



Brent's Kinship Local Offer 2026–2028

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Local Offer is to set out the London Borough of Brent's approach towards promoting, assessing and supporting the needs of children living with kinship carers. A kinship carer is a family member or close family friend who provides care for a child when their birth parents are unable to do so.

Brent is committed to ensuring children are in the Kinship arrangement that best suits their needs. Brent aims to avoid giving children 'Looked After Children' (children in care) status unless necessary and instead are committed to providing the right support to all Kinship arrangements that will best support the child to thrive. Brent is also committed to assessing children and families when necessary, or when requested to do so, and will not assess all Kinship arrangements as standard. At times support can be put in place without a significant assessment being undertaken. Brent encourages families to approach us for advice, guidance and assistance.

LEGISLATION AND STATUTORY GUIDANCE UNDERPINNING THIS LOCAL OFFER

- Children Act, 1989
- Children (Leaving Care), 2000
- Adoption and Children Act, 2002
- Children and Adoption Act, 2006
- Children and Young Persons Act, 2008
- Children and Families Act, 2014
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations, 2011
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, 2011
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations, (2010 as amended)
- The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations, 2015
- Special Guardianship Regulations, 2005
- Special Guardianship (Amendment) Regulations, 2016
- Special Guardianship Guidance, 2017
- The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance on their Roles and Responsibilities, February 2017
- The Human Rights Act, 1998
- Championing Kinship Care: National Kinship Care Strategy, 2023
- Children's Social Care: Stable Homes, Built on Love consultation response, September 2023
- Championing Kinship Care, The National Kinship Care Strategy, December 2023
- Children's Social Care National Framework, December 2023
- Kinship Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, October 2024
- Practice Guidance, Kinship Care, Foundations, What Works Centre for Children and

Families, October 2024

- Improving the Kinship Local Offer and Approach to Kinship Care, Insight Report, February 2026

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Brent is committed to:

- Supporting families to enable children to safely remain in the care of their birth parents.
- For children who are unable to remain in the care of their birth parents, Brent is committed to enabling children to remain within the care of their kinship network, unless this is not consistent with their welfare.
- Promoting children's permanent care in their kinship network.
- Ensuring that assessment of support for all types of kinship care is based on the needs of the child.
- Promoting the holistic needs of the child or young person, including their cultural and religious identity.
- Support should be based on the needs of the child rather than their legal status.
- Where possible kinship families should be supported to prevent children from becoming children in care to Brent. For those children who are children in care this Kinship Local Offer aims to prevent those children from remaining children in care for longer than is needed.
- Children are active participants in their own lives and circumstances; this Kinship Local Offer aims for children to have their views, wishes and feelings taken into account in all relevant processes where adults are trying to solve problems or make decisions that relate to the child.
- This Kinship Local Offer aims to eliminate discrimination and promote the advancement of equality of opportunity between people and foster a good relationship between those people in line with the Equality Act 2010.
- This Kinship Local Offer aims to remove potential barriers to accessing support and services.

Please note that information, guidance, support and services are available to children, birth parents and Kinship Carers from the Local Authority as well as other organisations, charities and resources. This Kinship Local Offer aims to avoid repeating information that is available clearly elsewhere so will signpost to other sources of information (where appropriate to do so). Please note at the end of this Local Offer there is a list of services and organisations families can contact for more information and support.

A KINSHIP LOCAL OFFER BY CHILDREN AND KINSHIP CARERS

In developing this Kinship Local Offer the London Borough of Brent asked Birth Parents, Kinship Carers as well as children in Kinship Care Arrangements what they would like to see in Brent's Kinship Local Offer. The following consultations were completed in 2025 and 2026:

- A virtual Kinship 'Coffee Morning' consultation via Microsoft Teams

- An in-person Kinship ‘Coffee Morning’ consultation at Brent Civic Centre
- An online survey sent to Kinship Carers
- An online survey sent to children in Kinship Care Arrangements
- An online survey sent to birth parents who have children in Kinship Care Arrangements
- Interviews undertaken with children in Kinship Care arrangements

If you would like to provide any other feedback to this Kinship Local Offer, please do email the service at kinship.team@brent.gov.uk

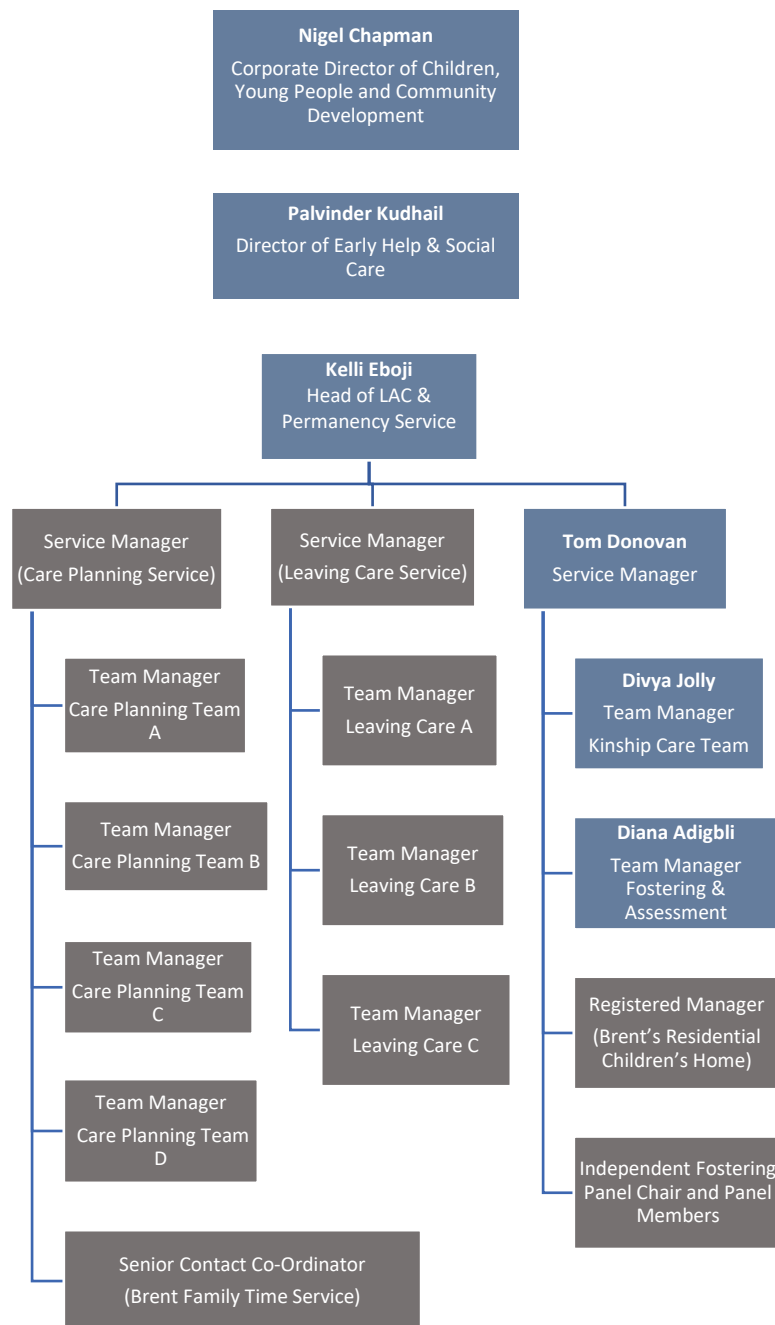
If you have any concerns, comments or complaints then you can submit these to the Local Authority using the Local Authority’s complaint process. More information can be found here: <https://www.brent.gov.uk/the-council-and-democracy/complaints-and-feedback>

A shorter/condensed version of the offer outlining the key headlines from this Kinship Local Offer will be added to the London Borough of Brent’s website by June 2026 as requested by Kinship Children and Families.

MANAGEMENT OF BRENT’S KINSHIP LOCAL OFFER

In the London Borough of Brent, the Brent Kinship Local Offer has been compiled by the Kinship Care Team within the Children, Young People and Community Development directorate in Brent. The Kinship Care Team is currently overseen by Team Manager, Divya Jolly and Service Manager, Tom Donovan. The Kinship Local Offer will be reviewed and updated every 2 years; this may be completed earlier if updating guidance, legislation or learning is received by the London Borough of Brent. The Kinship Care Team continue to receive feedback and views from children, birth parents and carers which will feed into service development, planning and improvement which includes updating the Brent Kinship Local Offer.

The structure chart below outlines how the service is structured in Brent.



DEFINITION OF KINSHIP CARE

The UK government's new definition of kinship care states that "Kinship care is 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."

This definition includes:

- Informal kinship arrangements and private family arrangements
- Private Fostering arrangements
- Special Guardianship Orders
- Child Arrangements Order (when the Child Arrangements Order is made to someone who is not the birth parent of the child)

- Kinship foster carers (when children are children in care to the Local Authority) (this is also referred to as ‘connected person foster carers’)
- Adoption by family or friends

Below are more detailed definitions of each Kinship Care Arrangement:

Please note, at Appendix C in this Kinship Local Offer, a table is included clearly outlining the different types of Kinship Care Arrangements, to assist the reader.

- 1) Kinship Foster Care also known as Connected Persons (‘Family and Friends’) Foster Care – for children/young people who are “Looked After Children”. This refers to children who are Looked After Children (children in care) subject to Section 20 voluntary agreements, children subject to Interim Care Orders (section 31) as well as children subject to Care Orders (Section 38) of the Children Act (CA) 1989. The children in these arrangements usually have an allocated social worker in Children’s Social Care; the connected person foster carers usually have an allocated supervising social worker from Brent.
- 2) Special Guardianship Orders – Kinship carers with a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) – these are carers who have parental responsibility (PR) for a child following an order made by the family court. A Special Guardianship order is a court order that says a child will live permanently with someone (who is not their parent) until they are 18. The Special Guardian shares parental responsibility with the birth parent. The children in these arrangements do not usually have an allocated social worker in Children’s Social Care, unless a concern or need has arisen.
- 3) Private Fostering Arrangements – Parents who make their own arrangements for the care of their child/ren with someone other than a close relative (as defined by the Children Act 1989, above), and for longer than 28 days, enter into a private fostering arrangement. Whilst this is a private arrangement made by the family, the Local Authority must be notified and they are required by law to assess, monitor and support this arrangement.

To help give an example, if a child under 16 years old from abroad lives with a ‘host’ adult/family in the UK to study, this is a private fostering arrangement. If a child lives with a hired childminder or nanny for longer than 28 consecutive days, this is a private fostering arrangement. The Local Authority need to be informed to check the child is safe and happy in this arrangement that was made by the family.

The birth parent (or other person with Parental Responsibility) remains financially responsible for the child; they should ensure they are happy with the arrangement before committing to it. They will also be encouraged to enter into a written agreement with the carer they identified so that it is clear what is expected part of everyone involved. In Brent, once we are notified, the carer and accommodation will be assessed by the Private Fostering Lead Social Worker to ensure it is safe and appropriate for the child. In Brent, the Private Fostering Lead Social Worker sits within the Kinship Care Team.

The Private Fostering Lead Social Worker can assist in the drafting the agreement between the private foster carer and the birth parents (if this step has not yet been completed) as well as to provide support including signposting to support services available. The Local Authority can offer guidance to the private foster carer whilst monitoring the placement's suitability for the child/ren through regular visits to the home. The Kinship Care Team will inform the carer of training opportunities that they may find useful in their role as a Private Foster Carer. If a concern is raised for the Private Fostering Arrangement this will be discussed with the birth parent(s) and private foster carer to consider what should happen next.

- 4) Child Arrangements Order – A Child Arrangements Order is an order that details who a child lives with, spends time with or otherwise has contact with. Each Child Arrangements Order is decided on the circumstances of the individual family and on what is in the best interests of that particular child. This means that there is no such thing as a 'usual' arrangement. Child Arrangements Orders are governed by Section 8 Children Act 1989. These orders can be made to a birth parent but can also be awarded to adults who are not birth parents. When a non-birth parent has a Child Arrangements Order for a child, this can be considered a Kinship Care arrangement.
- 5) Informal Kinship Arrangement – is when a birth parent decides who will care for their child but there is no legal order, court order or agreement in place confirming this arrangement. To clarify this needs to be a "close family member", if it is not a "close family member" then this is a Private Fostering Arrangement (which is outlined above). An Informal Kinship Arrangement is usually when a child is cared for by a grandparent or older sibling.
- 6) Adoption by Family or Friends – Some family members who take on the care of a child connected to them decide to care for them by adopting them instead of utilising other legal orders such as Child Arrangements Orders or Special Guardianship Orders. Many of these Adoption arrangements are also Kinship Care arrangements. It is important to note that Adoption Orders that have been made outside of England may not be legally recognised in England.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Brent is committed to informing kinship carers of the different options available to them if they are considering caring, or already caring, for a child with whom they have a connection. The Local Authority's response to Child Arrangements Orders, Special Guardianship Orders and other legal orders are included throughout this Kinship Local Offer.

The purpose of this Local Offer is to ensure that members of the public have the necessary information to make informed choices about the most appropriate route for them to follow and what support is available to them from the Local Authority and other agencies.

This link contains the legal framework that may apply when caring for somebody else's child and the entitlement to support services relating to each option.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/kinship-care-framework-for-local-authorities>

The Local Authority have several duties to a child who is classified as a 'Looked After Child' (a Child in Care), in short summary these duties can include:

- Creating a care plan and implementing this care plan
- Providing the child with a safe placement/arrangement to live in
- Ensuring the child's holistic needs are met, including health needs and identity needs
- Obtaining the child's wishes and feelings and acting on these wishes and feelings
- Aiming to achieve permanency for the child as soon as possible without delay

More information about a Local Authority's duty to Children in Care can be found online at Coram's Child Law Centre Website:

<https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/local-authority-duties-to-looked-after-children/>

As a reminder, not all children in Kinship Care Arrangements are classified as Children in Care.

