

# **Scotland's Vision for Kinship Care: Our Offer of Support for Families – For engagement and consultation**

December 2025

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## **1. MINISTERIAL FOREWORD**

I am delighted to share with you our ‘working’ vision for kinship care in Scotland and offer of support for families. I am now asking you to engage further with us to shape and refine the vision and offer, helping make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people, and delivering concrete improvements for kinship families.

This working vision highlights the positive role kinship care plays in enabling children to remain within their family network, and the need to recognise nationally that kinship care is a vital and valued form of care in Scottish society.

Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, loving, and stable home, and kinship carers are a crucial part of making this possible—often stepping in at a moment’s notice to provide care, security, and continuity for children within their family and friend network. The commitment from kinship carers is extraordinary and reflects the very best of our values: compassion, resilience, and community.

This commitment underpins our approach, which is rooted in the principles of Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and our pledge to Keep The Promise. It also aligns with the central mission of this Government to tackle child poverty.

Kinship care is often the best way to maintain a child’s sense of identity, belonging and connection with their family and community. We know from research and good practice that children thrive when they remain connected to their families and communities. But we also recognise that carers face unique challenges: financial pressures, emotional strain, and navigating complex systems. That must change.

Kinship care is a journey and it is crucial that kinship families receive the support they need, when and where it’s needed. Our working vision and offer is about families, public, third sector and community services working together to deliver positive outcomes for our children and their families

We know there are challenges, such as pressures on public spending, and workforce capacity issues which mean we cannot deliver everything straight away or at the same time. Therefore, it is critical that we sequence the delivery of changes in a way that is realistic and affordable, and we want to work with local partners and kinship families to co-develop a plan which ensures that children and kinship families get the support they need at the right time and in the right way.

I want to end by personally thanking kinship carers and practitioners across Scotland who dedicate so much to providing safe, loving homes for children and young people. Please take the time to give us your views on this vision and offer and help shape the future of kinship care in Scotland.



**Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise**

## 2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Scottish Government believes that every child in Scotland should grow up feeling loved, safe and respected, with rights upheld and relationships nurtured.

Key to this is The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Scotland) Act 2024 which ensures that children's rights are respected and protected in Scotland. In particular, it affirms every child's right to preserve their identity and family relationships without unlawful interference. This includes babies and infants, whose needs must be actively recognised and evidenced in decision-making about their care.

Our overarching ambition – in line with The Promise - is to keep families together where it is safe, and to provide the support that is needed to make this happen. Where that is not possible, our legislative framework and The Promise is clear that kinship care should be actively explored as a positive place for children to be cared for, along with the right family support in place. This approach is aligned with the ambitions of our work on Whole Family Wellbeing and Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26 as resilient family units, with the right support, are more likely to lead to the reduction in child poverty.

Our work on The Promise is underpinned by Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) which is Scotland's approach to supporting all children and young people. GIRFEC makes it everyone's responsibility to ensure children grow up safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible, and included. The GIRFEC National Practice Model helps practitioners assess and respond to the needs of children in kinship care, ensuring support is tailored and holistic. It makes it clear that all children should benefit from a coordinated system where health visitors, mental and physical health services, and local authorities collaborate seamlessly to provide support when needed. For pre-school children, this includes recognition that the Health Visitor is the Named Person for most under-5s.

We also know that early childhood development is key to laying the foundations for wellbeing throughout childhood and into adulthood. Positive experiences in the first 1,001 days (conception to age 2) and through the 0–3 stage lay the foundations for later life. Latest ECD analysis indicates looked after children are significantly more likely to present developmental concerns than non-care-experienced peers. Supporting babies, infants and their carers within kinship arrangements early and proportionately is therefore critical.

The link between kinship care and poverty is established. Many kinship carers, often grandparents or extended family members, step in during times of crisis, frequently without preparation or financial support. They may face increased costs, reduced income, and limited access to resources, all while providing full-time care.

The broader range of actions and commitments we are taking to deliver on The Promise, including activity on reducing child poverty and reforming public services are set out in our Keeping the Promise Implementation Plan Update, and Plan 24-30.

The Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill 2025, currently progressing through the Scottish Parliament, further supports our Promise ambitions by making legislative changes in areas such as the extension of eligibility to receive aftercare support and the introduction of a right to advocacy for children, young people and adults with care experience.

This working vision and offer complements the above plans and legislation, and also sits alongside our existing adoption vision and work on the future of foster care. Many of the principles – especially around intensive family support, trauma-informed practice and community-based help – are shared across all caregiver groups, while this document focuses on the specific context and needs of kinship families.

### **3. THE EVOLVING NATURE OF KINSHIP CARE**

Kinship care refers to situations where a child is unable to live with their parent(s) and instead resides with someone they already know - for example a relative, a close family friend, a godparent, or a guardian with an established relationship. These carers, known as kinship carers, take on the responsibility of meeting the child's day-to-day needs and supporting their wellbeing. Kinship care is often, but not always, the right option for the child and decisions should continue to be based on how best to meet the unique needs and wellbeing of the child and ensure they are safe, loved and able to thrive.

Kinship care in Scotland has developed significantly over time. What began as informal and sometimes unclear arrangements has evolved into a more structured and recognised form of care. Today, kinship care is increasingly understood as a vital way to help each and every child remain connected to their family, community and cultural identity. This evolution reflects a growing recognition of children's rights to stable, loving relationships and the importance of supporting families - whether related by blood or bond - so that children and young people experience a sense of belonging, safety and support.

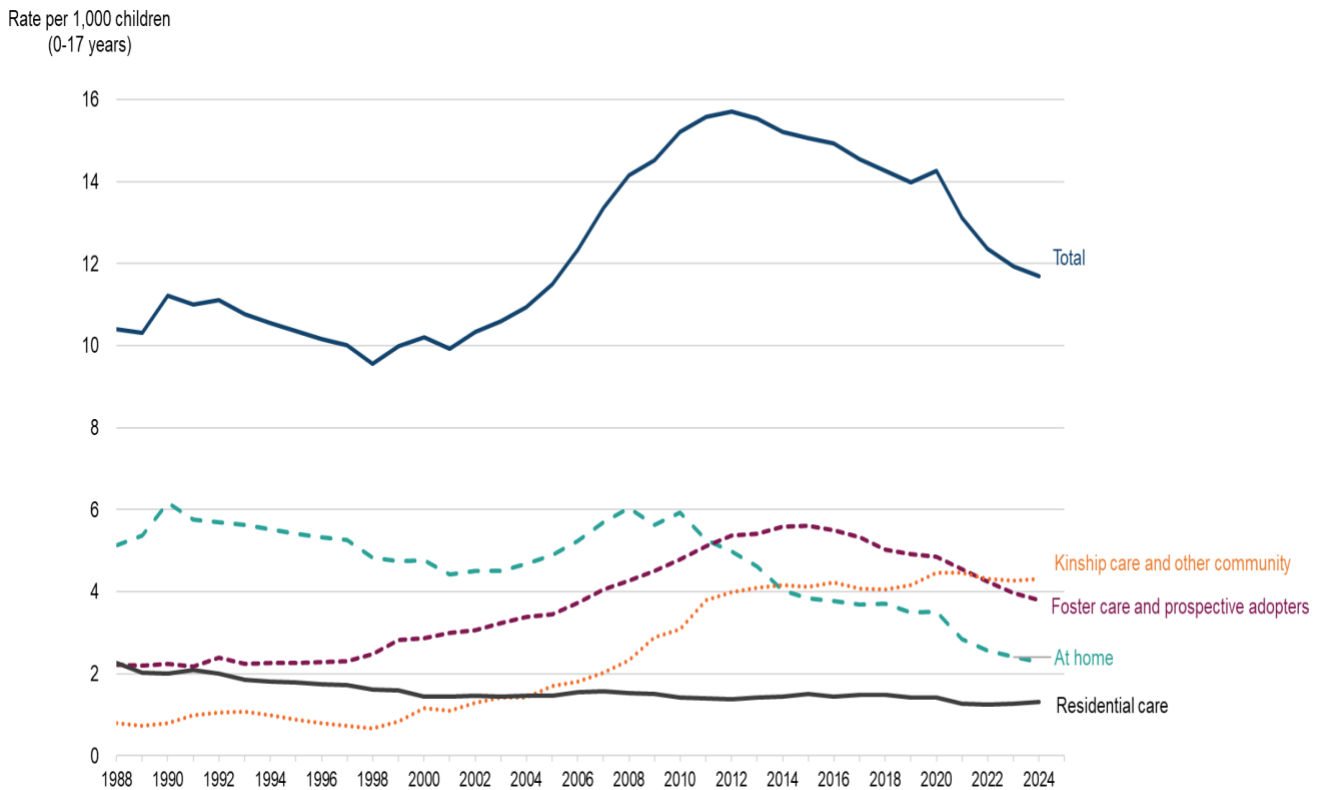
The main legislative framework for kinship care in Scotland, whilst connected to the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, lies within Part 13 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Kinship Care Assistance (Scotland) Order 2016. However, children in kinship care have a diverse range of experiences and may be subject to a range of legal orders, or none. Some children live with relatives through private family agreements without statutory involvement, while others are supported through a child's plan developed in collaboration with their family. Some children are looked after by the local authority, who asks the kinship carer to care for the child on their behalf, while others live with carers under a Section 11 order (regulating Parental Responsibilities and Rights) or are supported by a guardian appointed under section 7 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Corporate parenting duties apply when a child is looked after; they do not apply to children living with kin under Section 11 or private arrangements, although support may still be offered.

