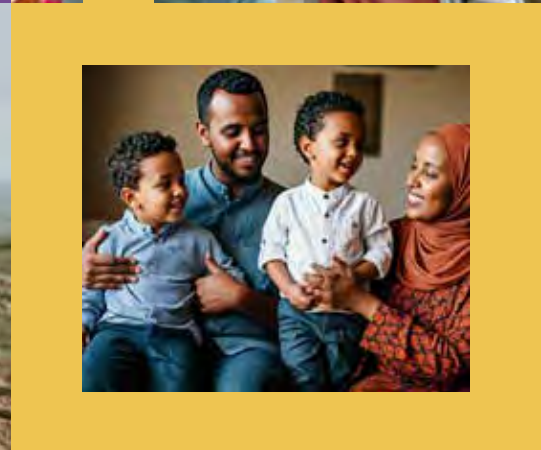




**Camden's
Kinship
Strategy
2025-2028**





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Foreword



Loving, stable, and secure relationships are vital in helping children thrive. In Camden, we have long recognised the strength of extended family members or trusted community networks to support children when they cannot be cared for by their parents. Extended family members are instrumental in nurturing growth, healing, and resilience. Families are unique, and while their needs and forms may vary across cultures and generations, every child deserves to be loved, cared for, and protected in enduring relationships.

In January 2024, Camden set a strong precedent by designating 'care experience' as a locally protected characteristic. This decision has become the cornerstone for our broader approach, shaping our Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025-2028 and informing our Kinship and Children's Placement Sufficiency Strategies. National reforms are prompting a significant shift in how we support care experienced children, and in Camden, our commitment is to lead this change through an integrated, community-wide approach.

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2025–2028 prioritises caring for children as any loving parent would, providing stability, encouragement, and opportunities to flourish. Our Children's Placements Sufficiency Strategy is central to this effort, with keeping families together as the top priority. Whether through kinship care or safe, family-based placements when alternative arrangements are necessary, we are dedicated to ensuring every child feels loved, secure and supported. By embedding family care into the heart of our local strategy, we acknowledge its benefits: continuity, familiarity, and the lasting connections that only a family or close community can offer. This approach addresses the systemic challenges care experienced young people have faced for too long, from the stigmas and disadvantages to the gaps in support that national reform seeks to remedy.

Camden's integrated strategy, therefore, unites the principles of kinship care with the goals of corporate parenting and children's sufficiency. Through collaborative partnerships with schools, health practitioners, local businesses, and community groups, we are building a system that is responsive, flexible, and deeply attuned to the needs of our children and families in a time of national change. Together, these strategies lay a strong foundation for a future where every child in our borough is respected, supported, and empowered to achieve their dreams.

We want to say a heartfelt thank you to all the kinship carers, children, and young people who shared their experiences with us. You told us what is working, where things need to improve, and how support can be more tailored to your needs. Your honesty and strength have shaped this strategy, and we are truly grateful for your time, your stories, and your commitment.

Tim Aldridge,
Executive Director,
Children & Learning



Introduction

Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, loving family that understands them. In many cultures, family care involves extended family members caring for children within their family through informal arrangements. This family-based approach has progressively gained recognition within numerous nations' formal child social care systems, steadily becoming the fastest-growing care option.

In Camden, many children are cared for by relatives or close family friends who step in during challenging times. In the context of children's safeguarding, this refers to children who have been removed from their parents and are living with extended family, relatives, and community members through formal arrangements. Family care is often driven by love, loyalty, and a strong sense of responsibility, and we recognise the incredible role families play in giving children the stability and connection they need to thrive.

Kinship care is the formal term for family arrangements in children's social work, where children are cared for by relatives or close family friends when it is unsafe for their parents to care for them. Kinship care is a deeply valued and growing part of how we support children and their families in Camden. It enables children to stay connected to the people, places, and cultures that matter most to them, offering familiarity, a sense of belonging, and better long-term outcomes for children who can no longer live with their parents.

This is our first-ever Kinship Strategy, which sets out our priorities, and the commitments around how we will achieve them and how we, as a borough, will work to support kinship families now and over the next three years. It links our Corporate Parenting and Sufficiency Strategies with our wider approach to helping children and families. It reflects our ongoing commitment to keeping children within their family networks wherever it's safe to do so.

We know caring for family members can bring real joy but also real challenges. This strategy is about making sure family carers feel seen, valued, and supported. Whether you are caring full-time or part-time, formally or informally, we want you to know you are not alone. We are working hard to build a local system that listens, learns, and stands alongside you, because family, in all its forms, matters deeply to us all.