The Local Authority have several duties to a child who is classified as a 'Child in Need', in short summary these duties can include:

- To safeguard and promote the welfare of children defined as 'Child in Need'
- To undertake an assessment of the child's needs
- To put in place a Child in Need plan where required
- To provide support to a Child, including financial support and advice/guidance

More information about a Local Authority's duty to Children defined as Child in Need can be found online at Coram's Child Law Centre Website:

<https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/child-in-need-services/> As a reminder, not all children in Kinship Care Arrangements are classified as 'Child in Need' as outlined in the Children Act 1989.

Kinship Families may wish to consider seeking their own independent legal advice. The below website may assist in supporting families to find an appropriate legal representative:

<https://find-legal-advice.justice.gov.uk/> Please note that most kinship families are not automatically entitled to Legal Aid funding and will likely need to be required to pay for independent legal advice.

FAMILY GROUP DECISION MAKING

Family Group Decision Making meetings, sometimes known as Family Network Meetings or Family Group Conferences, are when important people around the child come together to discuss and decide how they can support the child. People who attend these meetings can include:

- Birth Parents
- Aunts, Uncles (and their partners)
- Grandparents, Step-Grandparents
- Siblings and Step-Parents
- Cousins, Extended Family
- Godparents/Guide-parents
- Previous Carers
- Ex-Partners
- Close Family Friends
- Neighbours
- Members of the Local Community or Religious Community
- Or anyone important to the family who could provide assistance and support or care

These meetings can be used to help the family put a plan in place to support the child and keep them safe. They can also be used to explore where the child should live in the future, exploring possible kinship arrangements. They may also explore who the child will spend time with and who will help care for the child.

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) meetings are usually held when a need or concern arises for a child which results in Children's Social Care needing to become involved for an assessment and/or support. The FGDM meetings will be utilised to explore what the concern is and what the family/network can do to reduce the worry/concern. The Local Authority is committed to helping family members and networks to support children within their networks.

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) meetings can take place repeatedly during a family's journey through the children's early help and social care system, and even if a family has declined to take part in a meeting before, they can still take place again at a later date.

Family networks can be an essential support network to help families stay together and thrive. Brent is committed to utilising family networks and if possible avoiding children coming into care with foster carers who they do not have a current relationship with.

Brent fully supports the use of Family Group Decision Making Meetings to ensure that family and friends are explored and involved in the care plans for children.

Within Brent, if the child has an allocated social worker the child's allocated social worker will arrange and co-ordinate Family Group Decision Making meetings when they are needed. If the child connected to you has a social worker and you feel a meeting will be helpful, please ask the child's allocated social worker to arrange this.

Social Workers from Brent's Kinship Care Team are able to attend Family Group Decision Making meetings (when requested to assist); the Kinship Care Team can support with explaining permanence options, assessment processes, and support available to the child's friend and family network.

If the child does not have an allocated social worker but you feel the family would benefit from a Family Group Decision Making Meeting, please contact Brent's Kinship Care Team on 020 8937 2749 and the duty social worker will provide support, advice and guidance about the possibility of arranging this. Unfortunately, the Local Authority is not able to offer FGDM meetings to all families that request these and at times will only be able to offer advice and guidance.

There may be occasions when a Family Group Decision Making meeting is not appropriate. In these circumstances, Brent will work with the family to establish an alternative way in which they are able to contribute to decision making.

BRENT'S ASSESSMENT AND APPROVAL PROCESS FOR CONNECTED PERSON(S) / KINSHIP CARERS

As outlined above, Brent will assess a Kinship Care arrangement when required to do so or requested by the court to do so. Not all Kinship Care arrangements will require an assessment. The process is detailed in this section if a kinship carer is required to be assessed for the following Kinship Care arrangements:

- A temporarily registered Kinship connected persons foster carer, under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (often referred to as a Viability Assessment)
- An approved Kinship connected persons foster carer, under Regulation 27 of the Fostering Regulations 2011 (sometimes referred to as Kinship Carers who have attended an independent fostering panel for approval)
- A Special Guardianship Order (SGO)

For ease, the above three arrangements will be referred to as 'Connected Persons' in this section of this Kinship Local Offer. Do not worry, the different arrangements can be confusing, the legal definitions of these arrangements are clearly outlined in **Appendix C**. If you need support to understand the different kinship arrangements and how they apply to you, you can contact the Brent Kinship Care Team duty social worker on 020 8937 2749.

For families in Private Fostering Arrangements, they will undergo a Private Fostering assessment, which is outlined later in this Local Offer.

Please note, if there are possible concerns identified for the child, as outlined in Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, then the Local Authority would undertake a Child and Family Assessment (CFA) or Family Help Assessment (FHA). Further information about this assessment process is found here on the Brent website.

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/safeguarding-children/keeping-children-safe#Reportchildabuse>

As a reminder the assessment processes are different for each type of assessment. For example, a Child and Family Assessment (CFA) is a different process to an SGO assessment. Please note, in Brent the CFA is soon to change to a Family Help Assessment which is a single tool for Child and Family Assessments and Early-Help Assessments.

If an Informal Kinship Arrangement or Private Family Arrangement would benefit from advice, support and guidance please do still contact the Kinship Care Team on 020 8937 2749 as Brent is committed to supporting all Kinship Care arrangements.

When Brent are asked to undertake connected person fostering assessments or SGO assessments, here is the assessment process within Brent.

1. Viability assessment

Whether in an emergency, in a planned way, or as part of a long-term plan, a viability assessment should be undertaken prior to a child living with a kinship carer. In Brent this viability is a joint assessment, carried out by the child's Social Worker and a kinship Social Worker. Brent uses an internally designed tool for undertaking viability assessments of potential kinship carers, based on the recommended viability template used in the "Initial Family and Friends Care Assessment: A good practice guide", published by the Family Rights Group in 2017 and updated in 2022.

<https://frg.org.uk/product/initial-family-and-friends-care-assessment-a-good-practice-guide/>

The viability assessment is designed to assist Social Workers establish the strengths, risks and support needs of prospective kinship arrangements and the relationship between the child and the prospective carer. It covers:

- an assessment of the quality of the existing relationship between the child and the connected person
- the child's wishes and feelings about the kinship arrangement
- a visit to the connected person's home by the Social Workers, which should confirm that the physical environment and space available is suitable for the particular child/ren
- whether the connected person would require any additional resources in order to meet the particular needs of the child/ren
- the quality of the relationships between the members of the household, including children

and young people, and their views about the proposed caring arrangement, impact of the proposed caring arrangement on other children and young people in the household, based on information about their history and current lifestyle

- the connected person will be interviewed to consider their ability to provide safe and appropriate care, to promote family time (contact) to birth family, to work with the Care Plan and to ensure they understand that should the arrangement continue, they will need to be fully assessed as connected person carers
- the accommodation, including sleeping arrangements, will be assessed
- information will be obtained about other persons in the household
- the proposed carer and all members of the household aged 16 and above are asked to give written consent to Police, DBS and other relevant checks, and
- the wishes of those with parental responsibility for the child will also be ascertained.

If an immediate, emergency placement is required, this viability assessment forms the basis for agreeing a temporary Connected Person fostering approval (see below for **Approval of immediate placements under Regulation 24**).

2. Approval of Immediate Placements under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations (2010 as amended)

In the event that a child needs to move to a connected person in an emergency (before a full Connected Person(s) Care assessment can be completed) under the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations (2010 as amended), approval needs to be sought from the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) for the Local Authority. In Brent, the Agency Decision Maker for these arrangements is Kelli Eboji (Head of Service, Looked After Children and Permanency).

The viability assessment provides the ADM with the information to make the decision (about whether a family member or friend can be approved temporarily as a foster carer for Brent and care for the child). The addition of the ADM's comments and signature at the end of the completed Viability Assessment forms the decision to place under an emergency and grants interim approval of the placement.

Interim fostering approval can be provided to a connected person for a period of up to 16 weeks, during which time the kinship care team aim to complete a full Connected Person fostering assessment. Please note these assessments are detailed; the assessing social worker is required to ask many questions and explore many areas of the connected person's history and current circumstances. The Kinship assessing social worker will support connected persons through the assessment process however it is important connected persons are aware these assessments are thorough and the carer needs to be available to undergo this assessment.

Once the Connected Person fostering assessment is complete, the carer should be presented at Brent's independent fostering panel before the 16 weeks Regulation 24

arrangement expires. Once the independent fostering panel recommends for a connected person to become a connected person foster carer for Brent, this recommendation needs to be ratified by the ADM , within the 16 weeks.

In exceptional circumstances, temporary approval can be extended for up to a further 8 weeks (including the presentation to panel and subsequent ratification by the ADM). These circumstances include:

- Where temporary approval is likely to expire before the assessment can be completed; or
- The outcome of the assessment is that the connected person(s) are not approved and a review is sought.

An extension to the temporary approval must be agreed by the ADM (Head of Service, LAC and Permanency). Further information is available in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/959/regulation/25>

When starting an assessment of a connected person, including a Regulation 24 viability assessment, the assessing social worker will consider the following:

- What are the child/children's specific needs. This information is important in order to accurately assess the prospective carer's ability to meet those needs
- Historical information in respect of kinship carers, including where there has been Children's Social Care involvement in the family
- The current care plan or legal proceedings for the child
- Has the connected person been assessed before? Having copies of any other assessments can be helpful to the assessment process

3. Checks required before immediate placement

The Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Family and Friends (Kinship) Foster Care states that the Local Authority must ascertain as much information as is possible in the circumstances. This is to ensure the child is safe in the care of the connected person. Where a child is placed with a connected person who is to be temporarily approved, every effort has to be made to maximise the level and quality of information that will be used to decide whether the connected person should be temporarily approved. In Brent, the child's social worker will complete the following checks on the prospective carers and all household members over the age of 16 years with their consent:

- Police National Computer (police checks)
- Child Protection checks including Local Authority checks. This means asking other Local Authorities, where the family/friend has lived, to ask if there were any worries or any Children's Social Care involvement for the connected person and their family

4. Checks required during full 16-week Connected Person(s) Carer assessment

It is important that connected carers are aware of what checks will take place during the connected person foster carer assessment. Please note the below information is an outline, and during the assessment the assessing social worker may identify other checks that may be required and will discuss this with the connected person being assessed.

In Brent, we use the same assessment template and same assessment process to assess connected persons regardless of whether they want to be connected person foster carers or Special Guardians (where a Special Guardianship Order is in place). Therefore, the below assessment process is only outlined once. Those who are being assessed to become Special Guardianship carers may not be required to attend Brent's fostering panel however this may be required, as an interim arrangement, if the child is already in their care and is a Brent child in care. For many families the connected person has to be approved as a connected person foster carer as an interim basis whilst we wait for the family court to grant a Special Guardianship Order.

- The allocated kinship care Social Worker will arrange for the prospective carers to undergo a medical examination with their allocated GP. We will provide documentation that the connected person can take their GP surgery, and the GP surgery will book an appointment for the connected person to have a medical examination by their GP. The GP will complete a report identifying any health information that could impact the connected person caring for the child. This GP report is passed to our Brent medical advisor who completes a summary for the Local Authority social worker and Brent independent fostering panel (if required). If the applicant does not live in Brent, we may need to liaise with the medical advisor for the area where they live.
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks need to be sent off as soon as possible by the assessing Social Worker. This requires the connected person (and everyone who lives in their house) to complete a DBS form and provide identification documents to the assessing social worker. More information about DBS checks can be found here: <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/about-fostering/being-a-foster-carer/relationship-with-your-fostering-service/criminal-record-checks/>
- Where the applicant or any member of the household has been known to any Social Care Department, this should be raised with the assessing social worker by the child's social worker, the connected person or any family member. The information will then be obtained from the relevant department or Local Authority.
- Where applicants have recently moved to the UK (within the last 10 years), checks will also be made through International Social Services and/or the relevant Consulate on all members of the household aged 16 and over.
- Where the applicant has school age children, the relevant school(s) will be contacted, with the permission of the applicant, for information regarding the applicant's ability to promote their own child's education.

If any concerns are raised in any of the checks completed, these will be discussed with the connected person. If possible, additional support or safeguards will be put in place to address the concerns raised. We are not here to judge any connected persons; we are here to keep the child/ren safe as far as possible. We encourage all connected persons who are undergoing an assessment to be open and honest with the assessing social worker. We aim to work in an open and supportive way and are understanding that most individuals and families have experienced some difficulties or vulnerabilities in their lives. If you are concerned about information from your checks being raised you can discuss this with us at any stage. We encourage all connected persons to discuss any concerns with us rather than assuming they will not be approved as in many circumstances we can explore with connected persons what can be put in place to keep the child safe. A previous criminal record does not automatically prevent an individual from being approved as a connected person foster carer; an assessment is required to assess the risk to the child.

It is important that connected persons are aware there are some circumstances where we are not able to recommend the child lives with (or continues to live with) the connected person if it is our assessment that it is too unsafe or not in the child's best interest to do so. Any possible concerns that are identified will be discussed with the connected person. There are occasions when concerns are identified that the connected person has decided to withdraw from being assessed.

