

Kinship Care & Developments

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[Something to be proud of - a film by Kinship](#)

National Kinship Strategy 2023

Gave a clear definition of Kinship Care

Core principles:

1. Supported

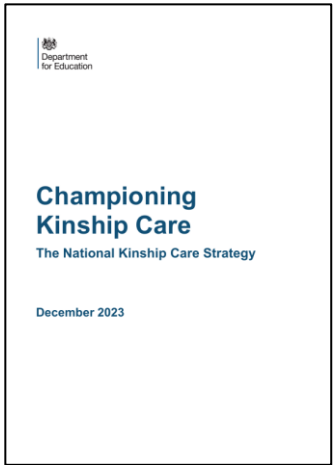
Improving practical and financial support for kinship families Increased financial support (including pilot allowances) Better training, advice, and peer support. Stronger education support (Virtual School Head role extended) Guidance to support kinship carers in employment.

2. Empowered

Giving kinship families a stronger voice and influence. Amplifying lived experience in policy and practice. Strengthening advocacy for children and carers. Promoting family-led decision making (e.g. family group conferences). Introduction of roles such as Kinship Care Ambassador.

3. Understood

Improving system understanding and consistency. Clearer definition and visibility of kinship care. Updated statutory guidance for local authorities. Improving practice consistency across services. Building the evidence base and data on kinship care



Key National Commitments

- Pilot financial allowances for kinship carers
- Expand Virtual School Head support to kinship children
- Deliver training and advice offer for all carers
- Provide employment guidance for supporting working carers
- Update Kinship Care statutory guidance
- Review and simplify legal frameworks

Implications for Practice

- Kinship care should be considered early and proactively
- Practice should be family-network led, not service-led
- Support should be based on need, not just legal status (reinforced in later guidance)
- Social workers should work in partnership to identify, assess, and support kinship carers effectively

1. New Legal Definition and Support

- **Legal Definition:** The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill received Royal Assent on the 29th April 2024, introducing a legal definition of kinship care for the first time, aimed at improving recognition of carers.
- **Kinship Local Offer:** Following updated statutory guidance in October 2024, local authorities are now required to publish a "kinship local offer," outlining the support available to kinship families in their area.
- **National Support Offer:** The Department for Education (DfE) has funded a national, bespoke training and support package for all kinship carers—including informal carers—which launched in 2024.

2. Financial Support and Pilots

- **Allowance Pilot (2025-2029):** The government is funding a £40 million, 7-local authority pilot –(Kinship Zones) to test paying kinship allowances to carers with a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or "lives with" Child Arrangement Order (CAO), where the child would otherwise be in care. The allowance aims to match the national minimum fostering rate.
- **Funding Renewal:** The Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) was renewed for 2025-26, though with a 40% reduction in funding per child for therapy, a point of concern for advocates.

3. Education and Advocacy

- Virtual School Heads (VSH): Legislation is moving to place the role of VSH on a statutory footing to champion the education of children in kinship care, ensuring they get better school support.
- Family Group Decision Making (FGDM): The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill aims to place a new duty on councils to offer family group decision-making meetings when a child is at risk of entering care, helping identify kinship carers earlier.
- National Kinship Care Ambassador: Jahnine Davis was appointed in October 2024 to advocate for kinship children and carers across government.

4. Workplace Rights

- No Statutory Paid Leave: Despite campaigns, there is currently no legal right to paid employment leave for kinship carers, unlike adoptive parents.
- Employer Best Practice: The DfE has published information for employers on how to support kinship carers, and the "Kinship Friendly Employers" scheme is encouraging companies to introduce their own paid leave policies.

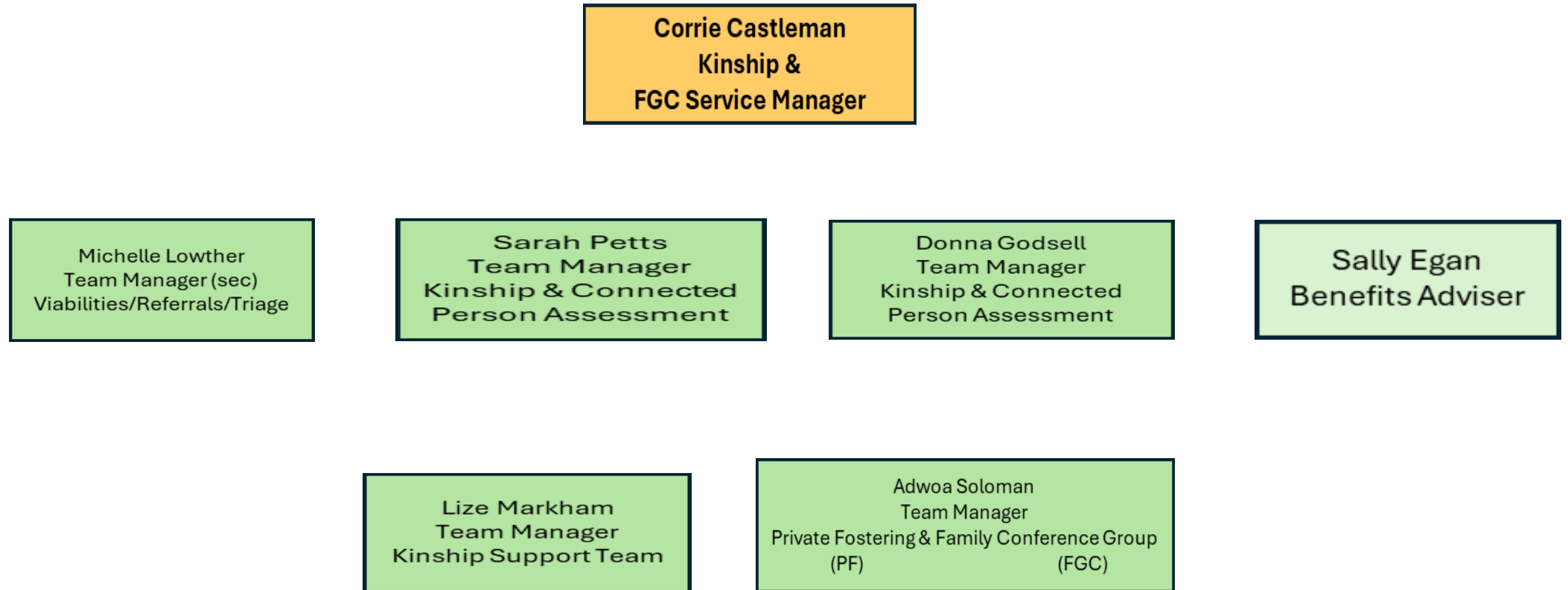
5. Future Changes (2026 and Beyond)