National Strategies - A Shift Toward Family-Led Support

Kinship care is now firmly recognised as a priority within national children's social care reform. Recent strategies reflect a growing commitment to valuing and supporting family networks, especially when children cannot live with their parents.

Stable Homes, Built on Love

This major reform strategy from the Department for Education (DfE) followed three important national reviews:

- The Independent Review of Children's Social Care.
- The National Panel Review into the tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson.
- The Competition and Markets Authority review into the children's care market.

At its heart, Stable Homes, Built on Love promotes a family-first approach, where families and wider networks are empowered to play a central role in decision-making, while children's safety and well-being remain paramount. It recognises that children thrive best when cared for by people who know and love them.

National Kinship Care Strategy

Building on the Stable Homes Strategy, the Government's first-ever National Kinship Care Strategy sets out a clear plan for recognising, supporting and involving kinship families in decision-making. It is backed by £200 million in funding over 2024–2025.

Key ambitions include:

- Children in kinship care achieve better outcomes.
- Kinship carers receive practical and emotional support.
- Kinship families feel empowered and understood.
- Family networks are identified earlier and barriers to support are reduced.

“ **Mental Health and Trauma Informed training needs to be more accessible to carers, it's essential for helping us support our children well.** ”



“

I felt well supported when the SGO was granted, but more consistent support throughout the placement would really make a difference.

”



National Kinship Care Ambassador

In October 2024, the Department for Education (DfE) appointed Jahnine Davis as the first ever National Kinship Care Ambassador. In this pioneering role, Jahnine advocates for children in kinship care and their carers, ensuring their voices are heard across government. She collaborates directly with local authorities to enhance services, sharing best practices and empowering them to better support kinship families.



Our vision

Kinship means family, through blood, marriage, or deep, trusted connections. It reflects the enduring bonds that connect children with those who know and love them best. In kinship care, children are supported by relatives or close family friends when their parents are unable to care for them, either temporarily or long term. This form of care preserves family and cultural ties, promotes stability, and supports a strong sense of identity and belonging.

We believe every child deserves a safe, stable, and nurturing environment. Kinship care enables children to remain within their familiar network of love and support, reducing the need for entry into the formal care system, and improving long-term outcomes.

Our commitment is to strengthen and sustain kinship families through timely, inclusive, and accessible support. This includes removing unnecessary legal barriers, empowering families to make informed decisions, and ensuring kinship options are explored as a priority. By embedding family-led decision-making and recognising kinship care as a vital, first-line option, we aim to keep children connected to their roots, their culture, and their community.

“ I like that I still get to see my cousins and go to the same school. ”



Camden’s Corporate Parenting Strategy

When children come into care, Camden becomes their corporate parent. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028 sets out five promises that guide everything we do. The promise about ‘home’ is especially relevant to this Kinship Strategy. This strategy supports that vision and commitment:

“ We will help children live with extended family members through kinship arrangements whenever it is safe and appropriate. We will strengthen support for kinship carers so that they feel equipped and confident to provide a stable, loving home where children can thrive. ”



Camden’s Placements Sufficiency Strategy 2025–2028 also underpins this approach, ensuring every child in care has a home that meets their needs and helps them grow into successful, independent adults.

Camden Children’s Sufficiency Strategy

Camden’s 2025-28 Children’s Sufficiency Strategy sets out six priorities, the first two of which align with this Kinship Strategy:

Priority 1: Camden will continue reducing the number of children entering the care system. More children will remain home safely with their parents or extended family, where this is best for them.

Priority 2: We will achieve permanence within children’s kinship networks. Where children cannot remain with their families, we will increase the proportion of adoptions and Special Guardianship placements for our youngest children.

Change In Statutory Duties

What we mean by Kinship Care

Kinship care is when a child is raised by someone they already know and trust, usually a grandparent, aunt, uncle, older sibling, or a close family friend, because their parents are unable to care for them. These caring arrangements can be temporary or long-term, and they take many different forms. What they all have in common is the importance of keeping children connected to their family, culture, and community. This includes:

- **Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs)** Where a trusted adult, often a relative or close friend, is appointed by the court to care for a child and take on parental responsibility.
- **Child Arrangements Orders (CAOs):** Where the court agrees a child should live with a family member or friend who is not their parent.
- **Kinship foster care:** When a child is in the care of the local authority and placed with someone they know, such as a relative or close friend, who has been assessed and approved as a foster carer.
- **Informal kinship care:** These are private, family-led arrangements where a child is cared for by relatives (such as a grandparent or older sibling) without a legal order or formal involvement from the local authority.
- **Short-term private arrangements:** For example, when a child under 16 stays with someone who is not a close relative for less than 28 days. These arrangements may still need to meet safeguarding expectations.
- **Testamentary arrangements:** When a parent or special guardian has named a relative or friend in writing to care for the child in the event of their death. Legal advice may be needed to formalise these plans.
- **Private Fostering:** When a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) lives with someone who is not a close relative for 28 days or more. These arrangements are made privately between carers and parents, but must be reported to the local authority so safeguarding checks and support can be provided.