5. References

- Each applicant will be asked to provide the names of three personal referees, who are adults, who have known the applicant for at least five years. One of the referees should be a family member; the other two references must be from a non-family member. All referees should be people who know the applicants well in a personal capacity. For a kinship foster carer it is useful if one of their personal referees is someone who has known them whilst parenting their own children (if they have children).
- Where there is a joint application (usually a couple in a romantic relationship), referees must know both applicants, and if not, additional referees will be required. A proforma questionnaire must be sent to the referees prior to the visit. This information can then be used in the interview to lead the discussion. The assessing social worker will comment on the referee comments within the assessment.
- A written reference must be obtained from each applicant's current employer regardless of the applicant's occupation. If the applicant is currently not working, a reference will be requested from their most recent employment. If an applicant is self-employed documentation will be required to verify their working hours and current circumstances. Where the connected person has had a previous job working with children it will be useful to follow up a reference with a previous employer pertaining to their time caring for children.
- Where the prospective applicant has made a previous application to foster or adopt, the

relevant agency will be asked to confirm in writing the outcome of the application and provide a written reference (regardless of whether the applicant did end up fostering or adopting a child previously or not).

- Referees and any other family members spoken to during the preparation of the report will be informed about the position in relation to confidentiality. Ordinarily a completed written reference will not be shown to an applicant unless the applicant asks to see this and the referee consents to this being shown to them. The same applies to information and opinions shared in the course of conversation. These will not be disclosed to an applicant without permission. However, referees and others should be made aware that it will often be necessary to discuss with applicants' information and opinions expressed although where this happens, the particular source of the information or opinion will not be disclosed automatically unless specifically requested by the applicant.
- Where there are existing children in the household, contact with the allocated health visitor, nursery or school will be made with the consent of the parents. This is to explore if professionals have worried about the individual caring for children. All adult children of the applicant(s) living away from home or adult children who are no longer household members will be contacted and interviewed too. The assessing Social Worker will also contact the previous partners/spouses of the applicants, particularly if they have cared for children together (taking care not to disclose confidential personal information about the applicant). Where there were any children of the relationship or where children were cared for jointly, the Social Worker will arrange to interview them face-to-face wherever practicable. Please note, if contacting an ex-partner or any other individual could place the child, birth parent or connected person at risk this should be shared with the Local Authority immediately. A decision will be made on a case-by-case basis to decide how to proceed in order to ensure everyone is kept safe as far as possible.

6. Presenting to the Brent Independent Fostering Panel

As outlined above, not all kinship carers who undergo an assessment will be required to be presented to Brent's independent fostering panel. For those who do require to attend Brent's independent fostering panel, the steps are outlined below.

The assessing Social Worker will present the completed Connected Person(s) Carer report in the form of a full assessment covering the following areas:

- Summarising the prospective carers circumstances
- highlighting any vulnerabilities, issues or concerns that have arisen during these enquiries
- an analysis of the implications for the placement; and
- a conclusion with an analysis of the risks and benefits of the proposed care arrangements, including what actions need to be taken to minimise any identified risks.

The report will make a recommendation to the Brent independent fostering panel clearly outlining how the carer is able to meet the child's current and developing needs (or not) and their understanding of the levels of commitment this could entail. If a long-term

approval is requested, the assessment report will consider and provide evidence which supports the carer's ability to meet the child's needs for the remainder of their childhood.

The assessing Social Worker will submit several documents to Brent's fostering panel to support their assessment report, these usually include:

- Medical Advisor's report (for the connected carers only)
- Details of enhanced DBS checks for all household members over 16, including back up carers and nominated carers
- Details of agency checks, including Ofsted checks
- Employer references
- Record of interviews with referees
- Record of interviews with adult children and ex-partners
- A home health and safety report, including any pet questionnaires; and
- Safer caring report
- A fostering Personal Development Plan (a document that outlines the development of the applicant).

It is important to note that sometimes there can be delays in obtaining these references, for example if the connected carer struggles to get a medical appointment with their local GP or an employer takes a long time to provide a reference. Where possible we try to avoid delays by starting the checks as soon as possible but sadly at times there are circumstances beyond our control.

If you are unclear or unsure about any of the above terms, a social worker in the Kinship Care Team can explain these further to you or there is additional information here <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/about-fostering/becoming-a-foster-carer/the-journey-to-approval/>

For Brent's fostering panel, if the child has an allocated social worker the child's social worker will also complete a profile on the child's needs. If the child does have an allocated social worker it is important they attend the Brent fostering panel alongside the connected carers and the assessing Kinship Care Team social worker.

At Brent's Fostering Panel the report is considered and the carers' suitability to foster is discussed. The independent panel members then make a recommendation regarding whether the connected person(s) can be an approved connected person(s) foster carer.

The Panel's recommendation (alongside the minutes from the Fostering Panel) regarding the suitability of the Connected Person(s) Carers is presented to the ADM for a decision to be made.

The ADM will notify the carers in writing of the decision, and the terms of their approval within 7 working days of the approved fostering panel minutes being presented to the ADM for consideration. There is more information about the fostering panel process and ADM's role

here. <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/about-fostering/for-fostering-services/relationships-with-your-foster-carers/foster-carer-panels/>

Please note, for exceptional circumstances, the ADM may take longer than 7 days to provide the ADM decision/outcome.

Brent's independent fostering panel is usually made up of the following members:

- An independent fostering panel chair
- 2 to 4 independent fostering panel members (these are members of the community, who do not work for Brent, to provide input into Brent's independent fostering panel)
- 2 to 3 social workers (who do work for Brent but are not involved in the connected person assessment or linked to the child)
- A member of Brent's virtual school
- A Brent councillor
- A Local Authority panel advisor (this individual does not input into the recommendation but provides advice and guidance to the independent panel as/when required)

The Brent independent fostering panel is committed to championing Kinship carers and values the hard-work and commitment of Kinship carers. The Local Authority understand that attending an independent fostering panel may be daunting or worrying for some individuals. If you would like a pre-discussion with the Brent Fostering Panel Advisor before attending panel please contact Tom Donovan on 020 8937 3417.

7. Court directed assessments of family and friends during care proceedings

For some children the family court will ask Brent to undertake an assessment of a prospective kinship carer. It is good practice for the assessment to be fully completed before this kinship care arrangement takes place; for example, the child may remain with their birth parents or may be in foster care whilst the assessment takes place.

Planned placements of children with relatives or connected person(s) carers should enable sufficient time for the full assessment of the proposed carers.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO KINSHIP PLACEMENTS

a) Social work and practical support:

- **for those caring for Brent Children in Care**

Each connected person looking after a child/ren that is a child in care to the Local Authority will have access to the child's Social Worker as well as their own kinship assessing/supervising Social Worker. They will receive support via telephone, video meetings and home visits.

Supervising Social Workers have a minimum statutory responsibility to visit Connected Person foster carers every 6 weeks once they are approved connected person foster carers. During a Connected Person fostering assessment, visits will likely be more frequent due to the assessment process and safeguarding responsibilities. Connected Person foster carers can also expect that some of these statutory visits will be unannounced visits in line with the national fostering regulations. Children's Social Workers also have a minimum statutory responsibility to visit the child at least every 6 weeks. As stated earlier, all visits may be more frequent if required.

As approved foster carers for the Local Authority, Connected Person foster carers will receive financial support via a fostering allowance (when the child is in their care), access to support groups and access to training. They will be expected to complete their Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) workbook within the first 18 months following approval with the support of their supervising social workers. All Connected Person foster carers will also need to complete mandatory training courses related to fostering.

All supervising Social Workers are qualified practitioners and registered with Social Work England. The Social Work England register can be found online here:

<https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/umbraco/surface/searchregister/results>

Please note that for children who are children in care to the Local Authority, the foster carer or Kinship carer does not usually hold parental responsibility for the child. Parental responsibility is usually held by the birth parent/s and shared with the Local Authority when they hold a court order. Please speak to the allocated social worker for the child if you need more information or clarity in relation to parental responsibility.

- **for those caring for children under Special Guardianship Order (SGO) / Child Arrangements Order (CAO)**

Social work support will be dependent upon the needs of the child and the Special Guardianship support plan will be devised in consultation with the kinship carer, child's social worker and the kinship social worker and agreed by all before the granting of the court order. The SGO support plans are co-authored by the assessing/supervising social worker, the kinship carer(s), the child and the birth parents (where possible). SGO support plans are key documents that outline what the current needs are now for the child, what needs are likely to arise in the future, and makes clear who is offering what support. Whilst the family court can often direct strict deadlines it is important these SGO support plans are carefully considered by everyone involved to ensure they are sustainable, realistic and outline what is best for the child.

The Local Authority recognise that unexpected and unplanned needs can arise for children as they grow older; the Local Authority also recognise that circumstances can change. In these circumstances a review of the SGO support plan may be required. Families are encouraged to

seek advice and support from the Local Authority's regional agency Adopt London West who provide post SGO support on behalf of Brent. Adopt London West can be contacted on: 020 8825 5241 to discuss this further. There is also more information on their website <https://adoptlondon.org.uk/special-guardians/>

A child subject to a Special Guardianship Order will continue to receive social work support from their social worker for 3 months following the granting of a Special Guardianship Order. After 3 months, these families will be referred to Brent's Regional Agency, *Adopt London West*, for further support, advice and guidance.

Please note that in Brent we have a regional agency who provides Special Guardianship Order support to families on behalf of Brent. Not all Local Authorities have this arrangement. Our regional agency, Adopt London West (ALW), are based in the London Borough of Ealing. Please do not worry, we work in close partnership with ALW and will ensure your details are passed to them (with your consent) when an SGO is granted. More information about Adopt London West can be found here <https://adoptlondon.org.uk/special-guardians/> and here <http://adoptlondon.org.uk/adoption-support/adopt-london-west-support/>

It is important to make clear that an SGO is seen as a permanent arrangement for a child to live with a connected person. An SGO should not be viewed as a temporary arrangement to allow a birth parent time to undergo support or changes. The Local Authority recognise however that birth parents can make lasting positive changes to their circumstances which can result in the risk they present to the child reducing. The Local Authority recognise that for many families having ongoing support from a birth parent to a child in an SGO arrangement can be beneficial, positive and rewarding for the child and the level of involvement from a birth parent should be reviewed when required. Where possible the Local Authority will signpost birth parents to support services in order to support birth parents to undertake lasting positive changes that are in the best interests of their child. All kinship carers are able to contact the Local Authority for advice in relation to how much involvement a birth parent has with the child in their care. The level of involvement/input a birth parent has with a child in an SGO arrangement is ultimately decided by the kinship carer who has the SGO in place however the Local Authority will continue to advise and support birth parents where possible to empower them to have positive, lasting relationships with their children. Brent also lists all the services available to birth parents in the community directory, found here:

https://www.brent.gov.uk/neighbourhoods-and-communities/community-directory?page=1&skip=0&order=brent_item_title&size=25

- **for those caring for children under Private Fostering arrangements**

A private fostering assessment will be carried out by the Private Fostering Lead social worker based in Brent's Kinship Care Team once a private fostering notification has been received. In some circumstances the child in a private fostering arrangement will have a separate allocated social worker (but not always). Suitable Private Fostering arrangements will be monitored by the Private Fostering Lead from the Kinship Care Team with 6 weekly visits and an annual review of the placement. The Private Fostering Lead Social Worker will also provide support

and guidance to those caring for a child/ren under a Private Fostering Arrangement.

- **for those caring for children under private family arrangements**

Under these arrangements, Local Authority involvement should be based on the needs of the child.

The Brent Kinship Care Team is able to provide information and advice to all informal kinship carers either in person or via telephone, or signpost them to a service that can assist. There are details for agencies, support and services in this Kinship Local Offer.

This support may include access to local peer support groups, access to Kinship's training offer, and access to Family Rights Group's free Family and Friends Helpline which can be found on their website <https://frg.org.uk/get-help-and-advice/>

Other helpful information can be found on the Kinship Charity's website <https://kinship.org.uk/>

b) Training and Support groups

All Kinship Carers will be encouraged to attend training to enhance their skills and assist them to meet the needs of the child/ren they are caring for. It is a specific expectation of those carers who are approved as Brent Connected Person Foster Carers to regularly attend training.

Training is routinely offered to Connected Person foster carers, Special Guardians and Child Arrangements Order holders via the general Brent Fostering Training however we have made this training offer available to all Kinship carers. If you want to access our training in Brent, please contact us on 020 8937 2749.

The Local Authority encourages kinship carers to meet with other kinship carers as an opportunity to network and seek support and encourages all kinship care applicants to attend the Kinship Training Day during the process of assessment.

Support groups for kinship carers are offered by the following services:

- Brent's Regional Adoption Agency, *Adopt London West*.
- Kinship (The UK charity)

Some support groups are in-person and some are virtual. The times, dates and locations of the support groups do change therefore please do contact us on 020 8937 2749 for more information about the support groups available to you. If you live outside of Brent, please do still contact us as we will explore what support groups are available to you in your area.

Please note that in October 2025 a number of Kinship Carers based in Brent decided they would like to set-up a Kinship Support Group in Brent. This will be run by Kinship Carers for Kinship Carers. Once dates/times for this group are set, information will be sent out to Kinship

carers for them to consider joining if they want to. It is important to note this support group is encouraged and supported by the Local Authority but not run by (or on behalf of) the Local Authority.

EARLY HELP SUPPORT

In Brent we are committed to supporting children and young people to be safe, have their needs met and achieve their full potential. We recognise that families, whether in a kinship arrangement or not, may at times benefit from advice, guidance, assistance or support. This Kinship Local Offer aims to help families access the support most suitable for them. Not all families will benefit from children having an allocated social worker and may find help from charities, organisations or other services helpful.

