

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

# FOSTERING SERVICE

## A GUIDE TO KINSHIP CARE

Kinship Fostering,  
Special Guardianship Orders,  
and Private Fostering



SURREY  
COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL AUTHORITY

**Fostering**  
SOUTH EAST

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# WELCOME

## to Kinship in Surrey

Dear Kinship Carer,

Surrey County Council understands that this may be a difficult, confusing, and challenging time for you and your family, often in very difficult circumstances. Many of our kinship carers have asked us to provide a resource booklet to help them understand the support we can offer. We often ask carers, “What support do you need?” and the response is often, “What do you offer?” This booklet highlights our commitment to publishing our offer and ensuring that support is consistent for all our carers. We have produced this booklet to highlight much of the support we have, but this is not exhaustive. Your social worker or support worker will be able to offer you further guidance, or you can find more information online.

**Clark McAuley, Fostering Service Manager**



# ABOUT US

At Surrey County Council, we're all about providing exceptional care and support to our residents and carers. We're constantly working to make our services for children and families in Surrey even better.

We're especially proud of our Kinship Service, which supports kinship fostering, special guardianship orders (SGOs), and private fostering. With personalised guidance, resources, and expertise, we help kinship carers on their unique journeys, ensuring the children in their care have the stability and well-being they need on a regular basis.



# WHAT IS KINSHIP FOSTERING?

Kinship fostering is when a child is cared for by a relative, friend, or someone they already know and trust, rather than their parents. This arrangement is different from when a child enters the care system and is looked after by the local authority. Kinship fostering often occurs during a time of crisis, but not always.

Kinship fostering, also known as family and friends fostering or connected persons care, involves relatives or close family friends stepping in to care for a child when their parents are unable to do so. At Surrey County Council, we believe in the importance of these family connections and strive to support children and young people in care to live with someone they know and trust whenever possible.

Kinship carers provide a familiar and loving environment, helping to preserve a child's sense of identity and place within their family. To ensure the best care, kinship carers must go through an approval process to become foster carers, receiving the necessary training and support from Surrey County Council. This approach underscores our commitment to keeping families together and providing stable, nurturing homes for children in need.





# OUR KINSHIP OFFER

Surrey County Council is committed to providing comprehensive support to kinship carers, ensuring they have the resources and assistance needed to care for the children in their lives. We offer a range of services, including training and development programs designed to equip kinship carers with the skills and knowledge required to provide high-quality care. Additionally, our dedicated support workers are available to offer guidance and advice, helping kinship carers navigate any challenges they may face.

Depending on your situation and type of kinship care arrangement, you may be able to get financial support and signposted for benefit advice.

Beyond financial and practical support, Surrey County Council places a strong emphasis on emotional and community support for kinship carers. We facilitate support groups and the chance to meet other carers, allowing carers to connect with others in similar situations, share experiences, and build a supportive community. This holistic approach ensures that kinship carers feel valued and supported in their vital role, contributing to the overall well-being and stability of the children in their care.

# OUR KINSHIP OFFER: TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

## ◆ **Kinship Preparation Group**

This is specially designed to help kinship foster carers prepare for the challenges and rewards of caring for a family member, and fostering in general. It explores children's experiences and outlines the support available for both you and the child in your home.

## ◆ **Kinship Ready Programme**

Surrey County Council collaborates with Kinship Ready to offer specialised preparatory workshops for prospective Special Guardians. This two-part programme includes:

- A 4.5-hour session delivered remotely via Zoom. The workshop aims to increase carers' knowledge and empower them to make informed decisions alongside their allocated social workers.
- A follow-up session designed to help carers reflect on the workshop's content and their experience.

## ◆ **Virtual Reality enabled training courses focusing on trauma**

## ◆ **Further Development and Courses**

As a kinship carer, you will have access to a wide variety of development opportunities, including:

### **General Training**

Virtual School e-PEP Training (Online)

Working Together to Safeguard Children (Online)

Therapeutic Parenting Introduction Video (Online)

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Fostering (Online or in-person)

Working with Birth Parents in Fostering and Adoption (Online Training Hub)

Cultural Awareness and Diversity (In-person or online)

### **Specialist Therapeutic Courses**

Issues of Attachment and Trauma

Understanding Mental Health and Wellbeing

Parent and Child Training

Management and Support for ADHD

Compassion Fatigue Workshop

Managing Anger and Positive Psychology

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking C&YP

Secure Base Framework





# OUR KINSHIP OFFER: SUPPORT NETWORKS

## **Membership to the National Association of Therapeutic Parents (NATP)**

As a kinship carer, you will have access to the resources provided by the NATP, including: Empathic Listening Service; Regional Peer Support Groups; Over 200 Resources on Key Topics; Parent Coaching Consultations; Discounts on Training.