This Strategy focuses on supporting all forms of kinship care, except where an Adoption Order has been made. In those cases, the adopter becomes the child's legal parent and full parental responsibility is transferred. Support for adoptive families in Camden is available through Adopt London North Camden.

The newly published statutory guidance (October 2024) on kinship care aims to improve outcomes for children who cannot live with their parents and are being raised by extended family, friends, or other connected individuals. It outlines how family networks can be engaged throughout the children's social care system and provides a framework for local authorities and partners to assess and deliver necessary support.

The guidance covers various kinship care arrangements and Local authorities are now required to publish a "kinship local offer", setting out the available support for kinship carers and children. This aligns with Outcome 2 of the Children's Social Care National Framework, which emphasises that children should be supported by their family networks whenever possible.

Overarching Principles

- **Support Based on Need, Not Legal Status** – Services should be allocated based on a child's needs rather than their legal status, ensuring fair access to support.
- **Preventing Unnecessary Care Entry** – No child should have to enter the care system solely to access financial, practical, or other support for their carers.
- **Trust and Sensitivity in Assessments** – Local authorities should build trusting and supportive relationships with kinship carers, recognising the emotional impact of assessments.
- **Empowering Family Networks** – Effective family engagement should explore how existing family resources can be mobilised to support the child, while also assessing relatives' capacity and willingness to provide care.
- **Promoting Permanence for Children** – Policies should prioritise stability and security, supporting kinship care as a preferred alternative to local authority care where appropriate. Permanence can be achieved through family reunification, kinship care, Child Arrangements Orders or Special Guardianship Orders.

“ Its reassuring to know help is there when we need it. ”



Camden's Kinship Priorities



Priority 1

Security

Enabling children and young people who cannot live with their birth parents to stay with people who are known to them and love them

“ At the very beginning when I first got custody of my granddaughter the department were very supportive in sorting out payments and explaining everything to me. ”



The challenge

What we will do

1. Utilise family-led decision making to identify potential caregivers within the family and friends network at an early stage, promoting stability and permanence for the child. This approach also helps to mobilise support from the wider network to assist kinship carers in their caregiving role.
2. Provide comprehensive and timely assessments of prospective kinship carers, viability, Child Arrangement Orders and Special Guardianship Orders.
3. We will incorporate evidence-based assessment tools to assist practitioners when assessing the strengths and weaknesses of prospective placements with family and friends.
4. Holistic and robust support plans that consider support and care needs of the child/young person, kinship carer and any household members now and through to adulthood.
5. Review support plans yearly to ensure the stability and durability of the placement.

How will we know we have made a difference:

- Early identification of extended family members and connected people to provide care and support to children and young people who are unable to remain in the care of their birth parents.
- Thorough understanding of what assistance families might need to provide a safe and effective long-term home for a child or young person.





Camden's Kinship Priorities



Priority 2

Inclusion

Establishing kinship care as a central element of Camden's Family Help support offer

“ We would really like more access to literature and training and know what's on offer to support us. ”

“ We are the grandparents and have always had them even before it was made official. There have been no major issues or concerns with both children, they are achieving very well in all areas. ”

What we will do

1. Co-design a Kinship Local Offer that supports all our kinship carers and families to thrive:
 - a. Consult kinship carers and children, including those from the global majority, on the support they find most helpful and the additional support they would like to see.
 - b. Use the feedback from the consultation to design and publish our Kinship Local Offer, which outlines the availability and route for accessing the different types of support.
 - c. Develop stronger relationships with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to understand, advertise and maximise the support they can provide to our kinship carers.
 - d. Ensure the Kinship Local Offer is an accessible resource for our kinship families to engage and benefit from.
2. Facilitate monthly kinship peer support groups in collaboration with kinship carers, including offering guest speakers and training opportunities that would be most beneficial and specific to the needs of kinship carers.
3. Deliver training to kinship Carers quarterly in addition to training offered within the North London Fostering and Permanence Consortium.
4. Provide information and guidance to kinship carers through a dedicated phone line offering support and guidance.