In Brent we have an Early Help service that aims to support families to address concerns at an early stage and prevent them from getting more serious. Families that are living in Brent can access these free services if they feel this would be beneficial, regardless of what type of kinship arrangement you are in. Please find more information about Brent's Early-Help service available here:

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/support-for-parents-and-families/early-help-service#whatistheearlyhelpservice>

Some of the services available to families from Brent Early Help are to strengthen parenting/caring skills of carers. This includes birth parents and kinship carers. Please note that some of the services are called 'Parenting Support Services' but any kinship carer living in Brent can access these if they want to, you do not have to be the birth parent. Please find more information about the parenting support services available in Brent here:

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/support-for-parents-and-families/parenting-support-services>

Early Help support in Brent includes the Brent Family Wellbeing Centres (FWCs); these centres support families from the moment parents know they are expecting, through pregnancy and birth, until their child is 18 years old (or up to 25 for young people with additional needs). The support is also available to families with kinship care arrangements. The FWCs have summer activities for early years, primary and secondary aged children and young people. The programmes are available online, or from the local FWC. The information is also available in different languages:

www.brent.gov.uk/familywellbeingcentres

The Start for Life programme, to integrate support services from maternity through the early years, is also delivered from the Brent FWCs. The Start for Life offer has helpful information about early years services alongside better access to breastfeeding, perinatal mental health, parenting and home learning environment support. The programme aims to ensure that the best support is available to families in the first 1001days of their child's life; more information is

available here:

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/support-for-parents-and-families/start-for-life>

There is also more information about the UK Government's Best Start in Life resources available here:

<https://beststartinlife.gov.uk/>

If you wish to use the services provided at any of the FWC, you will need to register your family's details, including all of the children you have in your care. It's simple and easy to do and once you are registered, you can book and manage your sessions and activities in advance. The details of Brent's Family Wellbeing Centres are below.

Please note that the Kinship Care Team have met with the staff teams in Brent's Early Help services to ensure the staff in these centres are aware of what a kinship carer is and the different types of kinship care arrangements available.

Alperton Family Wellbeing Centre
Ealing Road, Wembley, HA0 4PW
Telephone Number: 020 8937 3860
Alperton.FWC@brent.gov.uk

Church Lane Family Wellbeing Centre
Fryent Primary School, Church Lane, Kingsbury, NW9 8JD
Telephone Number: 020 8937 3890
ChurchLane.FWC@brent.gov.uk

Curzon Crescent and Fawood Family Wellbeing Centre
Curzon Crescent, NW10 9SD
Telephone Number: 020 8459 6813
admin@curzon.brent.sch.uk

Fawood Family Wellbeing Centre
Fawood Avenue, NW10 8DX
Telephone Number: 020 8965 9334
admin@fawoodcc.brent.sch.uk

Granville Plus Family Wellbeing Centre
Carlton Vale, Kilburn, NW6 5HE
Telephone Number: 020 8937 6581
GranvillePlus.FWC@brent.gov.uk

Preston Park Family Wellbeing Centre
College Road, Wembley, HA9 8RJ
Telephone Number: 020 8937 5980

PrestonPark.FWC@brent.gov.uk

St Raphael's Family Wellbeing Centre
Rainborough Close, St Raphael's Estate, NW10 0TS
Telephone Number: 020 8937 3620
StRaphs.FWC@brent.gov.uk

Three Trees Family Wellbeing Centre
Tiverton Road, Kensal Rise, NW10 3HL
Telephone Number: 020 8937 3892
ThreeTrees.FWC@brent.gov.uk

Willow Nursery & Family Wellbeing Centre
Barnhill Road, Wembley, HA9 9YP
Telephone Number: 020 8937 6562
Willow.FWC@brent.gov.uk

We understand that not all Kinship carers live in Brent; we understand that family members and connected persons come forward to care for children who lived in Brent but the connected persons may live somewhere else in England. Please can we highlight that you are still able to access Early Help services in the area you live in, if you need help finding suitable support in the area you live in you can contact us for advice on 020 8937 2749.

As a reminder, if you are an SGO carer and want to access post SGO support from Adopt London West, you can access this support even if you do not live in Brent. If you are asking for support 3 years after the SGO is made you will need to access post SGO support from the Local Authority that you are residing in. If you are unsure you can still contact ALW on 020 8825 5241 to discuss this further. There is also more information on their website <https://adoptlondon.org.uk/special-guardians/>

LEISURE

At Brent we are committed to children and their families living healthy, active lifestyles in order to support them to feel happy and achieve their full potential. If you are living in Brent, you can find out more information about our facilities and services available here. <https://www.brent.gov.uk/parks-leisure-and-healthy-living/sports-clubs-and-activities>

If you are not living in Brent you can contact us directly; we will aim to assist you to find the right support for you and your family in your local area.

In the London Borough of Brent, the activities available for all children and families include:

- Football
- Rugby
- Cricket

- Bowls
- Tennis
- Outdoor Gyms

Please note this is not an exhaustive list and often several different events take place throughout the year, especially in school holiday periods.

Activities can be booked easily via the Brent website as outlined above. New events are added to the website regularly.

CHILDCARE

Many families, including families with Kinship care arrangements, need support with childcare. Whether this is to return to work or to manage other demands. Depending on the age of the children in your care as well as your personal circumstances, you may be entitled to the following:

- Children 9 months and older, where families work: 30 hours of childcare equivalent to 38 weeks of the year
- 2-year-old children, where families have no income or low income: may qualify for 15 hours of childcare equivalent to 38 weeks of the year

Kinship care families can access this support depending on their circumstances. The free hours of childcare is usually taken as 15 hours or 30 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year (dependent on your circumstances and eligibility). You can choose to take fewer hours over more weeks, if your local childcare provider offers this option. There is more information about this on the government's website.

<https://www.gov.uk/find-free-early-education>

and here

<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-and-education-for-3-to-4-year-olds>

There is also information available about childcare on Brent's website.

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/neg2#overview>

If you are a kinship carer and you are working, you may be entitled to access 30 hours per week for the child in your care. There is more information about this on the government's website.

<https://www.gov.uk/free-childcare-if-working>

If you are looking for a nursery or childcare provider in Brent, to use the childcare hours, then use the search function on our website.

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/childcare-and-early-education/find-local-childcare>

If you need further advice and guidance around this you can contact Brent's Children and

Families Information Services (CFIS) on the below details.

Contact the Children and Families Information Services

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Phone: 020 8937 3010

Email: cfis@brent.gov.uk

If you live outside of Brent and need advice and guidance, you can contact us and we will assist you to find suitable services in the area that you live in.

c) Family Time (sometimes known as ‘Contact’) and mediation:

Family Time is when a child spends time with their birth parent, it can include in-person interaction or virtual interaction (such as video calls and phone calls). During care proceedings (family court) for many families the family time is formally supervised. Once care proceedings are concluded however, for many families the family time does not require ongoing formal supervision, though most family time benefits from being carefully planned and thought through. Family time should be what is best for the child.

For some families the emotional ties and complex family dynamics can make managing family time challenging for kinship carers. For some children in some circumstances, it is not appropriate for the child to have any family time. For many children however family time can be beneficial and enriching for children. Brent wants to support families to promote positive family time for all children in Kinship Care arrangements as far as possible. We aim for family time to be as natural as possible and ask that family time is only supervised when required for the safety and wellbeing of the child.

Arrangements for keeping connections with parents should meet the needs of the child. Most children living in kinship care will be in touch with one or both of their parents, and often also with other relatives, and this will often help to promote positive relationships. However, management of family time can often be a source of considerable anxiety and conflict for kinship carers. It can place emotional and practical strains on all the parties involved.

If your child has an allocated social worker, please do contact them for advice and guidance around managing family time. If your child does not have an allocated social worker, here is some helpful advice and guidance about family time from the Kinship charity.

<https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/advice-and-information/managing-contact-time-with-family/>

As a reminder family time does not stay the same always; plans for family time often need to be reviewed and changed as the child gets older and if the birth parent’s circumstances change or the child’s views/needs change. Family time should be what is best for the child. For children subject to an SGO, the kinship carer who holds the SGO is required to decide how best to safely and appropriately manage family time. Whilst family time arrangements

are outlined in the SGO support plan; SGO kinship carers are reminded that family time can decrease or stop if required to do so. Family time can also increase, especially if the birth parent has undertaken positive changes and the family time has continued to go well. As a reminder, family time needs to be what is best for the child. Please note, if a contact order has been issued by the family court then the conditions of the contact order should be adhered to. SGO kinship carers can seek advice and guidance in relation to family time from Brent's regional agency Adopt London West on 020 8825 5241.

For many children in Kinship Care Arrangements, family time can be organised and supported by the Kinship Carer. Family time takes place at a venue that best meets the needs of the child and at a frequency that best meets the needs of the child. For some families formal supervised contact services, such as supervised contact centres, are required. If this is required, here are the details of Supervised Contact services in Brent and the local surrounding areas.

Pentecostal City Mission Church (Willesden Branch) - London

Contact: 020 8965 7296

The Mission House, 6 Craven Park, London, NW10 8SY

Kidz 1st Community Project - London

Contact: 07305 419642

37-41 Winchelsea Road, London, NW10 8UN

Chas Service CIC - Willesden - London

Contact: 020 3952 1756

271 Willesden Lane, Willesden, London, NW2 5JG

Multi Horizons Ltd - Harrow - London

Contact: 07803 134572 / 07471 266624

St Paul's Church, Corbins Lane, Harrow, London, HA2 8EL

Project West Assessment & Contact Services - Northolt - Middlesex

Contact: 020 8422 8184

27 Sandringham Road, Northolt, Middlesex, UB5 5HN

For a small number of children, who are children in care to Brent, they have supervised family time at Freeman Family Centre, Brent Civic Centre or in the local community provided by the Brent Contact Service. Unfortunately we are not able to offer this service to all families.

If you do not live in the London Borough of Brent, please use The National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC) to find a supervised contact service in your local area.

<https://naccc.org.uk/find-a-centre/>

For some children it can feel unnatural and intrusive to have a professional supervising family time therefore these services should only be used when there is a risk to the child from

individuals attending family time. Family time arrangements should also be regularly reviewed to explore if they continue to be safe (or not), if formal supervision is required (or not) and if there should be any changes made. The need for formal supervision may change as the child gets older and as the family make any changes to their lives or circumstances.

Please note that there is a cost for supervised contact services and unfortunately for many families Brent Local Authority is not able to fund these. Often families are able to ask for support from their networks to come up with creative solutions to allow the child/ren to have positive family time safely with their birth parent(s). It is also important to highlight that SGO carers are expected to use their SGO allowances to financially support family time where required (for example, to travel to a location for family time to take place).

Mediation services

Family mediation can help parents and carers to communicate better and resolve disputes taking account of the child's wishes in a supported environment. There are different organisations and services available throughout the UK for families to access mediation support. This website can help find a mediator local to you:

<https://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk/find-local-mediator/>

Please note these services usually come at a cost. Unfortunately, the Local Authority is not usually able to consider funding these services separately however kinship carers in receipt of allowances may want to consider using the allowances paid to purchase mediation services. Please note that legal aid is available for family mediation in some circumstances.

Below are some other organisations that may be of benefit to some Kinship Families.

National Family Mediation (NFM) - www.nfm.org.uk

Provides mediation services to support couples who are separated, and their children and others affected by this.

Tel: 0300 4000 636

Email: enquiries@nfm.org.uk

Relate - <https://www.relate.org.uk>

Provide relationship support in England and Wales through counselling.

Tel: 0300 100 1234

- **Family Time for Brent Children in Care**

In these situations, the family time arrangements are organised by the child's allocated social worker, in partnership with the child, the kinship carer, the birth parents and other key family members. Many of these family time arrangements are unsupervised. For families that are going through public care proceedings, often the family time is formally supervised. If you

wish to discuss the family time arrangements for a child that is a child in care to Brent then please contact the allocated social worker.

- **Family Time for children under SGO arrangements or CAO arrangements**

Any family time needs for children in SGO or CAO arrangements will be identified as part of the assessment (and support plan if required) prior to a court order being made. There are occasions where the family court make Child Arrangements Orders without a full assessment and support plan in place; in these circumstances if you require advice and guidance about family time then please do contact us (or the child's allocated social worker if the child has one).

Kinship Carers who are caring for children subject to SGOs or CAOs are expected to organise family time, as outlined in the SGO or CAO assessment (and support plan if included). The kinship carer who holds the SGO or CAO is expected to use their Parental Responsibility to decide what is the most appropriate and safe family time arrangement for the child in their care.

For some families, the family court may direct the Local Authority to financially support family time arrangements for a child. In those circumstances the Local Authority will continue to fund family time arrangements as directed by the family court.

While some families require ongoing assistance with family time, other families will be able to manage contact between children and their birth parents and extended families with minimal intervention from Children's Social Care and it is felt that children benefit from this type of arrangement where possible. It is an expectation that all carers will work with the Local Authority where possible towards a situation where they are able to manage family time for the child/ren in a safe and suitable environment.

For families with an SGO you can contact Adopt London West (ALW) for advice and guidance around family time on 020 8825 5241.

d) Therapeutic / Behavioural Support

For many children in kinship arrangements, they have gone through significant change, abuse, trauma or neglect and consequently may have emotional and behavioural needs, which require support. The Local Authority is committed to ensuring that each child has the appropriate emotional and psychological support that they need in order to assist them with any emotional or behavioural needs.

Support for the child may include the following:

- Mentoring services
- Advocacy services
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) assessment/input

- Training for carers.

Please see **Appendix A** for a list of services that families can access.

Some children in Kinship Care Arrangements are eligible to apply for funding from the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) to pay for therapeutic assessment, support and intervention. The children who can access this are those who were previously in care but are now adopted or subject to an SGO.

