

Slough Children First Kinship Strategy 2025

Introduction

Slough Children First have developed their kinship strategy based on a series of government policies and guidance set out by the Department of Education (DFE) and working in collaboration with kinship carers, children, partner agencies, voluntary services and faith groups. The strategic plan developed by Slough Children First outlines how we will identify, support, and value kinship carers (relatives or family friends who care for children when their parents are unable to do so).

Background

On the 15th December 2023 the Government launched the National Framework for Children's Social Care "Championing Kinship Care" which was the first ever national kinship care strategy produced by the DFE setting out their plans for Kinship care.

The purpose of this strategy was to transform children's social care by improving outcome for vulnerable children so that more children can thrive and to bridge the gap for kinship families. The purpose of this strategy is to set out a national plan to address the inequalities experienced by kinship carers and to increase awareness and recognition of their vital role.

The DFE has pledged to invest £20 million of funding in 2024-25 for Championing Kinship Care, to help move towards a children's social care system with kinship at its heart.

Stable Homes, Built on Love prioritised kinship care as a central pillar for improving support for families. Championing Kinship Care furthers this vision by setting out how the government will continue to reform kinship care, in order to keep more children safe and allow them to thrive.

Stable Homes, Built on Love reinforced children's existing legal rights to a family life wherever possible through a family first approach by supporting children to remain living within the families or within their family network.

This is underpinned in the Children Act 1989 in that children are best looked after within their families, with their parents playing a full part in their lives unless this is not safe for them.

The government introduced the Kinship Care Ambassador role, to work with local authorities and kinship carers to raise standards and share best practice.

The National Framework 2023 is statutory guidance from the Department for Education and is central to setting direction for practice in children's social care as

part of the reforms set out in Stable Homes Built on Love. The National framework also emphasised the need for stronger collaboration with partner agencies and prioritised effective multi-agency working. **The reforms framework established four overarching outcomes for the children’s social care system:**

Children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need.

Children and young people are supported by their family network.

Children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes.

Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes

In October 2024, the Government updated guidance on Family and Friends Care by setting 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 the children’s social care system, including those who are unable to live with their parents. This updated guidance is called Kinship Care strategy guidance. [Kinship care: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

Kinship Care, strategy guidance for local authorities

In October 2024 the government launched Kinship Care, strategy guidance for local authorities. The guidance 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 the children’s social care system, including those who are unable to live with their parents. This guidance provided a clear framework on how local authorities should implement their duties to kinship families.

The statutory guidance includes how local authorities and partners should provide services for children and young people in various kinship care arrangements. This includes informal arrangements, temporary arrangements, private fostering, kinship foster care, child arrangements orders, special guardianship orders, and arrangements leading to adoption.

Children’s Wellbeing and Schools 2024/2025

Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill, March 2024 set out key steps towards removing barriers between young people’s background and their future success through improvements to the education and care system so that every child can achieve and thrive.

These reforms champion a “**Family First**” approach—putting families and kinship carers at the heart of decisions about children’s care. We at Slough Children First wholeheartedly support that ethos.

The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2025, placed a duty on local authorities to publish a Kinship care local offer in order to clarify to families what support is available for kinship families and how to access that support and to promote

transparency so that kinship families can be informed about their rights and the resources available to them including support from other organisations including in the voluntary sector.

The children's well-being and Schools Bill defined kinship care so that all local authorities apply a uniformed approach to kinship care and calls for collaboration with kinship carers, children, voluntary services and faith groups in order to produce their kinship local offer.

Definition of kinship

A person who cares for a child who is unable to live with their birth parents and has a pre-existing relationship with the child. This relationship could be through blood, marriage, civil partnership, or through a professional capacity such as a teacher, childminder or youth worker.

Kinship carers can also be referred to as Friends and Family carers or Connected people by Local Authorities however the wider term is "Kinship carer"

What is kinship care

Kinship care is defined within the Statutory Guidance as "any situation in which a child is being raised in the care of a friend and family who is not their parent". This arrangement may be temporary or longer term.

Kinship care, it can generally be broken down into two main categories: informal and formal care.

- **Formal arrangement** – The child is placed with a family member or close friend and the Local Authority acts on the states behalf in relation to making decision regarding the child's welfare. Such as Kinship foster carer, child arrangement order, special guardianship
- **Informal arrangements** – You are looking after a child, but you don't have parental responsibility, and they are not in the care of the local authority. Without legal recognition it can be difficult for the kinship carer to access certain services and benefits for the child/children in their care.

