



Executive Summary

1. The Kinship Care Alliance

The Kinship Care Alliance aims to:

- Prevent children from being unnecessarily raised outside the family
- Enhance outcomes for children who cannot live with their parents and who are living with relatives
- Secure improved recognition and support for family and friends carers.

2. Context of Family and Friends care

2-300,000 children, who cannot live safely at home with their parents, are being raised by relatives and friends (known as family and friends carers) as an alternative to being brought up by unrelated carers in the care system. These carers are typically grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings, who step in to care for a child because of parental difficulties, such as mental or physical ill health, domestic abuse, alcohol or substance misuse, or imprisonment or bereavement.

Many family and friends carers struggle as they cannot get access to the support services that they need, and they suffer financial hardship as many are forced to give up work but receive no financial support to meet the child's particular needs.

Despite this and these children having suffered from similar adversities to children in the care system, research¹ shows that they are as safe, and doing as well if not better, in relation to their health, school attendance & performance, self-esteem, social & personal relationships and show a marked improvement to emotional/behavioural problems when compared with children in unconnected foster care.

¹ Farmer and Moyers 2008 and Hunt et al 2008

We are calling on the Government to:

- Make it possible for family and friends carers to get the support they need by **amending the definition of who is a child in need** in Children Act 1989 s.17 (10) to include “(d) children being cared for by family members or friends”.
- Introduce a **national financial allowance** to cover the real costs of bringing up a child for family and friends carers who take on raising a child for more than 28 days continuously as an alternative to the child being taken into the care system.
- Introduce measures in the regulations and guidance for the Welfare Reform Act 2012 to **exempt family and friends carers from specific job-seeking requirements and from the total cap on welfare benefits.**
- Introduce a period of **paid leave** from work for family and friends carers when the child comes to live with them, modelled on statutory adoption leave and pay .
- **Audit local authorities’** implementation of the statutory guidance on family and friends care².
- Give family and friends carers a statutory entitlement to support irrespective of legal status, through a **duty on local authorities to establish family and friends care support services** modelled on the duties on local authorities in respect of adoption and special guardianship support services.
- Introduce a duty on local authorities to **collect and publish official statistics of children in family and friends care** to whom they provide.
- Enable family and friends carers to **obtain parental responsibility without having to bring a case to court**, by allowing parents to enter into a parental responsibility agreement with a relative (as defined in s.105 Children Act 1989).
- Establish a **ministerial advisory group** to urgently identify measures that would improve the support for family and friends carers and ensure every child who cannot live with their parents is always supported to live with a relative when this is in their best interests.

For further information including the full briefing see

<http://www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/family-and-friends-carers/kinship-care-alliance>

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² DfE (2011) Statutory Guidance on Family and Friends Care,