How we will know if we have made a difference:

- Positive feedback received from kinship families on the support offered by Camden.
- Kinship carers are appropriately equipped to understand, support, and meet children's and young people's needs.
- A reduction in the number of kinship arrangements breaking down.
- An increase in the number of kinship families accessing support from the Council or VCS organisations.
- Increased engagement of kinship families accessing support from Camden's Family, Friends, and Fostering Service.



Camden's Kinship Priorities

Priority 3

Stability

Ensuring the stability of kinship placements

“ Having someone else to talk to at school would really make a difference. ”



What we will do

1. Implementation and utilisation of a monthly Kinship Support Panel, drawing upon the knowledge and expertise of a multidisciplinary team including CAMHS, Education, Community Services, Early Help, Health, and Housing to ensure:
 - a. Placement stability.
 - b. Early/Immediate access to services.
 - c. Fast-track referral to services.
2. Utilise the kinship network to understand key stressors which lead to kinship placement breakdowns and, by doing so, identify additional areas of support that can be provided where necessary to enhance Camden's kinship local offer to address these proactively.
3. Adopt a preventative approach by drawing upon multi-agency partnerships to provide access to services as early as possible to ensure the appropriate support is provided at the right time.
4. Deliver workshops for kinship carers offering free advice, tips, and practical tools for those who are new to kinship care.
5. Bridging support gaps to achieve placement stability.

How will we know we have made a difference:

- A reduction in the number of kinship arrangements breaking down.
- Fast-track referral routes to a range of services to support placements at risk.
- Induction of a community of informed kinship carers who engage in local services and access training.
- Evidence of effective multi-agency working leading to positive outcomes for children and young people in kinship placements.

“ The monthly support group meetings are really good, enables me to connect with other kinship carers. ”





Camden's Kinship Priorities



Priority 4

Raising Awareness

Promoting understanding of kinship families across Camden

“ Schools don't always recognise us as kinship carers. There should be more awareness in schools, so they understand our role and the support our children need. ”

“ There should be more opportunities for our families to meet up and attend regular event, it helps us feel more supported. ”

What we will do

1. Run a series of roadshow sessions with teams across Children's Services to raise the profile of kinship families.
2. Support colleagues in understanding and being aware of our kinship families within Camden and kinship family structures.
3. Enhance understanding of kinship families across partner organisations such as Health, Police and Education.
4. Develop a Kinship Steering Group comprised of people with lived experience and a range of practitioners to oversee Camden's work with kinship families.
5. Disseminate an annual report highlighting the work of the Family, Friends and Fostering service, focusing on kinship.
6. Distribute e-bulletins every two months for kinship families and practitioners promoting kinship work in Camden and sharing information.

How will we know we have made a difference:

- Increased awareness and understanding of kinship care across internal and external organisations.
- Evidence of a knowledgeable workforce that considers and responds to the needs of kinship families.
- Elevation of the voice of kinship families within Camden across a range of services.
- Promote the identity of kinship families.
- Improved involvement of kinship families in the Family, Friends and Fostering service.





Priority 5

Achieve

Enhancing the outcomes and well-being of children, young people, and kinship carers

“ There was one occasion, when I wanted to move my granddaughter to a different school and the social worker from the CYPDS team wrote a letter to support the move, it really helped. ”

What we will do

1. Support for children and young people in kinship placements should be multidisciplinary. The health and well-being of kinship carers, including the kinship panel, should also be considered.
2. Strengthen partnerships with education providers and SEND services across Camden, within the local authority, voluntary, and charity sectors, to address barriers to education and attainment for children and young people in kinship placements.
3. Supporting kinship families who often experience deprivation in areas such as employment, education, health and disability, and housing.
4. Kinship families receiving family help services are directed to the Family, Friends, and Fostering Service (where appropriate).
5. Foster links with local partners to broker education, training, and employment opportunities for kinship families, promoting positive outcomes.

How will we know we have made a difference:

- The number of children and young people in kinship placements accessing and receiving support from schools and colleges in Camden has increased.
- Kinship families receive assistance promptly.
- More kinship carers are accessing Camden’s kinship information, advice, and guidance telephone line for assistance when needed.
- Kinship families are aware of entitlements and support from local services within Camden.