The benefits of kinship care arrangements

Stability and permanency:

- Children in kinship care experience fewer placement disruptions compared to foster care. They're more likely to remain in one stable household, which contributes to emotional security and well-being.

Emotional and behavioural outcomes:

- Children in kinship care report better mental health and fewer behavioural issues compared to those in foster care. This is likely due to the familiar and supportive environment that relatives can provide, which reduces trauma.

Family and cultural ties:

- Kinship care maintains children's connections to their family and culture, which fosters a sense of identity and belonging. This is particularly important for children from minority backgrounds.

Educational outcomes:

- Children in kinship care generally perform better academically than children in traditional foster care. Stability and the familiar environment help reduce the risk of school changes and the academic disruptions that can accompany them.

Legal framework

It is important to note that local authorities do not have a general duty to assess all arrangements where children are living with their wider family or friends' network rather than their parents, but it does have a duty where it appears that services may be necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a Child in Need.

The majority of family and friends' carers act informally, with the agreement of the parent, but there are a number of different legal options which family and friends' carers can consider to secure care arrangements formally. The advice of a social worker or a solicitor may be helpful when deciding which option is most applicable to your circumstances.

A child placed by Slough Children First with a Connected Carers will be a Looked After Child. A Looked After child can only be placed with a Connected person if that person(s) has been approved as a foster carer under the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 or granted temporary approval under the Care Planning and Case review (England) Regulations 2010.

Private fostering arrangements

A privately fostered child is a child under 16 (or 18 if disabled) who is cared for by an adult who is not a parent or close relative, where the child is to be cared for in that home for 28 days or more. Close relative is defined as 'a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent.' It does not include a child who is 'looked after' by a local authority. In a private fostering arrangement, the parent still holds parental responsibility and agrees the decision-making arrangements with the private foster carer. Private foster care arrangements should be notified to the local authority in the

area where the child and carer reside, who will then undertake a private fostering assessment.

Slough Children First will assess, support and review all private foster carers. If the child is also assessed as a child in need the local authority has a responsibility to provide services to meet the assessed needs of the child under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Following assessment, a child in need plan will be drawn up and a package of support will be identified. This can comprise a variety of different types of services and support, including financial support. Privately fostered children are not Looked After children.

Looked after friends and family arrangements

Whenever a child needs to be looked after by Slough Children First, Children Services will first try and identify a relative or family friend who is able to care for them. If the care arrangement is likely to continue past 16 weeks, the law states that the carer must be formally assessed and approved as a Slough Children First Kinship Carer. The assessment process will involve a number of visits to complete the assessment and will also involve undertaking background checks, medical histories etc.

It is important to note that *temporary approval* does not mean the Kinship Carer is formally approved as a short-term Foster Carer. Temporary approval is a time-limited measure that allows a child to be placed with a connected person while a full fostering assessment is completed.

In contrast, *formal approval as a short-term Foster Carer* can only be granted after the full assessment process has been completed, the fostering panel has considered the assessment, and the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) has endorsed the panel's recommendation. Fully approved Foster Carers are required to meet enhanced standards, commit to ongoing training, and maintain detailed records about the children in their care.

Immediate placements

A parent may ask for a child to be accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 because they feel unable to care for them or a social work team may feel the parent is unsuitable to care for the child and initiate care proceedings under section 31 of the children Act 1989.

Where a child needs to be immediately placed in an emergency under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 with a relative or Connected Person a viability assessment will need to be completed, and the placement will need to be approved by the head of Regulated Services.

The Local Authority must be satisfied that any placement is the most suitable one to safeguard and promote the child's welfare, until the full assessment for approval is completed under the 2011 Fostering Regulations.

Special Guardianship

Special Guardianship can be considered for children needing permanent care outside their birth family. It can provide greater security for the child while maintaining important links with their birth family, unlike adoption, which involves a complete legal severance

Relatives may apply for a Special Guardianship Order after caring for the child for one year. As Special Guardians, they will have Parental Responsibility for the child which, while it is still shared with the parents, can be exercised with greater autonomy on day-to-day matters than would be possible under a Child Arrangements Order.

