

<b>Date:</b>	19 March 2026
<b>Report title:</b>	Kinship Local Offer Developments and Implementation Plan
<b>Report Author:</b>	Service Development Team

## Purpose

To share how we are enhancing our Southwark Kinship Local Offer (KLO) which is an integral part of the wider CSC reform agenda. Activity will be progressed through the implementation plan set out below which will require coordinated, whole-family support with shared responsibility across teams and services. Success will look like transparency for families and accountability within our systems, ultimately enabling more children to remain safely within their family networks.

## Background

In September 2025, Southwark was one of the first local authorities to launch their KLO. This was done following a large consultation with kinship carers comprising two focus groups and a survey. The KLO is a statutory requirement within the Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

The main principle of the offer is that children should be enabled to live with their families unless it is not consistent with their safety and welfare. Those who cannot live with their parents should, where appropriate, remain with members of their extended family or friends, as this will provide a better alternative and avoid them growing up within the public care system.

Our KLO contributes to overarching Corporate Parenting Strategy, supporting more families to stay safely together and specifically to 'further increase the rate of children in connected care arrangements, through investment in family group decision making and wider support offer'.

## Approach

Following implementation of our current offer, we have continued to develop the enhanced offer. The focus remains on creating a transparent, accessible, and co-produced framework of needs-led support for all kinship carers, regardless of legal status. The offer will not just 'live' within the Special Guardianship and Connected Carer Team but involve multi-disciplinary teams such as safeguarding, housing, education, and health.

We recognise that regular communication and engagement is essential. To address this, we have been working closely with our Digital Marketing Officer to strengthen how we communicate the KLO. This will be done by developing clear messaging, using multiple channels, improving signposting and focusing attention on all kinship carer groups, from prospective to long-standing and from informal to formal.

Lastly, it is important to note that the Southwark KLO is a 'live' document. It is proactively reviewed and improved as new developments arise, best practice guidance is disseminated and councils publish their offers which we can benchmark against.

## Our current offer

We provide a clear and comprehensive overview of [Southwark's Kinship Local Offer on the Council website](#), setting out the wide range of support available for kinship families. The site explains our wider objectives and approach and clearly signposts how carers can contact our dedicated Special Guardianship and Connected Carer Team for advice and support throughout their kinship care journey.

## Kinship developments and implementation plan

Below are tables documenting our current offer, alongside further developments and actions we are taking to continue to enhance support for kinship families.

We have structured this around seven themes: Therapeutic, Training and Support, Financial, Education, FGC Contact, Legal and our Children in Care Council. These themes align with suggested content from the DfE and how we structured our initial offer.

### Therapeutic:

- Activity centred around developing one-to-one clinical interactions and a wider and more sustainable pool of Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund service providers.

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p><b>Southwark Clinical Service</b></p> <p>Clinician attends SG and CC Team support groups on an ad-hoc basis. Clinician can offer limited child and family interventions. Urgent situations and on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p><b>Southwark Clinical Service</b></p> <p>Offer more direct one-to-one interactions with KCs on specific issues. This will be on a case-by-case basis after community-based support has not been satisfactory.</p>	<p>SGO &amp; CC team to work with Davina on process and criteria for one-to-one interactions with KCs on specific issues</p> <p>This will be on a case-by-case basis after community-based</p>	<p>Clinician now involved in groups &amp; training on a regular/ scheduled basis</p> <p>Process and criteria for 1-2-1 work to be developed</p>

<p><b>Eligibility:</b> All kinship carers</p>	<p><i><b>‘31% of kinship children have diagnosed or suspected social, emotional and mental health needs and more than 1 in 10 have diagnosed Autistic Spectrum Disorder’.</b></i> (Kinship Forgotten Report 2024)</p> <p><i><b>‘I’m not sure if she (my SG child) is delayed due to trauma or another underlying issue or if she is even delayed and I’m just being paranoid’.</b></i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p>	<p>support has been tried without success</p>	
<p><b>Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)</b></p> <p>KCs can access funds of up to £3,000 per child. A wide range of therapies can be funded including psychotherapy, life story work and shorts breaks with a therapeutic element</p> <p><b>Eligibility:</b> For children who were previously in care of the local authority</p>		<p>As a part of the ‘induction’ process the SGO and CC team to ensure all eligible KCs know about the fund</p> <p>This can be done by referring KCs to the KLO – specifically under ‘mental and physical wellbeing support’</p> <p>SGO and CC Team to ensure there are team members who are available to support fund applications</p> <p>SGO and CC Team to compile and manage a list of delivery providers.</p> <p>Adopt London South has a list the team can access, however, the SGO and CC Team to ensure these providers understand the specific needs and experiences of kinship families</p>	<p>Leaflet with key aspects of KLO is being developed with Danielle from Comms. This will be sent to all new SGs. IG / GDPR guidance is being sought to determine whether an email can be sent to existing SGs.</p> <p>Existing provider list has been reviewed. Research into additional providers is being undertaken to reduce wait times.</p>

## Training and support:

- Activity centred around developing and embedding kinship ‘champions’ throughout children’s social care services from FEH to Care.