Kinship care plays an essential role in delivering The Promise by allowing children to remain with family or close friends and within their community wherever safe and appropriate.

Over the past decade, kinship care has grown significantly as a proportion of care placements. Legislative and cultural shifts towards family-based care have contributed to this trend. The increasing recognition of kinship care reflects Scotland's commitment to ensuring children are cared for in environments that support their identity, relationships and long-term wellbeing, while recognising that appropriate support is critical to sustain placements.

**Figure 1 - Rate of looked after children per 1,000 children by placement type, 1988-2024<sup>1</sup>**

The table below shows the rate of looked after children per 1,000 (ages 0–17) by placement type since 1988. Over time, the share in kinship care has risen, foster care grew then declined more recently, at home placements have trended down since the late 2000s, and residential care has remained relatively stable at a low rate, alongside an overall fall in the total rate since the mid-2010s.



<sup>1</sup> Children’s Social Work Statistics: Looked After Children 2023/24 - gov.scot

## **4. RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT**

Our working vision and offer for kinship care is informed by research and the lived experience of kinship carers, children and families. We also engaged with local authorities and local partners, including the third-sector, and drew on insights from earlier work by the Kinship Care Collaborative.

### **What the research tells us**

Emerging CELCIS work and published Scottish statistics indicate that kinship care, when well supported, can sustain family, school and community connections, reduce placement disruption and help continuity of identity. Barriers commonly highlighted include variable access to advice and income maximisation, uneven local support offers, gaps in trauma-informed help, and challenges navigating legal/assessment pathways. These findings shape our vision and offer which focus on early, proportionate support and clearer local delivery expectations.

### **Children and young people's perspectives**

Listening to babies, children and young people is central. For pre-verbal children we commit to 'voice of the infant' practice, for older children, participation feedback emphasises the need for timely information, stability of relationships, and support for family time where safe. Across ages, young people want professionals to explain decisions clearly and to evidence how their views informed those decisions.

### **Kinship carers' engagement**

We met carers across Scotland through peer support groups in urban and rural areas and drew on professional insights from local services and The Kinship Care Advice Service for Scotland (KCASS) management information. Carers consistently highlighted: (i) the need for clear information at the outset (ii) reliable income maximisation and practical help (iii) straightforward access to emotional/therapeutic support and (iv) better coordination between services (health, education, social work). Further detail is at Annex A.

### **Stakeholder workshops and system insight**

We also held workshops with local partners and national stakeholders, including members of the Kinship Care Collaborative. Differing views were expressed and local partners raised points around ensuring the right support at the right time, the impact of different legal orders on support, the definition of kinship care, the role of GIREFC, resourcing implications, the role of the community etc. Some enablers to existing barriers were also identified including: clearer local 'kinship offers', common templates/guidance, proportionate data for improvement and stronger LA–Health collaboration in the early years.

