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# Portsmouth City Council Children's Services

## Kinship Local Offer - Guide for kinship carers, special guardians and their families

## Introduction

Welcome kinship carers!

This information pack is designed for kinship carers and their families who live in Portsmouth and for carers who have been assessed as special guardians by Portsmouth City Council.

## Management responsibility

The senior manager responsible for the Kinship Local Offer is Mark Jowett, Head of Children We Care For.

## What is kinship care?

There are many types of kinship carers. They are family and friends who step up, often in a crisis, to care for a child or young person when a parent is unable.

The Kinship Care Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities October 2024 defined kinship for the first time. This document can be found here: [Kinship care: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

## Informal kinship care

Informal arrangements are when a close family member looks after a child temporarily or permanently. A close family member is defined by the Children Act 1989 as grandparent, aunt, uncle, or sibling. This arrangement is agreed privately with the parents or persons with parental responsibility and the parental responsibility remains with the parents. There is no statutory duty for the local authority to be involved unless there is a safeguarding reason.

## Private fostering

Private fostering is when a child under 16 (18 if they have a disability) is cared for by someone who is not a close family member for a period (or intended period) of 28 days or more. The arrangement is made between parents and carers, and the parent retains parental responsibility. The local authority has a statutory duty to safeguard and support children who are living in these arrangements. Legally, instances of private fostering need to be reported to the local authority, to not report it is an offence.

Find out more information on how Portsmouth supports private foster carers and children here. [Private Fostering - Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership.](#)

## **Child Arrangement Order**

A kinship carer with a Child Arrangement Order is when a child is cared for by a friend or family member who has been awarded a Child Arrangement Order by a family court which awards them parental responsibility which they share with the parent.

## **Special Guardianship Order**

A Special Guardianship Order is a legal order made by a family court where a carer is appointed as the special guardian of the child until they turn 18 years old.

The Special Guardianship Order was created with the intention of meeting the needs of children who have been separated from their birth parents. It can be a great option for children who are unable to live with their parents as it secures permanence for them whilst maintaining links with their birth family.

Special guardian's share parental responsibility with the child's parents. However, special guardians have an enhanced level of parental responsibility meaning they can make decisions relating to the child's day to day life without consulting the birth parents.

## **Kinship foster carer**

Kinship foster carers have been assessed as foster carers for a specific child who is known to them. The child is cared for by the local authority either with parental agreement (section 20) or with agreement of a court via an Interim Care Order or Full Care Order.

The local authority shares parental responsibility with the parent. Where a child is looked after by the local authority, we have a responsibility, wherever possible and safe, to consider if the child is able to live with a member of the family who is subsequently approved as a foster carer (Section 22 of the Children Act 1989). The child can be placed with the family members prior to such approval, subject to an assessment of the placement, for up to 16 weeks under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.

Regulation 24(1) provides that where the local authority is satisfied that an immediate placement with a connected persons is the most appropriate placement for the child, the carers can have temporary approval for a period of up to 16 weeks provided that an assessment of their suitability under Regulation 24(2) has taken place. Regulation 25 of the 2010 Care Planning Regulations gives an extension of 8 weeks to the original 16 weeks.

In this context, the carer is referred to as a connected person and the process of obtaining approval for the placement is set out in the **Placement with Connected Persons Procedure**. Where temporary approval is given to such a placement under the procedure, the carers will receive financial support.

In addition, the child will have a placement plan which sets out the specific arrangements surrounding the child and the carers including the expectations of the foster carers and the support they can expect to receive to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities for the child.

The assessment and approval process for family and friends who apply to be foster carers for a specific child we care for will be similar to any other foster carer and include checks and references. However the assessment is focused on meeting the needs of the specific child/children.

Once approved as foster carers, they will be allocated a supervising social worker from the fostering service to provide them with support and supervision; and they will receive fostering allowances for as long as they care for the child as a foster carer.

