





# **Kinship Care Support Offer**



**A guide for Kinship Carers, Special Guardians,  
and their families**

**Post Special Guardianship Support Service**



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## Introduction

Welcome Kinship Carers of Milton Keynes!

We have designed this information pack for Kinship Carers and their families. This booklet will provide the information that you need around your responsibility as a Kinship Carer, what Milton Keynes City Council offer under the umbrella of support for Kinship Carers, and what generic support you can access locally.

### What is Kinship Care?

Kinship Care is a type of caregiving arrangement where a child is looked after by relatives or close family friends. Kinship Care is also known as Connected Persons Care, which is the idea of keeping children within their family when they cannot be cared for by birth parents.

Kinship Care is needed for children when their birth parents are unable to provide safe, stable, or appropriate care - whether due to illness, substance

misuse, domestic violence, mental health issues, incarceration, or other challenges. Kinship Care can be a good option for children who are separated from their birth parents, as it offers stability and permanence whilst maintaining links to the child's birth family.

There are different types of kinship care arrangements – including Kinship Foster Care, Special Guardianship Orders, Child Arrangement Orders, and informal care arrangements.

## **Our Offer of Support**

At Milton Keynes City Council, we recognise that being a Kinship Carer can often be a challenging yet rewarding role which requires support and understanding.

We appreciate your role as a Kinship Carer and want to support you in the most effective way.

Regardless of what type of kinship care arrangement you have for a child, we will work alongside you to create a plan that works for your family, and allocate resources based on what you need.

### **Our commitment to you:**

- We will listen.
- We will not be judgmental.
- We will be open and honest.
- We will be advocates for you and your children.
- We will work alongside you.
- We will signpost you to resources that will support you long-term.

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



# Kinship Foster Care

A Kinship Foster Carer is someone who is approved by the local authority to care for a child who is a relative or someone the child already knows.

The child is placed with the Kinship Foster Carer under a Care Order, Emergency Protection Order, or Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 - which is a voluntary agreement where the parents agree to the child being looked after by the local authority. In these cases, the child is considered to be 'looked after' by the local authority.

Kinship Foster Carers do not automatically have parental responsibility for the child that they are caring for. This means that they may not have the legal authority to make key decisions about the child's life - such as consenting to medical treatment, choosing a school, or applying for a passport. These decisions are usually made by the local authority, in consultation with the child's birth parents.

There are different routes into Kinship Fostering:

**Regulation 24** – This is where a child is placed immediately with a relative or connected person in an emergency situation, before the carer has been formally approved as a Kinship Foster Carer. Under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010), the local authority can grant temporary approval for up to 16 weeks, allowing the child to be placed quickly while a full assessment is carried out. During this period, a viability assessment is completed to ensure the carer can meet the child's needs and the carer must agree to undergo a full fostering assessment. If the carer successfully completes the assessment, they can be formally approved as a **Kinship Foster Carer**. If not, the local authority must find an alternative placement for the child.

**Non-Emergency Placements** – If a child cannot live with their birth parents, the carer can put themselves forward to be assessed as a Kinship Foster Carer. In these cases, the child may already be living with a mainstream Foster Carer, or arrangements may be made while the child is still at home or in temporary care. During this time, the carer goes through a formal assessment and approval process.



## **The Assessment Process**

All Kinship Foster Carers must be formally assessed by the local authority, in line with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010. This process ensures that the carer is suitable to meet the child's needs and provide a safe, nurturing environment. The assessment process is the same for mainstream Foster Carers employed by the local authority.

You will be allocated an Assessing Social Worker who will complete your assessment, checks and references. The assessment includes home visits and interviews, health and safety checks, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, reference from employers and people who know the carer, training and preparation sessions. The assessment aims to explore the carer's parenting capacity, motivation, and understanding of the child's needs, and a recommendation will then be made.

Once completed, the assessment is presented to the **Fostering Panel**, which makes a recommendation to the local authority about whether the carer should be formally approved.