- Law Commission Review: A project to review and potentially simplify the legal orders surrounding kinship care (SGOs, CAOs) is underway, with a consultation paper expected in Spring 2026.
- Ofsted Changes: Ofsted is revising its inspection framework (ILACS) to focus more on how local authorities support kinship care, with changes expected to align with broader reforms by 2026-2027.

Types of Kinship Care Arrangements

- Informal Kinship – FLDM meetings and support packages in early help space
- Private Fostering – Assessed and supported by LA SW's
- Child Arrangement Order - Not assessed private order (live with order)
- Special Guardianship Orders – Assessed by LA share PR
- Kinship Foster Carers
- Adoption

Essex Kinship Service Structure



Financial Support

Adoption and Kinship Resource Panel consider:

- Ongoing Kinship allowance (until the child turns 18)
- Capital funding requests – adaptations to their homes
- Financial support with Nursery fee's
- Contribution towards purchase of larger vehicle
- Settling in cost up to £850
- Venue for post order Family time
- Therapeutic support
- Benefits advice in assessment pre and post order

Case Study: Rosie - Local offer of support

- **Rosie**, aged 10, is under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) with her maternal grandparents, Clair and John, granted when she was 4.
- Before the SGO, Rosie was a Looked After Child from age 2 due to neglect, domestic abuse, and parental substance misuse.
- From ages 4–8, Rosie appeared settled with her grandparents emotionally, socially, and in education, with no additional needs identified.
- Family contact with her parents was recommended six times a year during school holidays but was inconsistent due to parents not attending.
- Approaching her 9th birthday, the school observed behaviour changes affecting her learning and peer relationships.
- Rosie struggled with concentration and focus, became more dysregulated, and engaged in risk-taking behaviours.
- This led to a reduced school timetable to manage emotional overwhelm and support her wellbeing.
- At home, Rosie had frequent meltdowns and difficulty regulating her emotions and expressing how she felt.
- The situation began affecting family dynamics, with Clair and John requesting help to better understand and support Rosie's behaviours.



Work undertaken with the family

- **A Team around the Family (TAF) Meeting:**
- **Actions:**
 - An **assessment** of need by Kinship Support team agreed.
 - GP contact regarding referral to the Pediatrician to explore possible Neurodiversity.
 - School support and interventions were considered, a **one plan** to be initiated, with consideration being given to the school applying for an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), once evidence has been gathered.
 - Recommendations following the assessment were:
 - Clair and John to attend the **Nurturing Attachments** Group and their local **Kinship Coffee Morning**, which might offer peer support.
 - Referral to **Benefits** Project Advisor.
 - Consultation to be requested with **Mental Health Coordinator** to explore the need for potential therapeutic intervention and next steps.
 - **Family time** agreement to be explored.
 - As Rosie was a previously looked after child, she is eligible for the Adoption Special Guardian Support Fund (**ASGSF**) to fund therapeutic intervention.



Outcomes Achieved

- Nurturing Attachments course has developed the carers understanding of **therapeutic care**.
- Kinship Coffee Morning reduced sense of **isolation**.
- School implemented a One Plan and Rosie feels better understood and less **overwhelmed**. A transition plan for Rosie moving to secondary school is in place.
- A referral was made to the Paediatrician by the GP, and an appointment is awaited.
- Direct work with Rosie, identified she was in communication with her parents online, without her Grandparents knowledge. **Family Time Agreement offered containment** and set clear boundaries, having a positive impact on Rosie's emotional wellbeing and family relationships.
- Direct work with Rosie completed, helped her develop strategies that she could use to help herself **feel safe** and **regulated**.
- The family is now in receipt of all entitled **welfare benefits** and DLA for Rosie.
- SGO Support Plan in place and reviewed 6 monthly, this monitors and reviews the current plan in place.