While the child remains a child we care for, as a foster carer they will be expected to cooperate with all the processes that are in place to ensure that the child receives appropriate care and support. For example, contributing to reviews of the child's care plan, co-operating with the child's social worker and promoting the child's education and health needs.

## **Adoption**

Adoption is the only order to sever parental responsibility from the parents. A placement order is granted by the court and the child is placed with adopters who have been assessed and approved by an adoption agency. Once the Adoption Order is made, the adopters become the legal parent of the child and they hold all of the parental responsibility. You can find details of post adoption support here: [Adoption support for families and young people | Health and social care | Hampshire County Council](#).

## **Advice, support and services available to all kinship families**

We recognize that it is difficult to find information and support to help when you're caring for a child or young person. In Portsmouth we have a variety of services to support families around early years, education, health, leisure, finance and youth services. We hope this will assist you in your caring role.

### **Hive Directory | Hive Portsmouth**

HIVE Portsmouth is a strategic partnership in Portsmouth consisting of a representative group of the voluntary and community sector, NHS Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group and Portsmouth City Council. They work with local people, groups and organisations in a way that recognises and nurtures the strengths of individuals, families and communities and helps to build independence and self-reliance as an alternative to a reliance on traditional services.

### **Family Assist**

Family Assist is an innovative new way of ensuring that parents and their friends and families have access to a wide range of information and resources, both local and national, at their fingertips. It has been developed to act as a library of trusted evidenced based local and national information to support parent and carers make informed choices regarding their child's care and development.

### **Portsmouth City Council SEND Local Offer**

The Portsmouth SEND Local Offer details the information, support and services that Portsmouth City Council expects to be available in our local area for children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs and or a disability (SEND).

Portsmouth Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provides mental health services for children aged 5-18 suffering with acute, chronic or severe mental health problems. They provide assessment, treatment and support to young people and their families. Interventions include psychoeducation, care coordination, groups, family-based interventions/therapy, individual therapy, medication, and referral to other services where appropriate.

CAMHS staff are professionals who have had specialist training in child and adolescent mental health. The team includes nurses, mental health practitioners, social workers, therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists and business support colleagues.

Contact them here:

- Telephone: [0300 123 6632](tel:03001236632) (8.30am-5pm, Mon to Fri)
- Email: [CAMHS-general@solent.nhs.uk](mailto:CAMHS-general@solent.nhs.uk)

## **Kinship**

Kinship is a charity who are there to support family and friends who step up to raise a child. Their website has information about your role as a kinship carer. They offer training, connection with other kinship carers and specialist advice through their advice line. Find more information here: [Kinship: Home | The Kinship care charity | England and Wales](#).

## **Family Rights Group**

Family Rights Group is a charity that advises families about their rights and options within the care system. Find more information here: [Helping families Helping children - Family Rights Group](#).

## **Complaints**

You have the right to complain about anything that Portsmouth City Council staff may say or do that makes you feel upset, unhappy or angry. Information on how to make a complaint can be found here: [How to make a complaint about children and families social care - Portsmouth City Council](#).

## **Information for special guardians**

It can be confusing to understand your role as a special guardian and what you are able to do. The most important part of your role is to provide the child with a safe, nurturing and stable loving home, and support them to maintain links with their family.

You are responsible for the child's day to day care, which includes meeting their physical and emotional needs.

All parents have legal rights and responsibilities, known as parental responsibility. A parent will retain parental responsibility for their child unless the child is legally adopted. This is the only order which takes the parental responsibility away completely from the parents.

When a Special Guardianship Order is granted, the appointed carer is also granted parental responsibility for the child which they share with the parent. The special guardian has the overarching parental responsibility, which means they can make nearly all the major decisions about a child's life and day to day care, without having to consult the birth parents.

There are certain situations when special guardians are required to obtain permission from the birth parent, which includes:

- Taking the child out of the country for longer than three months
- Changing the child's surname
- Changing the child's religion
- Situations where consent from everyone with parental responsibility is required by law, such as certain medical procedures
- Placing the child up for adoption.