## **Post-Approval**

Once approved, the Kinship Foster Carer becomes part of the local authority's Fostering Service and receives ongoing support. Kinship Foster Carers are monitored and supported in line with the Fostering Regulations 2011. Please refer to the Fostering Policy for details.

The child continues to be looked after by the local authority, and they will have their own allocated Social Worker and Independent Reviewing Officer. The child's Care Plan will be regularly reviewed to ensure that their needs are being met and that the placement continues to be appropriate, in the form of Looked After Child (LAC) reviews, Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings, and health assessments.

These reviews consider the child's emotional wellbeing, education, health, and relationships, and involve input from the carer, the child (where appropriate), and professionals involved in the child's care. Kinship Foster Carers are expected to attend these reviews, to maintain fostering records, and work in

partnership with Social Workers and other agencies to support the child's development.

Any support or resources that the child needs, such as specialist assessments and therapies, can be discussed with their allocated Social Worker and organised by the professionals involved in their care.

Many Kinship Carers choose to explore other routes, such as Special Guardianship Orders, to secure permanency for the child without intense involvement from the local authority.

### **Support Services**

Kinship Foster Carers are able to access the same services as Mainstream Foster Carers, including:

- Financial allowances to help with the cost of caring for the child
- Access to training and development opportunities
- Regular supervision and reviews
- Support from a Supervising Social Worker

Supervising Social Workers will be their main point of contact within the Fostering Service. This worker provides guidance, emotional support, and practical advice, and ensures the carer is meeting the standards expected of Foster Carers. The Social Worker can also help the carer to navigate any challenges that arise, and coordinate access to training, resources, and specialist services. Supervising Social Workers carry out regular supervision visits, offer reflective discussions, and support the carer in attending required meetings.

# Special Guardianship

A Special Guardianship Order, often known as an SGO, 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. This is a permanent order, intended to provide long-term stability for children who cannot live with their birth parents.

When a Special Guardian Order is granted, the carer is given parental responsibility for the child - which they share with the birth parents. The Special Guardian's parental responsibility overrides that of the birth parents in most decisions, allowing them to make major choices about the child's life and day-to-day care without needing to consult or inform the birth parents. The birth parents retain parental responsibility, but it is limited under the order. The only time parental responsibility is completely removed is through adoption.

There are certain situations when Special Guardians are required to obtain permission from the child's birth parents, which include:

- Taking the child out of the country for longer than three months, or moving to another country.
- 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.

## The Assessment Process

When someone applies to be a Special Guardian for a child, the local authority must carry out a Special Guardianship Assessment. This is typically ordered by the Family Court during care proceedings for the child, but it can also be initiated in private law cases.

The assessment includes: background information about the child and proposed guardian, the relationship between the child and the proposed guardian, the guardian's capacity to meet the child's needs, any history of harm or future risk of harm to the child, the guardian's capacity and understanding of the responsibilities involved in caring for the child, the views

of the child (where appropriate) and the support needs of the carer. A number of checks will also be completed as part of the assessment, such as health and safety checks and a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, as well as references from people who know the carer.

The local authority prepare a report for the court which includes the full assessment, a recommendation on whether the court order should be granted, and a support plan outlining services to be provided to the carer and family. The court will then make a decision about whether to grant the SGO.

## **Post-Order**

When a Special Guardianship Order is granted, the local authority no longer holds parental responsibility for the child. This marks a significant shift in legal responsibility and involvement.

The local authority may carry out post-order reviews or offer ongoing support if this was agreed in the Special Guardianship Support Plan, however this support is not automatic and requires the guardian to contact the Fostering Team directly to request this and re-engage with services.

As a Special Guardian, it's important for you to know that:

- You are entitled to access support service from the local authority at any point whilst the SGO remains active. An SGO is active until the child's 18th birthday, or unless you apply to the court to discharge the order.
- If your circumstances change, i.e. there is a breakdown in the arrangement or there are new safeguarding concerns, the local authority may be required to become involved again.
- The support services available to Special Guardians vary between local authorities and are dependent on your child's circumstances prior to the order being granted. If the child was 'looked after' by the local authority at some point, they are entitled to additional services.