The ASGSF provides funds to Local Authorities and regional adoption agencies (RAAs) to pay for essential therapeutic services for eligible adoptive, Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and Child Arrangements Order (CAO) families.

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:

- are living (placed) with a family in England while waiting for adoption
- were adopted from Local Authority care in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland and live in England
- were adopted from abroad and live in England with a recognised adoption status
- were in care before an SGO was made
- left care under a Special Guardianship Order that was subsequently changed to an adoption order, or vice versa
- are under a residency order or child arrangements order (CAO) and were previously looked after (a child in care)
- were previously looked after (a child in care) but where the adoption, Special Guardianship, residency or CAO placement has broken down, irrespective of any reconciliation plans

If you feel the child in your Kinship Care arrangement would benefit from therapeutic support and is likely to meet the above criteria then please contact Adopt London West (ALW) for further advice and guidance.

Adopt London West

Second Floor Perceval House, 14-16 Uxbridge Road, W5 2HL

Phone: 020 8825 5241

adoptlondonwest@ealing.gov.uk

Please note more information about the ASGSF can be found online here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adoption-support-fund-asf>

For families that are not eligible to access support from the ASGSF, as outlined above, the Local Authority or Adopt London West are likely only able to provide advice and guidance. If you are unsure, please do contact Brent's Kinship Care Team on 020 8937 2749. It is important families are aware the Local Authority are likely unable to purchase private therapeutic input for children in Kinship care arrangements if they are not eligible for the ASGSF. The Local Authority can assist with signposting to other community based services

where appropriate to do so.

FAMILIES WHO DO NOT SPEAK ENGLISH

Brent is one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in the country as almost two thirds of the population (65%) are from Black, Asian and other ethnic groups. This diversity is then reflected through the languages we hear across the borough as 34% of residents use a main language other than English, including Gujarati, Romanian, Arabic and Portuguese amongst those top spoken languages. Over half (56%) of the borough's population were born in countries outside the UK, with the highest number of residents coming from India, Romania and Poland. Brent has one of the largest European populations in the country and the data suggests the population has grown considerably since the last 10 years, reflecting significant migration flows from Romania, Portugal, and Italy, in particular.

Brent understands that there are many disadvantages, barriers and vulnerabilities for families who live in England but do not speak English. When a Brent social worker is working with you, to complete an assessment or provide support, Brent will use professional/approved interpreters where required. We aim to also have key documents interpreted as and when required. Unfortunately, we cannot interpret/translate all documents, however where possible we will try to obtain key documents in your chosen language. If this is not possible, we will arrange for an interpreter to go through key documents with you.

The Brent website is fully accessible and can support both translation and impairments. Families are reminded that there are online translation services available however these services should be used with caution. Please contact the Brent kinship care team duty social worker if you need clarity or advice and guidance.

FAMILIES WHO HAVE DISABILITIES OR IMPAIRMENTS

Brent is committed to supporting families who have disabilities, impairments or additional needs. When you contact us if you require documents or guidance in other formats due to sight difficulties, hearing difficulties or other disabilities then please do discuss this with us and we will make necessary adjustments as far as possible.

CELEBRATING FAMILIES WITH KINSHIP CARE ARRANGEMENTS

The Local Authority acknowledge the hard-work, commitment and incredible support Kinship Carers give to children in their families to avoid them living with foster carers (that the child does not know) and providing them with the care, guidance, support and assistance that they need to thrive. From 1st April 2026 the Local Authority would like to provide a certificate to all families that have a child in a Kinship Care Arrangement. The certificate will be signed by a service manager in Brent, acknowledging and celebrating the hard-work and commitment to the child/ren from their Kinship Carer(s). We want children and their carers to feel proud to be part of the Brent

Kinship Care Community. We will hand out these certificates at celebration events held 2 to 3 times per year in Brent. For those who live outside of Brent or unable to attend a celebration event the certificate can be posted to your home address in England.

Kinship Care Week is a national week of awareness, recognition, and celebration of kinship families across England and Wales. This usually takes place in October each year. The Local Authority are committed to holding a celebration event each year in Brent. If you wish to be added to the invite list please send your request to kinship.team@brent.gov.uk. This celebration event is usually well attended by Brent Kinship Carers and provides information and updates to Kinship Carers as well as celebrates their hard work and commitment.

SPREADING AWARENESS OF KINSHIP CARE ARRANGEMENTS

Following feedback from Brent Kinship Carers and their families, we acknowledge it can be frustrating when some professionals do not understand what a Kinship Carer is, what the different types of Kinship Care arrangements are, the strengths that Kinship Carers have as well as the needs Kinship Carers have. In response to this feedback Brent are committed to raising awareness, utilising the information outlined in this Kinship Local Offer, by sharing information with the following professionals in Brent:

- GP surgeries
- Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Colleges
- Health Visitors
- Police

If there are any other services or professionals in Brent that the Local Authority can raise awareness with, please provide this feedback to us by emailing us at kinship.team@brent.gov.uk

e) Financial Support:

- **Fostering Allowances for carers of Brent Children in Care**

Kinship carers who are caring for Brent children in care are considered to be (Connected Person) foster carers for the Local Authority and as such will receive a fostering allowance for each Brent looked after child (child in care) in their care. These allowances are based on the age of the child and the experience of the foster carer.

The Local Authority has clear guidelines for foster carers in the use of these fostering allowances, and more information can be found in the annual 'Placements Rates and Guidance' document which is sent to all connected person foster carers when they start their fostering journey. If you need more information/clarity regarding the rates and guidance

information or need the guidance document sent to you again, please speak to your allocated supervising social worker.

The current Brent fostering rates are also clearly outlined on our website here:

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/fostering-and-adoption/fostering/fostering-with-brent>

If your allocated supervising social worker is not available or you need further support in relation to fostering allowances for connected person foster carers then please contact the duty supervising social worker in Brent's fostering service:

Brent Fostering Service

Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, London, HA9 0FJ

0800 001 4041

fostering@brent.gov.uk

There is additional information about the roles, responsibilities and experiences of Brent foster carers available here:

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/fostering-and-adoption/fostering>

- **Allowances for children cared for under CAO/SGO - General**

Brent approved Connected Person foster carers (who are currently receiving a fostering allowance) who then go on to apply for Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Orders for the children in their care will continue to receive the fostering allowance until the court orders are granted. Not all Kinship Carers, who apply for a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order, are Brent approved Connected Person Foster Carers therefore they will not receive a fostering allowance prior to a court order being made. If you are unsure if you are Connected Person foster carer or not, please do contact us to confirm at:

Brent Fostering Service

Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, London, HA9 0FJ

0800 001 4041

fostering@brent.gov.uk

Payments from Brent in relation to Special Guardianship Orders or Child Arrangements Orders can only start when the court order is granted and the child is living in the arrangement. Understandably payments cannot start until the Kinship Care Arrangement has started. If the child leaves the care arrangement then payments will be stopped, as the child is not living with you (even if the court order is still in place and has not been discharged). The payments from Brent can only be paid when the arrangement is ongoing.

Please note, as a carer receiving an allowance to care for a child, you are required to inform the Local Authority immediately if the care arrangement has come to an end. If you continue to receive an allowance for a child who is no longer in your care the Local Authority will need

to consider recouping the allowances paid for the period the child was not in your care. Please contact the Local Authority at:

Allowance.review@brent.gov.uk

As a reminder, not all families where there is a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order are entitled to an allowance. The allowances paid are determined during the assessment process, in accordance with guidance and is subject to review.

Brent is guided by the Department for Education in applying the *standardised means test model for adoption and Special Guardianship financial support* to assess the allowance available to Special Guardians. This takes into account any other grant, benefit, allowance or financial resources available to the guardian in respect of their needs as a result of becoming a Special Guardian of a child. Allowances may be reviewed periodically based on incoming and outgoing finances at either the instigation of the Local Authority or the Special Guardian. Financial support cannot duplicate any other payment available to the Special Guardian.

SGO allowances and Child Arrangements Order (CAO) allowances will **not** be paid to birth parents that are caring for or living in the same household as their own biological children under this legal arrangement. Should the care arrangements change for the children the SGO or CAO allowances cannot be given to another person without the Local Authority being notified.

For most Child Arrangements Orders Brent do not usually consider paying any allowance for children placed under this order, however consideration is given to specific requests for one-off items (equivalent to a 'settling in grant'). In exceptionally rare cases, the Local Authority will consider paying an allowance in cases of extreme hardship for a specific length of time, but only if it can be shown that the proposed placement is impracticable without such an allowance.

Generally, the Local Authority will only consider financially assessing and paying a CAO allowance in situations where children were "looked after" (a child in care) by the Local Authority prior to the making of the court order. However, there may be some private application cases where the family's circumstances are considered to be exceptional. These cases will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and if deemed exceptional, a means tested financial assessment can be completed as part of the support plan. In these situations, the applicants will be provided with the Local Authority's rationale for why this is or is not an exceptional case in writing.

For children living in any Kinship care arrangement, if a need arises the Local Authority may consider funding additional assessments, additional support services or payments to the family if there is an identified need as outlined in section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Please note, any payments made under section 17 are usually a temporary arrangement and not ongoing for the remainder of the child's minority.

Special Guardianship Allowance

Kinship carers who are considering caring for a child under a Special Guardianship Order or who are already caring for a child under a Special Guardianship Order can request an assessment for support, including financial support, under the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005.

According to Regulation 6 of the 2005 Regulations, financial support may be paid to a Special Guardian or prospective Special Guardian:

- a. To facilitate arrangements for a person to become the Special Guardian of a child where the Local Authority consider such arrangements to be beneficial to the child's welfare
- or
- b. To support the continuation of such arrangements after a Special Guardianship order is made

Please note support is payable in the following circumstances:

- a. Where the Local Authority consider that it is necessary to ensure that the Special Guardian or prospective Special Guardian can look after the child
- b. Where the Local Authority consider that the child needs special care which requires a greater expenditure of resources than would otherwise be the case because of illness, disability, emotional or behavioural difficulties or the consequences of his past abuse or neglect. This applies where the child's condition is serious and long-term. For example, where a child needs a special diet or where items such as shoes, clothing or bedding need to be replaced at a higher rate than would ordinarily be the case with a child of similar age who was unaffected by the particular condition.
- c. where the Local Authority consider that it is appropriate to contribute to any legal costs, including court fees, of a Special Guardian or prospective Special Guardian, as the case may be, associated with-
 - i. the making of a Special Guardianship order or any application to vary or discharge such an order
 - ii. an application for an order under section 8 of the Act
 - iii. an order for financial provision to be made to or for the benefit of the child

The principles underpinning the payment of Special Guardianship allowances and financial support include:

- No child should be unfairly disadvantaged
- People should be treated equally and fairly
- Allowances and grants are paid for the child. Any extra payments are to cover the specific needs of the child e.g. for protection, safety etc. Support services should not be seen in isolation from mainstream services, and it is important to ensure that families are assisted in accessing mainstream services. Special Guardians should be helped to access their entitlements to tax credits and social security benefits. Efforts will be made by the Local Authority to obtain financial support from the child's parents where appropriate

Conditions of support (including when support is ended):

The Special Guardian must agree to the conditions listed in reg.10(1) of the 2005 Regulations and must comply with them. This means they must notify the Local Authority of any change of circumstances and must complete a financial return to enable a means tested financial assessments to be completed. Failure to do so may result in payment being suspended or terminated and recovery of any payments made.

It can be an uncomfortable and difficult process for families when the Local Authority need to recover payments made to families. Therefore to avoid this happening it is important you contact the Local Authority regarding any changes in circumstances by emailing us at Allowance.review@brent.gov.uk

Please note the Local Authority undertake periodic reviews of allowances. If the Local Authority need to make contact with a family where a Special Guardianship order payment is being made but there is no response from the family after several attempts, it may be necessary to suspend payments until contact can be re-established with the family and a means test financial review completed. The Local Authority also reserves the right not to backdate payments. It is important families update the Local Authority if they change address, phone number or email address.

Please note if the Local Authority cannot confirm who is caring a child that is subject to a Special Guardianship Order, the Local Authority may complete safeguarding checks, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child, which could include:

- Contacting health services
- Contacting nurseries, schools, colleges and/or other education services
- Contacting housing services
- Contacting other Local Authorities, including their Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH)

If concerns are identified for the child or Brent Local Authority cannot confirm the circumstances for a child, Brent Local Authority will consider completing a referral to the Local Authority's Children's Social Care department in the Local Authority where the child resides. This may result in a section 17 Child and Family Assessment (CFA) or Early Help assessment being undertaken to assess the current support needs for the child. Please note in some Local Authorities the CFA is also known as Family Help Assessment; Brent are introducing Family Help Assessments soon.

As outlined above, in order to receive a Special Guardianship allowance from Brent Local Authority, the Special Guardians will need to agree that they will inform the Local Authority immediately if any of the following circumstances apply:

- a change of address (if you move home)
- if the child ceases to have a home with them (for example if the child goes to live with someone else, such as a birth parent or another member of family)

- if the child dies
- if the Special Guardian's contact number or email address changes
- if the child or the Special Guardian leave the UK
- if the Special Guardian undergoes a marriage or divorce
- if the child ceases full-time education or training and commences employment
- if the child qualifies for income support or jobseeker's allowance in his own right; or
- If there is a change (increase or decrease) in the Special Guardian's financial circumstances or the financial needs or resources of the child which may affect the amount of financial support currently being paid.

If the above information is given verbally to the Local Authority it must be confirmed in writing by the Special Guardian within seven days.