To access Portsmouth City Council's Special Guardianship Order Procedures and Financial Policy please visit:

<https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s48444/Appendx%20A%20-%20Special%20Guardianship%20Policy.pdf>

## **Portsmouth's offer of support for special guardians**

Special guardians and their families can access post-order support via Portsmouth City Council from the kinship support team if:

- The Special Guardianship Order was granted via Portsmouth City Council and the court, or
- The order was made by another local authority, but you live in Portsmouth, and it has been three years since the order was granted.
- Your child was 'looked after' by Portsmouth City Council prior to the Special Guardianship Order being made.

At Portsmouth City Council, we recognize that being a special guardian can often be a challenging yet rewarding role which requires support and understanding.

We appreciate your role as a special guardian and want to support you in the most effective way. We will work alongside you to create a plan that works for your family, and allocate resources based on what you and the child needs.

Our goal is to **support you in supporting your loved ones.**

## **Kinship Support Service**

We have a designated Kinship Support Service to advise, assist and support special guardians with a variety of issues. We currently have two workers within the service who are available to support you. You can reach out to us at any point to request support, advice and information.

Our special guardians have access to a variety of services. Our support offer includes:

- General advice, guidance, and information around your role as a special guardian, including managing issues such as family time, education and behaviour
- Providing emotional support and a safe place to talk
- Coordinating services to work as a team around your family, including education
- Signposting you to organisations who specifically offer support and guidance to special guardians
- Advocating on your behalf to ensure that your family's voice is heard, and decisions are made in your best interests
- Supporting you with financial queries and working with the finance team
- Special guardianship support groups
- Special guardianship events during school holidays
- If eligible, support to access the Adoption Special Guardianship Support Fund for therapeutic interventions
- Access to training.

### **How to access support**

You can contact our service via email or telephone. A duty worker will take some information from you, discuss your needs and answer any questions that you may have. Our workers are available 9am-5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am-4.30pm Friday.

Call: 02392 834 071 or

Email: [connectedpersonsduty@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:connectedpersonsduty@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

During the initial phone call, we may offer you immediate advice and information, or signpost you to universal services that you can access. If we feel that you need further support, we may offer you a home visit to discuss your situation in more detail.

We will work alongside you and be in regular communication to ensure that you are being supported and that the actions identified are being completed in a timely and efficient way. Once the work is complete, you can still contact our service in future if you need further support.

If you urgently need support out of hours you can call Hampshire Out of Hours on 0300 555 1373.

If you are concerned about a child's safety, call the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub on 023 9268 8793 / 084 5671 0271.

## Employment

We know that work can be a worry when you become a kinship carer. Perhaps you need some time off due to your new responsibilities or require flexible working, all impacting on your financial situation. **Working Families** are a charity supporting working people and they have advice and support for kinship carers here: [Time off work for grandparents and kinship carers - Working Families](#).

Remember if your financial circumstances change, then you can request a means tested assessment from Portsmouth City Council financial administrators who can be contacted on 02392 688 287 or email [FSU.Adoption@portsmouthhcc.gov.uk](mailto:FSU.Adoption@portsmouthhcc.gov.uk).

## Accommodation

We recognise that housing can be a complex issue for many kinship families. You can become overcrowded or be struggling with problems related to your housing prior to looking after somebody else's child.

Portsmouth City Council housing support page brings together information that could help if you are worried about rising household costs like rent and mortgage payments, energy costs and more. You'll find advice on benefits, ways to reduce energy bills and organisations you can contact for support.

[Housing support - Portsmouth City Council](#)

## Education

We know that children who have experienced trauma can struggle in education and need that extra bit of support. Our kinship support team want to help carers and children navigate education and promote children's potential.

Every child is entitled to an Individual Education Plan, which you can request from your child's school. This helps teaching staff to plan for and support your child, including strategies to help them learn and thrive.

## The Virtual School

All children who live in kinship care now come under the Virtual School. The Virtual School Head role has been extended to champion the attendance, attainment and progress of all children who live in kinship care. Kinship families who have a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order will also benefit from advice and support upon request.

