

www.hounslow.gov.uk/children-families-young-people/kinship-care

The background of the entire page is a photograph showing a close-up of two pairs of hands. One pair of hands, with darker skin, is being held and supported by another pair of hands, with lighter skin. The hands are resting on a blue fabric surface. The image conveys a sense of care, support, and connection.

Your guide to
Kinship Care



London Borough
of Hounslow



In Hounslow, we recognise that kinship carers play a vital role in supporting children who cannot live with their parents. We are on hand to support all families in a Kinship arrangement, whether you have a Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangement Order or a private/informal arrangement.

What are Kinship carers...



Kinship carers are family or friends who step up, often during an unexpected crisis, to care for a child when their parents are not able to. They may care for a child with the parents' permission, even if there is no crisis.

We refer to 'kinship care' as an umbrella term for anyone who looks after the child of a family member or friend. You will also see other organisations refer to kinship care as 'family and friends' care. Kinship carers might also be referred to as 'connected carers', 'kinship foster carers' or 'special guardians'.

Children living in a kinship arrangement may or may not be known to the local authority.

Types of arrangements

Informal Kinship arrangement

(not approved foster care)

This is where a close relative looks after a child. In some circumstances this could also be a more distant relative or friend. Overall responsibility for the child stays with the parents. There is no requirement to notify the local authority of the arrangement in most situations, if the carer is a close relative of the child.

In these arrangements, the local authority do not have a major involvement in making the arrangement for the child, and there may be no court order in place. This is often called 'a private family arrangement'.

Private Fostering arrangement

Someone who is not a close relative of the child under the age of 16, and looks after the child for 28 days or more. This arrangement is assessed by the Local Authority but the carer is not approved as a local authority foster carer.

Child Arrangements Order

There may be a 'lives with' Child Arrangements Order in place for a child, in favour of someone who is a friend of family but is not the child's parent. In this case the child will live with the kinship carer named in the order and the carer will share parental responsibility with the parents. For this you do not need an assessment by a social worker.



Support available

Every child in one of the above arrangements can access the following support:

- Access support in Hounslow through our early help services. Search our website for 'early help'. You can ask the child's school or health visitor to help with this.
- Where a child is assessed as being in need, support and services may be provided by the local authority under s17 of the Children Act 1989, including financial support.
- Access to support and help from Family Rights Group and Kinship.
- You can also ask a doctor, GP or health visitor for help.
- Ask the local authority if they know of any local support groups for informal carers.
- If a Child Arrangement Order is in place and the child subject to this was previously Looked After by the local authority then they are entitled to the following;
- Eligible to apply to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF).
- Eligible to pupil premium which provides extra funding in education.

A Special Guardianship Order (SGO)

This is a legal order given by the Family Court appointing a friend or family member as the child's special guardian. When you become a special guardian, the child will live with you until they are 18 years old. A special guardianship order gives the special guardian 'enhanced' parental responsibility for the child. This gives them the authority to make all major decisions about the child's upbringing and care (although there are things the special guardian cannot consent to, including adoption of the child, causing a child to be known by a new surname or removing the child from the UK for a period of 3 months or more). The order restricts the birth parents' rights but does not permanently end them. For the Court to make a SGO, you will need to be assessed by a social worker. This assessment will be shared with the court and is required before the making of an SGO. As part of this assessment, you will have to agree to a full medical assessment and for all adults to have a DBS check (police check).



If a child was looked after immediately prior to the making of a Special Guardianship Order, the special guardian has a right to receive an assessment by the local authority for support services, which may include financial support. They may be eligible to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) and pupil premium which provides extra funding in education.

Even if the child was not looked after immediately prior to the making of a Special Guardianship Order, you can still be eligible for additional support and services (including financial help) under s17 of the Children Act 1989. where a child is assessed as being in need.

Support available

A package of support for at least 3 years from Adopt London West as below. The carers may be entitled to some or all of the following support from Adopt London West after the Special Guardianship Order is made.

- Monthly Special Guardianship support coffee morning (currently virtual) to enable peer support and a safe space to share and seek advice;
- Special Guardianship Forum facilitated by a peer SG;
- Access to independent, confidential advice and counselling run by an independent charity PAC-UK;
- Referral to Kinship -the UK leading kinship care charity, offering support and advice to all kinship carers;
- A Special Guardianship support assessment of need to consider from what supports the family might benefit;
- Six half-termly evening education support seminars facilitated by an educational psychologist;
- Therapeutic support via an Adoption Support Fund funding application, where the child was looked after previous to a SGO granted;
- Consultation with ALW's Clinical Psychologist or via an Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Social Worker regarding the most appropriate therapeutic intervention;
- Training on further developing the Special Guardians therapeutic parenting skills via support seminars;
- Advice and support around education, employment and training for young people;
- A 9-week "Foundations for Attachment" virtual training to develop carers' understanding of how trauma affects children. ALW will endeavour to ensure carers are offered a place within the first-year post order;
- Advice and guidance to the carers around life story work with their child;
- Regular newsletters and mailouts, with articles and training events taking place locally, as well as changes in legislation and new initiatives;
- An annual fun event to enable special guardians and their children to get together with other special guardians and their children.



Kinship foster carers

This is where the child is 'looked after' by the local authority, but family and friends are approved as a local authority temporary (also called a Regulation 24 carer) or long term foster carers for the child. This may be where the child is subject to an interim or final care order, or the child is being accommodated by the local authority voluntarily. You will receive a regular foster care allowance to help you support the child, as well as having a social worker for you and your foster child. The child is in the care of children's services, who share parental responsibility with the child's parents. For this you will need to be assessed by a social worker for both short and/or long-term fostering arrangement. This assessment may be shared with the court.

Support available

- Kinship foster carers are entitled to the same support as any other local authority foster carer
- They are entitled to a fostering allowance and a supervising social worker
- Foster care training as well as annual reviews from an independent fostering board
- The child will have a care plan which will be reviewed by an independent reviewing officer
- Social work visits

Adoption and special guardianship support fund (ASGSF)

Department for Education

Following announcements in April 2025 about changes to the application criteria for the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund, the Department has published an update to its guidance on use of the fund. Local authorities and regional adoption agencies can apply for therapeutic funding for eligible adoptive, special guardianship order and child arrangement order families.

www.gov.uk/guidance/adoption-support-fund-asf



Contact us

If you want to access any kind of support and are unsure what is available, please contact the Adoption and Permanence team via the duty email adoption.duty@hounslow.gov.uk.

Our team of social workers can offer targeted support, general advice, and signposting to local or national support groups. Please also look for independent advice on:

- Family Rights Group – a National charity that advises parents, grandparents, relatives and friends about their rights and option www.frg.org.uk.com
- Kinship charity at kinship.org.uk
- Statutory guidance for Kinship Carers at www.hounslow.gov.uk/children-families-young-people/kinship-care/2



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