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p><b>SGO and CC Team - training</b> KCs are welcome to attend Southwark’s monthly in-person support group and can also attend monthly walk-in sessions</p> <p>The team have launched four training courses: 1) attachment 2) trauma 3) managing challenging behaviours 4) life story work</p> <p><b>Kinship charity- training</b> Welcome to attend free online and in-person training and workshops</p>	<p><b>SGO and CC Team</b></p> <p>The SG and CC team will call KCs once in the first 3 months and visit them in their home within the first 6 months.</p> <p><i><b>‘A significant majority of respondents said they had not had any information/advice on kinship care or felt that what they had was not enough.’</b></i> (Southwark Kinship Survey Nov. 2024)</p>	<p>As a part of the ‘induction’ process the SGO and CC team to ensure all KCs are aware of and participate in internal (SGO and CC team, FEH) and/or external support groups and training</p> <p>This can be done by through direct email/WhatsApp messaging and by referring KCs to the KLO – specifically under ‘TBC’</p>	<p>As above with ASGSF</p> <p>As above taking advice on GDPR and WhatsApp channel</p> <p>Separate section on ‘training’ to be integrated into the current and published KLO.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Managing challenging behaviour</li> <li>▪ Raising someone else’s child: an introduction to kinship care workshop</li> <li>▪ Financial support for kinship families</li> <li>▪ Overview of the EHCP and SEND process</li> <li>▪ Formalising your kinship care arrangement</li> <li>▪ Supporting your kinship child at school</li> <li>▪ Life story work with children in kinship care</li> </ul>	<p><b>PAUSE Team</b></p> <p>Develop bespoke training with the PAUSE Team. PAUSE has Innovation Fund money which could support development.</p> <p>Training could include understanding identity through HOPE Boxes and enabling positive relationship dynamics between carers and parents.</p>	<p>Consider working with Pause on additional in-house courses based on KC need and ensuring there is no duplication with other relevant courses offered within Southwark or through local and third section organisations</p>	<p>Meeting with Pause to be booked by end Q1. Proposing Kinship ‘champions’ in partner teams such as Pause, FEH, Lifelong Links.</p> <p>Internal KLO launch to include SG team members joining/ presenting at team meetings</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding how to keep children in kinship care safe online</li> <li>Dealing with emotional challenges as a kinship carer</li> <li>Managing contact for kinship families – practical tools and tips</li> </ul> <p><b>Eligibility:</b> All kinship carers for both Southwark and Kinship groups and courses</p>	<p><b>Southwark Family Early Help (FEH)</b></p> <p>Consider developing bespoke training with the FEH Team addressing specific need such as addressing contact issues</p>	As above	<p>Meeting with FEH to be booked by end Q1. Proposing Kinship 'champions' in partner teams such as pause, FEH, Lifelong Links</p> <p>Internal KLO launch to include SG team members joining/ presenting at team meetings</p>
	<p><b>Lifelong Links (part of Family Rights Group)</b></p> <p>Develop bespoke practical life-story work workshops for kinship families</p>	As above	<p>Meeting with Pause to be booked by end Q1. Proposing Kinship 'champions' in partner teams such as pause, FEH, Lifelong Links</p> <p>Internal KLO launch to include SG team members joining/ presenting at team meetings</p> <p>NB Life Story training has begun with internal life story lead – to support group. Referrals for 1-2-1 bespoke life story work are made.</p>

## Financial:

Activity centred around improving and clarifying details on financial entitlements taking account of legal status and the process for applying for one-off payments.