Educational support for Kinship Children

Children in kinship care who are looked after by Camden Council fall under the statutory duties of the Head of the Virtual School. Children in kinship care who were previously looked after fall under the Virtual School's non-statutory remit in the local authority where they attend school. For these previously looked after children, the Virtual School's role is focused on advice and signposting. Schools are responsible for monitoring progress and for deciding how the enhanced Pupil Premium (PP) is spent. The pupil premium funding is allocated by the DfE directly into each school's overall PP budget and is not assigned to individual children by name. Each school must have a Designated Teacher for both groups of children. Camden's Virtual School receives and retains pupil premium funding for children in kinship care who are looked after. This funding can be requested by the child's teacher or social worker via the Personal Education Plan process.

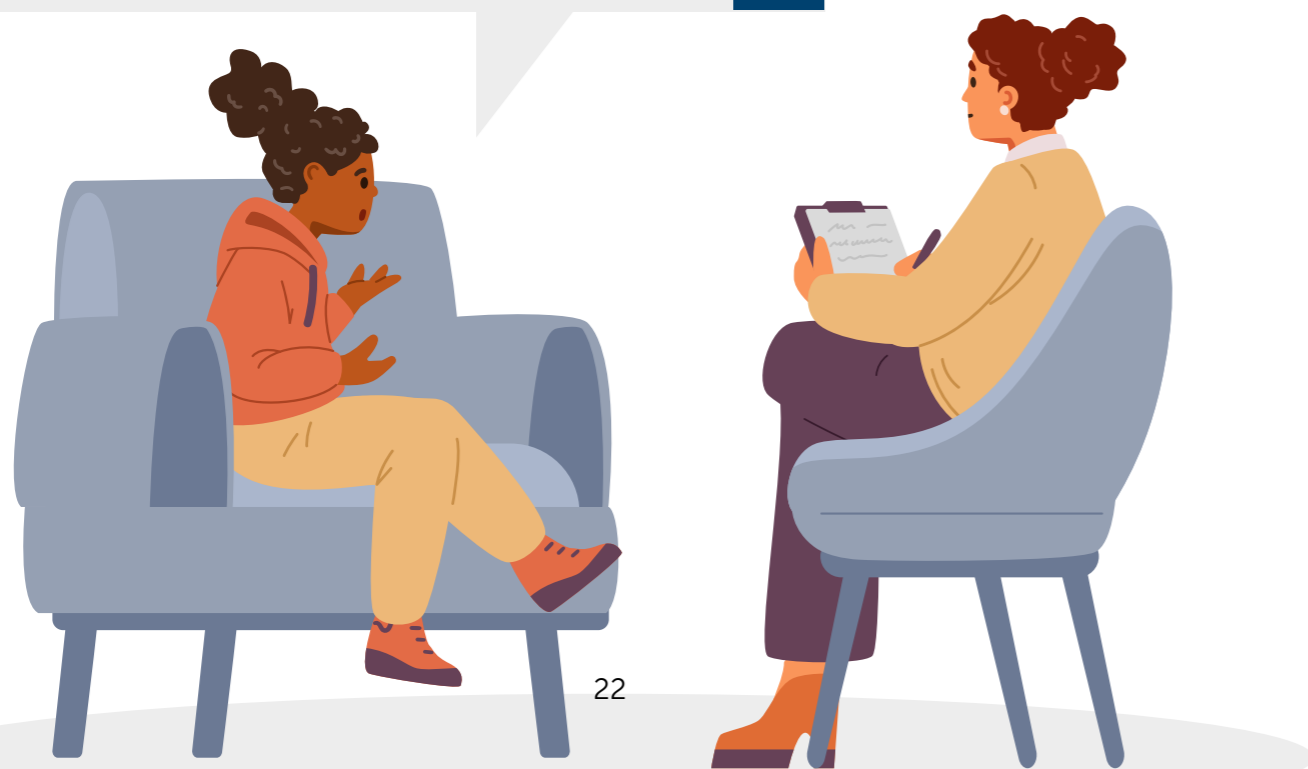
When schools or education providers contact the Virtual School about a child in kinship care, education consultants work with the SGO Support Worker to share information, and signpost to services. Similarly, when SGO Support Workers receive education-related enquiries from kinship carers or partner services, they liaise with the Virtual School for advice and support. This two-way communication ensures consistent guidance, reduces duplication, and helps identify emerging educational issues at an early stage.

