



GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Fostering Service
Kinship Local Offer

Fostering
Gloucestershire
County Council 

2025/26

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1. Foreword

Children thrive and do best when they are surrounded by people who love them and who they know and trust. For many children who can't live with their parents, this means being cared for by members of their extended family, friends, or others with whom they share a meaningful connection. These dedicated individuals, known as **kinship carers**, step forward in times of need to provide stability, love, and continuity.

Kinship carers play a vital role in enabling children and young people to remain within their familiar networks, providing that secure base that enables a child to feel safe, to know who they are and to feel that they belong.

It can be a tough job, sometimes requiring sacrifices and requiring the energy to meet new challenges often at a time when carers least expect to. It's only right that we offer the help and support that's needed, when it's needed, so that every child and kinship family can flourish.

Kinship carers do an incredibly important job, choosing to care, often at a time in life when they least expect to. They deserve our heartfelt thanks and more - we must act to value and support kinship carers on every level - emotionally, practically, and financially.

This strategy is dedicated to recognising, valuing, and supporting kinship carers – it goes above and beyond what is required of us and aims to ensure that every kinship carer is supported and child in kinship care has the opportunity to achieve their potential.



Ann James
Director of Children's Services



Tammy Wheatley
Head of Service – Corporate Parenting
and Fostering

2. Introduction

Children may be brought up by members of their extended family, friends or other people



who are connected to them, for a variety of reasons and in a range of different arrangements. These carers are referred to as Kinship carers. Kinship carers play a unique role in enabling children and young people to remain with people they know and trust if they cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents.

Many children who live with family and friends do well in life, but some can be vulnerable and require support to reach their potential. Many Kinship carers want and need support to enable them to

provide the best possible care they can for the children living with them.

The Family and Friends Care Guidance (2010) makes it clear that children and young people who are unable to live with their parents should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare, whether they are cared for by the Local Authority or not.

Some Kinship carers may be older, in poorer health and less well-off financially than others who may be looking after children and young people. Caring for another child or young person is a huge commitment, and many carers make significant changes to their own family life to do this.

In statutory guidance, a Kinship carer is a family member or friend of a child, or has some other pre-existing relationship with the child, and with whom the child is living full time. This could be in any of the following circumstances:

1. In informal arrangements with a relative (relative is defined by section 105 of the Children Act 1989 as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, or aunt (whether of full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or stepparent).
2. In informal arrangements with friends or other family members which last for a period of less than 28 days (if the intention is for the arrangement to last more than 28 days, then this may be private fostering).
3. As a private fostering arrangement.
4. As a child in care with foster carers approved by a fostering service provider
5. Under a Child Arrangement Order or a Special Guardianship Order

It has been estimated (2018, national data) that up to 300,000 children are cared for full time by kinship carers, over 7000 are children in care living with kinship foster carers. In

Gloucestershire, approximately one third of children living with in-house foster carers are in kinship arrangements.

Gloucestershire County Council fully appreciates and acknowledges the selfless commitment these carers make, often sacrificing their own future and making significant adjustments to their day-to-day life.

This Kinship Local Offer is hugely welcomed and clarifies how kinship carers, and the children they care for in Gloucestershire, will be supported to have the best possible experiences and opportunities leading to improved and positive outcomes.

Whilst the Kinship Team in Gloucestershire are experienced, knowledgeable and hold statutory responsibility for kinship arrangements, the whole council are committed to ensuring any children in these arrangements, regardless of legal status, are fully supported and understood.

In establishing this Kinship Local Offer, we have considered current working practices and feedback from professionals and kinship carers.

2.1 Working with Gloucestershire County Council

Gloucestershire Children's Services' mission is, "Right Child, right support, right time, every time" and is committed to supporting families and communities to give every child the best chance of a happy and rewarding life, especially those who need more help.



- **We will show kindness, respect, and fairness in everything we do.** We will make sure children are seen and heard when decisions are being made about their lives. For those children who cannot live safely at home, we will do everything we can to give them a second chance to live a better life.
- **The help we offer will be based on what works.** Our staff will be expert and collaborative, working with others to understand what life is like for this child and finding the best way of helping them to achieve a brighter future.
- **We will be courageous and ambitious for our children.** We will not let fear of criticism stop us from doing what we think is best, but we will always respond to well-founded criticism with a willingness to learn and to change.

Our children are the future. It is our duty to do everything in our power to help them to shape that future; for themselves, their families, and their communities.

A key principle of the Children Act 1989 is that children are best brought up within their families and, for the purposes of the Act, the term ‘family’ is to be understood broadly and could include relatives, friends and other significant people in the child or young person’s life.

Children thrive and do much better when they have a sense of permanence and belonging. Gloucestershire County Council are committed to providing children with permanence as soon as possible regardless of the arrangement in which they live. Our practice approach is to enable children who cannot live with their birth parents where safe and appropriate to do so to remain with people they know in a kinship arrangement.

This Kinship Local Offer has a focus upon narrowing the gap in outcomes between children who have experienced challenges and their peers and sets out our offer, regarding promoting and supporting the needs of children living with kinship carers.

2.2 Accountability

Gloucestershire Kinship Local Offer is the responsibility of Tammy Wheatley, Head of Service – Corporate Parenting and Fostering who must ensure the local offer meets the statutory requirements and is responsive to the needs of Gloucestershire’s Kinship families.

2.3 Legal Framework

There are many options for caring for somebody else’s child, and they all have their own legal framework. If the Local Authority becomes involved, a single assessment will be undertaken as to how best to meet the child or young person’s needs. A decision will be made as to the support that will be required, and whether the child or young person needs to be cared for.

The Family and Friends Care guidance 2.12 states: “Local authorities and their partners should make sure that family and friend’s carers are aware of relevant support services, and that these can be readily accessed by those caring for children whether these are cared for by the Local Authority or not.”.

While each legal arrangement for caring for someone else’s child carries its own requirements, services must not be allocated solely based on the child’s legal status. Commissioners and service providers should recognise that many children in family and friends care have experienced significant adversity, similar to those who are looked after by the Local Authority.

Support services identified as necessary to meet a child’s needs must not be withheld simply because the child is in an informal arrangement rather than an approved foster placement or under a legal order. Under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, the Local Authority has a duty to support children in need, ensuring their welfare is safeguarded and promoted through effective use of resources. This duty helps ensure children only

become looked after when it is the most appropriate way to meet their needs.

Support services should be available without requiring a child to become looked after. Decisions about care status must be based on a thorough assessment of the child's individual needs and circumstances. While the type of support may vary depending on the arrangement, all kinship carers and the children they care for should receive the support necessary to promote the child's best interests.

The legal framework for kinship arrangements varies and includes:

Private Fostering

Private fostering is an arrangement where a child or young person under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) is cared for by someone other than a parent or a relative (as defined under the 1989 Children Act), with the intention that the arrangement should last for 28 consecutive days or more, and in an arrangement made privately, (that is without the involvement of the local authority).

Carers are often distant relatives or family friends. You cannot be a private foster carer if you are a close relative which is defined within the Children Act 1989 as a grandparent, uncle or aunt, brother or sister, half-brother or half-sister by marriage or civil partnership.

The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that children living in Private Fostering arrangements are safe and well. Once the Local Authority is notified that a child is living in a private Fostering arrangement, the social worker will complete an assessment which will explore the suitability and safety of the arrangement as well as considering what support may be required by the carer, the child, and the birth parents.

The law says this arrangement whilst it continues should be monitored and a social worker will continue to visit the carer and children at regular intervals to ensure the arrangements remains suitable and that any support needed is available.

If the arrangement is likely to be a long-term arrangement until the child is 18 years old the Kinship team can support the carers to consider potential options enabling them to share parental responsibility for the child.

Child Arrangement Order

This is an order agreed by the family court setting out the arrangements as to where the child will live. If the order specifies that the child will live with someone who is not a parent that person is granted parental responsibility which is equal to that of a parent.

Child Arrangement Order's last until the child is 18 years old and parents can apply for this to be ended sooner through the court. If the child becomes subject to a Care Order, then the Child Arrangement Order ends automatically.

The Local Authority does not need to be involved in this arrangement; you can apply for a child arrangement order online or get help from a solicitor. It is recommended that you get legal advice and support to understand all your options before applying.

Special Guardianship Order

This is an order which is made by the court which provides those named on the order with guardianship for the child. As a special guardian you will have legal parental responsibility for the child until they are 18 years old and they will live with you permanently. You will have day to day responsibility for them and will make important decisions for them.

There are two routes to becoming a special guardian: public law and private law.

If the Local Authority have been involved in the arrangement for the child to live with you, then you will go through **public law proceedings**.

- This will usually involve, once the local authority agrees to this arrangement, an assessment of you as prospective guardians which will be presented to the court by the Local Authority as part of their care proceedings.
- You should be provided with all the information about a special guardianship order prior to agreeing to this so you can make an informed decision about committing to this. In addition to this you should be provided with a support plan which you should take to a solicitor for legal advice prior to the final decision being made. The Local Authority in this circumstance will fund a one-off legal consultation.
- You should never feel forced or pressurised into agreeing to this type of arrangement, it is long term and must be right for you and the child.

If the Local Authority have not been involved in the planning for child and it is a private family arrangement whereby you and the parent decide that special guardianship would be in the best interests of the child, you will go through **private law proceedings**.