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p><b>Regular payments to kinship carers</b> National special guardianship means-tested allowance of between £195 and £289 per week dependent on the kinship child's age</p> <p><b>Eligibility:</b> For carers who have been through social care proceedings</p> <p>Year 1 and 2 payment and post-2 years payment -In year 1 and 2 of a foster carer becoming a special guardian Southwark special guardians will receive the same fostering fee and child's allowance that they were receiving before the Special Guardianship Order was granted -Post-2 years Southwark special guardians receive whatever they are means-tested assessed as being entitled to</p>	<p><b>Other payments to kinship carers</b> £750 'setting-up' payment (previously £500) – for when the child comes to live with you</p> <p><b>Eligibility</b> - For carers who have been through social care proceedings</p> <p><i><b>‘For every 100 children looked after in well-supported kinship care rather than local authority care, the state saves £4 million per year and increases the lifetime earnings of those children by £2 million’.</b></i> (Kinship report 2020)</p> <p><i><b>“I find means-testing very unfair. I didn't feel encouraged to work which if very important to my mental health and wellbeing. Being a SGO is expensive no matter how much we earn”.</b></i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p>	<p>As a part of the 'induction' process the SGO and CC team to ensure all eligible KCs know their financial entitlements</p> <p>This can be done by referring KCs to the KLO– specifically under 'financial support'</p>	<p>Former 'Friends &amp; Family Policy' (replaced by KLO) is being revised with the Policy and Learning Lead. This will include updated and expanded information on financial support eligibility.</p>

<p><b>Eligibility:</b> Carers must have previously assessed as a regulation 27 carer</p>	<p><i>“We went without so the children were okay and could have things. They came to us with nothing”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2024)</p>		
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## Education:

Activity centred around partnership work between the SGO and CC Team and the Virtual School.

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p><b>Virtual School Head</b> Provides information, support and guidance to all kinship carers on a wide variety of issues.</p> <p><b>Eligibility:</b> All kinship families</p> <p><b>Designated Teachers</b> Help kinship carers to participate in discussions about their child’s support needs and strategies to meet identified needs, including how Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) can be used to support their child. They can also provide an induction for kinship children starting school or new to a school</p> <p><b>Eligibility:</b> For children who were previously in care of the local authority</p> <p><b>Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)</b> £2,570 per child paid directly to schools for a variety of support to be chosen with the school designated teacher</p> <p><b>Eligibility:</b> For children who were previously in care of the local authority</p>	<p>Devise a programme of activity jointly with the Virtual School to raise the awareness and visibility of kinship care and increase direct one-to-one support for kinship families</p> <p><i>“Kinship children in England are over three times more likely to have an EHCP than all pupils and are around five times more likely to be learning in a special school”.</i> (Kinship Forgotten Report 2024)</p> <p><i>“Schools need to know about SGOs!”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p>	<p>SGO &amp; CC team to work with Kate Bainbridge, CIN Coordinator on protocol for direct, tailored assistance e.g. to navigate the school system and EHCP applications and process, address specific learning needs and how to link KCs with their schools designated teacher</p> <p>SGO &amp; CC team to also work with Kate on how they can jointly use data on kinship children as it is introduced into the 2026-27 DfE School Census.</p> <p>SGO &amp; CC team to invite Kate Bainbridge to attend the kinship support group twice a year</p> <p>As a part of the ‘induction’ process the SGO and CC team to ensure all eligible KCs know about educational support</p> <p>This can be done by referring KCs to the KLO – specifically under ‘support with a child’s education’</p>	<p>Initial meeting to be booked by end Q1</p> <p>New leaflet to accompany welcome letter will highlight educational support</p>
<p><b>School admissions</b> Top priority in school admissions and should be placed in good or outstanding schools School place can be secured through the Fair Access Protocol for vulnerable children</p> <p><b>Eligibility:</b> For Formerly Looked After Children and those in formal kinship care arrangements</p>		<p>As above - referral to the KLO under ‘support with a child’s education’</p>	

<p><b>Higher Education</b> Higher Government Bursary for Students in Vulnerable Groups'. It is for young people who need financial support to stay on in further education or training. Bursary can cover things like meals, books and transportation</p> <p><b>Eligibility:</b> For 16-19-year-olds who were previously in care of the local authority</p>		As above - referral to the KLO under 'support with a child's education'	
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## FGC, Contact:

Activity centred around embedding the FGC kinship champion and ensuring all appropriate kinship carers are offered and receive a FGC at the pre-proceedings stage.