Camden's Virtual School discharges its non-statutory strategic duty towards all children in kinship care through its involvement in the multi-disciplinary approach led by the Kinship Strategic Group, which operates under the auspices of the Corporate Parenting Board. The Virtual School works collaboratively as a member of the Kinship Support Panel to ensure educational expertise is available to professionals, and it also provides training and consultation to kinship support groups and practitioner forums.

“

I want to do well in school, but sometimes I need extra help because of everything that has happened.

”



Camden Kinship Profile

At the end of November 2025, Camden was supporting 230 children living in formal kinship care arrangements, including 22 in kinship fostering or connected carer placements, 16 under Child Arrangements Orders (CAOs), and 192 living with carers under Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs). These arrangements sit within different legal frameworks but share a common purpose: enabling children to remain with people who know them well and can offer love, continuity, and stability.

Kinship Fostering / Connected Carers

Kinship fostering provides children with a safe and familiar home when they cannot live with their parents, often during periods of significant upheaval. The current cohort of 22 children includes those in temporary, interim and progressing to permanence arrangements. This group is diverse, with the largest proportion of children coming from Mixed heritage backgrounds, followed by White, Black or Black British, and Asian or Asian British children. Boys make up around two-thirds of this cohort.

Nearly half of kinship fostering placements begin in early childhood, with infancy and the early years being the most common entry points. This emphasises the urgency with which family networks often step in during moments of crisis. However, placements also occur for older children and young people, reflecting the ongoing importance of extended family relationships throughout childhood. These patterns reinforce the need for tailored age-appropriate support that responds to children's developmental stages and the specific needs of the relatives or friends caring for them.

Child Arrangements Orders (CAOs)

Child Arrangements Orders provide clarity about a child's living arrangements and help ensure stability without the child entering the formal care system. Camden supports 16 children under CAOs, with the largest groups being White and Mixed heritage children. Girls are more strongly represented within this cohort, accounting for almost two thirds of children supported through this route.

Children enter CAO arrangements at a wide range of ages, from infancy to mid adolescence. The most common ages include 7, 11, 13 and 15, suggesting that CAOs are often used at key transition points in a child's life. Patterns in recent years show peaks in the number of CAOs being granted at particular moments, which may reflect changing family circumstances or more proactive early help and legal planning. Understanding these patterns helps shape the support offered to families using this route to maintain long-term care within their wider networks.

Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs)

Special Guardianship continues to be Camden's most widely used and stable form of kinship permanence, with 192 children supported in these arrangements. SGOs enable a trusted adult, often a relative or close family friend, to take on enhanced parental responsibility, giving children a secure and lasting home while preserving links with their birth family.

Children living under SGOs reflect a broad mix of Camden's communities. The largest proportion are White children, followed by Mixed heritage and Black or Black British children, with smaller numbers from Asian and other backgrounds. The gender distribution is evenly balanced. As with kinship fostering, SGOs are most commonly granted for younger children, particularly babies and children aged 1 and 6, although older children also benefit from this route to long-term stability. The pattern of SGOs granted since 2014 reflects consistent use of this option as a reliable permanency pathway that meets children's long-term needs.

Camden's Kinship Local Offer

We are committed to ensuring that every kinship carer and the children they care for have access to clear, consistent, and meaningful support. Our kinship local offer includes financial help, practical advice, emotional wellbeing services, and access to legal guidance. By setting out a clear and transparent support package, we want to help families feel confident and supported in their caring role, making sure children have the stability, care, and love they need to thrive. To make this support easy to access, we are sharing information through our website, printed materials, and direct conversations with families.

Listening to Kinship Families

To build a local offer that truly reflects the needs of kinship carers and the children they support, we have spoken directly with those who have lived experience. This has included focus groups, one-to-one calls, and surveys. The feedback we have received has been invaluable and it has helped shape our services to be more relevant, accessible, and responsive to what families tell us they need most.

Ongoing Commitment to Families

We know that the needs of kinship families can change over time. That is why we are committed to regularly reviewing and improving our local offer. We will continue to adapt our support and keep open communication with carers and young people. We are also exploring new ways to offer both practical and emotional support, making sure kinship care remains a strong and lasting option for children who are unable to live with their birth parents. Our focus remains on supporting family connections, helping children stay within their wider family network whenever it's safe to do so, and providing every child with a safe, loving, and nurturing home.

Working Together to Support Families

We are working in close partnership with key agencies, including the Virtual School, local schools, health services, MASH, and Early Help teams to develop a joined-up approach to kinship care. By working together, we aim to ensure that children in kinship arrangements receive the right support for their learning, health, and wellbeing, at the right time. This joined-up approach helps kinship families feel more supported and ensures that children can flourish in safe and stable homes.