- This is an arrangement between individuals, such as family members.
- An SGO is a long-term commitment, and it is advised that you seek legal advice prior to making the application.
- You need to notify the Local Authority in writing of your intent to make an application 3 months before the date you want to apply to the court for an SGO, and the child must have been living with you for 12 months prior to you making an application.
- A social worker will then be assigned to complete an assessment to show that you are able to care for the child. The assessment is detailed and includes information about you and your background, the child, and any support you think you will need. This assessment will then be provided to the court to inform their decision making.

- If you are on a low income or receive government benefits, you may be able to apply to the family court to get help with paying court fees.

Kinship Foster Care

Kinship foster care is when a person connected to the child, family or friend is approved as a foster carer specifically for that child. All carers under this arrangement are assessed and approved by the fostering panel and must adhere to the fostering regulations, National Minimum Standards and will have a review every year to consider their approval. In this circumstance, the child is in the care of the local authority who are likely to share parental responsibility for the child with the parents.

A delegation of authority form will be provided to you which clarifies who has the right to make decisions for the child. This is based on regulations but also ensuring that children can lead a life with proportionate professional involvement. For example, you are likely to have permission to agree to school day trips, and hair trims.

You are expected as a foster carer to carry out tasks on a regular basis which include training, attend support groups and relevant appointments, be available for supervisory visits, statutory child visits, maintaining records for the child and completing life story

work with and for the child and more. This is all clearly recorded in your foster carer agreement which you will be asked to read and sign on an annual basis.



If the child is likely to remain in your care long term the local authority will look to secure a permanence plan for the child and this may be through a long-term matching arrangement (which the child's social worker can talk

to you about) or by discussing other longer-term options, including a Special Guardianship Order. You should never feel pressurised into this, however we know that children fare much better when they feel secure and know what their future may look like.

Informal Kinship Care

This is when a family decides that a child will live with a close relative including a grandparent, uncle/aunt, brother/sister, or stepparent. The child's parents usually discuss and agree with the carer how this will work and what it will look like. In most circumstances the Local Authority will not be involved in this arrangement and there is no court order in place.

You will not have parental responsibility for the child, and this remains with the parents, although you have a responsibility to care and safeguard the child. This also means that the parents must provide financially for the child and make any decisions about them.

You may wish in these circumstances to draw up a decision-making document between you and the parents, so you are all clear about what should happen in certain situations, for example if there was a medical emergency.

This arrangement can last until the child reaches adulthood or until either party no longer agrees to it. If you are concerned about the child returning to their birth parents, you should seek advice from children's services.

3. Support for you...helping you to care

3.1 Training

Gloucestershire Kinship Teams, in conjunction with the general fostering service, offer a significant training offer to all kinship carers.

It is important that carers are offered training which enables them to develop new skills, enhance those they already have, and understand the best way to care for a child who has experienced adversity.

Gloucestershire provides a variety of training opportunities which include face-to-face direct training and online courses.

Online training is provided by a well-known company called Flourish (previously AC Education). They have a range of courses which you can access and complete depending on your own needs and those of the child you are caring for. The benefit of this type of training is that you can do it from your own home and at a time which suits you. You can do it in sections, and you can also share the content with those who are supporting you. The courses can be reviewed and retaken at any time; this is often useful if you and the child are experiencing difficulties and you wish to refresh yourself on why this may be happening and what you could do to help.

All kinship carers have access to online training from our training partner – Flourish. If you are an *approved* kinship carer, you can access the training via your supervising social worker or by emailing the team at kinshipsupportworkers@gloucestershire.gov.uk or fostercarerstraining@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Gloucestershire also provides additional courses which may be face to face or via a different platform. The details of these courses will be emailed to you, and you can book a course by emailing fostercarerstraining@gloucestershire.gov.uk

It is essential that the training team are provided with your name and email address when you become carers. Your supervising social worker (if you have one) will provide this to

them, but it is also useful for you to send them an email with your details just to be sure.

The Gloucestershire Safeguarding Partnership also offers a range of safeguarding courses which you can access, including face-to-face and online courses. You can access these courses by emailing fostercarerstraining@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Specific courses for Kinship Carers

The Kinship team can refer you to specific evidence-based training which will be funded and provided to kinship families to support you to have an improved understanding of the needs of the children you care for and to help provide you with the tools and strategies to meet these needs. These courses include:

- **Non-Violent Resistance (NVR) training**

A six-day NVR course can be used with children from around 5 years old, up to, and including, adulthood. It also has proved effective with neuro-atypical children and young people and with all kinds of family make-up, including foster and adoptive families.

- **PACE stands for Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy.**

PACE is a framework developed by clinical psychologist Dr. Dan Hughes over 20 years ago, aimed at developing caregivers' ability to build safe and trusting relationships with children and young people, particularly in cases where they have a history of trauma. PACE principles have been increasingly adopted over the years and are now regarded as a highly beneficial system of thinking when approaching childcare in a variety of settings.

- **Theraplay**

Theraplay was developed for any professional working to support healthy child/caregiver attachment. Strong attachment between the child and the important adults in their life has long been believed to be the basis of lifelong good mental health as well as the mainstay of resilience in the face of adversity. Modern brain research and the field of neuroscience have shown that attachment is the way in which children come to understand, trust, and thrive in their world.

Training from a national charity

Kinship is a national charity that provides advice and support for all kinship carers; they are passionate about ensuring Kinship carers are supported and receive the training they need. They provide a range of training specifically tailored towards kinship carers, and it is often an opportunity to meet others who are in a similar position to you.

All details regarding their training offer can be found on their website kinship.org.uk. You will need to have access to an email address to sign up. Gloucestershire's Kinship team will share details of any training and conferences they receive from Kinship in case you miss this.

Training expectations

Gloucestershire County Council sees training as a vital part of the support in caring for the most vulnerable children. However, depending on the specific nature of your role in the lives of the children for whom you are caring, our expectations differ.

If you are an **approved kinship foster carer** you are expected (amongst other things) to complete the training pathway which includes mandatory training and refresher courses. These training courses have been developed in partnership with the training team and kinship carers, identifying the most helpful opportunities for kinship foster carers in their role. It consists of both mandatory and suggested helpful training. Full details of the training can be found in Appendix E.

For **all other kinship carers**, you will have access to (and are encouraged to engage in) all the available training. Although there are no mandatory training requirements, if you are considering an SGO, we would strongly advise that you attend the SGO Induction training.

Our training offer is reviewed throughout the year and if you have any specific needs which are not covered in our current package then please contact the team or your allocated worker (if you or the child have one) and we will do our best to meet your needs.

If you have any training enquiries, please feel free to contact our training team at fostercarerstraining@gloucestershire.gov.uk who will be happy to help you.

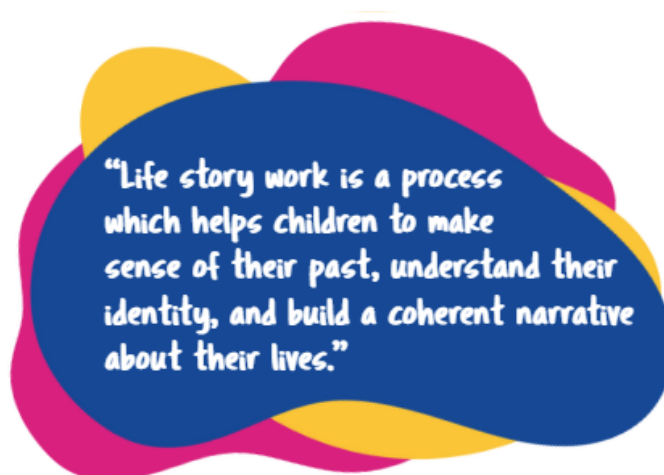
3.2 Life story work

We all have a unique personal story; from our family history and culture to where we grew up, our origins are formative to who we are as people.

This is significantly important to children who for many different reasons are unable to live with their parents.

Life story work is a process which helps children to make sense of their past, understand their identity, and build a coherent narrative about their lives.

Life Story work captures children's day-to-day lived experiences with their caregivers, including kinship foster carers, special guardians, or private foster carers.



Through access to accurate (age-appropriate) information, presented sensitively where necessary, children can gain an understanding of what led to their current situation and start to build resilience, rather than filling in the ‘unknown’ with their worst-case imaginings or trauma-informed thinking.

In addition, and importantly, Life Story Work allows the child to start working out how to tell their story in their own words and then choose when and how to share it, increasing their sense of agency and ensuring they know they have a voice.

Life Story Work can start with information about their past – such as a written history, photos of relatives and more – and can provide opportunities to explore their past with a trusted adult in a safe environment.

Life Story guidance and training

Gloucestershire County Council is committed to supporting children with life story work. Guidance and training are available to support you as a Kinship carer to complete life story work with the child you care for:

- Email fostercarerstraining@gloucestershire.gov.uk to book onto face-to-face training. You can also use this email address to request access to our training provider’s portal – Flourish. Once your email has been registered by the fostering training admin team, you can log into the Flourish portal at www.flourish.co.uk
- 8 Tips for Creating a Life Story Book (See [Appendix B](#))
- Receive support from your supervising social worker during your regular supervision to help create a life story book.
- Gloucestershire County Council Life Story Coordinator is available to attend support groups to provide expertise and offer support and guidance.
- If a child has a social worker, then life story work should be completed with them during their statutory visits.
- Every Story Matters – guidelines for foster carers (See [Appendix C](#))
- If the child has been in care and is now cared for in a special guardianship arrangement, the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund is available to them should they require Therapeutic Life Story Work.
- ‘A Guide for Me’ for children living in a kinship fostering arrangement is available via the child’s social worker.