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p>The SG and CC Team:</p> <p><b>FGCs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Makes referrals and helps coordinate FGCs for kinship carers</li> </ul> <p><b>Contact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signposts kinship carers to local contact centres and family mediation services (fee charged to carers)</li> </ul> <p><b>Eligibility:</b> Kinship carers known to Southwark CSC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FGC team to provide family mediation, Lifelong Links only to be used when in-house support is not feasible</li> <li>Provide more referrals to KCs regarding free short-break provision in the community</li> <li>Increase birth parent(s) awareness and understanding of the support plan and their responsibilities within it</li> <li>When supported contact is necessary explore ways to make it more affordable</li> <li>Increase the number of family members identified to offer respite and formalise this in support plans</li> </ul> <p>Process and timescales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FGC to take place within the first 6 weeks of assessment (full SG assessment takes 10-12 weeks).</li> <li>During the FGC process family members who are appropriate and able to provide respite are identified</li> <li>If no family members are identified Lifelong Links may be commissioned to work on identifying potential respite carers within the network and build this into broader support plans</li> <li>As a part of the support plan kinship carers are referred to free short-break provision e.g. CHICKS, Forest School, Endorphins holiday club, THRIVE SEND, cooking workshops</li> <li>Trained mediators in the FGC service provide mediation to support Family Plan development and preparations. Where there is a strained relationship between</li> </ul>	<p>SGO &amp; CC team to work with the FGC team lead on process and criteria for one-to-one interactions with KCs on specific issues</p> <p>This will be on a case-by-case basis after community-based support has been tried without success</p> <p>Protocol for family mediation</p> <p>As a part of the 'induction' process the SGO and CC team to ensure all eligible KCs know about FGCs, Contact (family mediation, respite) and refer KCs to 'Kinship' charity training on how to manage contact.</p> <p>This can be done by referring KCs to the KLO – specifically under 'TBC'</p>	<p>Meeting with FGC team has been booked to take place end April. Consider having a kinship 'champion' in FGC team.</p> <p>As above, to be included in new welcome letter and leaflet</p>

	<p>parent(s) and KC around family time arrangements, mediation can be offered (with close consultation with the SW) with a view to agreeing a Family Plan around the future arrangements for family time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Family plans to be reviewed on an annual basis by the FGC Coordinator</li> </ul> <p>The number of kinship families requiring extra support around family time is low. There have been two cases in past six months (2025)</p> <p>Monthly cost estimate to support with contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ £200 for facility (free if offered in the community or council space)</li> <li>▪ £100 for the worker</li> <li>▪ £300 x 6 per/year = £1.8k per kinship family</li> </ul> <p>During the entire process all teams SFS, FGC and SG and CC teams to work together to increase birth parent's awareness of and commitment to their responsibilities in keeping to the support plan.</p> <p><i>“Contact is very challenging. It's not easy explaining what and why things happened. Would have liked this to come from an independent professional so it didn't look like we were the bad ones”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2024)</p> <p><i>“Make birth parents keep to the Court order. Ensuring birth parents know they can't do what they want”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p> <p><i>“There is a huge gap here, especially when the relationship with the birth parent is challenging. I feel like I have been left without the help to manage this – paying £75 per/hour for contact is just too expensive”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p> <p><i>“Respite is viewed as an emergency rather than a carer simply requesting a break”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p> <p><i>“It (being a kinship carer) is a very demanding role. Respite is important. Dealing with a child with difficulties is hard. We need a chance to breathe. We need consistent respite”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2024)</p>		
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## Legal:

Activity centred around ensuring kinship carers know about the free legal sessions.

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p>Carers can receive one free advice session with a legal expert Where Southwark considers it necessary, it will assist with the foster carer's legal expenses to apply for a SGO at rates agreed in advance.</p> <p><b>Eligibility:</b> For carers who have been through social care proceedings</p>	<p>£500 for two legal advice sessions (previously £250 and one session)</p> <p>The first sessions to be held in the viability/reg 24 stage The second to be held after the support plan has been developed</p> <p><b>Eligibility:</b> For all kinship families, including those applying for a SGO through the private law route and CAO carers. Must have a genuine link to Southwark CSC.</p> <p><i>“The birth mother has free legal representation which means that she is able to make a of requests. As I am not eligible for free legal help due to me working it makes me feel very vulnerable should she decide to take me to Court”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p>	<p>As a part of the 'induction' process the SGO and CC team to ensure all eligible KCs know about legal support they are entitled to</p> <p>This can be done by referring KCs to the KLO – specifically under 'support with legal issues and housing'</p>	<p>Letters confirming legal advice support are sent by both SFS and Care, sometimes A&amp;I, discussion with Service Manager about the best way to disseminate info on this change by the end April 26</p>

## Children in Care Council:

Activity centred around ensuring kinship children are participating and benefiting from Southwark's Children in Care Council (SpeakerBox).

