



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

6 November 2025

Kinship Local Offer

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Shirley Reynolds – Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Lifelong Learning
Lead Director:	Darren Knibbs – Director: Children's Safeguarding & Family Support
Service Area:	Children's Safeguarding & Family Support
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Yes – 21 May 2025
Report considered by:	SMT – 23 September 2025 Policy Development – 9 October 2025 Cabinet – 6 November 2025

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Endorse the publication of the Telford and Wrekin Local Offer for Kinship Carers
- 1.2 Note the content of the report and acknowledge the national developments in Kinship Care and how we have applied these locally.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To update on services provided to kinship carers and the children they care for, residing in Telford and Wrekin.

- 2.2 To highlight the Kinship Local Offer for publication. This will provide kinship families with clear and accessible information and guidance on the support that is available. This will ensure that the Council is compliant with the recent legislative and policy changes, and it is able to deliver its commitment to ensure effective services are in place for children and young people in kinship families in the borough.

3.0 Background – National Context

- 3.1 Currently, there is national focus on supporting all children where possible to remain with their family and relational networks, when they are unable to live with their parents. There is new statutory and non-statutory guidance to support overall practice working with children and kinship carers.
- 3.2 Kinship Care is a term used to describe placements of children living with family, friends or connected persons. In October 2024, the Government issued statutory guidance on 'Kinship Care', which included a definition (now enshrined in the draft Children's Wellbeing and Schools bill before Parliament) of kinship care: 'any situation in which a child is being raised in the care of a friend or family member who is not their parent. The arrangement may be temporary or longer term.'
- 3.3 This covers a wide span from informal arrangements and private fostering to Children in Care fostered by family or friends, and children subject to Court orders proving their family or friends with parental responsibility. Children may live with Kinship Carers in any of the following circumstances:
- In informal arrangements with a relative or connected person.
 - As a Private Fostering or Supported Lodgings arrangement.
 - Under a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order.
 - As a looked after child with Kinship Foster Carers.
- 3.4 In February 2023 the Government set out 6 ambitions of reform through the Stable homes, Built on Love. Within the new Social Care National Framework 2023, one of the six requirements is that all Local Authorities update and review their Kinship Care policy in line with the updated Kinship care statutory guidance.
- 3.5 The DFE have recently published their updated Kinship Care: statutory guidance for local authorities (DFE, October 2024). This sets out a framework for the provision of support to kinship families, and how family networks can be engaged to support the needs of children throughout children's social care, including those who are unable to live with their parents.
- 3.6 It sets out proposals and principles for local authorities (no change to statutory duties):

- To identify a 'Kinship Lead' who is a senior officer in Children's Social Care.
- For all local authorities to publish a Kinship Local Offer. This will include the provision of information about all support and services in the local area, which is to be readily available to those who need it.
- Support available should be based on the needs of the child rather than the legal status of the child.
- For local authorities to focus on family networks and identifying these at an early stage.

3.7 The National Framework 2023 outlines the principles of which children, young people and their families should be supported, the enablers to ensure that the system is effective, and the outcomes that should be achieved so that children and young people are able to thrive. It also places an emphasis on the importance of the voices and views of children, young people and their families; and how imperative it is that their voice is at the heart of practice, ensuring that they have a say in respect of how they are supported.

3.8 Jahnine Davis was appointed by the Department for Education as the National Kinship Care Ambassador in October 2024. The role "advocates for kinship children and carers across government and works directly with local authorities to improve services". Jahnine has lived experience of Kinship Care and has over 20 years professional experience in children's rights and participation work. Jahnine is scheduled to visit Telford and Wrekin for the second time on the 27th November 2025 with colleagues from the Department for Education to hear about the development of our Local Offer and localised changes in response to the reform's agenda.

3.9 In October 2024, a Kinship Care Practice Guide as published to "support senior leaders and commissioners in local areas to commission and develop effective services to support kinship families." This followed a commitment outlined by the previous government in "Stable Homes, Built on Love" to produce Practice Guides, which set out the best evidenced approaches for achieving the outcomes set within the Children's Social Care National Framework.

3.10 Kinship care (sometimes known as family and friends care) is the most prevalent form of alternative care for children worldwide. Kinship carers play a unique role in enabling children to remain with people they know and trust if they cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents and if being cared for by Kinship carers is considered as being within their best interests. These children may or may not be cared for by the Local Authority or even known to the local authority, although

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through the local offer it is anticipated that more Kinship carers and the children they care for will be reached.