## **Support Services for Special Guardians**

The local authority has a dedicated Special Guardianship (SG) Support Service, which operates as part of the Fostering Team. The level and type of support offered will depend on your individual circumstances and needs, and may be outlined in a Special Guardianship Support Plan agreed at the time that the order was made.

Special Guardians and their families can access post-order support via Milton Keynes City Council if:

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

Our Special Guardians have access to a variety of services, our generic support offer includes:

- General advice, guidance, and information around your role and responsibilities as a Special Guardian.
- 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.
- Management of financial queries, including completing your annual financial assessment and access to additional financial support.
- Signposting you to services who can support your family and support with accessing resources.
- Details of our local Kinship Support Group.

- Access to specialist online/face-to-face training and webinars on a variety of subjects.
- Access to Clinical Supervision with an attachment-expert.
- Emotional support and a safe space to talk.
- Networking events where you can connect with other Special Guardians.

### How to Contact Us:



**Fostering Duty: 01908 253652**



**Email: [PostSGOSupport@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:PostSGOSupport@milton-keynes.gov.uk)**

Our Fostering Duty Service is open from 9am – 5pm Monday – Thursday and 9am – 4.30pm on Fridays (excluding bank holidays). If it is out-of-hours then please contact the Emergency Social Work Team on 01908 265545.

1) You can self-refer to the Special Guardianship Support Service. To do this, please contact our service via email or the Fostering Duty phone line, we will take some brief information from you and schedule in a time to have an initial phone call to discuss your situation/needs and to answer any questions that you may have. Alternatively, you can ask another professional, such as your child's teacher, to make contact with us and refer you to our service.

2) During the initial phone call, we may be able to offer you immediate advice and information or signpost you to universal services that you can access. If we feel that your needs require further exploration, we may offer you a home visit to discuss your situation in more detail.

3) Once we have gathered the information we need, we will decide what support our service can offer you and whether your case needs to be allocated to a worker. Please note that there may be a waiting list for allocation to a worker, due to the volume of Special Guardians and children in Milton Keynes.

- 4) If your case is opened and allocated to a worker, we will complete an assessment of your needs and explore services and resources to support you and your family. We will work alongside you and be in regular communication with you to ensure that you are accessing the support that you are eligible to receive. We will identify actions together and ensure that they are completed in a timely and efficient way that works for you. This support will take place over an initial 12-week period.
- 5) Once the initial 12-week period has ended, we will review your case, if there are still matters outstanding and further actions are required, we can extend our support for an additional number of weeks.
- 6) Once your support case is closed, you will be sent an outcome letter which will set out what has been achieved along with a feedback form which will help us to improve our service.
- 7) Even after your case has been closed, you can contact the service again if you need to. The process will restart.

## **Training and 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, even children removed from the care of their parents at birth may have suffered stress in the womb.

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

It is important that Special Guardians understand the impact of trauma and past experiences and how this can manifest in children's behaviour. Special Guardians can access a variety of resources to support their child's wellbeing to develop the necessary skills to support the child.

## Training

The world of Special Guardianship is constantly growing and changing, and it's important to keep updated.

Training is a valuable resource - it can help you to better understand the children that you look after and how you can support them. As a Special Guardian, it's also important to learn and practice self-care to support your own wellbeing and promote your personal development.

Sometimes, training can seem like a daunting task, and it can be difficult to allocate time to focus on learning – but it doesn't have to be! At Milton Keynes City Council, our Special Guardians can access a variety of fantastic training that works around their routine, meets their learning style, and satisfies their interests.

There are lots of courses and resources to explore which cover a variety of subjects, through several providers including:



You can access face-to-face and online courses, webinars, podcasts, videos, books, and more.

If you would like to explore training, please contact the SG Support Service. We can recommend courses to suit your family's needs, your learning style, and your lifestyle, or you can request a specific training course that you are interested in.

Please refer to our Special Guardianship Training Brochure for further details around accessing training.

## Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund

The Adoption Support Fund was established in April 2016 to fund support and therapeutic interventions for eligible families. Following the release of the National Kinship Care Strategy in December 2025, the name of the fund was changed to be more inclusive to the families who access the fund - the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF).

## Is your family eligible for support?

The ASGSF is available for children and young people up to and including the age of 21, or 25 with an education, health and care plan, who:

- were in care (looked after) before an SGO was granted
- left care under a Special Guardianship Order
- are under a Child Arrangements Order and were previously in care or looked after by the local authority
- were previously looked after but where the Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order has broken down, irrespective of any reconciliation plans

## How much funding is available?

In April 2025, the government made some changes to the ASGSF. The funding has been extended for a further year, until March 2026, however the fair access limit has been reduced to £3000 per year, per child.

The funding can be used for the following interventions for children and families:

**Specialist Assessments** to explore the child's trauma and attachment needs. This will then recommend potential therapies for the child and family moving forward.

Unfortunately, standalone assessments for single conditions, i.e. ADHD, ASD, FASD, are out of scope for the fund so you will need to follow the normal referral route through the NHS for those. You will need to make an appointment with the child's GP to request an assessment via a paediatrician or CAMHS specialist in this instance.

## Therapy for your Child:

- **Creative Therapies**, including art, dance, drama, music, Lego, mindful yoga.
- **Play Therapies**, including theraplay, filial therapy, and attachment play.
- Life Story Work
- **Psychotherapy (Talking Therapy)** including cognitive behavioural therapy, educational psychotherapy, eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing therapy, sensory processing, and attachment therapies.

## **Support for You:**

- **Parent Training Courses**, including Therapeutic Reparenting.
- **Family Therapies**, including Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy and child to parent violence programmes.

The funding being applied for should help you and your child to achieve the following positive outcomes:

- Improved strategies to support your child's wellbeing, to regulate their emotions and to manage their behaviour
- Improved understanding of your child's behaviour and needs
- Improved attachment, relationship and communication between you and your child
- Improved relationships between your child and their peers, family members, teachers, 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 to the ASGSF on your behalf.

- 1) Contact the Special Guardianship Support Service to request an 'assessment of need'.
- 2) You will be allocated a Social Worker from the Special Guardianship Support Service who will complete the assessment and recommend what support your family may need.
- 3) If a specialist assessment or therapeutic support is required, your Support Worker will make a referral to local therapeutic providers to obtain their recommendation, availability and a quote for the work. An application to the ASGSF will then be made on your behalf.



Please note that the ASGSF have a timescale to review any applications, which takes at least 20 working days.

4) If the ASGSF approve the funding, they will contact the local authority and the chosen provider, and the funds will be released.

5) The provider will contact your family to start the process.

6) Once the specialist assessment or therapy has ended, a review meeting will be held between the provider, Special Guardians, and your Special Guardianship Support Worker to discuss next steps. If further therapeutic intervention is required, additional applications can be made.

If your child or family require additional therapeutic services but you have reached the maximum funding limit from the ASGSF, you will need to wait for the next financial year for funds to be available.

## **Support for Your Family**

### **Clinical Supervision**

Milton Keynes City Council commission Clinical Psychologists to support those who care for children under Special Guardianship Orders or through fostering.

We know that caring for children who have been hurt can be a tiring, troubling and even confusing experience. Everyone deserves extra support from time to time, or perhaps on a regular basis.

Clinical Supervision is a confidential, supportive, and non-judgmental service, designed to give you the opportunity to talk to and exchange ideas with an attachment expert.

The agenda is set by you – you can talk about specific issues that are affecting you and your family, work through new ideas and approaches to take with managing behaviours or talk about your own general wellbeing and coping strategies.

Please let us know if you would like to book an appointment – these are booked on a first come, first serve, basis.

## **Networking and Events**

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

We hope to run annual events for Special Guardians and Kinship Carers, to give you the opportunity to meet and make connections with people who are in similar situations to you.

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 Post-SGO Support Service will send information out to carers about any events that we are holding.

## **Newsletter**

The Post-SGO Support Service are committed to sending out a quarterly newsletter to Special Guardians – SG News.