## Pupil Premium

Children the local authority has cared for are eligible for Pupil Premium Plus, which is funding paid directly to state schools to support children emotionally, socially and educationally. For each child, the school is paid £1,385 per year. You must inform the school that the child is subject to a Special Guardianship Order to benefit from this funding.

Schools have flexibility on how the money is spent. You can ask your child's school what the funding is being used for, or for their Pupil Premium Strategy (published on the school website), and how this supports the child that you are caring for. The funding cannot always be used to support children individually. Sometimes schools collate the funding for all eligible pupils together to commission a service to support a group of students.

The funding can be used for:

- Extra one-to-one or small-group support for children within the classroom
- Employing extra teaching assistants to work with classes
- Running catch-up sessions before or after school, for example for children who need extra help with maths or literacy
- Running a school breakfast club or after school clubs to improve attendance
- Providing extra tuition for able children
- Providing music lessons for children whose families would be unable to pay for them
- Funding educational trips and visits

- Paying for additional help such as speech and language therapy or family therapy
- Funding English classes for children who speak another language at home
- Investing in resources that boost children's learning, such as laptops or tablets.

## School Placements

Children that the Local Authority has previously cared for qualify for priority admissions into school. Please speak to your child's school in the first instance and make sure you include this on your admission forms.

## Special Educational Needs

If you think that the child you are caring for may have Special Educational Needs (SEN), then you should speak to the child's school in the first instance and the kinship support workers can support with this.

This web page from Portsmouth City Council provides information on how to get in contact with the SEN team and the Neurodiversity Profiling tool: [Special educational needs and disabilities - Portsmouth City Council](#).

[Welcome to Portsmouth SENDIASS | Barnardo's](#) offers free impartial, confidential advice and support to families where a child or young person has or may have Special Educational Needs or disabilities.

[Portsmouth Local Offer](#) details the information, support and services that Portsmouth City Council expects to be available in our local area for children and young people aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and or a disability.

## Family time with birth and extended family

Family time between children and their birth parents and extended family can be difficult to manage. We recognise that family relationships can be complex.

It is important to encourage family time between children and their family if it is safe and appropriate to do so, as it supports their identity, promotes their understanding of their life story and helps them maintain links with people who are important to them.

Family time between children and their family is usually set out in the Special Guardianship Support Plan or the child's care plan and is decided based on the child or young person's best interest.

There are different types of family time:

- Direct family time: face to face
- Indirect family time: phone calls, video calls and letters.

Family time can be supervised or unsupervised, as well as held in the community, at home or in a family time centre. A minimal level is decided in a plan which is usually court directed. Anything above this can be decided by the special guardians.

Plans for family time are set at a moment in time. We understand that family circumstances and the children or young person's views can change over time. It is important to keep an open mind about family time and consider if the arrangements are working for your family. The kinship support team can help with advice and guidance around family time. Frequent concerns and queries include:

- Birth parents would like more family time
- The children don't want to see specific people
- The special guardians feel unable to manage or supervise family time
- The current arrangements are not working
- An incident happened during family time that made the carer worried

Child Arrangement Orders in respect of family time are set by the court to determine who the child has family time with, the frequency and the duration. Anyone can make an application to the court to request a Child Arrangement Order.

## **Family group decision making**

Family networks can be an essential support network to help families stay together and thrive, or offer support and a loving stable home when this is not possible. In Portsmouth we offer family group conferencing through Daybreak. Daybreak empower families to come together, make decisions and solve problems within their community. Speak to your kinship support team if this sounds like something your family requires.

## Mediation

We recognise sometimes relationships between family members can become strained. There can be disagreements on things relating to the child or young person such as family time. If you feel this cannot be resolved within your family, you may wish to explore mediation to support you to talk through the issues and come to a mutual resolution.