- 3.11 While many children in kinship care arrangements thrive, they can often face additional challenges due to the circumstances and experiences which led to them to their being in kinship care. Many carers both want and need additional support to enable them to meet the needs of the children they care for.
- 3.12 The Local Authority and wider agencies should be flexible in their approach to enable kinship carers to access the right support at the right time, without the need for them to become formally approved foster carers and without the child/young person needing to become cared for by the Local Authority.
- 3.13 Kinship carers should be able to access information, advice and training, alongside financial and peer support, that equips them to meet the needs of children and young people and provide them with a stable and loving home.
- 3.14 As part of the reforms to Children's Social Care, every Local Authority has a duty to co-produce a Local Offer for Kinship Carers in their local area. It is clearly set out within the National Policy Guidance, that the Local Offer should be co-produced by kinship carers, the children they care for and by partner agencies.
- 3.15 This is underpinned by Kinship Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, October 2024 (previously known as the Family and Friends Care Statutory Guidance) and Outcome 2 of the National Social Care Framework – 'children and young people are supported via their family networks'. The Kinship Care: Statutory Guidance sits alongside a range of existing legislation and provides a framework for Local Authorities and partner agencies to assess and provide kinship support.
- 3.16 The Local Offer should outline the local authority's commitment to provide specific services for kinship carers and the children and young people they care for. It is a requirement for the Local Offer to be a single source of accessible information about the support available to kinship families in the area.
- 3.17 The Local Offer should be developed in collaboration with local partners. It should be widely available, including publication on the local authority website and widely and effectively communicated in various accessible formats.
- 3.18 The Local Offer should be developed in response to local context and need, within the framework of the law and statutory guidance which details what the Local Offer should cover.

4.0 Local Context

- 4.1 When children cannot live with their birth parents, Telford and Wrekin Council are committed to ensuring that children can remain with wider family members, or connected networks, wherever this is possible. This offers some children and young people the best chance of permanence and stability and enables them to maintain strong links with their birth parents where this is considered safe and within their best interests. It is important that family and connected networks continue to be explored for cared for children throughout their childhood, in line with their personal circumstances and best interests.
- 4.2 Telford and Wrekin Council recognise that to support Kinship Carers to offer appropriate care to children, who cannot live with their parents, they need access to a range of high-quality support services, at universal, targeted and specialist levels. These should be aimed at improving outcomes for children who cannot live with their birth parents and where it is considered that being cared for by Kinship carers is within their best interests.
- 4.3 It is an underlying principle of the Children Act (1989) that children should be enabled to live within their family unless this is not consistent with their welfare. This principle underlies the work of Telford and Wrekin Children's services.
- 4.4 Prior to the Children's Social Care reforms, we had already launched and rolled out our local Family First Strategy, with the underpinning values and premise that children and young people have a right to remain within their birth family wherever it is safe for them to do so. When children and young people are separated from their birth families', every effort should be made to maintain relationships and connections where this is within the child/young person's best interests.
- 4.5 As part of the implementation of the strategy, we have held multiple training events, practice focussed sessions and practice evaluation activity. This has provided us with the opportunity to examine our current approaches to supporting kinship caring arrangements and the connections of young people with people who matter to them if this is within their best interests.
- 4.6 We have enlisted the support of the Practice Lead and Trustee of the National Charity 'Kinship' and National Ambassador Jahnine Davis as critical friends to support our journey of developing the Telford and Wrekin Kinship Local Offer.
- 4.7 We hold firm values in relation to meaningful co-production alongside people who we support and have been recognised by 'Kinship' as achieving best practice in relation to our approach to understand the needs of kinship carers and form a Kinship Local Offer that reflects these needs.

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- 4.8 Our Kinship Local Offer development has been firmly grounded by research and best practice principles and has been co-designed by partner agencies.
- 4.9 The methodology paper (Appendix 1) evidences the formulation of our Kinship Local Offer development. This includes how we have engaged with key stake holders including Kinship carers, children and young people cared for by Kinship carers, cross directorate engagement, and engagement with the partnership including the voluntary sector. It also evidences the research underpinning the development of the Local Offer.
- 4.10 In terms of governance, the Director of Children's Services has been nominated to ensure that the Local Offer meets statutory requirements and is responsive to the needs of Kinship children and their carers.
- 4.11 We have built live web pages to enable us to continually update our offer with new additions, such as training, events, and community initiatives. The web pages provide an easily accessible link to understand kinship care and the Kinship Local Offer for partner agencies and families in our borough.
- 4.12 Alongside the launch of the Kinship Local Offer, there will be facilitated training and learning opportunities for partners which have been co-produced with kinship carers.
- 4.13 Based on feedback from carers, we have produced leaflets for carers and young people in respect of the support offer and assessment process for Special Guardian and Connected Carers.
- 4.14 We already have existing peer support forums which we are looking to expand for carers and young people. We have also developed a peer support advocacy offer. Both of which have been co-designed by Kinship carers and our Voice of the child apprentices.
- 4.15 We have an existing training offer, However, following feedback shared by kinship carers, this is being expanded to cover additional topics which are experienced by kinship carers that they feel would benefit our training offer. This has included an expansion of our family hubs offer in terms of wellbeing support for Kinship carers as well as ensuring the existing Family Hubs offer is accessible by Kinship carers.
- 4.16 We are recruiting for a Parent Worker to support birth parents with maintaining meaningful family time and to provide the bridge between kinship carers, the Local Authority and birth parents.