## **Special Guardianship Allowance**

Milton Keynes City Council conducts 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.

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 Post-SGO Support Service and the Finance Officer will endeavour to respond to you as soon as possible (please do not call the Post-SGO Helpline as we will not have access to the same information).

## **Family Time (Contact) Arrangements**

Family time between children and their birth parents or extended family members can be difficult to manage, due to the complex relationships within families.

It's important to encourage family time between children and their birth 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 to maintain links with their birth family.

Family time between children and their birth family is usually set as part of the SGO Support Plan, this is usually a 'minimum' level of family time which is decided based on the child's best interest, the needs of your family and what you will be able to manage.

There are different kinds of family time:

- Direct family time, which is face-to-face
- Indirect family time which can be telephone calls, video calls and/or letterbox

Family time can also be supervised or unsupervised, as well as held in the community, at home, or in a family time centre. Some carers are managing daily family time, weekly, monthly, or yearly. A minimum level is set out in the SGO support plan which is court directed. Anything over and above this can be decided by Special Guardians.

Family time set out early in the placement is based on that moment in time, however family circumstances and the wishes and feelings of children can change over time as they grow older. It's important to keep an open mind about family time and review the arrangements where necessary which Post SGO service can help and support with.

Child Arrangements Orders are set by the court to enforce family time, this determines who the child who have family time with, the frequency and duration of this. Anyone can make an application to the courts to request a Child Arrangements Order, with permission from the courts. The purpose of the court is to decide whether the child should have regular family time with the person requesting it, and the arrangements around this including frequency of family time, location, and whether this is supervised/unsupervised.

### **Advice about Managing Family Time**

Lots of Special Guardians contact the Special Guardianship Support Service seeking advice about managing family time, which could be due to the following issues:

- Birth Parents would like more family time with the children
- The children don't want to have family time with specific people
- The Special Guardians feel unable to manage or supervise family time
- The current arrangements aren't working for either or both party
- An incident happened during family time that worried someone

If you do have concerns about family time, please contact our service who can offer you advice on managing family time and can signpost you to other agencies who may be able to help.

Special Guardians are also able to access training around managing family time with family members.

## **Legal Advice**

It can often be useful to seek legal advice in relation to family time, especially if there are difficulties surrounding this, for example it may be that the birth parents are requesting more family time with the child however you may not feel it is in the child best interests.

The Special Guardianship Support Service can signpost you to a list of family law solicitors in Milton Keynes, should you need one. Alternatively, you can search for a solicitor:

- Kinship provides a list of solicitors on their website:  
<https://kinship.org.uk/for-kinship-carers/get-more-support/lawyers-list/>
- The Law Society provide a list of solicitors on their website:  
[www.lawsociety.org.uk](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk) and selecting the “choosing and using” option at the top of the page followed by “find a solicitor”.

Please contact our service to discuss any requests for funding towards legal advice, which is considered on a case-by-case basis.

## **Mediation**

Sometimes relationships between family members can become strained, especially if you disagree about something related to a child. If you feel that the issues that 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 – it’s important that everyone is on the same page and that all decisions are made in the best interests of the child.

Family Mediation is a process where a mediator supports you to work out arrangements about a child, they are there to help you work through disagreements and find solutions that work for both parties.

### **How does mediation work?**

A trained independent mediator will complete a Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting (known as a MIAM) with both parties, to find out more about your situation and assess whether mediation is an appropriate option based on your circumstances.

In mediation, you can still come to a resolution without being in the same room or space with the other person – the mediator can work through the disagreement without you being in direct contact.

RelateMK, Mediation MK, and Mediation1st are mediation agencies who can support with family conflict. The Family Mediation Council ([www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk](http://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk)) and National Family Mediation Service ([www.nfm.org.uk](http://www.nfm.org.uk)) are useful organisations to contact for advice.