3.3 Mockingbird

The Mockingbird programme is an alternative method of delivering foster care which centers on the idea of an extended network of family support.

It empowers families to support each other and overcome problems before they escalate and offers children a more positive experience of care.

The programme uses the concept of a constellation (the term used to describe the fostering community involved within the model), where six to ten satellite families live near to a dedicated hub home which provides peer support, planned and emergency short break care, and regular social activities.



The constellation also builds links with other adults important to children's care plans, including resources in the wider community that provide enhanced opportunities to learn, develop, and succeed.

Hub Home Carer

A hub home carer is an experienced, approved foster carer who provides support, guidance, and leadership to foster carers and children within the Mockingbird constellation. The hub home carer is a central point of support for all families within the constellation; this includes day care and planned sleepovers for children and young people living with satellite families. They are the key communicators between the hub home, satellite carer homes, and the fostering service.

Satellite Carers

There will be between 6 and 10 satellite families within each constellation. Satellite families are all approved foster carers with Gloucestershire County Council; they are supported by the hub home carer. Satellite families actively contribute and be a part of the constellation, participating in regular social activities, support groups, and training opportunities.

"For the children, it's great. The Hub Home Carers really do think about the children and come up with lots of different ideas for activities. I can see how they flourish and they're meeting other children in the same situation as them."

“It’s nice that you know you can pick up the phone to someone if you’ve had an emotional or a bad day; you can talk to somebody that you’ve met, made friends with because I didn’t have that before Mockingbird. My non-fostering friends don’t really understand things about fostering.”

Feedback from a kinship foster carer about being part of a Mockingbird constellation.

What can satellite carers expect from Mockingbird?

- practical and emotional support from the hub home carers, including evenings and weekends.
- planned and crisis sleepovers for the children and young people in satellite families.
- training and development opportunities with other members of the constellation.
- monthly social events for families within the constellation, providing peer interaction and support for all carers, children, and young people.
- monthly foster carer support groups which will provide peer support and mentoring.
- a close support network of foster carers within the constellation, who can offer peer support and guidance.

What can children and young people expect from Mockingbird?

- Monthly social activities with all members of the constellation.
- Peer relationships with other children and young people.
- A close network of families around them who can meet their diverse needs at various times.
- Support from the hub home carers.
- Sleepovers at the hub home.
- To feel part of a community and a sense of belonging.

Please talk to your supervising social worker if you would like to find out more about being part of a Mockingbird constellation in Gloucestershire.

3.4 Support groups

Meeting with other kinship carers has proven to be extremely beneficial for several reasons. Gloucestershire County Council offer a variety of groups which provide a safe space to meet other kinship carers both face to face and online.

Support groups are a valuable opportunity to share experiences, provide and access support – especially emotional support from professionals and other carers. It can sometimes feel quite isolating being a kinship carer but knowing you have access to other carers who understand and can help you feel less alone.



The support you gain from other kinship carers cannot be underestimated, and therefore we encourage all kinship carers to attend and will be available to facilitate this if needed.

As a kinship carer you are welcome to join any of the support groups held every month. Each group has a theme, and an annual plan is available in advance, helping you to prioritise groups which may be of particular interest to you and your circumstances. This includes a support group for carers who are currently being assessed and may benefit from meeting other families who are in similar situations, need help to prepare for the role, and support during the adjustment. To book these support groups you will need to email friendsandfamilyadmin@gloucestershire.gov.uk.

The support groups are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they are relevant and accessible to all carers, should you have any feedback or requests regarding these groups please contact the Kinship Support Team who will be happy to have a conversation regarding this.



See [Appendix A](#) for 2025 annual support group plan.

3.5 Family Meetings and Mediation

To help make the best decisions for the child, we bring families together through **family meetings**. These are structured, supportive conversations where everyone who cares about the child can share their views, explore options, and plan together.

Sometimes, families need extra help to work through difficult conversations or disagreements. That's where **mediation** comes in. A trained, neutral mediator helps

everyone listen to each other, understand different perspectives, and find common ground—always keeping the child’s wellbeing at the heart of the discussion.

These approaches help families stay involved, feel heard, and often lead to more stable, lasting arrangements for children.

Family Meetings

The Family Meeting is a great opportunity for you and your wider family and close friends to talk about worries within the family and decide how to deal with them in a way that makes sense to you.

It is an opportunity to bring together family and friends who together can make decisions and plans for the care, protection and support of a child in your family, including looking at what support they can give you to enable you to look after you as well as those who depend on you.

If you engage in a Family Meeting, you will be provided with an independent coordinator whose role includes:

- Visiting you at home to explain how the meeting is organised, what it will look like for you as a family and answer any questions you have. If you decide to go ahead, the coordinator will work with you to plan the meeting and decide who to invite.
- Visit all the family and friends that you have identified and discuss the meeting with them.
- Arrange an advocate for the child. This is someone who will work with the child before the Family Meeting to help them put across their views and wishes. The advocate will come to the meeting to support them to express their views and make all the necessary preparations for the meeting.

To access a Family Meeting a lead professional will need to complete a referral, and you can get help with this from the Kinship Support Team.



Further information about the Family Meeting Service can be found online at www.glosfamiliesdirectory.org.uk. Alternatively, you can call 01242 532353 or email fms@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Mediation

Kinship mediation is a process that helps kinship carers and parents work together to make decisions about a child. It can help with contact arrangements (also known as family time), communication, and conflict management.

Mediation plays a crucial role in resolving disagreements related to special guardianship arrangements, ensuring the child’s best interests are prioritised.

Benefits of Mediation Services:

- **Impartial Facilitation:** trained mediators provide a neutral platform for all parties to express their views and work towards mutually agreeable solutions.
- **Cost-Effective Resolution:** Mediation often reduces the need for prolonged legal proceedings, saving time and resources.
- **Confidentiality:** Discussions during mediation are private, fostering open communication without fear of external judgment.

The Kinship Support Team can offer mediation as it has two trained mediators within the team. If you would like to know more about this service, please contact the team to discuss your circumstances.

3.6 Family Time

Family time (which is sometimes called ‘contact’) is about providing opportunities for children who are unable to live with their birth parents to stay connected with their family and friends, and other people who are important to them. It can be direct meet ups or indirect (through things like phone calls, letters and cards, or video calls). Kinship carers play a crucial role in supporting and encouraging children and young people to maintain these important relationships.

It is recognised that family time in kinship arrangements can often be challenging with the complex family dynamics and the emotional ties within the family unit. You will be supported sensitively in relation to this whilst keeping the child at the centre of decisions and planning.

It is always encouraged that carers will facilitate any family time with children and those who they are staying connected with, and you will be supported to do this, including top tips for family time and advice and guidance before and after if needed. Any arrangements for family time should be considered and agreed upon prior to any order being granted and included in your support plan. This should include who is facilitating it, how often it should happen, and any associated costs.

Responsibility for organising family time

- If a **child remains in the care of the local authority**, it is the local authority who is responsible for managing, arranging, and monitoring family time arrangements. That said, you may be asked as a kinship foster carer to supervise this and, if there were no safeguarding concerns, we would advise this.
- For **Special Guardians**, family time plans should be clearly set out in the special guardianship support plan to include frequency, duration, location, and supervision requirements if needed (including by whom). As a Special Guardian you are responsible for ensuring that family time remains in the best interest of the child and this can be decreased or increased if needed but should always be

clearly explained to the adults whom the family time is with.

- For **Private Fostering arrangements**, the family time is usually agreed between the carer and the birth parents, taking into consideration the wishes of the child. This will be considered in the assessment and ongoing visits with the private Fostering Social Worker who will be able to support this, if needed.
- For children living with carers on **Child Arrangement Orders**, family time is usually agreed by the court when making the order. However, the Kinship Support Team is available to offer advice and support in relation to this.

Family time advice and support

The Kinship support team offers advice, guidance, and support with family time arrangements for all Kinship carers. As examples they can support with:

- Supervision of family time for one year post special guardianship order being granted via the Family Focus team.
- Family support workers can offer support (like mediation) to try to resolve any issues arising from family time arrangements for Kinship carers as outlined in the support plan.
- Advice and guidance with issues or reviewing family time arrangements.
- Help identify providers for facilitation, supervision, or venues of family time.
- Manage indirect arrangements when needed.
- Training for kinship carers in managing family time.



Details of private family time providers can be found in Section 5 of this document in [useful resources](#).

3.7 Housing

Gloucestershire County Council recognises that housing can be a complex issue for kinship families. You can become overcrowded or struggle with problems related to your housing as a result of becoming a kinship carer and welcoming other children into your home.

Gloucestershire County Council do not manage the local authority housing schemes and consequently do not have any jurisdiction on the allocation or management of this.

If you have issues connected to housing, we will do our utmost to support and help you, depending on your personal circumstances, this may look different.

Examples of how we can help include:

- Supportive letters to district councils requesting a move to a bigger property.
- Support to appeal housing decisions e.g. banding.
- Financial support to adapt or extend your own home.
- Financial support to move (private rental) including contributions to deposits or increased rent.
- Help with clearing the home.

3.8 Education

The changes following the publication of 'Championing Kinship Care' (December 2023), meant that the role of the virtual school and the virtual head teacher expanded. It is an expectation that they will champion the educational progress of all children in kinship care.