Family mediation is a process where a mediator supports you to work out arrangements about a child. To work through disagreements and come to solutions which work for both parties. You don't need to be in the same space as the other person if relationships are difficult. The mediator can support you both without being in direct contact.

There are mediation agencies who can support with family conflict. The [Family Mediation Council](#) and the National Family Mediation Service ([Family Mediation | National Family Mediation](#)) are useful organisations to contact for advice.

The Ministry of Justice are running a time limited Family Mediation Voucher Scheme to support families to resolve family law disputes outside of court. For more information please see here [Family Mediation Voucher Scheme - GOV.UK](#).

## Legal Advice

It is important to know that birth families can legally apply to the court for permission to discharge the Special Guardianship Order. The court will look at any new evidence and make a decision based on the child's best interest. Family Rights Group [Helping families Helping children - Family Rights Group](#) has more information on this.

It can be useful to seek legal advice in relation to family time if there are challenges surrounding this that are not being resolved.

Kinship offers advice and support on obtaining legal advice, including information about legal aid and signposting to other helpful organizations: [Legal help for kinship carers - Kinship](#).

The Law Society has a find a solicitor service: [Find a Solicitor - The Law Society](#).

Our kinship support team can advise and signpost you to the people who can help with legal enquiries. We can also discuss any request for funding towards legal advice.

## Therapeutic support

Many children who live with special guardians have had a very difficult start in life. Some children may have witnessed or suffered abuse or neglect, or experienced stress in-utero.

They are often greatly affected by their past experiences. Trauma has a significant impact on the body and the brain which may lead to children having complex needs. This can impact on the child's behaviour and their feelings about themselves and the world.

It is important that kinship families understand the impact of trauma and past experiences and how this can manifest in children's behaviour. The kinship support team will help signpost you to a variety of resources and training to support children's wellbeing.

## The Adoption Special Guardianship Support Fund

The Adoption Special Guardianship Support Fund was set up to fund support and therapeutic interventions for eligible families. If the child or young person was cared for by the local authority prior to the Special Guardianship Order being made, then they are entitled to request funding. More information can be found here [Adoption and special guardianship support fund \(ASGSF\) - GOV.UK](#).

It is important to note that standalone assessments for single conditions, i.e. ADHD, ASD and FASD are not in the remit of the fund and so usual referral routes need to be followed (Health).

The funding has two fair access limits:

- £2,500 per child per year for specialist assessments to explore the child's trauma and attachment needs and recommend potential therapies for the child and family moving forward
- £5,000 per child per year for therapeutic interventions, including:
  - Creative therapies
  - Play therapies
  - Life story work
  - Psychotherapy
  - Therapeutic short breaks
  - Parent training
  - Family therapies

The funding should help you and the child that you are caring for to achieve positive outcomes such as:

- Improved strategies to support your child's wellbeing, regulate emotions and manage their behaviour
- Improved understanding of your child's behaviour and needs
- Improved attachment, relationship and communication between you and your child
- Improved relationship between your child and their peers, family members, teaching and school staff
- Improved emotional regulation and behaviour management
- Improved understanding and processing of their life story and family relationships
- Improved engagement with learning
- Improved confidence and ability to enjoy a positive family life and social relationships.

## How to Apply

The local authority will apply on your behalf after you request an assessment of need. The kinship team will complete the assessment and will recommend what support your family may need. If that includes a specialist assessment or therapeutic support, then the kinship support team will make an application to the Adoption Special Guardianship Support Fund on your behalf. They will review the application and will respond, usually within twenty working days.

If funding is approved, they will contact the local authority, and the chosen provider and funds will be released. The provider will then contact you to start the process. Once the assessment or intervention has ended, a review meeting will be held to discuss next steps. If further support is required, further applications can be made. If the funding limit is reached you will need to wait for the next financial year for further funding to be available.

## Training

Training can be helpful to understand the theories behind attachment and child development, and help you to understand how the child's early experiences can impact on their behaviour, mental health and emotional wellbeing as they grow and develop.