## **Support Groups**

Surrey County Council facilitates various support groups to help kinship carers connect, share experiences, and receive tailored advice and training. These groups include:

### **Fostering Support Groups**

Connect with other foster carers to share experiences and get support.

### **Special Guardianship Order (SGO) Support Groups**

Join other SGO carers for advice and mutual support.

### **Men's Support Groups**

A safe space for men to discuss challenges and support each other.

### **Kinship Support Groups**

Meet with other kinship carers to share stories and find support.

### **New Leaf Mental Health Support Groups**

Connect with others to share and support mental health journeys.

## **One-to-One Support**

We offer one-to-one support through access to a therapist.



# WHAT IS A SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDER?



Special guardianship orders (SGOs) in the UK are legal arrangements that grant an individual parental responsibility for a child or young person, allowing them to live with the guardian permanently. In the 2024 year under review, 3,860 children left care through an SGO in the UK. This order provides the guardian with the authority to make important decisions regarding the child's care and upbringing, while still enabling the child to maintain a relationship with their birth parents, where possible. Special guardianship serves as a bridge between fostering and adoption, offering a more permanent solution than fostering but without severing the legal ties to the child's birth family.

# OUR SGO OFFER

## **Comprehensive Support Services for SGO Carers**

We offer a range of support services to ensure SGO carers have the necessary resources to provide stable and nurturing homes for children.

### **Financial Allowances**

Financial support is payable when the Local Authority considers it necessary for the Special Guardian to look after the child. Allowances vary based on the child's pre-SGO status:

- Less than 12 months looked-after: Fixed allowance at the fostering rate for two years, then means-tested (subject to means-test after two years - please see [SGO policy online](#)).
- Private proceedings: Financial Needs Assessment available.

### **Practical and Emotional Support**

We offer practical and emotional support, including advice, guidance, and support plan reviews. Specialist therapy is available through the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF).

### **Support Groups and Schemes**

SGO carers can join in-person and virtual support groups and benefit from the Kinship Connected post-order scheme, which provides one-on-one support for six months.

### **Commitment to Ongoing Support**

Surrey County Council supports special guardians from assessment workshops through to post-SGO support, including informal mediation and family meetings.





# WHAT IS PRIVATE FOSTERING?

Private fostering involves caring for a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) who is not closely related to you for more than 28 days. Legally, both the parent and the person providing care must notify the Local Authority about this arrangement. Close relatives include siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and step-parents married to the child's parent, but not cousins, great aunts/uncles, or other adults. These arrangements are not made with Children Services, but privately between the carer and parents.

If you are involved in a private fostering arrangement, you must inform the Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA) team. This notification is crucial as it allows the Local Authority to ensure the child's safety and well-being in the private foster home. The C-SPA team will visit your home to conduct an assessment, where they will see and speak with the child. The assessment should be completed within 42 working days. Then Surrey County Council will provide ongoing support and guidance to the private foster carer. Training is available for private foster carers but not mandatory.

It's important to comply with these legal requirements to ensure that all privately fostered children in Surrey are safe and well-cared for. For more information or to notify the Local Authority of a private fostering arrangement, please contact the C-SPA team via phone or email, using the details at the end of this booklet.

# OUR PRIVATE FOSTERING OFFER

## **Initial Assessment and Safety Checks**

When the local authority is notified of a private fostering arrangement, a social worker will visit the carer's home within seven days to assess the suitability of the environment and ensure it meets the child's needs. This visit includes meeting all adults in the household and conducting Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks for a safe and secure home.

## **Ongoing Support and Monitoring**

Social workers provide ongoing support through regular visits (at least every six weeks) to monitor the arrangement, assist carers, and ensure the child is happy, thriving, and well-cared for.

## **Written Agreements**

The council can help create a written agreement between the parent and carer, covering financial support, emergency medical permissions, and maintaining contact with the child's parents. This ensures clear responsibilities and focuses on the child's needs.

## **Training and Development Opportunities**

Private foster carers have access to the same training programmes offered to general foster carers, covering essential childcare and development topics. These equip carers with skills to meet children's needs and provide high-quality care.