Gloucestershire Virtual School promotes and supports the educational attainment and progress of children and young people in care from nursery to 18 years old, through effective collaboration with schools, social care, and other agencies. It also offers support, guidance, and advice for previous children in care and children with a social worker.

In September 2024, the Virtual School duty was expanded to provide advice, support, and guidance to kinship carers with a special guardianship order, child arrangement order or private fostering arrangement, regardless of whether the child had previously been in local authority care.

The Virtual School can provide the following educational support for children in kinship care and have previously been looked after:

- Provision of information, advice, and guidance to carers
- Children to receive Ever 6 pupil premium funding – If a child had free school meals prior to being made subject to SGO, CAO or becoming privately fostered, this funding can be extended, up to 6 years old.
- Entitlement to Pupil Premium Plus funding
- Eligible to secure a school place through Fair Access Protocol.
- Virtual school education adviser can attend education meetings in a supporting capacity if needed.

For children who have not previously been looked after, the Virtual School can provide the following educational support:

- Providing advice, guidance and information to carers, education settings and other professionals on areas including:
 - School admission arrangements
 - Special Educational Needs
 - Attendance
 - Exclusions
 - Homework
 - Choosing GCSE options
 - Behaviour in relation to education settings
- Signposting to other services that can offer advice and support.
- Making information available to education settings to improve awareness of the needs of previous children in care. This may include:
 - Supporting understanding of the impact that issues such as trauma and attachment difficulties and other mental health issues can have on previous children in care, and signpost schools to appropriate resources and tools where required.
 - Supporting children to be aspirational for their future education, training, and employment. - Promoting positive educational and recreational activities.
 - Guidance on effective use of Pupil Premium. (Unlike Pupil Premium Plus for children in care, Pupil Premium for previous children in care is not a personal budget for individual pupils, and schools do not have to spend pupil premium so that it solely benefits pupils who meet the funding criteria.)
- Building and developing good working relationships with designated teachers for previously looked after children in Gloucestershire, and supporting these settings to have high expectations in helping previous children in care achieve their full potential in education.
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to provide help for children within school to supportively engage with parents and carers when facing difficulties and challenges.



For more information about the Virtual School call 01452 328360 or visit www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/vschool or see the [Useful contacts and resources](#) section at the end of this document.

3.9 Therapeutic Support

The Adoption and Special Guardian Support Fund (ASGSF) is available to help cover the cost of therapeutic services for children who are living with Special Guardians or under a Child Arrangement order, if they were previously a Child in Care prior to the order being granted. It is targeted toward those who may need additional therapeutic services to address and support the young person's emotional and developmental needs.

Local authorities are responsible for applying for the funding. They must apply within three months of conducting and assessing the family's support needs.

Funding is available for children and young people up to and including age 21. It can be extended to those up to the age of 25 if they have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) in place.

If you require support via the ASGSF then please contact the Kinship Support team who will be able to help you and consider your need via an assessment of need and if appropriate an application to the fund.

We recognise that this element of support is not available to all children living in kinship arrangements and, where possible, we try to provide therapeutic support for all children. If you do not meet the above criteria but would like to seek advice and guidance on how to access it, please contact the Kinship Support Team to discuss this further.

For any children where they require additional support with their emotional health and need to access health services to help, the Kinship Support Team can advise on access to services such as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Additionally, you can access support within the community via your GP, school nurse, Health Visitor or child's school.

3.10 Employment

We recognise that a lot of kinship carers are employed alongside caring for the children in their care. Work commitments and caring commitments can come into conflict with each other, putting additional strain on a kinship carer.

Gloucestershire County Council is working within the community to develop an awareness of the needs of kinship carers and welcome employers to become kinship friendly.

There is guidance available for you to share with employers – 'Kinship carers in the workplace: Guidance for employers' which sets out the role of kinship carers and how they can best be supported in the workplace. This can include adapting HR policies, signposting employers to existing workplace entitlements, and creating a culture of support. Kinship carers are already entitled to access some of the UK's family-friendly workplace entitlements designed to help parents and carers combine work with childcare.

The UK's national charity for working parents and carers offers useful advice regarding time off work for grandparents and kinship carers, and other topics you might find helpful.

<https://workingfamilies.org.uk/articles/time-off-work-for-grandparents-and-kinship-carers/>

Other support that the Kinship team can provide regarding your employers includes:

- Supportive letter to employers to help them understand how they can support you as a kinship carer at work.
- Provide you with visits and support outside of working hours.
- Help to apply for funding for childcare.
- Financial support.

3.11 Finances

Financial support for kinship carers

Becoming a kinship carer can have financial implications. Support may be available through universal benefits and local authority allowances depending on your care arrangement.

Universal Benefits

Kinship carers may be eligible for the following benefits:

- Child Benefit
- Child Tax Credits
- Pension Credit
- Guardian Allowance
- Universal Credit

Kinship fostering

Kinship foster carers receive weekly fostering fees, age-related child allowances, and additional payments for birthdays, holidays, and expenses. Full details are provided in the **Core Costs for Foster Carers** document.

Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)

Financial support may be provided to special guardians based on assessed need. This includes support for legal costs, exceptional care needs, and maintenance. A means test is conducted and reviewed annually. Support may be time-limited and subject to reassessment.

Former foster carers

Special guardians who were foster carers may receive matched child-related allowances for up to two years. Continued support beyond this period is based on reassessment and exceptional circumstances.

Legal costs

Local authorities may contribute to legal costs for SGO applications and related orders. Contributions are case-specific and must be agreed in advance.

Financial reviews

Financial support is reviewed annually or upon changes in circumstances. Guardians must submit assessment forms to avoid suspension of payments.

Urgent support

Urgent financial support may be provided without delay, subject to approval and subsequent review.

Private fostering

Private foster carers typically receive financial support from birth parents. Government benefits may also be claimed. Local authority support may be considered following a financial assessment.

Child Arrangement Orders

Allowances may be available from children's services. These are discretionary and means-tested.



For further information on financial support for kinship carers please read [Appendix D](#)

3.12 Early help provision

Early Help is about providing support to children, young people, and their families as soon as they need it, or when there is a strong likelihood that they may need it in the future. It is also about providing support at any and every stage of a child's life: pre-birth, during pregnancy, childhood, or adolescence.

In Gloucestershire, we believe that families are best supported by practitioners who are already working with them, as well as other organisations and services within their local community. These organisations include health services, schools, learning providers, councils, charities and voluntary groups, children and family centres, the police, housing providers and many others.

‘Early Help’ is an umbrella term that describes the work of many agencies engaged with children and families and focuses on how we can help people to do things for themselves and build strength within families. If we can get this right early on, at the right time, we get the opportunity to help people with areas of their life they may be struggling with, which sets people up for a better long-term future.



Working with Early Help is voluntary, and you can refer yourselves or ask a professional known to you to do so on your behalf. You can access the support of Early Help by either:

Contacting the Gloucestershire Children's Helpdesk on Telephone 01452 426565 or email Childrenshelpdesk@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Children, young people, and families with additional needs can be supported by the *Graduated Pathway of Early Help and Support*. Additional details can be found by clicking on the link below or by visiting www.glosfamiliesdirectory.org.uk and searching for Graduated Pathway of Early Help.



[Glosfamilies Directory | Graduated Pathway of Early Help and Support FAQs](http://www.glosfamiliesdirectory.org.uk)

Following a referral to Early Help

Once your request for support has been received, the service will contact you. This may be via telephone, letter, or email to follow up on the referral and identify the best way to help and support you.

The Early Help practitioners include:

- **Early Help Co-Ordinators** who provide support for practitioners who are working with children and families to meet their needs through the Graduated Pathway
- **Community Social Workers** work with organisations to provide a social work perspective on families they are supporting. This supports practitioners to ensure families receive the right level of support and act as a link between Children's Social Care and the community.
- **Early Help Partnership Managers** support partnership work between organisations in communities to support the development of resources available to children and families. They attend District Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) to make sure there is a focus on Early Help for vulnerable families alongside wider community safety concerns.
- **The Education and Inclusion Specialist Support Team (EISSS)** provides advice, guidance, and support on educational issues including attendance, children missing education, support for pupils with SEND and elective home education. Further information can be found at [Your Pupils](#)
- **Advisory Teaching Service (ATS)** The ATS works closely with schools and early years settings to identify pupils who are likely to experience difficulties due to their social and emotional needs. Further information can be found online by clicking [Advisory teaching service](#)
- **Educational Psychology Service (EPS)** offers a comprehensive psychology service for children and young people (0 – 25). As educational psychologists, they use their knowledge of psychology, child development and social interaction to promote young people's development, learning, and wellbeing. The Educational Psychology Service works with families, educational settings, health and social care partners, and other organisations.
- **The Disabled Children and Young People Service** provides social care assessment and support planning for disabled children, young people and their families, and a range of support to meet assessed needs. Support is intended to enable disabled children to have the same range of opportunities as non-disabled children, and with their families to be able to experience the 'ordinary' things of life that others take for granted. Further information can be found online by clicking on the link below: [Glofamilies Directory | The Disabled Children and Young People Service](#)

- **Families First** uses a flexible approach with families, according to their individual needs and it is not a 'one size fits all.' They aim to help families within a 6–12-week review cycle to make and sustain improvements, using a 'whole family approach' which involves identifying the things that are impacting on the family environment and then using their strengths to build stronger family units. Families First can help with things like:
 - **Keeping your family safe and well** – your health and wellbeing, stress, and depression, managing disabilities, eating and exercise, drinking or drugs.
 - **Parenting** – support with relationships, communication, routines and responding to children's behaviour.
 - **Education** – helping children and young people to access their education and make positive progress.
 - **Difficult life events** – support if needed to help with managing relationship breakdown, bereavement, trauma, loss, and abuse.
 - **Moving towards employment** – find out about training, CV and interview preparation, voluntary work experience and preparation for employment.
 - **Creating new opportunities** – helping you and your family to get involved in community activities and networking with others.
 - **Housing** – help with budgeting, benefits, managing your debts, community relationships and, where needed, we will provide help with hygiene and cleanliness.
 - **Antisocial behaviour and crime** – we can support families to explore ways to reduce antisocial behaviour and offending, and we can bring in specialist support if needed.