We have used all of the above research and engagement to inform this working vision and offer for families. We plan to engage further over the period January to

March 2026 to seek views, ideas and thoughts with a final version to be published by spring 2026. More details are set out in Section 7- Next Steps and Consultation.

## 5. SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL VISION FOR KINSHIP CARE

Our vision is of a Scotland where children and young people living in kinship families receive the right support, at the right time, so they can thrive and reach their potential. Kinship care would continue to be routinely explored as a positive place for children to be cared for and, importantly, be recognised and valued as a vital part of society. Kinship carers and the children living with them would be supported through holistic, place based, whole family support based on the 10 principles of family support outlined in The Promise. And children living in kinship families are listened to and are placed at the centre of decision making about their lives, with their rights upheld. There would be equitable access to appropriate, high-quality help and support for kinship families based on their unique needs and experiences, delivered by people and organisations working effectively together.

Our vision **applies to all kinship families** in Scotland. This includes those families where the child is 'looked after'; those with a legal status/orders such as a Section 11, and those in private arrangements.

However, it is important to recognise that kinship carers are not a homogeneous group. The vision and offer (set out in section 6) aims to improve recognition and support for all kinship families, while respecting these different legal routes and related responsibilities. It does not change legal entitlements or duties under Part 13 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Kinship Care Assistance (Scotland) Order 2016 or those who are looked after in kinship care. This means that in addition to the vision and offer, local authorities have additional duties to those children and young people. For example, young people who are 'looked after away from home' – living with foster carers, kinship carers or in residential care – on or after their 16th birthday have legal rights and entitlements to stay in the same place with the same carers up until their 21st birthday. There are also different duties on local authorities and corporate parents if a child or young person is looked after.

### **The Foundations**

Our new working vision and offer to kinship families is underpinned by the universal principles of GIRFEC, UNCRC and built on the 5 foundations set out in The Promise. It acknowledges the support and good practice already in place for kinship families and seeks to strengthen this through continued partnership and shared effort. Collectively, leadership and delivery will help us Keep The Promise and reduce child poverty by 2030.

### **Voice: Being Heard and Empowered**

The voice of kinship families: babies, infants, children, young people and the adults who are caring for them – must be at the heart of decision making nationally, locally

and especially where it affects their everyday life, and future. Family group decision making approaches are a key way to empower children and should be part of decision-making where, safe and appropriate, if kinship care is being considered. Access to information, advocacy and legal advice also helps ensure that children and families understand their rights and how they can access them. Kinship carers should be enabled and empowered to access the support they need to care for the child they are looking after, and the help they need to look after themselves.

### **Family: Benefits of Kinship Care**

Kinship care - living with relatives or close family friends – is a vital way to maintain family life. It should be actively considered as an alternative place for children and young people to live if they cannot live with their birth parents, and it meets the needs of the child. International evidence<sup>2</sup> generally demonstrates that kinship care can retain a sense of family, identity and heritage and may increase the chances of children maintaining critical connections such as staying in the same school and community.

Evidence<sup>3</sup> also indicates (with variation by context) that when well supported, children in kinship care often feel settled and safe and experience strong continuity of relationships, schooling and community. Kinship care can also bring with it the increased possibility for reunification with the birth family where appropriate, and support for birth families should continue so that relationships can be repaired and sustained wherever this is safe and in the child's best interests. The strong policy emphasis on kinship as the first consideration has existed explicitly in Scotland since 2007.

### **Care: Equity of support**

As The Promise states, “support must be offered freely without the kinship carer having to fight for it.” Support should be based on the unique family needs of children and carers – not the legal status of the arrangement. Families must receive the right support at the right time, with a flexible “step up, step down” approach across the childhood journey.

Kinship families should be able to access holistic, place based, whole family support. This support should be practical, emotional and financial support and in line with the 10 principles of family support set out in The Promise. It should also take account of cultural, ethnic or other diversity needs.

Care should have the infant, child or young person's wellbeing, views and interests at the centre with tailored support for the kinship carer(s) to help them better meet the physical, emotional and practical needs of the child. This should be captured in

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<sup>2</sup> [CELCIS briefing on kinship care in Scotland](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Permanently Progressing? Building secure futures for children in Scotland](#)

the Child's Plan where applicable, or a separate record, as it helps kinship families flourish and stay together.