Please note that all allowances made to Special Guardians will automatically end when the child reaches 18 years old, regardless of the family's circumstances. Brent are committed to supporting children receive their full educational potential therefore will give careful consideration on a case-by-case basis to potentially pay a Special Guardianship allowance to Special Guardians for the remainder of the academic year after the child turns 18 years old. This means if the child is in full-time education and turns 18, Brent will continue to pay the allowance until the child finishes that academic year in education.

For example, if the child in your care started academic year 13 in September 2026, then turned 18 in December 2026 and the child remained in full-time education, the Special Guardian payments would continue to receive the allowance for the remainder of that academic year (i.e. July 2027).

To be considered for ongoing SGO allowances beyond 18, the family are required to write to the Local Authority 3 months before the child turns 18 to put in a request for continued funding and the educational reason(s) why. Please note checks with colleges, schools or sixth-form providers may be made to verify the information.

Special Guardians are required to inform the Local Authority if the child stops attending education, changes education provider or changes their course. Unfortunately, the Local Authority cannot continue Special Guardianship allowances for 'resit years' or similar circumstances. It is important Special Guardians are aware payments will automatically stop when the child turns 18 unless approval is given by the Local Authority for payments to continue beyond 18 for a temporary period.

As mentioned above, Special Guardians may be required to undergo a periodic review of the financial support being offered. In this circumstances, those in receipt of Special Guardianship payments will be asked to provide the following information:

- The financial circumstances of the Special Guardianship carers;
- The financial needs and resources of the child;
- Confirmation that the child still resides in the Special Guardianship arrangement.

If the Local Authority do not receive the information outlined above when requested, Special Guardians need to be aware that the payments may be suspended or ceased until contact can be made. It is important that up-to-date contact information is given to the Local Authority for all Special Guardianship families so payments are not affected by contact details being out of date.

The Local Authority, if conducting a periodic means tested financial review, will review the payment of financial support and, if it proposes to reduce or terminate the support or revise the plan, it will notify the Special Guardian of the decision. The Local Authority will allow a period of 28 days in which the Special Guardian may make representations, which will then be considered by the Local Authority and a final decision made.

As outlined earlier, the payments will cease when any of the events listed in Regulation 9 occur, these include:

- (a) if the child ceases to live with the Special Guardian for any reason
- (b) The child ceases full time education or training and commences employment (this is specifically in relation to payments being paid in relation to a child who is over 18 years of age)
- (c) The child qualifies for universal credit, income support, jobseekers allowance or employment support allowance in his own right

The Local Authority also reserves the right not to backdate payments.

Requests for financial assistance and assessments

If a request for financial assistance is made by a prospective Special Guardian of a child who is currently a child in care to the Local Authority; or a Special Guardian of a child who was a child in care to Brent immediately before the making of the Special Guardianship order, then an assessment will be carried out (this is required by Regulation 11(1) of the 2005 Regulations). Please note that the birth parent(s) or the child themselves can make this request.

Requests for financial support from other people will be considered, but unless the Local Authority is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, a financial assessment, including a means test, will not be conducted. It is not possible to specify the sort of circumstances which might be regarded as exceptional because case-by-case consideration is required. However, by way of example, if the Local Authority is satisfied, having regard to its history of involvement with the child, that the child would (on the balance of probabilities) have entered into the care of the Local Authority (as a Child in Care) had the Special Guardian not stepped in to care for them, the Local Authority might consider that to amount to an exceptional circumstance warranting a means tested financial assessment for support. In those circumstances consideration of financial support will be on the assessed needs of the child under regulation 12 and the Local Authority considering that the award is necessary to ensure that the Special Guardian can look after the child.

In the event that the Local Authority decides not to conduct a financial assessment, it will notify the applicant of the reasons for the decision and allow him/ her a reasonable period within which

to make representations, which will then be considered by the Local Authority. The final decision will be made, and the person requesting assessment notified of it, within a reasonable period of receipt of their representations (Reg.11(2) and 11(3)). The Local Authority will ordinarily consider 28 days to be a reasonable period both for the making of representations and notification of the Authority's decision, however, this period may be extended if required.

Non-periodic financial support

Contribution to settling in grant – This may be awarded where the Local Authority considers it appropriate further to an assessment of the needs of the child joining a new family under a Special Guardianship order. The price of items needed will be based on the price of equivalent items from a high street or online retailer. The grant is not paid if the child was in foster care and the foster carers have applied to be that child's Special Guardians, unless there are exceptional circumstances which would justify such a grant being made. Where awarded the grant is paid up to an agreed maximum £600 per child and all payments require receipts as proof of purchase.

Legal Advice – Limited financial support may be available for legal advice, unless the prospective Special Guardian has access to free legal representation, and if so, is paid at the "legal help" rates. It is only paid for children known to the Local Authority prior to the application being made (such as Brent Children in Care, Children on Child in Need Plans, Children on Child Protection Plans) and where the Local Authority supports the making of the SGO as it is believed to be the best outcome for the child.

Other exceptional circumstances where the Local Authority will consider funding Legal Advice, include:

- The Local Authority considers that the carer or prospective Special Guardian requires legal advice about the different care arrangements that could be made for the subject child and supports the child being placed or remaining in his/her care; and
- Where he/she is not eligible for legal help or any other financial assistance for example under an insurance policy; and
- The Local Authority considers that his/her financial circumstances are such that it would not be reasonable to expect him/ her to pay his/ her own fees.

This is payable up to the Local Authority's agreed limit for the initial consultation, presently this is set at £300 (inclusive of VAT). The solicitor instructed should be a member of the Law Society's Children Panel, unless otherwise agreed by the Local Authority in advance. Itemised bills will be required to be sent to the Local Authority.

It is important that Special Guardians and potential Special Guardians choose a solicitor independently therefore unfortunately the Local Authority cannot recommend a solicitor to them. Families can use the following link to look for appropriate legal representation

<https://find-legal-advice.justice.gov.uk/>

Additional Financial Support

All Special Guardians and Child Arrangements Order carers may also be eligible for Child Benefit and Universal Credit. Prospective carers should speak to their assessing/supervising Social Worker for more information about benefits to which they may be entitled, and speak to their local DWP office. Further information on available benefits is given on page 44 of this Local Offer.

In addition to the above, Special Guardians and Child Arrangement Order carers are entitled to the same benefits as birthparents. They are entitled to claim Universal Credit and child benefit, though the amount they receive is dependent upon their income. Special Guardianship Allowance is not counted as income when working out means-tested benefits.

If the carer was previously a foster carer before being granted the SGO and received income support they need to update their details with the Department of Work and Pensions as they are no longer seen as 'employed' as a foster carer.

Special Guardians should check if their benefits allowance now reaches the benefits cap. There are exemptions e.g. for families with a disabled child.

Pension claimants who are Special Guardians are exempt from the 'bedroom tax' and benefit cap as they are not in work and can claim for child benefit and child tax credit.

Child Arrangements Order financial support

Legislative Context

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, Residence Orders were replaced by Child Arrangements Orders. For the purpose of this Kinship Local Offer all Residence Orders are deemed to be Child Arrangements Orders.

Applications for Child Arrangements Orders are usually between private individuals, under section 8 of the Children Act 1989. A Child Arrangements Order (Residence) is an order setting out with who the child is to live or when the child is to live with any person. A Child Arrangements Order may also set out the details of a child's contact with specified persons. Child Arrangements Orders (Contact) do not fall within the scope of this Local Offer.

Under Schedule 1, paragraph 15, of the Children Act 1989 where a child lives, or is to live, with a person as the result of a Child Arrangements Order, a Local Authority **may** make contributions to that person towards the additional cost of caring for the child. These contributions are known as a Child Arrangements Order Allowance.

The power to make contributions does not apply where the person with whom the child lives, or is to live, is a parent of the child or the husband or wife or civil partner of a parent of the child.

Eligibility Criteria

Whether payments are made, including the amounts of any such payments, remains at the discretion of the Local Authority. There is no automatic entitlement to a Child Arrangements Order Allowance and, if deemed eligible, any payments agreed are likely to be made only until such a time as carers are in receipt of the appropriate state benefits. The carer is encouraged to claim state benefits.

A holder of a Child Arrangements Order must apply, in writing, to the Local Authority if they wish to be considered for a Child Arrangements Order Allowance.

A Child Arrangements Order Allowance **may** be paid where:

- the child is Looked After (child in care) or was Looked After by the Local Authority immediately prior to the making of the Child Arrangements Order; and
- the Local Authority supports the placement of the child with the person(s) in whose favour the Child Arrangements Order is made; or
- the Local Authority is satisfied, having regard to all the circumstances, that, but for the making of a Child Arrangements Order, the child would have become Looked After (a child in care) by the Local Authority; and
- the Local Authority supports the placement of the child with the person(s) in whose favour the Child Arrangements Order is made.
- Requests for financial support from other persons, not falling within the provisions above, will be considered, but unless the Local Authority is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, a financial assessment, including a means test, will not be conducted and no allowance will be paid. It is not possible to specify the sort of circumstances which might be regarded as exceptional because case by case consideration is required.
- In all cases, the applicant must live within the United Kingdom in order to qualify for the allowance.

The Amount of Allowance

The Child Arrangements Order Allowance will likely be set at the equivalent to the state benefit entitlement which will be assessed in relation to the DWP guidance, found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators>

The allowance is usually only paid for a period of 16 weeks or up until the carer is in receipt of the appropriate state benefits, whichever is sooner. Any extension to this period would require evidence to be provided to the Local Authority that appropriate state benefits have been applied for and that there has been a delay in receipt of these.

Appropriate state benefits may include the following:

- Universal Credit
- Child Benefit
- Personal Independence Payments (PIP)
- Any other state benefit direction taking a child into account

Some benefits have now been replaced by Universal Credit. These are:

- Housing Benefit
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Income Support

Kinship carers can check which benefit they should claim by visiting www.direct.gov.uk

Please note that if a child is 'looked after' (a child in care) before becoming subject to a Child Arrangements Order and the Child Arrangements Order is made to a Brent Foster Carer, exceptional consideration may be given to a time-limited Child Arrangements Order payment however the carer would still be required to apply for benefits in relation to the child, as outlined above. The Child Arrangements Order payments would be subject to frequent review as set by the Local Authority.

Financial Support for Child Arrangements Orders under Section 17 Children Act 1989

The Local Authority will consider any applications for one off payments under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. These are discretionary payments to be decided on a case-by-case basis following assessment of the needs of the child and family. Payments made under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 will not be ongoing payments and are made for the safety and wellbeing of the child.

Enhanced Payments made in relation to Children subject to Child Arrangements Orders

The level of allowance may be adjusted to include an enhanced payment where the Local Authority considers that the child needs special care which requires a greater expenditure of resources than would otherwise be the case because of illness, disability, emotional or behavioural difficulties, the consequences of past abuse or neglect, or other exceptional circumstances. This applies where the child's condition is serious and long-term.

For example, where a child needs a special diet or where items such as shoes, clothing or bedding need to be replaced at a higher rate than would normally be the case with a child of similar age who was unaffected by the particular condition.

In considering the applicability and amount of this adjustment, the Local Authority will have regard to any disability related benefits or other sources of funding available to the family in respect of the child. Payments will only be made for the child after all other alternatives in terms of provision of specialist services, direct payments, eligibility to the social fund, benefits and grants have been explored. The level of the child's needs will be reviewed at an agreed timescale.

An enhanced payment may be made, exceptionally, in circumstances falling outside the scope of the criteria detailed above at the discretion of the Head of Service.

Notification of the Local Authority decision in relation to Child Arrangements Order payments

If the Local Authority decides not to pay an allowance in cases where they have the discretion to do so, the Local Authority will write to the holder of the Child Arrangements Order setting out the decision made and the reasons for that decision.

Where the decision is made to pay a Child Arrangements Order Allowance the Local Authority will write to the holder of the Child Arrangements Order setting out:

- the amount of the allowance
- the date of the first payment
- the method and frequency of payment and
- when the payments will cease

Notifications by those in receipt of an allowance

Those in receipt of a Child Arrangements Order Allowance must promptly notify the Local Authority of changes in their circumstances or those of the child. In particular, the Local Authority must be notified if:

- the carers are in receipt of all relevant state benefits
- the child dies
- the child ceases to live with the holder of the Child Arrangements Order
- the Child Arrangements Order / Residence Order is revoked; or
- there is a change of address (including moving outside of the UK)
- the holder of the Child Arrangements Order changes their email address or telephone number

The notification should take place promptly and in any event within 28 days of the relevant change in circumstances.

An applicant for, or person in receipt of, an Allowance must provide such information as is reasonably requested by the Local Authority to enable it to be satisfied that the Allowance should be paid/ continued. Failure to do so may result in non-payment or cessation of an Allowance. Notification should be made to allowance.review@brent.gov.uk

Commencement of Child Arrangements Order Payments

The payment of a Child Arrangements Order Allowance will begin from the date of the making of the order, when granted upon the issuing of, or during the course of, care proceedings.

In cases whereby a Child Arrangements Order has been granted during private proceedings, a Child Arrangements Order Allowance, if payable, will begin from the date the request for a financial support was made by the child/young persons' carer. The Local Authority reserve the right not to backdate payments.

Review, variation and termination of Child Arrangements Order allowances

Eligibility for the allowance, and the proportion payable to a particular Child Arrangements Order holder, is subject to frequent review, upon request by, or on receipt of notification of a change in circumstances from, the carer. Failure to do so may result in payment being suspended or terminated and recovery of any payments made. Additional conditions on the provision of support may be imposed by the Local Authority as considered appropriate in such circumstances; for example payments will not be back dated in circumstances whereby the carer(s) fail to inform the Local Authority of any changes to personal/financial circumstances.