Further information can be found online by visiting [Glosfamilies Directory | Families First](#)

3.13 Fostering secure site

As a kinship **foster carer**, you will have access to a secure part of the fostering site which contains useful information, guidance, and important guidance for all foster carers. The site also houses the quarterly **newsletter** sent out by the fostering service which will keep you updated on events, training, news, and opportunities.

The link below takes you to the fostering pages of the Gloucestershire County Council fostering website pages. <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/fostering/> Click on the 'Secure Site' tab and your request will be dealt with by the fostering admin team.



If you have any problems accessing the secure site, please speak to your supervising social worker.

3.14 How to make a complaint or register a compliment

Feedback from everyone using our service is fully welcomed and is a fantastic opportunity for us to learn and develop our practice, ensuring those who access it have the best possible experience.

If you have any questions or concerns about the service you receive, it is important to raise these initially with the relevant Team Manager and if they are unable to resolve it one of the senior managers will be happy to help.



All complaints are taken seriously, and it is important that you raise your concerns with us. You can do this using any of the following methods:

- Telephone 01452 427614
- Send an email to corporatecomplaintsteam@gloucestershire.gov.uk
- Fill in an online form at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk
- Send a letter to the complaints manager at, Complaints Team, Gloucestershire County Council, Shire Hall, Westgate Street, Gloucester, GL1 2TG.

It is equally beneficial to **share positive experiences and compliments via the service**, this also helps to grow and develop the service, learning from what works for you and what we can do more of so please do share your positive feedback too via the same process above.

4. Glossary and Definitions

Looked after child or Child in Care	A person under 18 who is subject to a care order (under section 31 of the 1989 Act or voluntarily accommodated (by someone with PR) under section 20.
Connected person	The term is used in regulations and guidance to include relatives, friends, and other persons connected to the child.
Parental responsibility (PR)	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.
Foster Carer	A person who is approved as a foster parent by a local authority or fostering agency under regulation 27 of the 2011 fostering regulations.
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, is to be cared for in that arrangement for 28 days or more.
Close relative	Defined as: grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or stepparent by marriage or civil partnership.
Child Arrangement Order (CAO)	A legal order specifying with whom a child will live usually lasts until the child is 18. Parental responsibility is shared with the parents.
Special Guardianship Order (SGO)	A formal court order made by the family court which places a child in the care of another person, usually someone with a close relationship with the child.

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 or Family Meeting (FGC)	A decision-making meeting in which a child's wider family network comes together to agree how they will support the child and family moving forward.
Regulation 24 approval	The temporary approval of a kinship foster carer to enable a child who is looked after by the local authority to be cared for by a connected person.
Fostering panel	An independent panel of people with relevant experience in fostering that considers the suitability of fostering assessments to approve foster carers. They meet in person at Shire Hall, Gloucester.
ADM	Agency Decision Maker, this is a nominated person within a local authority who makes specific fostering decisions.

5. Useful contacts and resources

Service/Team/Role	Contact Details
Kinship Assessment Team	KinshipAssessmentTeam@gloucestershire.gov.uk 01452 425282
Kinship Support Team	KinshipSupportTeam@gloucestershire.gov.uk 01452 425320
Training support	fostercarerstraining@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Payment advice	fosteringsupportfinancebox@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Private Fostering	pfosteringcontact@gloucestershire.gov.uk 01452 425320
Gloucestershire's Virtual School	www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/vschool
Virtual School – Head	Jane.Featherstone@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Virtual School – Asst Head	Lindsay.evans@gloucestershire.gov.uk 07557 214097
Virtual School – Education Advisor for previous CIC	Sophie.Hill@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Virtual School – Admin	virtualschooladmin@gloucestershire.gov.uk 01452 328360
Kinship organisation	www.kinship.org.uk 03300 167235
Family Rights Group	www.frg.org.uk
Kinship Carers UK	www.kinshipcarersuk.com 07714 531802
Family Information Service	https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/children-young-people-and-families/family-information-service-fis/ 01452 427362
Advisory Teaching Service	https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/schoolsnet/your-pupils/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send/send-support-services/advisory-teaching-service/
The Disabled Children & Young People Service	https://www.glosfamiliesdirectory.org.uk/kb5/gloucs/glosfamilies/service.page?id=2-5QQwl8zA8
The Gloucestershire Society	www.gloucestershiresociety.org.uk
Kinship Carers UK	www.kinshipcarersuk.com 07714 531802

Gloucestershire Welfare Support Scheme	https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/gloucestershire-welfare-support-scheme/
Gloucestershire Citizens Advice	www.gloscab.org.uk/get-advice/
Free Family Law Clinic	https://www.uwe.ac.uk/business/business-and-law-clinic/services#abb809923-f4be-4fea-9649-f857291f0bcb
Family Mediation Services (Glos)	https://www.glosfamiliesdirectory.org.uk/kb5/gloucs/glosfamilies/service.page?id=WsNn3FZBFSw
Family & Parenting Support via CCP	https://www.ccp.org.uk/family-support/

Local Services offering Family Time/Contact:

Service/Team/Role	Contact Details
Gloucester Child Contact Centre	https://naccc.org.uk/centres/gloucester-child-contact-centre/ £60 per referral, £5 per contact session
Dursley and Cam Child Contact Centre	https://www.dursleytab.org.uk/wplive/child-contact-centre £25 for initial referral by parent requesting contact
Bubba's Contact Centre – Brockworth	https://www.walkthewalkcic.co.uk/bubbas-contact-centre/
Cheltenham Child Contact Services	https://ymcacheltenham.com/cheltenham-child-contact-centre/ £60 admin fee / £10 handover / Supported contact £10 per hour Supervised contact £55 per hour, £100 for 2 hours
Family Ties (Bristol)	https://familytiescs.com/our-centres/bristol-contact-centre/ Offer community-based family time in Gloucestershire also
Children's Contact Services	https://www.childrenscontactservices.com/where-we-work/ Centres in Stroud, Cheltenham, and Cirencester

Local or National Services offering Mediation:

Service/Team/Role	Contact Details
National Family Mediation	https://www.nfm.org.uk
Access Mediation Service Gloucestershire	https://accessmediationservices.co.uk/family-mediation-services-gloucester/
Cheltenham Mediation Services	https://www.cheltenhammediation.co.uk
Mediation & More	https://www.mediationandmore.co.uk/our-locations/

Appendix A: Kinship & SGO support group information



Kinship Carers Support Groups 2025

JAN 22
FACE TO FACE: 10-11:30 AM
NOAH'S ARK CC
VIRTUAL: 6-7 PM
Post Christmas/New Year positivity

FEB 24
VIRTUAL: 10-11:30 AM
VIRTUAL: 6-7 PM
Family time - issues and barriers

MAR 21
FACE TO FACE: 10-11:30 AM
BROCKWORTH CC
VIRTUAL: 6-7 PM
Tax and National Insurance

APR 30
VIRTUAL: 10-11:30 AM
VIRTUAL: 6-7 PM
PDPs, training and reflections

MAY 19
FACE TO FACE: 10-11:30 AM
GARDNERS LANE CC
VIRTUAL: 6-7 PM
Care Leavers and transition

JUN 27
VIRTUAL: 10-11:30 AM
VIRTUAL: 6-7 PM
Carers support and available resources

JUL 23
FACE TO FACE: 10-11:30 AM
BROCKWORTH CC
VIRTUAL: 6-7 PM
National minimum standards for fostering

SEP 29
FACE TO FACE: 10-11:30 AM
NOAH'S ARK CC
VIRTUAL: 6-7 PM
Why are safe care practices important for fostering?

OCT 24
VIRTUAL: 10-11:30 AM
VIRTUAL: 6-7 PM
Children & Young People's Emotional Health & Well-being

NOV 26
FACE TO FACE: 10-11:30 AM
GARDNERS LANE CC
VIRTUAL: 6-7 PM
Every Story Matters - (life story books) and feedback/ideas for 2026

NOTES & VENUES
PLEASE EMAIL TO BOOK A PLACE ON ANY OF THE SUPPORT GROUPS (10 MAX FOR IN-PERSON; 15 FOR VIRTUAL). IF LESS THAN 3 CARERS ARE SIGNED UP TO ATTEND ANY IN-PERSON GROUPS 2 DAYS PRIOR, THE GROUP WILL NOT RUN.
PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND SO WE CAN OFFER YOUR PLACE TO ANOTHER CARER.
friendsandfamily@gloucestershire.gov.uk
BROCKWORTH CHILDREN'S CENTRE (GL3 4JL)
NOAH'S ARK CHILDREN'S CENTRE (GL20 5HU)
GARDNER'S LANE CHILDREN CENTRE (GL51 9JW)
KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED FOR DETAILS OF A CHRISTMAS MEAL/GET TOGETHER!