### **People: High quality advice, support and information**

To ensure that carers can provide the trauma informed and nurturing care required by children in kinship care, and support educational, physical, emotional and mental health needs, kinship carers must have access to high-quality advice, support and help. This should be both practical and emotional. This begins at or before the point of potential placement and continues proactively over the kinship journey.

Supporting kinship carers enables strong, meaningful and sustained relationships, and enhances the positive contribution they already make, resulting in resilient carers who can provide strong and loving homes.

### **Scaffolding: Role of partners**

Support for kinship families should come from a range of providers, and there is a role for many different organisations. While some legal duties rest with local authorities, this is not solely a social work responsibility. Partners across housing, education, health, justice, the third sector, community organisations, and volunteers all have a role to play in delivering the holistic, place-based, whole-family support that kinship families need and deserve. Corporate parents only have particular legal duties to those who are looked after by the local authority.

The Government expects a multi-agency approach to service design and delivery, with Children's Services Planning Partnerships and GIRFEC playing a central role. There is no one-size-fits-all model. Social work involvement in kinship families should be guided by the same principles that apply to any family. Kinship families—especially those without social work involvement—should be able to access universal services, third sector support, and community-based resources such as existing family centres. All support must be free from stigma and judgement, widely promoted, and easily accessible.

## 6. SCOTTISH OFFER TO KINSHIP FAMILIES

Kinship carers play a vital role in providing safe, loving homes for children and young people, where they cannot live with their parents. We recognise that where children are not being looked after by the local authority, not all kinship carers, want, or require intensive support, but many kinship carers in these situations tell us they feel unrecognised, under-supported and sometimes stigmatised.

Our Scottish offer – **which is subject to further engagement and consultation and may change** – is informed by research and the voices of children, young people and carers. It sets out the basic level of support that every kinship family should be able to expect, wherever they live in Scotland, and regardless of the legal status of their arrangement. If a child or young person is looked after by the local authority in a kinship care arrangement they may already be accessing this support, as well as there being other duties placed on the local authorities. For those kinship families where there is no local authority involvement, this offer is not about increasing unnecessary statutory interference in private family life – instead it aims to increase support to kinship families who need and choose it.

In this section, some commitments reflect existing duties and services that we want to strengthen, others will require changes to legislation or guidance. All legislative proposals **are subject to approval by the Scottish Parliament** and may change depending on what happens as it progresses through stage two and three of the parliamentary process.<sup>4</sup>

### SCOTTISH OFFER TO KINSHIP FAMILIES

#### 1. Voice – Listening to and amplifying lived experience

Babies, infants, children, young people and kinship carers must have a meaningful say in the decisions that affect their lives and in how services are designed and delivered.

##### **Our commitments:**

- Children and young people in kinship care, and those who have experience of kinship care, will have improved access to independent advocacy support, through legislation and statutory guidance.
- A universal definition of “care experience” will be developed (through legislation and subsequent guidance). This will include those with experience of kinship care and will help to raise awareness, reduce stigma and improve consistency in support and understanding of care experience across public services.
- We will promote positive recognition of kinship care through awareness

<sup>4</sup> Part 2: Stages of Bills – the general rules | Scottish Parliament Website

raising, improving understanding among professionals, including health and education, and the public.

- Life journey work will be embedded as good practice in kinship care to help children understand their story and strengthen identity and belonging.

## **2. Family – Support that keeps families together**

Often kinship care is about sustaining family relationships and navigating tricky family dynamics. Families must be able to access timely, proportionate help that reflects their individual and unique circumstances.