The Family, Friends, and Fostering Service

Camden is committed to supporting kinship families through a comprehensive and accessible service. Key provisions include:

- Dedicated Support Workers – The service is staffed by two Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Special Guardianship Order (SGO) support workers, ensuring tailored support for kinship carers.
- Extended Support for Young People – Kinship placements are supported beyond childhood, including "Staying Put" arrangements for young people up to age 21.
- Ongoing Support and Training – Monthly support groups and training sessions provide kinship carers with guidance and peer support. Upon being granted an SGO, carers gain access to an assigned worker offering advice, advocacy, and practical support.
- Financial and Therapeutic Assistance – The service facilitates access to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF), enabling carers to obtain therapeutic support when needed.
- Accessible Advice and Guidance – A dedicated telephone advice line and email service operate Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm, ensuring kinship carers receive timely assistance.



It would be good if there was someone to check in with us, not just the adults.



Family-Led Decision Making

Camden's approach to supporting kinship families aligns with a wider commitment to family-led decision making, ensuring that families are empowered to take the lead in planning for children's care and well-being. Family networks, which include relatives, close family friends, and other connected individuals, play a vital role in helping families remain together and preventing children from entering local authority care. By prioritising family-led solutions, Camden seeks to work collaboratively with these networks, supporting parents and carers to create sustainable change. This approach, when successful, can lead to a reduction in formal intervention and promote long term stability for children within their family environment.

Camden aims to integrate family-led decision making at various stages of a child's journey through social care, ensuring that family engagement is not a one-time process but an ongoing consideration. Even when immediate placement with a family member is not possible, family-led decision making remains an essential tool for planning reunification or other forms of family-based care. The commitment to offering this approach as part of the kinship local offer ensures that families have access to this vital support mechanism throughout their involvement with children's services.

Kinship Support: Financial & Practical Pathways

A System-Wide Approach to Kinship Care

Camden is strengthening kinship care by identifying carers' needs across social care, education, health, and community services. Through system mapping, opportunities for early intervention are being identified, enabling more effective, preventative support pathways. We are enhancing data-sharing and multi-agency collaboration to improve early identification of kinship arrangements and ensure timely, coordinated support. This helps prevent issues such as financial hardship, mental health challenges, and social isolation.

A tailored support model offers kinship carers access to financial assistance, mental health and parenting support, and respite care, improving placement stability and reducing risks like school exclusion and exploitation. To embed this approach long-term, Camden is integrating kinship care into strategic planning beyond 2028. This includes, developing workforce expertise, and strengthening training in trauma-informed and culturally sensitive practice, ensuring carers receive consistent, knowledgeable support.

Family Hubs

We have extended our support for the Kinship Carers' group through the Family Hubs, providing welcoming and family-friendly spaces for connection. Support will be flexible, offered in locations close to where families live, and may include a combination of in-person and online sessions. Consideration will be given to additional targeted groups, such as fathers or male carers, and to informal drop-in opportunities to meet and access guidance.



Our early support for kinship families focuses on providing timely, flexible, and tailored assistance to ensure that both the children and the family members supporting them receive the help they need. To avoid hardship and stabilise arrangements, Camden's approach is structured around three interconnected strands of financial and practical support:

1. Local Financial Support

Through Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and discretionary allowances, Camden provides direct financial assistance to families in need, including those caring for children under informal kinship arrangements. This timely support helps stabilise placements and reduces the likelihood of children needing to enter formal care.

2. Carer Guidance

Kinship carers receive clear, accessible information on benefits, pensions, employment rights, housing, and access to Welfare Rights Support. This guidance ensures carers are equipped to navigate systems confidently and prevents avoidable financial and housing instability.

3. Partnership Support

Camden works closely with advice agencies and voluntary organisations to deliver joined-up financial and legal assistance. This collaborative approach ensures carers receive holistic and sustained support tailored to their circumstances.

Together, these pathways reflect Camden's commitment to providing early, flexible, and practical help for kinship families, supporting both carers and children to achieve stability and wellbeing.

Access to Therapeutic Support

Following the National Strategy, the Adoption Support Fund was extended and renamed the 'Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)' to ensure children in special guardianship families can access therapeutic support. This gives kinship carers with an SGO improved access to specialist services for children who have experienced trauma and loss.



The therapy we accessed through the support fund to secure specialist therapy for my child, helped my son manage his emotions at school, and we felt like we weren't alone anymore.