SGO Carers Support Groups 2025



JAN 13 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM HESTERS WAY CC</small> 31 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM BROCKWORTH CC</small>	FEB 11 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM HESTERS WAY CC</small> 28 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM BROCKWORTH CC</small>	MAR 11 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM HESTERS WAY CC</small> 28 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM BROCKWORTH CC</small>
APR 15 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM HESTERS WAY CC</small> 25 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM BROCKWORTH CC</small>	MAY 13 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM HESTERS WAY CC</small> 23 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM BROCKWORTH CC</small>	JUN 10 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM HESTERS WAY CC</small> 27 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM BROCKWORTH CC</small>
JUL 8 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM HESTERS WAY CC</small>	SEP 9 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM HESTERS WAY CC</small> 26 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM BROCKWORTH CC</small>	OCT 14 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM HESTERS WAY CC</small> 31 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM BROCKWORTH CC</small>
NOV 11 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM HESTERS WAY CC</small> 28 <small>09:30 - 11:30 AM BROCKWORTH CC</small>	NOTES & VENUES <p>ALL SGO CARERS ARE FREE TO TURN UP TO ANY OF THE SUPPORT GROUPS. YOU CAN CALL 01452 425320 IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS. TOPICS VARY FOR EACH MEETING.</p> <p>HESTERS WAY CHILDREN'S CENTRE, CHELTENHAM, GL51 0ES BROCKWORTH CHILDREN'S CENTRE, GLOUCESTER, GL3 4JL</p> <p>25 AUGUST 2025 PICNIC IN THE PARK, 10:00AM - 2:00PM PITTVILLE PARK, PRESTBURY, CHELTENHAM, GL50 4SH</p> <p>11 DECEMBER 2025 CHRISTMAS LUNCH, 12:00 MIDDAY TOBY CARVERY, BROCKWORTH, GLOUCESTER, GL3 4PH</p>	

Appendix B: 8 Top Tips for Creating a Life Story Book

1. **Choose the life story book with the child.** If the child in your care does not have one, then please buy one together. It could be a lever arch A4 folder that should have meaning to the child and into which documents can be securely added.



2. **A life story book should:**
 - a. Be a full chronological record of the child's life.
 - b. Be something the child can access when they choose.
 - c. Help to promote the child's sense of self and self-worth.

3. **Making entries into the life story book.** If you have a child who has been in your care for some time, then there is no need to backdate all the entries as the thought of this could be overwhelming, start from now, and add one or two entries per month.

4. **Capturing the memories.** The life story book is an account of a child's life through activities, anecdotes, photos, pictures, and documents of events that have taken place within the family. Remember to add photos of yourself, your house, the child's bedroom, garden etc. and write about what it was like on the day they came to stay with you. Insert into the book one-page profiles of all the professionals involved in the child's life. Should the child move to a new home, write a goodbye letter to the child, perhaps mentioning your hopes and dreams for them in the future.



5. **Work together on the life story book.** The value is in creating the book together, having the conversations that matter and building the memories around the events that have taken place. This will have a positive impact on relationships and promoting their sense of self. Not every child will want to be involved in their creation of their life story book, in these cases it will need to be created for them for a time in the future when they may be interested in their story.
6. **Keep the life story book safe.** The life story book (wallpaper and memory box) belongs to the child, and it is their story and information to share with whom they choose. However, we do not want the child to bear the responsibility for ensuring that this information is safe and therefore carers and other professionals working with them need to discuss this with them.

We ask that the life story books, wallpaper, and memory boxes remain in the home. If the need arises and these items must be transported, every care should be taken to keep them safe to reduce the risk of them being damaged or misplaced.

- 7. Life story book discussions with your supervising social worker.** Your supervising social worker will discuss and view the contributions you have made, discuss support you may need for further ideas and help you to overcome any barriers. What is in the life story book needs to be recorded on the child's file in case the original gets lost or destroyed; you will need to email copies of your contributions to your supervising social worker every month, so they can upload it to your and the child's file.
- 8. Tips on organisation of life story book information:**
 - a. If you take photographs on your phone, create a file to store them in for when you are ready to attach to a document or print, making them easily accessible.
 - b. Use clear plastic wallets to hold entry tickets, event leaflets, cards, tags, pictures etc. so they are easily accessible when you come to create the given page in the life story book.
 - c. Work on the book regularly to prevent having to do a lot at once.
 - d. Have a jar at hand to put notes in about things the child has achieved or said or prompts about what you want to write about in their life story book.



Appendix C: Every Story Matters guidelines

Foster for
Gloucestershire
County Council

Every Story Matters

Guidance for foster carers to complete a life story book with the children and young people in their care

'The foster carers are the custodians of the child's precious memories'

Wrench and Naylor (2013)

The word 'child' has been used throughout this document for ease of reading, but this information also applies to the young people in care.

Children need their foster carers to contribute and record the story of their stay with them as fully as possible.

Everyone involved in a child's life plays a part in their life story and by working together we can provide the child with an understanding of their story while in care.

We ask foster carers to create a life story book with or for the child in their care, documenting their family experiences throughout the duration of the child's stay with them. It is important to note that foster carers are NOT responsible for completing the formal pieces of life story work with the child.

The overall responsibility for a child's life story work lies with their social worker. This means their social worker will complete a small piece of life story work during their statutory visits, helping them with any questions they may have about their history and experiences. This work can then be added into the child's life story book.

This guide is designed to support the foster carers in the creation of a life story book and will discuss:

- Life story book
- Keeping the wallpaper, life story books and memory boxes safe
- Working together on the life story book
- What foster carers can contribute to a life story book, including suggestions about: babies, parent and child, memory boxes and videos.

If you have a foster child who has been in your care for some time, then there is no need to backdate all the entries. We are asking you to write a summary to go into their life story book about the experiences and memories you have shared together. Then continue with the life story book entries from the present day following the guidance given.




The life story book

Each child should have their own life story book. If the child in your care does not have one, then please buy one together; it should have meaning to the child and be something they like. Please take into consideration the size of the life story book and ensure that documents can be securely added as the majority of documents will be A4.

Life story books are currently a statutory requirement for children with a plan for adoption. Gloucestershire County Council's aim is to provide all children in care with a life story book. This is a real-time working document, representing the child's story in chronological order. It is an account of a child's life through activities, words, pictures, and documents of events that have taken place within the foster family. This will include life story work completed by their social worker and/or family support worker.

The life story book will also include the profiles of all professionals working with the child and new profiles added when there is a change of social worker, family support worker and independent reviewing officer. When there has been a change of foster home the new 'Welcome to Home' book needs to be added.

A life story book should:

- Be a full chronological record of the child's life.
- Be something the child can access when they choose.
- Help to promote the child's sense of self and self-worth.

If a child moves to a new foster home their life story book, wallpaper, child's guide, and memory box moves with them.



Keeping life story books, wallpaper, and memory boxes safe

The life story book, wallpaper and memory box belongs to the child, and it is their story and information to share with whom they choose. We do not want the child to bear the responsibility for ensuring that this information is safe. For this we need the foster carers and other professionals working with the child to discuss the importance of this with them.

All life story books, wallpaper and memory box's need to remain in the foster home during the child's stay. If the need arises and these items must be transported, every care should be taken to keep them safe to reduce the risk of them being damaged or misplaced.

Working together on the life story book

The child should be encouraged to be involved in the creation and upkeep of their life story book and can do so by helping you add photographs, decorations, and text. By capturing their words and writing them down you are valuing what they are sharing with you.

The value is in creating the book together, having the conversations that matter and building the memories around the events that have taken place. This will have a positive impact on how a child builds relationships and promotes their sense of self.

Not every child will want to be involved in their creation of their life story book, in these cases it will need to be created for them for a time in the future when they may be interested in their story.



Every Story Matters guidelines cont.

Ways foster carers can contribute to the child's life story book

- Welcome to home book
- Descriptions of what the child was like when they arrived, what they liked and disliked
- First day with the (foster carers name)
- Developmental milestones like sitting, walking, learning to ride a bike
- Their own special memories of the child
- Birthdays, Christmas, and other family celebrations, outings, holidays etc
- Photos of favourite places etc.
- First dentist appointment
- First day at school
- First pair of shoes
- First haircut
- Favourite songs, nursery rhymes or poems
- Details and photos of the foster family, including extended family, pets, family friends, and who they got on with and who they did not
- If appropriate, without shaming, times when they had arguments, sulks, or other difficulties
- How you make up after a disagreement, for example by go for a walk, having a hug, drinking hot chocolate together etc.
- Special rituals the child likes
- Souvenirs of school, like photos, certificates, reports, photos of and stories from teachers
- What it is like for them to see their family, for example excited, worried, apprehension
- Illnesses
- Photos of birth family with foster family (if appropriate)
- Pictures from nursery or school or artwork from college
- Crafts and pictures completed in the foster home, school, playgroup
- Anecdotes
- Photos of parents and relatives (If appropriate)
- Photos of friends
- Details of brothers and sisters
- The child's views and memories
- Details of ceremonies like baptism, graduation, family weddings
- Favourite foods, likes and dislikes
- A letter from the foster carer with their hopes and wishes for the child's future when they move on from the foster home.

Babies - in addition to what has been mentioned above

- Photos of maternity hospital
- Date and time of birth
- Weight, length, head circumference at birth
- Any items from the hospital like their identity tag
- Celebration of birth cards
- Description of what it was like when they came out of hospital and what the baby wore
- Describe their first night and the first few days
- Dates of first smile, sounds, words, tooth, steps etc.