### **Our commitments:**

- Through legislation, kinship families will have the right to request, or be proactively offered, a holistic family-focused assessment of wellbeing to identify strengths and support needs early (in line with the GIRFEC approach and National Practice Model). This could be carried out by the local authority, for example by family workers, and we are exploring the feasibility of delegating this to third sector partners – detail will be set out in statutory guidance.
- The assessment of wellbeing and any agreed support would be captured within existing GIRFEC processes – in most cases, the Child’s Plan or another existing multi-agency plan. Where there is no existing plan, there would be a written record of the assessment and offer of support for the family.
- We will extend and clarify, in law, and statutory guidance the range of supports available as Kinship Care Assistance (KCA) to include:
  - Income maximisation and financial support (including clear interaction with benefits)
  - Information, advice and guidance
  - Emotional and therapeutic support (e.g. counselling, mediation, trauma-informed services)
  - Peer and community support networks
  - Learning and development opportunities
  - Practical and material assistance (e.g. household adjustments, transport, respite)
  - Transitional and continuing support as children move between arrangements
- Kinship families will be supported to maintain and strengthen relationships with parents, siblings and wider family where it is safe and, in the child’s, best interests.

## **3. Care – Stability, fairness and equity**

Every kinship family should experience equitable support, taking account of rural dimensions, regardless of where they live or the legal status of their arrangement.

### **Our commitments:**

- Through legislation, Ministers will require local authorities to publish the rates of payments paid to both foster and kinship carers, supporting efforts to ensure national parity of allowances, in line with the Scottish Recommended Allowance (SRA).
- Young people in kinship families who were looked after but left care before age 16 will have a legal right to apply for aftercare from age 16 up to age 26, subject to an assessment of their needs through legislation.
- Local partners will be expected to publish a local kinship care offer, setting out how the national offer is delivered locally, taking account of local needs and priorities and building on existing services and subject to available resources, with national support to reduce duplication.
- Kinship families will benefit from access to continuing support as children move from looked after to Section 11 kinship care arrangements, avoiding abrupt loss of help. While statutory kinship care assistance applies only to those with a Section 11 order, local partners should seek to avoid cliff-edges in support for other kinship families wherever possible.

#### **4. People – Skilled, connected and supported communities**

Kinship carers and practitioners need access to learning, peer networks and professional advice to sustain high-quality care.

##### **Our commitments:**

- Local authorities will be encouraged to strengthen dedicated kinship care expertise (for example through specialist kinship teams or lead practitioners).
- Kinship carers will be informed about the offer of support from the Named Person or Lead Professional where there is a Child's Plan, so that assessment and support for the child and family are co-ordinated.
- We will pilot Kinship Co-ordinators, trusted local professionals offering one-to-one support and help to kinship carers across services such as education, health and housing, as well as linking into local community groups. This could involve adapting existing initiatives/services. Details, including cost, will be scoped out with local partners in advance of piloting to avoid duplication of roles and add value.
- Access to bespoke trauma training for kinship carers, developed as part of the National Trauma Transformation Programme, to help carers provide trauma-informed care
- Guided by partners and kinship carers we will develop further information or learning resources that would help them better support the children and young people they are looking after.
- We will pilot opportunities for experienced foster carers who no longer foster full-time to mentor new kinship carers and offer short, child-centred breaks.
- Practitioners working with kinship families will have access to shared learning resources, communities of practice and training, so that support is consistent and grounded in evidence and lived experience.

## 5. Scaffolding – A coordinated and sustainable system

To make this offer real, delivery must be underpinned by robust structures, resources and partnerships.

### Our commitments:

- Local delivery will be co-ordinated through Children’s Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs), ensuring alignment across agencies and integration with whole family support and child poverty planning.
- Implementation will be sequenced through a costed national delivery plan, developed collaboratively with local partners and those with lived experience.
- We will actively facilitate sharing of good practice and innovative ideas between housing and social work professionals to tackle some of the challenges faced by kinship families.
- We will continue to develop guidance, templates and data improvements to promote consistency and reduce administrative burden.
- Progress will be tracked, using existing reporting mechanisms where possible, with regular reporting on milestones and outcomes for children and families.
- We will explore what more needs done to ensure a clear and understandable kinship policy and legislative landscape, and the cost/benefits of any changes.
- We will redesign the Kinship Care Collaborative to help us deliver the vision and offer.

## 6. Kinship Advice Service for Scotland (KCASS) — a national “first stop” for kinship families

KCASS will be further embedded as a universal, nationally promoted route to clear, consistent advice and referrals, aligned with The Promise and local Children’s Services Planning.