## **Resources and Support Services**

Surrey County Council offers resources such as advice lines, workshops, and peer support groups to help private foster carers navigate challenges and build a strong support network.



# OTHER SERVICES AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE

At Surrey fostering service we are dedicated to providing a wide range of training for all foster carers and special guardians. The training is designed to align with the child focused standards, within the Fostering Services' National Minimum Standards. It will also help foster carers to complete the Training, Support, and Development Standards (TDS), something kinship need to do within eighteen months of approval. This is not a requirement for special guardians or private foster carers.

Our training includes a variety of courses, many currently accessible online, which you can complete from the comfort of your home. These courses address issues that children and young people in your care may face and are an excellent way to enhance your skills and knowledge. Training is delivered through our comprehensive training hub and Surrey's internal training platform, and other accredited training providers, where appropriate. For more information on accessing these resources, please contact your assessing social worker.

We also partner with Kinship, an organisation offering a series of preparatory workshops for those undergoing the assessment process and considering a Special Guardianship Order (SGO). These workshops, designed by Special Guardians in collaboration with social workers and academic experts, provide invaluable insights into the role. Topics include family time, trauma and attachment, support plans, legal orders, and guidance on where to seek further help and support. If you are interested, your assessing social worker can make a referral on your behalf.

Additionally, we have Mockingbird hubs, an award-winning programme led by The Fostering Network. This initiative creates a supportive community for foster families by connecting six to ten foster families with a hub home carer. The Mockingbird model builds strong relationships, offering peer support, social activities, and guidance to prevent placement breakdowns and ensure stability.



# USEFUL RESOURCES

## Websites

- [Kinship](#), is the leading kinship care charity in England and Wales.
- [CoramBaaf](#), is the UK's leading membership organisation for professionals working across adoption, fostering and kinship care.
- [National Association of Therapeutic Parents \(NAoTP\)](#), supports and empowers parents of children who have experienced trauma or have neurodivergent characteristics.
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#), provides tips, advice, and resources to help parents and carers keep their children safe online
- [IMO \(In My Opinion\)](#), shares personal experiences and inspiring stories from care-experienced individuals with their podcast
- [Beacon House](#), offers a variety of free resources to help understand and heal trauma and adversity, including guides, videos, and therapeutic tools

## Podcasts

- BBC Radio 4, Bringing Up Britain: [Series 9, Children and Gender](#); [Series 11, Dealing with Aggression](#); and [Series 11, Parenting in the Smartphone Age](#)
- The Fostering Network, "[All About Fostering](#)," covers various fostering-related topics through interviews and discussions with people involved in the fostering community

## TV Shows

- [Three Girls](#), BBC iPlayer, Warning: Sexual Abuse and Violence
- [Mothers on the Edge](#), BBC iPlayer, Louis Theroux visits UK psychiatric units that treat mothers with serious mental illness, allowing them to stay with their babies.

## Videos

- [A child of the state](#) | Lemn Sissay | TEDxHousesofParliament
- [The Centre of Excellence in Child Trauma](#), YouTube: Understanding your Traumatized Child and What is Therapeutic Parenting?

For more information, please take a look at Surrey County Council [webpages on Private Fostering](#).

# GET IN TOUCH

If you're a child or young person facing abuse or neglect, or an adult concerned about a child's safety, contact C-SPA from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Please email [cspa@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:cspa@surreycc.gov.uk) or call 0300 470 9100  
For hearing or speech impairments, text 07527 182861

If you need more information about Private Fostering, please email [private.fostering@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:private.fostering@surreycc.gov.uk)

If you are a special guardian who needs support, please email [sgo.postordersupport@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:sgo.postordersupport@surreycc.gov.uk)

You can also email [fostering.recruitment@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:fostering.recruitment@surreycc.gov.uk) and call 0300 131 2797 from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Alternatively, write to Surrey County Council Fostering Service, Woodhatch Place, 11 Cockshot Hill, Reigate, RH2 8EF

Keep in touch by following us on social media at [@surreyfostering](https://www.facebook.com/surreyfostering)

If you based outside Surrey but in the South East please contact our team at [contact@lafosteringse.org.uk](mailto:contact@lafosteringse.org.uk)

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

# FOSTERING SERVICE

BECOME A FOSTER CARER  
AND JOIN SURREY'S  
BIGGEST FAMILY



LOCAL AUTHORITY

**Fostering**  
SOUTH EAST