Parent and baby placement - in addition to what has been mentioned above

If possible, work with mum or dad to create the book for the baby.

- Photos of parent and baby together
- What was the pregnancy like, did mum have any cravings?
- Where and when did mum go into labour?
- What was the labour like?
- What was the relationship like between mum or dad and baby?
- What was the routine, interactions, and responses?
- What was their favourite toy or comforter?



Things to remember

- There is an expectation that one or two pages are added to the child's life story book each month
- What is in the life story book needs to be recorded on their file in case the original gets lost or destroyed; you will need to email copies of your contributions to your supervising social worker every month. In your supervision your supervising social worker will discuss and view the contributions you have made, discuss support you may need for further ideas and help you to overcome any barriers.

Top Tips on organisation of items from foster carer

- If you are taking photographs on your phone, create a file to store them in for when you are ready to attach to a document or print, making them easily accessible
- Use clear plastic wallets to hold entry tickets, event leaflets, cards, tags, pictures etc. so they are easily accessible when you come to create the given page in the life story book
- Work on the book regularly to prevent having to do a lot at once
- Have a jar at hand to put notes in about things the child has achieved or said or prompts about what you want to write about in their life story book.

Suggested reading - should you wish to explore life story further

- Building the Bonds of Attachment - Daniel Hughes
- The Body Keeps the Score - Bessel Van Der Kolk
- My Name is Why - Lemn Sissay
- The Boy who was Raised as a Dog - Bruce Perry and Maia Szalavitz
- Life Story Books for Adopted and Fostered Children - Joy Rees (new edition)
- Life Story Work with Children Who are Fostered or Adopted - Katie Wrench and Lesley Naylor
- Life Story Work: why, what, how and when - Tony Ryan and Roger Walker



COVID-19 and its impact

If it is relevant to the age of the child, talk and write about COVID-19 and the impact it had on their life. This was a big life event that we lived through collectively and the child may want to share their memories of this time when they are older.

This could include their experience of school closures, home schooling and how they saw their family. What did they find easy, what did they find hard? You could also include positive activities, like the clap for the NHS, the events that took place around the country to lift spirits and the creation of rainbow artwork.

Memory Box

When a child is placed with you, involve them in making or choosing a memory box. The memory box will hold the items that have a particular memory or emotional connection too, as the child grows these items will contribute to their sense of identity.

Think about the future, some children may not seem interested at the time but as they get older these memories may become more precious.

Remember to take photographs of the items in the box just in case they get lost or damaged.

Videos

When the child is an adult it is important for them to be able to look back at videos of themselves as a child, these memories can be recorded and stored on a memory stick. Please ensure copies have been given to the child's social worker or your supervising social worker to pass on.

Appendix D: Financial support for kinship carers

Becoming a kinship carer can have a financial impact on you and there may be support available for you via universal benefits and allowances, including:

- Child Benefit
- Child Tax Credits
- Pension Credit
- Guardian Allowance
- Universal Credit

As kinship carers, you may need additional financial support for one-off expenses or on a more regular basis to enable you to continue to care for a child in the long term.

In addition, you may be entitled to financial support from the local authority depending on your circumstances. Details on financial support are listed below.

Finances & kinship fostering

Kinship foster carers are financially supported in line with general foster carers which include a weekly fostering fee, and an age-related allowance for the child they are caring for. This also includes additional payments for birthday and Christmas allowances, expenses, and holiday contributions.

Full details and guidance related to the financial support available to kinship foster carers can be found in the Core Cost Document provided to all carers.

Finances & Special Guardianship Order

The general principle is that where a person is seeking to make a permanent and substantial commitment to caring for a child by means of a Special Guardianship Order, this commitment should include a willingness and ability to meet the costs associated with caring for a child in the long-term. The financial means of the prospective special guardians to care for the child, as with prospective adopters, is an important part of the assessment of their suitability and ability to meet the needs of the child.

That said, Government guidance says that special guardianship arrangements should not fail purely due to financial restrictions. Financial support should be available to help secure a suitable arrangement where this is not possible because of a financial obstacle.

Each case must be assessed on its own facts. It would not be lawful, for example, to pay a flat rate to all Special Guardians, or a fixed percentage of fostering allowance.

The provision of financial support will be considered:

- When it is necessary to enable a special guardian to care for a child.
- When a child needs exceptional care due to disability, emotional or behaviour difficulties or previous neglect or abuse.

- To help towards the legal costs for applying for an SGO.
- When it is necessary to contribute towards the cost of accommodating and maintaining a child.

The local authority must also consider:

- Any other grant, benefit, allowance, or resource which is available to the person in respect of their needs because of becoming a special guardian of the child.
- Any investment income, tax credit or benefit, which would be available should the child live with them.
- The amount required by the special guardian or prospective special guardian in respect of the reasonable outgoings and commitments (e.g. housing, transport and daily living expenses) but not including outgoings in respect of the child, the financial needs that relate to the child (e.g. diet or replacement bedding) or the resource of the child (e.g. trust fund).

Where an assessment of need identifies a need for financial support, a request is submitted to the decision maker for SGO – Head of Service.

A financial means test will be completed, and the decision maker will decide the amount and the period for which any financial support will be paid. There is no expectation that financial support will continue after the specified period. The special guardians can request an assessment of support needs, including financial support at any stage. Any further support or financial support will be based on the outcome of an assessment of need.

Gloucestershire County Council uses a standardised means test devised by the Department for Education.

If, when completing a financial means assessment (including a review), it is identified that the special guardian has not declared additional income or savings the assessment will be revised accordingly, and the revised financial support plan will be implemented.

Failure to provide information that is required to undertake the financial assessment, or review may result in the termination of financial support.

In exceptional circumstances the local authority can disregard the outcome of a means test when considering whether to provide financial support for legal costs including fees payable to the court.

The local authority has a responsibility to provide notice of the outcome of the assessment, if financial support is to be paid to the special guardian, the proposed amount that would be payable, and any conditions attached to the payment. A SGO allowance is only paid once the decision maker has approved the case.

Financial support to former local authority foster carers

If, at the point when a SGO is granted, the special guardian receives a fostering allowance for the child, Gloucestershire County Council may match the rate of child related

allowance not including birthday, Christmas and mileage allowances (minus child benefit where the special guardian's income is not solely derived from state benefits), for two years from the date of the SGO. For children with exceptional needs, who require additional care as a consequence, consideration will be given to agreeing to paying an allowance until the child is 18 years old.

Regulation 7, SGO Regulations 2005 (as amended) provides that the financial support may include an element of remuneration but ONLY when the decision is made before the SGO is granted, and the local authority considers it necessary to facilitate the person to become a special guardian, in a case where:

- The special guardian or prospective special guardian has been a local authority foster carer (including family, friends, and connected person) in respect to the child; AND
- An element of the remuneration was included in the payments made by the local authority to that person in relation to the fostering of the child or young person.

Regulation 7(2) states that the element of remuneration (fee) ceases to be payable after the expiry of the period of 2 years from the making of the SGO unless the local authority considers its continuation to be necessary having regard to the exceptional needs of the child or any other exceptional circumstances. This only relates to the fostering fee (remuneration) element, not to the entire SGO allowance.

When a child-related allowance or fee is matched for two years, no other financial assessment will be completed during this period. There is no expectation that financial support will continue post the agreed two-year period, however special guardians can request an assessment of need including financial support, at any stage. Any further support will be based on the outcome of the assessment which must be considered by the decision maker. Any further financial support would be means-tested.

For Independent Fostering Agency carers, Gloucestershire County Council would not pay more than the Gloucestershire County Council maximum rate for a child of that age.

Assistance with legal costs

Regulation 6 (2)(c) SGO Regulations 2005 (as amended) provides that the local authority, where it considers that it is appropriate, may contribute to any legal costs including court fees, of a special guardian or prospective special guardian, as may be associated with:

The making of SGO, variation or discharge of the same:

- Application under S8 (Child Arrangement Order):
- An order for financial provision to be made for the child.

Local authorities are not expected to meet the legal costs of a Special Guardianship Order where they oppose an application in respect of a child they previously looked after or in a non-looked after case. Local authorities may wish to advise prospective special

guardians in these circumstances that they may be able to obtain help with legal costs from the Legal Aid Agency.

Gloucestershire County Council are not responsible for funding legal costs post order, for example if the birth parents contest the order or wish to consider a contact order. However, on a case-by-case basis a contribution towards these costs will be considered. This needs to be agreed upon in advance.

Review of financial support

Where financial support is paid, the local authority must review this:

- If there is any relevant change of circumstances that the special guardian agreed to notify, or any breach of a condition comes to the local authority's notice.
- At any (other) stage in the implementation of the plan that the local authority considers appropriate.

The procedure for a financial review replicates the initial assessment for financial support (see above). If the local authority proposes, as a result of the review, to reduce or terminate financial support or revise the plan, the local authority must give the person an opportunity to make representations before any changes are made, but the local authority may suspend financial support pending that decision if they think it appropriate.

Having regard to the review, and after considering any representations received within the period specified in the notice, a decision will be made whether to vary or terminate payment of financial support or whether to seek to recover all or part of any financial support that has been paid; and where appropriate, revise the plan.

The local authority will provide notice of their decision, including the reasons for it and, if applicable, the revised plan.

Where Special Guardians are in receipt of financial support, they will be contacted annually with a Financial Assessment Review Form to be completed, together with a request for information about any change in circumstances for the Special Guardian or the child.