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p>Many SpeakerBox activities and events are open to kinship children who were previously in the care of the local authority.</p> <p><b>Eligibility:</b> Not for babies and very young children</p>		<p>As a part of the 'induction' process the SGO and CC team to ensure all eligible KCs know about SpeakerBox</p> <p>This can be done by referring KCs to the KLO – specifically under 'general support'</p>	<p>SpeakerBox have been contacted re meeting with team, to follow up and confirm by end of Q1</p>

## Communication and engagement

As mentioned, alongside enhancing our offer we have been developing our communications and engagement approach focused on improving reach and increasing awareness. Dedicated support from our Marketing Officer has been valuable, enabling us to collaboratively shape clear objectives and a coordinated roadmap of activity. Through this work we aim to:

- Raise awareness and understanding of Southwark's Kinship Local Offer among both existing and prospective kinship carers

- Support current carers to feel confident in what support they are entitled to, and prospective carers to clearly understand what kinship care involves and the support available to them

We have drafted a range of activity across channels to support us in achieving these aims which will feed into a broader plan of delivery, with key items outlined below for April:

Planned Activity	
Channel	Content
Direct mail to existing carers	A letter sent to kinship carers introducing the Kinship Local Offer and clearly outlining available support.
Kinship Local Offer flyer (print and digital)	A visually engaging flyer for residents, designed to raise awareness and provide a clear overview of the support available to kinship carers in Southwark.
Training and Support Groups flyer	A regularly updated digital flyer for SGO and connected carers, highlighting upcoming training sessions and support groups
Southwark Life magazine feature (TBC)	A feature in the residents' magazine showcasing the Kinship Local Offer, supported by a real-life case study. This will sit alongside other carer schemes (Fostering, Family Link, Supported Lodgings and Shared Lives), helping residents understand the full range of support available across Southwark. Adoption will also be referenced as a potential pathway.
Kinship Life e-newsletter	Launch of a quarterly newsletter for kinship carers, sharing updates, stories and reflections, upcoming events, and signposting to support including cost of living help and wider Southwark services.
WhatsApp channel (SGO carers)	Launch of a dedicated WhatsApp channel providing regular, accessible updates (1–3 messages per week), including training opportunities, support groups, and helpful information for carers and young people.
Social media campaign	A series of posts to launch the Local Offer, directing audiences to the website and digital resources, followed by ongoing monthly content to maintain awareness and engagement.
Internal communications	An internal article to raise awareness among staff, encouraging consistent messaging and signposting across services.
School bulletin	Inclusion in the May school bulletin to reach families and raise awareness of kinship care and available support.
Website content (TBC)	A dedicated news article announcing the Kinship Local Offer, supported by clear, accessible web content.

April 2026		
Activity	Owner	Audience
Letter posted to Kinship carers	Marketing Officer create, SGO team to arrange postage	Carers
Kinship Local Offer flyer	Marketing Officer create, SGO team to distribute	Residents/prospective carers
Training and Support Groups flyer	Marketing Officer create, SGO team to distribute and update dates on flyer	Carers
Southwark Life magazine feature – TBC	Marketing Officer write and coordinate, SGO team to provide carers for case studies	Residents/prospective carers
Kinship Life	Marketing Officer write and coordinate with input from SGO team	Carers

WhatsApp channel	SGO Team to manage channel, Marketing Officer to provide support	Carers
Social media – 2 posts a week	Marketing Officer	Residents/prospective carers
Intranet article (internal comms)	Marketing Officer	Southwark Council staff
School bulletin	Marketing Officer	Headteachers & school staff
Website article - TBC	Marketing Officer	Residents/prospective carers

## 2026-27 Plan Progress

To ensure important outcomes in the enhanced local offer are achieved, the Service Development Team will enable monthly progress meetings with the Special Guardianship and Connected Carers Team and relevant partners where required.

It is also recommended that progress on the implementation plan is followed up with the SH4SC Board on a quarterly basis. This can be done in the form of verbal, exception reporting with a more detailed report at year-end.

Finally, any capacity issues within the Special Guardianship and Connected Carers Team will be monitored, particularly within the context of a higher number of support requests coming in as the KLO is actively publicised.

# Appendix

[September 2025 Southwark Kinship Local Offer](#)

[Kinship care | Southwark Council](#)

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