Special Guardianship Orders may be made in private family proceedings, and the local authority may not be a party to any such arrangements. Or, for a looked after child, a Special Guardianship Order in favour of a relative or foster carer (who was a 'Connected Person') with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a 'Looked After' child.

In either case, whether the child was a looked after child or not, the local authority is required to undertake an assessment and report to court in respect of all Special Guardianship applications.

As part of the Special Guardianship assessment, a support plan will also be completed which will detail the support available should a Special Guardianship Order be granted.

Child Arrangement Orders

A Child Arrangements Order is a Court Order which sets out the arrangements as to when and with whom a child is to live, spend time or otherwise have contact.

A Child Arrangements Order may give parental responsibility to the person in whose favour it is made. Parental responsibility is shared with the parents. Authority for day-to-day decision making about the child should be delegated to the carer(s), unless there is a valid reason not to do so.

Child Arrangements Orders may be made in private family proceedings in which the local authority is not a party nor involved in any way in the arrangements. However, a Child Arrangements Order in favour of a relative or foster carer (who was a 'Kinship carer') with whom a child is placed may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need or a 'Looked After' child.

The local authority may pay Child Arrangements Order Allowances to relatives or friends, unless they are a spouse or civil partner of a parent, with whom a child is living under a Child Arrangements Order. This is set out in paragraph 15 of Schedule 1 of the Children Act 1989; however, this is discretionary and subject to an assessment.

Adoption

Adoption is the process by which all parental rights and responsibilities for a child are permanently transferred to an adoptive parent by a court. As a result, the child legally becomes part of the adoptive family.

An Adoption Order in favour of a relative or foster carer (who was a Connected Person) with whom a child is living may be an appropriate outcome as part of a permanence plan for a Child in Need or a Looked After Child.

Local authorities must make arrangements, as part of their adoption service, for the provision of a range of adoption support services. They then have to undertake assessments of the need for adoption support services at the request of the adopted child, adoptive parents and their families, as well as birth relatives. The support required is then set out in an Adoption Support Plan, and this may include financial support.

Non- Agency Adoption Assessments

From the 1st April 2021, the Kinship team is responsible for completing all non-agency adoption assessments such as step-parent adoptions.

The Kinship Team provides information to prospective adopters on the adoption process, as well as other options available to them, such as SGO assessment of prospective adopters whilst guiding them through the application process.

Slough's vision for kinship families

At Slough Children First, we appreciate the vital role kinship carers play in keeping children connected to their family, their community and their unique identity. Whilst there are a huge number of benefits to being a kinship carer, we know that it can also be challenging. Whether that is supporting children with the daily challenges of school, homework and hobbies; or you are trying to navigate key decisions and actions from professionals, we want our offer to provide kinship carers with the help and tools needed to not just survive, but to thrive.

We are here to support you however your kinship care journey starts and regardless of where you currently are. Whether you are a temporary carer, a Special Guardian, or caring through a private arrangement, this offer is for you.

Slough Children First Kinship local offer

Slough Children First kinship local offer outlines the support, services, and resources available to kinship carers. Slough Children First take seriously their corporate parenting responsibilities and are committed to the family -first approaches.

[Further links and resources - Slough Children First](#)

Co-production

Slough Children First prides itself on working in collaboration with kinship carers, young people, partners agencies, voluntary services and faith groups to continue to evaluate and further built on our kinship offer in line with developing policies and guidance. We do this through co-working groups and regularly consulting with our kinship families.

Slough Priority Areas and how services will be improved

Slough Children First are committed to producing a kinship local offer that is accessible to all kinship carers and provides support to kinship carers at the time that they need it most.

Equity and inclusion

Slough is a diverse borough we are therefore committed to developing a local offer that is reflective of the demographic make-up of our carers. Slough Children First is Committed to reducing the equity between kinship care and foster care and producing an equitable local offer so that kinship families can thrive.

Children receive permanency in a timely manner

Slough Children First have established a framework for decision-making and reducing delays in children achieving permanency through our permanency monitoring group and regular permanency planning meetings and family group conference/ network meetings. Giving families the opportunity to come up with their own plans and identify their support network.

Accountability, and review of the Local Offer

Slough Children First Strategic Improvement Group monitors and has oversight of the Kinship Team's development and implementation of Kinship local offer under the social care reforms Family First Partnership. This is also shared with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

In addition, Slough Children First are part of an insight group set up by the Kinship charity who are working with a number of local authorities to collectively produce an equitable kinship offer.