The Assessment Form should be forwarded to the Finance Officer for consideration. If any change in financial support is considered appropriate, the recommended change should be forwarded to the Designated Manager (Special Guardianship Support) for a decision.

Where Special Guardians do not return the Assessment Review Forms within the required time scale, or following a reminder letter, they will be given 28 days' notice of the suspension of payments.

Urgent financial support

Where a person has an urgent need for a service, the assessment process should not delay provision, and arrangements can be made for support to be provided as a matter of urgency in appropriate cases. The approval of the Designated Manager (Special Guardianship Support) will still be required. The local authority will need to review the provision as soon as possible after the support has been provided in accordance with the procedures set out above.

Finances & private fostering

There is no specific financial support for private foster carers, and, in most cases, birth parents are expected to provide financial support for the carers to meet the needs of the child. They may not wish to do this and where they are at work you could seek support from the Child Maintenance Service to help with this, however it is advisable that all attempts are made to agree to this between them and the carer first. The kinship team may be able to offer advice and support with this.

Private foster carers are also able to claim government benefits including:

- Child Benefit
- Child Tax Credits
- Pension Credit
- Guardian Allowance
- Universal Credit

Financial support by the local authority to sustain an otherwise satisfactory private fostering arrangement may be considered, and where appropriate, the social worker should seek the approval of the relevant manager for such assistance to be given.

Once the approval in principle has been given, the social worker should arrange for private foster carers to complete a financial assessment.

Once the completed financial assessment form has been received, it should be sent to the relevant manager for the level of financial support to be agreed upon. This decision will be confirmed to you in writing along with any conditions.

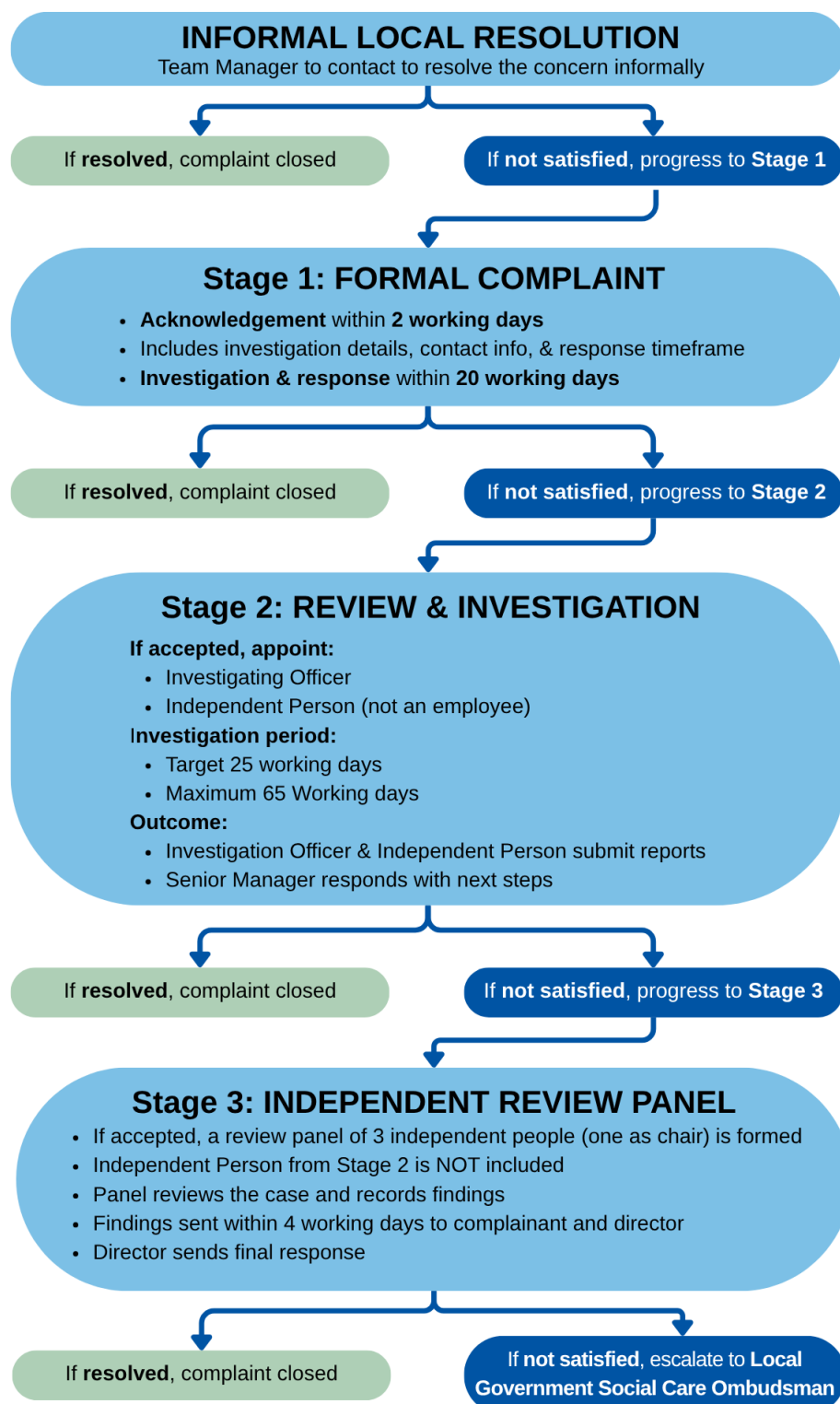
Finances & Child Arrangement Orders

If you have a child arrangement order, you may be able to get an allowance from children's services.

The allowance is:

- discretionary, which means children's services do not have to pay you.
- means-tested, which means if you get it and how much you get will depend on your financial situation.

Appendix E: Complaints flowchart



Appendix F: Training pathway for kinship carers

Both foster carers within the household are required to attend the **Kinship Induction Programme** (with Workbook). In addition, one carer must attend a minimum of 4 mandatory training courses (below starred and in bold) within the first year of fostering. The remaining courses as soon as possible afterwards – all training below to have been attended by the end of the second year.

Mandatory GCC Training	Refresher/ update timescales	Face to face course	Online: Flourish
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ First Aid Paediatric level 3 training for Foster Carers ★ 2-day face to face or 1 day e-learning and 1 day face to face practical 	Every 3 years	Yes	No
★ Safeguarding Children (Face to face then update online)	Every 3 years	Yes	Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Attachment: Introduction & Trauma (online) ★ Emotional world of the child (EWOC) ★ <i>Additional Attachment courses cover 'Practical Strategies'</i> 	Every 3 years	Yes	Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Managing Allegations & Complaints Involving Foster Carers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (Face to face or online) 	Every 3 years	Yes	Yes
★ GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)	Every 3 years	No	Yes
★ Induction Kinship care	One off		
★ Infant Care – Mandatory in first year if caring for 0-5 years (online)	Renew every 3 years if approved for babies	Yes	No
• Therapeutic Parenting	Every 3 years	Yes	Yes
• Recording Skills	Every 3 years	Yes	Yes
• Induction to kinship foster care	Once	Yes	No
• Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)/ Missing Children	Every 3 years	Yes	Yes

Training pathway for kinship carers cont.





Recommended online training from Kinship – the national kinship care charity organisation (www.kinship.org.uk).



For family or friends who
step up to raise a child.

Optional Kinship Training	Course length	Online
Managing contact for kinship families – the emotional journey workshop	1.5 hours	Yes
Overview of the EHCP and SEND process workshop	1.5 hours	Yes
Understanding how to keep children in kinship care safe	1.5 hours	Yes
Understanding trauma and attachment workshop	1.5 hours	Yes
Understanding the effects of drug and alcohol misuse on kinship families.	1.5 hours	Yes
Understanding foetal alcohol spectrum disorder	1.5 hours	Yes
Preparing for sensitive conversations with kinship children	1.5 hours	Yes
Managing challenging behaviour with children in kinship care	1.5 hours	Yes

Training pathway for kinship carers cont.

TSD Standards	The successful completion of the Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards is a national requirement for all approved foster carers in the UK. You/your household should have completed a signed off TSD Standards portfolio within the first 18 months.	
Mandatory GCC Training (& refresher updates)	<p>Training takes place both face-to-face and via online courses. If you are a new carer, or the subject matter is new to you, a face-to-face training course is recommended, where available. This is ideal for grasping the essentials of a subject from experienced professionals, as well as sharing knowledge and skills with other carers.</p> <p><u>Ensure you're clear about GCC's fostering policies and procedures about these core subjects. Ask if you need clarity.</u></p> <p>For refresher training, you can explore wider 'learning' as well as training resources. Consider books, e-learning, conferences, podcasts etc.</p> <p>We would recommend that every alternate refresher session is a face-to-face course or update, to help keep updated with recent changes in policy and practice developments.</p>	
Additional Learning	<p>If you are in your third year of fostering (or more), ensure your refresher/update training is completed within timescales and proactively pursue learning relevant to the needs of the child(ren) in your care. See the Training Manual and Calendar for further learning, plus wider public resources available.</p> <p>Consider e-learning, reading materials, conferences, webinars, media broadcasts, podcasts, etc.</p>	
Support Groups	<p>Support Groups can be an effective tool to find out information, process queries, learn from peers and explore formal/informal training or learning activity.</p> <p><u>Both family members are expected to attend at least four support groups per year.</u></p>	
Personal Development Plan (PDP)	List and plan your learning in your Personal Development Plan (PDP) for discussion in supervision and at annual review.	