### **Can I get financial support with mediation?**

The Ministry of Justice are running a time-limited Family Mediation Voucher Scheme to support families to resolve their family law disputes outside of court. If you are eligible, you could receive a financial contribution of up to £500 towards the costs of mediation. Find out more at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/family-mediation-voucher-scheme>



# Child Arrangement Orders

A Child Arrangements Order (CAO) is a legal order made by the Family Court, which sets out the arrangements for a child's care. This type of order can determine who the child lives with, who the child spends time with, and how and when contact takes place. These are 'private law' orders which local authorities do not typically have direct involvement in.

A CAO may be granted if the child's parents are unable to agree on arrangements for the child, or if a person with significant connection to the child (i.e. grandparent, step-parent) applies to the court. To apply for a CAO, the person must be the child's parent or guardian or someone with parental responsibility. A significant person in the child's life may also apply, however they must have permission from the court to do this.

CAOs can be granted alongside another order – such as a Special Guardianship Order.

Please note that as these are private law matters, the courts do not inform the local authority when Child Arrangements Orders are made, nor do the local authority have access to a list of all children under CAOs.

If you are someone with a Child Arrangements Order, you can access universal support from the local authority. You can do this by contacting the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The MASH acts as the front door to children's services within the local authority. It is the central point of contact for families and professionals who are seeking support for a child or where there are concerns about a child's welfare. The MASH Team is made up of professionals from social care, health, education, and the police, who work together to ensure that children and families receive the right help at the right time.

You do not need to wait for a crisis to contact the MASH. If you have a CAO and feel you need support - whether emotional, practical, or related to your child's development – the MASH Team can help you access the right services.

You can contact the MASH Team on 01908 253169 to request:

- General advice and guidance on parenting and child welfare.
- Signposting to local services such as family support, mental health, or housing.

- An assessment of needs if there are concerns about a child's safety of wellbeing.
- A referral to targeted or specialist services, where appropriate.

## Informal Kinship Care

This is arranged privately within the family, without involvement from the local authority. For example, this can include children living with grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, or other close relatives.

## Support for Previously Looked After Children

If your child has left care through a Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangements Order, they may be entitled to additional support services from the local authority.

## Universal Financial Support

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 to consider what support your family may be entitled to.

You can also check your entitlement to income support by using the Turn2Us benefits calculator:

<https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk/>

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

**Childcare** - The government help eligible families with childcare costs. Check your eligibility at: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

**Cost of Living** - If you claim certain benefits or tax credits, you may be eligible for an extra payment to help with the cost of living. This could include help

with household costs, energy bills, childcare costs, transport costs, and income support.

<https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/>

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/get-help-with-the-cost-of-living/>

We want to keep you up to date with everything that's happening in Milton Keynes and in the world of Special Guardianship, and to offer you support. The newsletter will feature any upcoming events, useful information and updates about Milton Keynes City Council and Special Guardianship across the country, and details of fantastic resources that we recommend to Special Guardians for you to use with the children in your care.

## **Pupil Premium Plus Funding**

Previously Looked After children 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 directly paid £2530 per year (2023-2024 grant). You must inform the school that the child is subject to a Special Guardianship Order to receive 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 (which should be published on the school website) and how this supports your child. 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**

Previously Looked After children 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 school admissions form.

## **Special Educational Needs**

If you are concerned that your child may have Special Educational Needs (SEN) then you should speak to your child's school in the first instance.

We also encourage you to contact from the Milton Keynes SEND Information and Advice Service (MKSENDIAS) – [www.mksendias.org.uk](http://www.mksendias.org.uk) – who can advise you on the processes for getting your child support within school, such as applying for an Education and Health Care Plan.

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.

# Family and Friends Kinship Carers Support Group



Being a Kinship Carer can sometimes feel lonely and isolating, it can feel like you are living in a different world that nobody else understands. It can be helpful to meet people who are in a similar situation to you and who truly understand what life is like as a Kinship Carer.

A group of Kinship Carers run a local support group in Milton Keynes called **Family and Friends Kinship Carers (also known as Kinship MK)**. The group meet every Thursday (during term-time only) from 9:30am to 11:30am, currently in the Community Room @ Westcroft District Centre.