You can access online, virtual and face to face training through Portsmouth City Council as well as through Kinship: [Free training and events for kinship carers | Kinship](#).

There are lots of courses to explore which cover a variety of subjects:

- Skills to Foster for connected carers
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome awareness
- Creative ways to communicate with children and young people
- Understanding behaviour
- NVR Non-violent resistance
- Life story work
- Paediatric first aid
- Trauma informed model of care.

The kinship support team are ready to signpost you to interesting seminars, webinars and learning events to support you to understand attachment, child development and the impact of trauma.

## **Kinship support group**

Being a special guardian can feel lonely and isolating. It can feel like you're living in a different world that nobody understands. It can be helpful to meet people who are having similar experiences and understand what life is like as a special guardian.

Having a good support network is crucial. Our aim is to create a community for all the fantastic grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, family friends and other relatives who are working hard to support the children they are raising.

Our two kinship support workers run a twice weekly support group for all special guardians. There's no need to book, just pop in and chat.

The group meet every Monday at Beacon View Primary School in the Sunflower Room from 9am to 11am and Tuesday at the Parenting Network at the Bridge Centre, Fratton from 9am to 11am.

Please contact the kinship service for information about the group.

Kinship Care Week is an annual celebration for us to raise awareness of the important role and challenges that special guardians and kinship carers face. The week is usually celebrated in October.

The kinship support service will send information out to carers about any events that we are holding such as our Christmas party.

## Newsletter

The kinship support service is committed to sending out a quarterly newsletter to special guardians.

We want to keep you up to date with everything that's happening in Portsmouth and in the world of special guardianship. The newsletter will feature any upcoming events, useful information and details of fantastic resources that we recommend to special guardians for you to use with the children in your care.

## Financial support

Portsmouth City Council conduct annual financial assessments for special guardians. Eligibility for a special guardianship allowance is determined as part of a means-tested assessment, this means that we will assess the income that you have coming in when calculating any financial allowance. This is in line with the Special Guardianship Regulations, 2005.

Special guardianship allowances are aligned with fostering allowances (usually Level 1).

Allowances are subject to annual review. We will write to you each year to ask if your circumstances have changed. You will need to respond if requested to do so, even if there have been no changes, to avoid any allowance that you currently receive being stopped.

If you are in receipt of full Universal Credit (i.e. not working), we will not means test and you will be provided with the full allowance, and no child benefit will be deducted.

If your circumstances change you must inform us immediately.

Please note that any special guardianship allowance is ignored as income when calculating your entitlement to other means-tested benefits and tax credits.

Additional financial support will only be considered in certain circumstances and following an assessment for special guardianship support.

If you have any queries surrounding your financial assessment of special guardian allowance, please email the finance officer who will endeavor to respond to you as soon as possible.

Portsmouth City Council financial administrators can be contacted on 023 9268 8287 or email: [FSU.Adoption@portsmouthhcc.gov.uk](mailto:FSU.Adoption@portsmouthhcc.gov.uk).

As a special guardian, you have the same right to benefits and tax credits as a birth parent would.

We recommend that you contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau in the first instance. They can help you consider what support your family may be entitled too: [Citizens Advice Portsmouth](#).

You can also check your entitlement to income support by using the Turn2Us benefits calculator: [Turn2us Benefits Calculator](#).

You may be eligible for additional financial support, such as:

- Childcare - the government help eligible families with childcare costs; check here: [Homepage | Childcare Choices](#)
- Find information here about support available for the cost of living: [Cost of living support: Overview - GOV.UK](#).

## Final Note

At Portsmouth City Council, we acknowledge that being a kinship carer requires patience, understanding, empathy and kindness. We would like to thank all kinship carers who are keeping children safe, supporting their relatives to maintain connection with their birth families, and helping children to thrive and reach their full potential outside of the care system.

## Feedback

Periodically, during our involvement with your family, we will ask you for feedback to help improve our service. Additionally, if you have used any services or resources that has been helpful for you and your family, please let us know so we can share with other kinship families.