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- 4.17 We acknowledge that family relationships can be challenging for kinship carers, and we have enhanced our Systemic and Family Group Decision Making offer to support the repair of relationships and maintain family links.
- 4.18 Based on the research, we understand that kinship carers can experience fatigue and burn out. As such we have implemented a kinship self-care offer.
- 4.19 We understand that kinship carers are often caring for children/young people who have experienced trauma, and that this can be multi-generational in nature. We have devised a therapeutic offer to support kinship carers and the children they care for.
- 4.20 There are mechanisms in place to monitor the impact of the Kinship Local Offer and gain feedback from carers which will then provide the basis for an annual review. We are working to improve data collection to ensure we understand the demographic of kinship carers in our borough, demonstrate impact of our Local Offer and any areas for further development which will enable us to adapt our services accordingly.
- 4.21 Work will remain ongoing to continue building our Kinship Local Offer for families in Telford and Wrekin in collaboration with all local authority directorates, as well as local businesses, charities, and organisations across the borough.
- 4.22 Every elected member and employee of this Council, along with our partner agencies has a duty to support children, young people and their families to the best of their ability. We are all responsible for providing the best possible care, safeguarding and outcomes for the children who are supported by services and forming a shared vision as to how this should be achieved.
- 4.23 The Kinship Local Offer will be dynamic and will be updated at least annually but more frequently during this transitional period for service delivery and service provision.

5.0 Summary of main proposals

- 5.1 The report presents the Telford and Wrekin Kinship Local Offer, attached at Appendix 1, for approval. The Kinship Local Offer is a guide to all the support available to kinship carers in Telford and Wrekin. The report outlines how the offer addresses the Council's statutory obligations to kinship carers and its commitment to keeping families together and providing timely, needs led support to kinship carers.

6.0 Alternative Options

- 6.1 The alternative option is not to approve the Kinship Local Offer, however, this would result in non-compliance with the government's legislative and policy requirements including the statutory guidance on Kinship Care.

7.0 Key Risks

- 7.1 Not having an up-to-date Kinship Local Offer with all that is available to kinship carers, not supporting kinship carers and their children adequately could result in an increased need for statutory involvement which is contrary to the Right to Private Family Life.
- 7.2 Not adequately supporting children to remain within their birth family/with those who are important to them creating additional trauma with a life-long impact creating a need for greater service involvement.

8.0 Council Priorities

- 8.1 Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.

9.0 Financial Implications

- 9.1 Much of the activity undertaken to deliver the kinship offer forms part of the core service that is funded by ongoing Children's Safeguarding and Family Support budgets. However, specific government grants, such as the social care prevention grant and family hubs grant have also been used to support the offer, for example to fund recruitment of a parent worker outline in paragraph 4.16 above.
- 9.2 An effective kinship offer, supporting children to remain with their family and friends, reduces the need for greater service involvement and so assists in controlling the costs of the service.

10.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 10.1 The Kinship Care – Statutory Guidance, October 2024, provides the framework for provision of support to kinship families and references the legislative framework of the Children Act 1989, Children and Families Act 2014, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the associated statutory guidance and related regulations. The primary duties under the Children Act 1989 are reflected in the guidance and support children to remain with those they trust, including duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area and the duty, more specifically, to accommodate in the most appropriate placement under s.22C(5). The Children Act 1989 reinforces the required safeguarding for children and reducing risk, highlighting that looked after children should be cared for within their family network wherever

possible. Safeguarding duties are to be read in conjunction with Working Together to Safeguard Children – Statutory Guidance December 2023.

11.0 Ward Implications

11.1 All.

12.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

12.1 For Children where it is considered within their best interests to remain in their birth family/with connected people often achieve an increased sense of belonging, identity and improved outcomes than children/young people who are cared for by alternative caring arrangements.

12.2 Kinship carers are often older and will require support to maintain the kinship arrangement as the child/young person reaches adulthood.

13.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

13.1 In formulating the Local Kinship Offer, legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 must be complied with. The Equality Act 2010 puts a duty on public authorities, in exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those persons who do not share it, as well as foster good relations between those persons. Any potential barriers to accessing services should be considered and mitigated where appropriate and able. This is important because of the differences in the support available depending on the type of kinship arrangement.

13.2 The guidance states: *'When developing their local offer, local authorities are required to co-produce this with Kinship carers, young people and partners, with a specific emphasis on the needs of cultural diverse communities', which has been addressed within both the methodology paper and Kinship Local Offer. This area will require further development.*

13.3 The Kinship Local Offer will help to alleviate barriers for groups with protected characteristics by simplifying the routes to accessing information and support, and providing a single, seamless pathway to seeing help which adapts to the needs of kinship children and families through offering a number of forms of communication and engagement.

14.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 14.1 The Kinship Local Offer collates existing support to kinship carers into a single, simplified document. As a result, it has no direct carbon impact.
- 14.2 Clarity and ease in accessing and understanding the support available has the potential to increase resilience to climate change.

15.0 Appendices

A Kinship Local Offer

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	16/09/25	22/09/25	DK
Legal	16/09/25	22/09/25	ON
Finance	16/09/25	02/10/25	TD