The Child Arrangements Order Allowance will cease if:

- the child dies
- the child ceases to live with the holder of the Child Arrangements Order
- the Child Arrangements Order is revoked
- the holder of the Child Arrangements Order has significant changes to their financial circumstances
- the child ceases full time education or training and commences employment, qualifies for universal credit, income support, jobseekers allowance or employment support allowance in his own right; or
- the child becomes 18

Overpayment of Child Arrangements Order payments

If an overpayment has been made the Local Authority will be entitled to recover the overpayment.

If the child has been receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment ("PIP") the kinship carer(s) may need to start managing this.

- **Financial support for Private Fostering arrangements**

As outlined earlier in this Kinship Local Offer, the parent or carer with Parental Responsibility should financially assist any private fostering arrangement and should be satisfied that this arrangement they have made meets the needs of their child. Brent is required to undertake a private fostering assessment once we are notified of any private fostering arrangements occurring in Brent. If any needs are identified for the child as defined as a 'child in need' concern set out in section 17 of the Children Act 1989 then Brent may be able to provide some short-term financial assistance to the family however this is on a case-by-case basis.

Brent are not required to assess Private Family Arrangements if they do not meet the criteria for private fostering arrangements and/or no additional concerns have been identified (as

outlined in section 17 child in need and section 47 of the Children Act 1989). As a reminder, a child living with a 'close' relative is not considered to be living in a Private Fostering Arrangement.

As stated however Brent is committed to supporting all Kinship arrangements and encourage Private Family arrangement kinship families to access support services detailed in this Kinship Local Offer, including attending support groups or making referrals to Early Help services.

More information about Private Fostering can be found here:

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/fostering-and-adoption/fostering/private-fostering>

- **Financial support for Informal Kinship Family Arrangements**

Financial support may be offered to Private Family Arrangements (also known as Informal Kinship Family Arrangements) under Section 17 (Children Act 1989) in exceptional circumstances and this is considered on a case-by-case basis. It is likely a Child and Family Assessment (or Family Help Assessment) will be required first to explore what needs the child has before financial assistance can be put in place by the Local Authority. Financial assistance provided under section 17 is likely to be time-limited on a temporary basis only.

f) Accommodation

Kinship care arrangements must comfortably accommodate all who live there and are expected to be warm, adequately furnished and decorated, and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene. The home and immediate environment must be free of avoidable hazards that might expose a child to risk of injury or harm and contain safety barriers and equipment appropriate to the child's age, development and level of ability.

Any assessment, including Viability Assessments, should explore the sleeping arrangement for each child. We recognise that in a crisis or emergency that families may utilise temporary sleeping arrangements for a very short-period however if the kinship arrangement is to last longer than 7 days each child should have their own bed; accommodation arrangements must reflect the child's assessed need for privacy and space or for any specific need resulting from a disability.

If a child is required to share a bedroom with other young people, carers or family members it is imperative that the child's views are sought prior to the care arrangement being made if they are of an age and ability to consult. A risk assessment should be undertaken to explore the possible risks to the child and other room occupants. The views of the child's birth parents as well as the other room occupants should be sought before an arrangement takes place.

It is acknowledged by the Local Authority that affordable housing and space is an issue for many Kinship carers, particularly within the context of housing crisis within the Brent and the UK as a whole. The Local Authority is unable to support kinship arrangements by providing financial support for loft conversions, extensions or building works. The only possible exception to this may be placements for children who have a complex disability that requires this type of support or modification. These cases are assessed and carefully considered on a case-by-case basis.

For carers living in social housing, the Local Authority is able to assist carers with support letters, assistance with meetings with housing officers and possible housing nomination (this is subject to the Local Authority's social care quota). To do this, it is helpful if the kinship carer provides us with consent and contact details of their allocated housing officer/representative. Unfortunately the Local Authority's Children's Social Care department cannot influence or overturn a policy/decision made by the Local Authority's Housing department.

For approved Brent Connected Person foster carers living in privately rented accommodation, the Local Authority may be able to support with rental deposits and time limited rent "top ups" in order to obtain housing which will meet the needs of their own family including the Looked After Child/ren (children in care). Carers would be required to manage the ongoing rent on their own in these circumstances.

For information, advice and guidance about housing, Kinship Carers are encouraged to contact the Citizen Advice Bureau on 0800 144 8848.

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/>

For Kinship Carers who ordinarily reside in the London Borough of Brent, contact details for the London Borough of Brent's housing department are below.

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/housing>

Tel: 020 8937 2000 (Select option 2)

Email: locatahelp@brent.gov.uk

Housing Department, London Borough of Brent, Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, HA9 0FJ

g) Child Care / Nursery Provision

Brent believes that children benefit from being able to grow up in families with good role models in relation to work, and benefit from living in families who are able to provide for them financially, and demonstrate a willingness and desire to work. It is acknowledged that prospective kinship carers do not come to the caring task because they have made a conscious decision or career choice to be carers, and therefore Brent understands that there is a need to support kinship carers if, and when, they are working.

This needs to be balanced with the need for children in kinship care arrangements to have stable and consistent care, with adults that they can develop good, secure relationships and

attachments.

Brent's expectation is that Kinship carers utilise the 15 hours (and 30 hours if eligible) government childcare funding as outlined earlier in this Kinship Local Offer. Any additional funding beyond this would be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis, put in place for a time limited basis in response to a specific identified need. Unfortunately the Local Authority are unable to commit to an ongoing childcare cost.

For Special Guardians and Child Arrangements Order carers, funding for nursery provision will be considered within their support plan, as outlined above. Unfortunately for most families the Local Authority is not able to commit to ongoing childcare costs.

To speak to us about being considered on a case-by-case basis for additional childcare please do contact The Brent Kinship Care Team at these details:
Kinship Care Team, Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, London, HA9 0FJ
Kinship.team@brent.gov.uk; 020 8937 2749

h) After School Clubs

There may also be a need for kinship carers to use before and after school provisions for childcare purposes. Carers will generally be asked to pay for these activities themselves. As a reminder however there are other support services, activities and groups Kinship families can access as outlined in this Kinship Local Offer.

More information about Brent childcare/club options can be found here:
<https://www.brent.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/childcare-and-early-education/childcare-for-school-aged-children#about>

i) Loss of Earnings / Income

In exceptional circumstances, some children will require the prospective carer to consider time off from work in order to settle the child/ren into a new placement and home. If this is the case, the Local Authority will carefully consider requests to compensate carers for loss of earnings or income. These requests will be considered when the time off is specifically for settling children into a permanent placement and will be for a time limited period, not exceeding a period of 1 month. These requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis and subject to reasonable amount limits.

j) Vehicles and Transport

The Local Authority does not provide vehicles (or funding for vehicles) for any kinship carers.

k) Education Support:

Pupil Premium Plus - Many children in Kinship Care Arrangements are currently Children in Care or were previously Children in Care. For these children their schools are able to receive Pupil Premium Plus. There is more information about what Pupil Premium Plus is and what it can be used for on the Kinship Charity Website: <https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/advice-and-information/pupil-premium-plus/>

Designated Teachers for Children in Schools – Many children in Kinship Care Arrangements are currently Children in Care or were previously Children in Care. For these children their schools are required to have a 'designated teacher' to monitor and support your child. More information in relation to Designated Teachers can be found on the Kinship Charity Website: <https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/advice-and-information/school-support-for-kinship-children/#designated-teachers>

Priority School Admissions – Many children in Kinship Care Arrangements are currently Children in Care or were previously Children in Care. For these children the school should prioritise their admission into the school over other children. More information in relation to Priority School Admissions can be found on the Kinship Charity Website: <https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/advice-and-information/finding-a-school/#priority-school-admissions>

- **for Current Brent Children in Care**

Children in Connected Person fostering arrangements are able to access specific support offered to Children in Care for education and health. This support is put in place in partnership between the child, the kinship connected person foster carer, the social worker allocated to the child, the Brent virtual school and the child's school.

Brent has a Virtual School, which is responsible for supporting all Children in Care with their academic progression and identifying educational provision.

Please note, Brent Virtual School are able to offer some support, advice and guidance to children who are not Children in Care, this is outlined in the next section below.

Carers can contact Brent's virtual school directly on the below contact details.
Brent's Virtual School, London Borough of Brent, Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, London, HA9 0FJ
educationforlac@brent.gov.uk

More information about Brent's virtual school is available here.

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/education-schools-and-learning/the-virtual-school#virtuelschool>

- **for children, who are not Brent Children in Care, living in a Kinship Care arrangement**

In September 2021, the Virtual School's role was extended further to include strategic leadership of promoting the educational outcomes of all children and young people with a social worker. Brent's virtual school has an 'Extended Duties Team'. Their role is to raise the profile of children known to social care, narrow the attainment gap, improve school attendance, reduce suspensions and exclusion, support parents/carers/ Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and to provide training, advice, information and guidance.

This covers all children who have been assessed as requiring a social worker at any time due to safeguarding and/or welfare needs and includes all children and young people aged 0-18 subject to a Child in Need or a Child Protection Plan, in all educational settings.

You can contact the Brent Virtual School on the above contact details to discuss any educational needs the child in your care may have.

As a reminder, for children who were previously in care to Brent, the school they attend receives additional funding. If the child in your care would benefit from extra support or intervention then speak to the school about this funding or speak to Brent's virtual school on the contact details outlined above.

Children in SGO or CAO arrangements should receive education and health support from their schools and local health provisions. If carers are having difficulty in accessing support in these areas, Brent Social Care is available to advocate and support families to be able to access the universal community supports, which should be available to them by contacting Brent's Regional Agency, *Adopt London West* on 020 8825 5241.

I) Legal Costs:

Before agreement is given by the Local Authority to provide financial support for legal purposes, Kinship carers are requested to establish whether they are eligible for legal aid through their solicitors. We can provide carers with details of appropriate childcare solicitors/firms on request.

- **for Brent Children in Care:**

On a case-by-case basis Brent will at times assist carers with legal costs associated with proceedings when they are applying for either Child Arrangements Orders or Special Guardianship Orders for the looked after child (children in care) in their care and the Local Authority is in support of this application.

Legal costs can be provided up to an amount of £300 (inclusive of VAT). For applications being made in relation to children who are currently looked after (children in care), agreement for legal funding is given by the Service Manager for Looked After Children and Permanency who

manages the Kinship Care Team (currently Tom Donovan), in consultation with Brent Legal Service in specific relation to services rendered.

For those (potential) carers who are being assessed within care proceedings where the recommended outcome is that the child/ren will be placed permanently with these carers, Brent is able to fund a one-off legal consultation prior to the conclusion of the proceedings. This funding should not exceed £300.00 (exclusive of VAT) for one consultation. It is recommended that these (potential) carers have their one-off consultation once a *draft* support plan is made available to them.

- **for Private informal kinship arrangements/SGO/CAO:**

For carers who are caring for children in a private informal kinship care arrangement who wish to apply for either Special Guardianship or a Child Arrangements Order, support for financial assistance will be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis depending on the needs of the child and the family's circumstances. It is likely a Child and Family Assessment (CFA) or Family Help Assessment will need to be undertaken first to explore the needs of the child.

m) Support for overseas kinship care arrangement

The Local Authority will not automatically financially support overseas kinship care arrangements. The Local Authority will carefully consider this on a case-by-case basis. It is acknowledged that kinship placements outside the UK may have specific and unique needs, which require consideration as part of a fostering support plan, SGO support plan or Child Arrangements Order support plan.

When assessing the needs of an overseas kinship care arrangement, the Local Authority may consider the following:

- Education: carers may require support with school fees, uniforms, books
- Health: there may be situations where carers must purchase private health insurance/cover due to the health system in their specific country
- Family Time (Contact): this is often an additional cost associated with placing children outside of the UK. It is important to consider these costs as part of the support plan prior to placement being finalised. Birth parents should also be included in these discussions so that all parties are clear about the support being offered and the expectations of the Local Authority in relation to this contact
- Legal advice and costs for prospective carers in relation to how the legalities of the placement will translate in their country of origin.

Whilst these factors will be considered, the Local Authority will carefully consider each case individually and cannot guarantee additional or ongoing support.

Living costs in the particular country of placement may also be taken into account when planning additional support. This may mean the amount paid may be lower than that paid if the carer lived in the UK.

There may also be situations when the prospective carers require support from the Local Authority prior to the children being placed in order to attend court hearings, establish contact with the children in the UK etc. In these situations, it is not the responsibility of the Local Authority to assist the prospective carers with their passport, visa and immigration needs in respect of coming to the UK.

The Local Authority will consider assisting the prospective carers with flights and / or accommodation while they are in the UK for the purposes of the proposed placement. This will be for a time-limited period. Payments of this type are subject to reasonable limits and receipts must be provided for any costs already incurred. The Local Authority may not reimburse costs that are considered to be unreasonable.

There may also be occasions where it is felt that a Social Worker should accompany the carer and child on their journey home. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be specifically related to the Social Worker's assessment and the specific needs of the child/ren.

Contact with the local Children's Social Care department in the carer's country should be made as soon as possible, and should be an essential element of the kinship assessment undertaken. It is imperative to identify the scope of support on offer by the carer's local services, how these services work, and how the carer is to access them if required. This information should be built into the support plan for the identified placement.

Where local services are willing to work collaboratively with the assessing Social Worker, this should be encouraged due to local knowledge. This also offers the opportunity for carers to build a local support system.

Please note that not all overseas kinship care arrangements can be financially supported by the Local Authority. It is also important to highlight that any financial agreement is subject to review as outlined earlier in this Kinship Local Offer.

COMPLAINTS/COMPLIMENTS

We always try to provide excellent services. But things sometimes go wrong and, when they do, we want to know so that we can put things right, and learn from our mistakes.

