**FAQs for Parents & Carers of Children in Kinship Care**

## **What is the definition of a Kinship Care? What support does my child qualify for?**

Kinship Care is defined by the government as ‘any situation in which a child is being raised in the care of a friend or family member who is not their parent.’

Kinship Care arrangements can be informal (a private arrangement between family members or friends), or formal, where there is a court order in place. The type of arrangement can affect the support you and your child are entitled to.

A brief guide to the different types of arrangement and some of the local authority support options:

* **Previously Looked After (PLAC):** if a child left the care of any Local Authority in England or Wales through adoption, a **Special Guardianship order** (SGO) or a **Child Arrangements Order** (CAO). If a child returns to their birth parent(s) (outside of these three conditions), they are **not** considered to be previously looked after.
  + A PLAC is eligible to receive Pupil Premium Plus funding (currently £2,570) through the school, during Reception through to the end of Year 11. Children aged 3 to 4 who are receiving the universal free 15 hours in an early years setting can claim Early Years Pupil Premium, which is up to £388.
  + You, your child, any social workers/other professionals and the school are entitled to educational advice and guidance and to participate in projects run by the Virtual School. We have separate advice for PLAC.
  + Your child may also benefit from support from the [local authority post-adoption](https://www.essexadoptionandfostering.co.uk/adoption/what-support-will-i-get/) or [Special Guardianship](https://www.essex.gov.uk/special-guardianship/support-for-special-guardians) teams and Adoption and Special Guardianship support fund. The above pages have links to useful websites. For adoption, the responsible authority is the placing authority for 3 years after the adoption, then it is where the child resides.
* Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order **without** previously being in local authority care:
  + you and the school/any social worker or other professionals are entitled to advice and guidance and to participate in most projects run by the Virtual School.
  + Your child may also benefit from support from the local authority [Special Guardianship](https://www.essex.gov.uk/special-guardianship/support-for-special-guardians) team and Adoption and Special Guardianship support fund.
* Informal arrangement between family and/or friends with no order and no prior time in local authority care:
  + Your school or other professionals such as social workers are entitled to advice and guidance from the Virtual School.
  + You may find information about [Private Fostering](https://corambaaf.org.uk/practice-areas/kinship-care/private-fostering?gad_source=1&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI-5m-0vHnhwMVW5ZQBh04vzs1EAAYASAAEgJ20vD_BwE) useful.
* If your child is currently or previously known to social care in the past six years under a Child in Need or Child Protection plan, they are also included in the non-statutory guidance for improving educational outcomes for children known to social care.

## **What is the Virtual School’s duty towards children who are in kinship care?**

The Virtual School has a duty to promote the educational achievement of children in kinship care through the provision of information and advice to professionals in the case of informal arrangements, and carers in the case of formal arrangements. There are further duties towards previously looked after children – please see those FAQs. This duty applies to all children attending school in the local authority, regardless of where the child lives.

The Virtual School is not the corporate parent for these children, so it does not monitor nor is held to account for individual children’s attainment and progress. Any intervention must be by the consent of the parent/carer.

Our role is to:

* Make visible the disadvantages that both children with a social worker and those in kinship arrangements can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings, local authorities and other services, including voluntary and community sector organisations, to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.
* Promote practice that supports children’s engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
* Level up children’s outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential.

We will do this by:

* Enhancing partnerships between education settings, the local authority and other organisations so agencies can work together.
* Identifying the needs of children with a social worker and those in kinship arrangements and addressing barriers to poor educational outcomes, including attendance, and ensure pupils make educational progress.
* Offering advice and support to key professionals to help children make progress, including through increasing their confidence in using evidence-based interventions.

Please contact the Essex Virtual School by emailing [christina.addenbrooke@essex.gov.uk](mailto:christina.addenbrooke@essex.gov.uk) if you would like to talk about your child’s education, or fill in a [Student Profile](https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupil-support-and-wellbeing/essex-virtual-school/complete-student-profile).

## **What else can the Virtual School do to help children in kinship care?**

If the arrangement is formal and if it is deemed appropriate, Essex Virtual School will liaise with relevant services with parental consent. We can advise parents, schools and other services, such as social workers or SEND partners. We can attend virtual or face-to-face meetings where situations are particularly challenging, to help everyone think about how to resolve difficult situations. We work in partnership with schools and other services for all our cohorts.

We also offer schools bespoke training. We have online resources through [Creative Education](https://www.creativeeducation.co.uk/available-courses/?_role=parents) that are available to parents/carers of previously looked after children or those in formal kinship arrangements, to give you some strategies to use with your child.

In Essex, the Local Authority advocates [Trauma Perceptive Practice](https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupil-support-and-wellbeing/social-emotional-and-mental-health-semh/semh-training/trauma-perceptive) and [Attachment Awareness](https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/Essex_Virtual_School/Pages/Virtual-School-Training.aspx) as ways to ensure the needs of all children are met. You may wish to ask your school where they are on their journey towards being trauma perceptive.

Finally, we have a number of offers for children in kinship care. Please see our [‘Interventions, Opportunities and Projects’](https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupil-support-and-wellbeing/essex-virtual-school/interventions-opportunities-and-projects/projects) page for full details of support for you and your child.

## **Who is responsible for supporting my child at school?**

The **Designated Teacher** is often the key point of contact for ensuring educational outcomes for your child. You can see their statutory responsibilities [here.](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683561/The_designated_teacher_for_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf) There are no current statutory duties for schools specifically towards children in kinship care. Many schools, however, have a number of adults around a child, and you may wish to consider regular meetings with a One Plan or similar with key adults to ensure that your child’s needs are correctly identified, the correct intervention is put in place and that it is monitored regularly. You can also make sure that information about any triggers and calming strategies are shared and that you, your child, and the school know what to do if there are any worries. It is useful to have one key point of contact at the school to avoid things becoming disjointed or overwhelming. Further advice and information is available on [Kinship](https://compass.kinship.org.uk/advice-and-information/how-schools-should-support-children-in-kinship-care/).

## **I have concerns about whether my child has additional learning needs.**

In the first instance, please speak to your child’s SENCO at school to explore your concerns. They may decide to put a [One Plan](https://send.essex.gov.uk/help-learning/support-school/make-plan-action-support-your-child) in place, to ensure that the right assessments and interventions are carried out, and that the impact of these interventions are evaluated regularly. Some schools choose to put a similar document in place that is specific for adopted or kinship children, an Education Plan for Adopted Children. In either case, you should have regular meetings with the school to discuss progress. The [Local Offer](https://send.essex.gov.uk/) website has lots of information about what is locally available to support your child and your family.

If your child has already been given an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), we recommend contact is made with [Essex SEND IASS website](https://www.essexsendiass.co.uk/). This is an impartial, free and confidential service and operate at arm’s-length from the Local Authority. You may also find [Child Law Advice](https://childlawadvice.org.uk/education/) helpful.