This group welcomes all those caring for children who are not their own, regardless of the legal status of their arrangement. It also welcomes carers who have no legal arrangement, but who want to explore what possibilities there are for them to support their caring. There are a variety of Kinship Carers in this group with differing lengths of experience.

The group offers friendship, emotional support and has a wide range of experience and information available. The group also operates a WhatsApp group which is permanently open and is available to find information or support.

There's no need to book, just pop in and chat. The group also operates a WhatsApp group which is permanently open and is available for information and support.

Please email [kinshipmk@outlook.com](mailto:kinshipmk@outlook.com) for information about the support group, or feel to drop in on a Thursday morning. You can also call or text Patsy McCarthy on 07891833925 for information about the group.

*"The people I met were so lovely & made me feel very welcome." "It's great to meet other people in the same situation." "I think the group is great." "Finding the group made me feel stronger in being able to cope." "I don't feel so isolated." "Makes me feel as if I have some support."*

## **Final Note**

As a service, we recognise that being a Kinship Carer is a unique role that requires patience, compassion and understanding.

We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all Kinship Carers, who are keeping children safe, supporting their relatives to maintain connections with their birth families, and helping children to thrive and reach their full potential.




## **Feedback**



If you have used any services or resources that have been particularly helpful for your family, please do let us know so that we can share them with other Special Guardians.

Post-SGO Support Service  
PostSGOSupport@milton-keynes.gov.uk  
01908 253206  
Milton Keynes Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate, East Milton Keynes, MK9 3E



## Helpful Organisations for Advice, Support, and Information

	<p><b>The Kinship Care Charity</b> are the experts in all things about Kinship and Special Guardianship Orders.</p> <p>There is lots of information on their website about your role as a Special Guardian, and the benefits and support that you are entitled to. You can request advice and guidance around any specific issues that you may be facing, and they can offer resources to help you get the support that you need.</p> <p>Kinship can also connect you with other carers in your community and with local support groups.</p> <p>You can access their free, specialist advice service – online, via email, or over the phone. Website: <a href="http://www.kinship.org.uk">www.kinship.org.uk</a> Contact Number: 0300 123 7015</p>
	<p><b>Family Rights Group</b> is a charity that advises families about their rights and options within the care system. Website: <a href="http://www.frg.org.uk">www.frg.org.uk</a></p> <p>Contact Number: 0808 801 0366 (available Monday to Friday between 09:30am and 3:00pm)</p>
<p><b>Citizens Advice Milton Keynes</b></p>	<p><i>Free, confidential, and impartial advice.</i> Website: <a href="http://www.miltonkeynescab.org.uk">www.miltonkeynescab.org.uk</a> Contact Number: 0808 278 7991</p>
	<p><i>Financial Information and Advice Service. Check your benefits entitlement by using the benefits calculator, search for a grant, find out what schemes may be available to you to support with energy and water bills.</i> Website: <a href="http://www.turn2us.org">www.turn2us.org</a></p>

 <b>MILTON KEYNES SEND IAS</b>	Milton Keynes Special Education Needs and Disabilities Information and Advice Services <a href="http://www.mksendias.org.uk">www.mksendias.org.uk</a>
<b>National Family Mediation</b>	Website: <a href="http://www.nfm.org.uk">www.nfm.org.uk</a> Contact Number: 03004000636
<b>National Association of Child Contact Centres</b>	Website: <a href="http://www.naccc.org.uk">www.naccc.org.uk</a>
	Website: <a href="http://www.corambaaf.org.uk">www.corambaaf.org.uk</a> Contact Number: 020 7520 0300
<b>Fostering Network</b>	<i>A charity focused on improving foster care and making a positive difference for children in care and leaving foster care.</i> Website: <a href="http://www.fostering.net">www.fostering.net</a>
<b>PAC-UK</b>	Specialist independent advice, support, counselling, training, and educational advice for all affected by Adoption and Permanency. Website: <a href="http://www.pac-uk.org">www.pac-uk.org</a> Telephone: 020 7284 5879