For more information about how to make a complaint, please see www.brent.gov.uk/complaints

The Brent kinship care team and Brent fostering service want to hear the views, wishes and feelings of children, young people, foster carers, kinship carers, birth parents and their

extended family. Every 6 months the service will send out surveys asking for the views and feedback from families, including families with Kinship care arrangements. Please do complete these if you can as it helps us develop the service. If you have any specific feedback for either service please do email us at kinship.team@brent.gov.uk or fostering@brent.gov.uk; alternatively you can utilise the Local Authority's complaint process as outlined above.

APPEAL MECHANISM

If there is a complaint about the substance of a decision as to payment or amount of allowance, the holder of the Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order may challenge the decision, in writing, within 28 days of written notification of the decision. The appeal notification should be sent to kinship.team@brent.gov.uk

The review of a decision will be escalated to the Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency. If the decision of the Head of Service is not accepted, the matter will be considered by the Operational Director and thereafter can be escalated by the Local Authority's complaints procedure, details available on request.

The letter of appeal must detail the reason(s) for the appeal and include any supporting evidence i.e. financial documents to justify the 'exceptional' or change in circumstances.

Any appeal outside of the 28 day timeframe must also explain the reasons why it was not made within that timeframe, and Brent will consider whether there are good reasons to consider the appeal out of time.

If you require this Kinship Local Offer in Large Text Format please do contact us on kinship.team@brent.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix A – List of national organisations for family and friends carers.

Appendix B – A Glossary of Abbreviations/Definitions used in this Kinship Local Offer and other guidance

Appendix C – Table of different types of kinship care arrangements

APPENDIX A – NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARERS

Kinship (Charity) - <https://kinship.org.uk/>

The leading kinship care charity in England and Wales.

Phone: 03300 167 235

Email: info@kinship.org.uk

Address: The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London, SE11 5RR

Please note Kinship have a link to other helpful organisations you can contact

<https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/advice-and-information/helpful-organisations/>

Family Lives and Gingerbread - <https://www.familylives.org.uk/> and <https://www.gingerbread.org.uk>

Family Lives, in consortium with Gingerbread, offer free online and phone support for parents and carers on various topics, such as mental health, behaviour, bullying, divorce, finances, welfare rights and more.

Family Lives Telephone Number: 0808 800 2222

Gingerbread Telephone number: 0808 802 0925.

E-mail: askus@familylives.org.uk

Brent CAMHS - <https://www.westlondon.nhs.uk/our-services/child-and-adolescent/camhs>

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Phone: 0203 317 5050

Address: Brent CAMHS, Monks Park Health Centre, Monks Park, Wembley, HA9 6JE

We Are With You - <https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/>

Offers a range of online support developed for families and carers affected by substance misuse.

Open Monday to Friday - 9am to 9pm, Saturday and Sunday - 10am to 4pm

Adfam - www.adfam.org.uk

Works with families affected by drugs and alcohol, and supports carers of children whose parents have drug and alcohol problems.

Tel: 020 7553 7640

Email: admin@adfam.org.uk

Children's Legal Centre - www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Provides free independent legal advice and factsheets to children, parents, carers and professionals.

Citizens Advice - www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice through local bureau and website.

CoramBAAF - <https://corambaaf.org.uk/>

CoramBAAF is an independent membership organisation for professionals, foster carers and adopters, and anyone else working with or looking after children in or from care, or adults

who have been affected by adoption. It is a successor organisation to the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF).

Tel: 020 7520 0300

E-mail: advice@corambaaf.org.uk

Coram Children's Legal Centre (CCLC) - www.childlawadvice.org.uk

Coram Children's Legal Centre provides free independent legal advice and factsheets to children, parents, carers and professionals.

Tel: 0300 330 5480.

Department for Education - www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families

Lists details of telephone help lines and online services to provide information, advice and support on a range of issues that parents and families may face in bringing up children and young people.

Family Fund Trust - www.familyfund.org.uk

Helps families with severely disabled or seriously ill children to have choices and the opportunity to enjoy ordinary life. Gives grants for things that make life easier and more enjoyable for the disabled child and their family.

Email: info@familyfund.org.uk

Family Rights Group (FRG) - www.frg.org.uk

Provides advice to parents and other family members whose children are involved with or require children's social care services because of welfare needs or concerns. Publishes resources, helps to develop support groups for family and friends carers, and runs a discussion board.

Advice line: 0800 801 0366 (Monday to Friday 9.30am to 3pm; excluding bank holidays)

Email: advice@frg.org.uk

The Fostering Network - www.fostering.net

Supports foster carers and anyone with an interest in fostering to improve the lives of children in care. Publishes resources and runs Fosterline, a confidential advice line for foster carers including concerns about a child's future, allegations and complaints, legislation and financial matters.

Email: info@fostering.net

Fosterline: 0800 040 7675

Email: fosterline@fostering.net

National Family Mediation (NFM) - www.nfm.org.uk

Provides mediation services to support couples who are separated, and their children and others affected by this.

Tel: 0300 4000 636

Email: enquiries@nfm.org.uk

Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group - www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk

Operates helpline and provides a variety of services to support anyone who has a link with someone in prison, prisoners and other agencies.

Tel: 0161 702 1000 (Monday – Friday 11:45am – 4:45pm, Saturday – Sunday 8am – 5pm)

Email: info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.co.uk

Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) - www.prisonadvice.org.uk

Provides practical and emotional support to prisoners and to their children and families.

Telephone: 0808 808 2003

TalktoFrank - www.talktofrank.com

The government's national drugs helpline, which offers free confidential drugs information and advice 24 hours a day. Information and advice is also available via the website.

24 hour advice line: 0300 123 6600

Email: frank@talktofrank.com

Coram Voice - www.coramvoice.org.uk

Advocacy organisation for children living away from home or in need.

Tel: 020 7833 5792

Young person's advice line: 0808 800 5792

Email: info@coramvoice.org.uk

Young Minds - www.youngminds.org.uk

Works to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people and empowering their parents and carers.

Parents helpline: 0808 802 5544 (Monday – Friday, 9:30am – 4pm)

Appendix B: Glossary of Definitions

In this Kinship Local Offer as well as in other guidance, the following terms are often used:

- a. “the 1989 Act” means the Children Act 1989;
- b. “the 1996 Hague Convention” means the 1996 Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children”
- c. “the 2008 Act” means the Children and Young Persons Act 2008;
- d. “the 2010 Regulations” means the Care Planning Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010;
- e. “the 2011 Regulations” means the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011;
- f. “the 2014 Act” means the Children and Families Act 2014
- g. “care plan” means the plan for the future care of a looked after child prepared in accordance with Part 2 of the 2010 Regulations;
- h. “a child in need” is defined in section 17(10) of the 1989 Act, which provides that a child shall be taken to be in need if (a) he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a Local Authority under this Part; (b) his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or (c) he is disabled;
- i. “child” means a person under the age of 18.
- j. “foster carer” means a person who is approved as a foster parent (by a Local Authority or an independent fostering agency) in accordance with regulation 27 of the Regulations 2011, or temporarily approved under regulation 24 of the 2010 Regulations;
- k. “fostering service” means a Local Authority fostering service;
- l. “independent review mechanism” means a review process that prospective or existing foster carers can access when they do not agree with the qualifying determination letter sent to them by their Fostering Service Provider Agency Decision Maker. The review process is conducted by a review panel which is independent of a fostering service provider.
- m. “informal arrangement” means an arrangement where a child is living with a kinship carer who does not have parental responsibility for the child. References to “informal arrangements” in this guidance do not include arrangements where the child is looked after by the Local Authority or where the child placed for adoption, or subject to a residence or a Special Guardianship Order. The legislation which governs these arrangements does not apply to an informal arrangement.
- n. “looked after child” means a person under 18 who is subject to a care order under section 31 of the 1989 Act (including an interim care order), or is accommodated under section 20 of that Act;
- o. “Non-agency adoption”, also known as independent adoption, is a type of adoption in which an adoption agency is not involved, such as in applications by step-parents or by relatives of the child;
- p. “parent” includes any birth parent, with or without parental responsibility for the child, any step parent, with or without parental responsibility for the child, who is in a subsisting

relationship with the birth parent, any adoptive parent, any parent by virtue of section 42 or section 43 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008, whether or not they have parental responsibility for the child, any parent by virtue of section 42 or section 43 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008, whether or not they have parental responsibility for the child.

q. “parental responsibility” has the meaning given by section 3 of the 1989 Act, being all the rights, duties, powers responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property;

r. “private fostering arrangement” means an arrangement where a child who is under 16 (or 18 if disabled) and who has not been provided with accommodation by the Local Authority, is cared for and accommodated by someone who does not have parental responsibility for him and is not a relative, and the arrangement continues for a period of 28 days or more or is intended to do so;

s. “relative” means grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent, as defined in section 105 of the 1989 Act;

t. “responsible authority” means, in relation to a looked after child, the Local Authority or voluntary organisation as the case may be, responsible for the child’s placement.

Appendix C: Table of different types of kinship care arrangements

This table has been included to support readers to understand the difference between the various Kinship Care Arrangements.

Type of kinship arrangement	Parental Responsibility	Approval process	Duration of placement	Supervision of placement	Support available to the carer and the child/ren
Informal Kinship Care	Informal arrangements are when a close family member or friend look after a child for a temporary or permanent amount of time. This arrangement is agreed privately with the parents and parental responsibility for the child remains with the parents.	None.	Subject to the discretion of the person with parental responsibility.	None.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to local peer to peer support groups • Access to Kinship’s training offer • Access to the Family Rights Group’s free Family and Friends Helpline

Type of kinship arrangement	Parental Responsibility	Approval process	Duration of placement	Supervision of placement	Support available to the carer and the child/ren
Private Fostering	<p>In England, private foster carers are individuals or families who look after a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if the child has disabilities) for more than 28 days, but who are not close relatives of the child. These arrangements typically occur without the involvement of the Local Authority. Private foster carers have a significant responsibility for the child's welfare during their time in their care. While they don't have parental responsibility in the same way that birth parents do, they do have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. This includes providing the child with a safe</p>	<p>The arrangement is assessed by LA, but the carer is not 'approved' as a Local Authority foster carer. The arrangement may be prohibited if assessed by the Local Authority as unsuitable. Additionally, private foster carers are required by law to notify their Local Authority of any private fostering arrangement, allowing the authority to assess the suitability of the arrangement and provide support and oversight if necessary.</p>	<p>Subject to discretion of person with parental responsibility and readiness of private foster carer.</p>	<p>It is not a placement, but there are statutory visits to child by social worker (minimum 6 weekly in first year, then 12 weekly).</p>	<p>This is a private arrangement, and there is limited support available from the local authority, however, these carers may wish to access some of the support available to informal kinship carers as set out above.</p>

	and nurturing environment, ensuring their physical and emotional needs are met, and promoting their education and development.				
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Type of kinship arrangement	Parental Responsibility	Approval process	Duration of placement	Supervision of placement	Support available to the carer and the child/ren
Kinship Carers with a Child Arrangements Order (CAO). <i>(In 2014, Child Arrangements Orders replaced Residence Orders and Contact Orders)</i>	Child Arrangements Orders are granted by the family court and determine who a child can live with and/or who a child can stay with and for how long and determine contact. The kinship carer shares parental responsibility with the child's parents, or others with parental responsibility, until the age of 18 unless the court states otherwise.	Appointed by court following application.	Age 18 unless varied or discharged by the court before the child reaches 18 years.	None.	All of the support available to informal kinship carers, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the kin child/ren is previously looked after they will be eligible to apply to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) • A range of educational support is available, particularly to previously looked after kinship children, as set out in the educational support section of the guidance.

Type of kinship arrangement	Parental Responsibility	Approval process	Duration of placement	Supervision of placement	Support available to the carer and the child/ren
Kinship Carers with a Special Guardianship Order (SGO)	They have parental responsibility for a child following an order made by the family court. SGO Kinship carers live permanently with their children but need permission from the court to make important decisions, such as changing the child's surname.	Appointed by court, following application from the applicant. LA must investigate the matter and prepare a report for the court dealing with the suitability of the applicant to be a Special Guardian.	Age 18 unless varied or discharged by the court before the child reaches 18 years.	None.	All of the support available to kinship carers with a CAO, plus: • Financial support may be available at the discretion of the Local Authority.
Kinship Foster Carers	They look after children who are "looked after" by the Local Authority following a voluntary agreement, if a child spends more than 24 hours in Local Authority care under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 or if a Care Order is made by the family court.	Approved as Local Authority foster carers in accordance with Fostering Services Regulations. (If child is looked after, carers must be approved as foster carers even if close relative.)	So long as placement remains in line with child's care plan, as determined by the LA.	Statutory: visits to child by social worker and supervision of foster carers by supervising social worker.	Kinship Foster Carers are entitled to the same support as any other Local Authority foster carer, based on the NMA. This is set out in more detail in chapter 2.

Type of kinship arrangement	Parental Responsibility	Approval process	Duration of placement	Supervision of placement	Support available to the carer and the child/ren
Adoption	Parental responsibility transfers to adopters and legal relationship with birth parents is severed.	Adoption agency assesses and approves prospective adopters, court makes order regarding specific child. If the child is not looked after then notice of intention to adopt must be given to the LA who then carry out an assessment / report for the court.	Permanent lifelong relationship.	When child is placed for adoption by the LA, the placement is supervised and there are statutory reviews. Once the adoption order is made, none.	Entitlement to assessment for adoption support services, which may be provided at discretion of LA in accordance with Regulations and NMS. Adopters and adopted children are entitled to therapeutic support from the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund.