Key Practice Guidance for Kinship Care

Additional Support for Families in Crisis:

Camden has introduced a monthly Kinship Support Panel to strengthen placement stability and prevent disruption in the lives of children and young people in kinship care. Colleagues are encouraged to refer cases to the panel at the earliest opportunity where additional support is needed, particularly where placements may be at risk of breakdown. Grounded in the principles of the Children Act 1989, the panel recognises that children are best supported within their families wherever safe and appropriate, and that kinship carers should receive timely, proportionate support regardless of legal status. The panel provides a reflective, multi-agency forum to analyse emerging issues, problem-solve, and agree internal and external support solutions, including the commitment of resources and professional consultation. Its purpose is to ensure sustainable, strengths-based support plans are in place from the outset, offer immediate interventions when risks are identified, and coordinate robust multi-agency responses that promote family stability, resilience, and positive outcomes for children and young people. This panel complements, but does not replace, existing safeguarding arrangements.

Commissioned Support Services

In partnership with Family Action – PAC-UK and the North London Consortium, Camden provides a range of specialist support for Special Guardians and their families, including:

- A self-referral system for families seeking assistance.
- A dedicated advice helpline and informative website offering expert guidance.
- Counselling services for both birth parents and kinship carers.
- Regular support groups, coffee mornings, and seasonal events to foster community and peer support.

By embedding these services, Camden ensures that kinship carers and children receive the guidance, stability, and resources they need to thrive.

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Meeting other children who are in a similar situation makes me feel less alone.

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This Strategy is underpinned by clear principles to ensure that kinship families receive the right support at the right time. These practice guidance principles reflect Camden's commitment to security, inclusion, stability, awareness, and achievement for children and young people in kinship care. They describe the values and approach that guide how we work with families, practitioners, and partners to strengthen kinship care across Camden.

Priority 1 – Security: Strengthening Family Networks for Stability

We are committed to ensuring that children and young people who cannot live with their birth parents are supported to remain within their family and friendship networks wherever possible. Our practice focuses on early identification of connected carers, family-led decision-making, and robust, evidence-informed assessments. Through consistent support and clear planning, we aim to promote long-term safety, belonging, and permanence for children and young people.

Priority 2 – Inclusion: Embedding Kinship Care within the Family Help Offer

Kinship care is a central part of Camden's Family Help approach and we work in partnership with kinship carers and young people to design services that reflect lived experience and meet real needs. By promoting peer networks, training opportunities, and collaboration with voluntary and community partners, we ensure that every kinship family can access advice, guidance, and emotional support to thrive.

Priority 3 – Stability: Supporting Long-Term Success in Kinship Placements

Sustaining kinship placements requires proactive and coordinated support and our approach brings together professionals from across health, education, housing, and community services to respond early to emerging challenges and reduce the risk of placement breakdown. We take a preventative, multi-agency approach that focuses on practical help, emotional wellbeing, and building carers' confidence in their role. We will also advise on family time (contact) arrangements and, where appropriate, support safer, sustainable kinship placements.

Priority 4 – Raising Awareness: Promoting Understanding of Kinship Families

We are committed to increasing awareness and recognition of kinship families across Camden's children's services and partner agencies. This includes promoting understanding of the unique strengths and challenges of kinship care, amplifying the voices of carers and young people, and embedding kinship awareness into professional development and service design. By doing so, we ensure that kinship families are visible, respected, and fully included in planning and delivery.

Priority 5 – Achieve: Improving Outcomes for Children and Kinship Families

Our work focuses on enabling children in kinship care to flourish and reach their full potential. We adopt a whole-family approach that values the wellbeing of both children and carers, working in partnership with education, health, housing, and employment services to remove barriers and promote opportunity. By tackling inequality and promoting inclusion, we help kinship families achieve long-term stability, confidence, and success.

By embedding these practice principles across all aspects of our work, Camden will ensure that kinship care is recognised, supported, and strengthened. These values underpin every priority in this strategy and shape how we work with families and partners to enable children and young people to grow up safely, securely, and happily within their extended families.

Delivering Our Vision: Governance and Future Reform

To deliver this strategy, Camden will embed strong governance arrangements that ensure accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement, keeping kinship care central to our Family Help offer. Progress will be overseen through cross-agency collaboration and informed by the lived experience of kinship carers and young people. The Kinship Local Offer will be reviewed annually through the Kinship Steering Group and updated on our website. Alongside this, we will take a phased approach to reform, delivering immediate improvements while working towards long-term, systemic change so that children can thrive safely within their families and communities.



