife of the children in care and the shared children, highlighting positives but also any issues that need to be addressed.

Training and development

NEL has an extensive learning and development offer for foster carers. Once carers are formally approved as a kinship foster carer, they will be given access to a log in to the online portal where they can access helpful information and book on training. The Fostering social worker can support carers with this. The training offer is also open to carers who are Special Guardians for a child, or have a Child Arrangement Order.

Foster carer reviews

Kinship carers will have their first Foster Carer Review within the first year of their approval, following a positive recommendation from the Fostering Panel and the subsequent agreement of the Agency Decision Maker.

This gives the kinship carer a suitable timeframe to attend training and support groups. Discussions and preparations for the Review take place within foster carer supervision and there is support provided to the kinship carer, regarding the completion of the documentation. Following the completion of the first Foster Carer Review, it is presented to the Fostering Panel and the Agency Decision Maker. Subsequent Foster Carer Reviews will then continue to take place annually but will only be reviewed by the Fostering Panel on a 3 yearly basis.

Care leavers and 'Staying Put'

NEL is committed to young people staying with their kinship carers after the age of 18 and has a 'Staying Put' policy. Staying Put is the name that the

government has given to arrangements whereby a young person aged 18 and above, remains living with their former foster carer. The aim of Staying Put is to help young people make the transition to independence and adulthood at a pace, and within a timescale that suits them, rather than having to move when they reach the age of 18, when they are formally no longer a 'child in our care'.

The service alongside the Leaving Care team will support with the planning for this, prior to the child being 18.

Complaints Procedure

Where a Kinship Carer is not satisfied with the level of support provided to enable them to care for the child, then they have access to the Local Authorities complaints process. Our aim would be to resolve any such dissatisfaction without the need for a formal investigation but where an informal resolution is not possible, then a formal investigation will be arranged.

The timescale and process are set out in the Res-CustomerServices@nelincs.gov.uk

Glossary and definitions

Cared for child – the child is ‘in care’ or ‘accommodated’ by the Local Authority NEL.

In care – a Court has made an Interim or Full Care Order, or an Emergency Protection Order on the child which gives the Local Authority the power to remove the child from the care of their parents.

Accommodated – the child is being cared for by the Local Authority with the agreement of their parents/ others with parental responsibility under Section 20 Children Act 1989.

Connected person – the term used in regulations and guidance to include relatives, friends, and other persons connected to the child.

Parental responsibility – the legal right to make decisions about a child’s care and how they are raised.

Child in need – Under Section 17 (10) of the Children Act 1989, a child is a Child in Need if: he/she is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him/her of services by a Local Authority; his/her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him/her of such services; or the child is a disabled child.

Private fostering – an arrangement where a child under 16 (or 18 if the child has a disability), who is cared for by an adult who is not a parent or close relative, where the child is to be cared for in that arrangement for 28 days or more.

Close relative – is defined as: grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step-parent by marriage or civil partnership.

Child Arrangements Order specifying with whom a child will live – it usually lasts until the child is 18. Parental responsibility is shared with the parents. Carers can apply after caring for the child for one year.

Special Guardianship Order – Like a Child Arrangements Order specifying with whom the child will live, this Court Order states where a child should live and gives the carer parental responsibility.

A Special Guardianship Order gives the carer more authority to make decisions than a Child Arrangements Order.

Adoption Order – a Court Order made as part of the adoption process. All parental rights and responsibilities for a child are permanently transferred to the adoptive parent.

Family Group Conference – a decision-making meeting in which a child's wider family network come together to make a plan about the future arrangements for the child.