### Our commitments:

- **National advice hub:** KCASS acts as a national advice hub, providing timely, rights-based guidance and referrals into local services (LA kinship teams, income maximisation, education, health, housing, third sector).
- **Outreach:** A co-ordinated awareness push so every kinship carer (formal and informal) and every key professional (social work, schools, health, advice agencies) knows how to access KCASS.
- **No wrong door:** Standard referral/sign-posting protocols so local partners and KCASS can hand families off seamlessly; shared scripts/templates to reduce variation.
- **Inclusive access:** Phone, web, and community outreach; accessible formats and languages; targeted campaigns for under-served groups (e.g. informal carers with no current LA involvement).
- **Insight to improvement:** KCASS provides anonymised data/insight on recurring issues (e.g. allowances, housing barriers, school supports) to inform

national policy and local offers.

- **KCASS will act as a national hub for practice support:** sharing learning, resources and training opportunities for practitioners working with kinship families.

### **How this offer will evolve**

This offer is a first step in transforming how Scotland recognises and supports kinship families. It is subject to further engagement and consultation – planned for early 2026 - with carers, children, young people and delivery partners to ensure it is meaningful, achievable and aligned with The Promise. A final vision and offer will be published by spring 2026.

### **Workforce and resourcing**

We are aware that the vision and offer will have resource and workforce implications, especially for local authorities and third sector partners. We will work with national and local partners to consider how the needs of the workforce can be met, developing skills at a practice level, in order to best support kinship families, linking this to the future National Social Work Agency. It has been suggested that a scoping exercise, or similar, may be needed to understand the current workforce baseline and clarity around roles, requirements and training needs.

### **Delivery of the vision and offer**

We know everything cannot be delivered straight away.

We intend to co-design, with partners and those with lived experience, a phased and costed delivery plan that is realistic, with clear timelines and milestones, sequenced according to resources and impact. It will align with The Promise routemaps. There will be a key role for a redesigned Kinship Care Collaborative.

The co-design work will be undertaken during May to September 2026, with a delivery plan published in autumn and implementation on a sequenced basis thereafter. We will draw on different tools to support this, including the theory of change, and consider mapping what services are currently available to understand what new/adapted services might be needed to help local authorities and third sector partners to implement the vision and offer. Absolutely key is the sequencing of delivery based on the capacity of local partners. We will also consider consistency of support across the different caregiver groups where it meets the needs of the children and family.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

The delivery plan will also set out clear roles and responsibilities recognising that successful implementation of the vision and offer will require the commitment and support from many partners including local authorities, health, education, housing, justice, social security, the third sector and communities. We recognise that different partners may have different legal duties, including for different kinship care cohorts.

## **Monitoring and governance**

We will also consider how best to track progress and measure impact. Data collection and strong evaluation will be key with read across to the existing Promise Progress Framework and Promise route maps.

In line with this, we are committed to gaining a comprehensive understanding of all kinship care arrangements in Scotland, including kinship placements where the child is no longer considered "looked after". By collaborating with local authorities to gather data on kinship care families in their areas, we aim to create a more complete and accurate picture of kinship care across Scotland. These insights will help shape policy decisions that better support the wellbeing, stability, and positive outcomes of all children and families in kinship care.'

We want to ensure accountability and governance, including feedback loops for kinship families. We will consider how best to do this in a way which utilises existing forums and stakeholder groups both within the Scottish Government and externally, so we avoid duplication, link to wider work on child poverty, early child development and whole family support, making best use of peoples' energies and efforts.

## 7. NEXT STEPS AND ENGAGEMENT

We welcome views on this 'working' Kinship Care Vision and Offer. We will run engagement sessions through January–March 2026. The Scottish Government will issue a final version by spring and produced alongside the final vision will be user friendly children and families versions.

Details on how to engage are below.

### How to engage.

- **Email:** [kinshipcare@gov.scot](mailto:kinshipcare@gov.scot) (to provide comments on this document, or meet with the policy team to discuss further)
- **Citizen Space:** To complete a short public feedback form on our website click here - [Vision for kinship care – short consultation](#)
- **Workshops:** Targeted sessions with carers, children and young people, CSPPs and frontline practitioners. This will be advertised through local partners, umbrella organisations and kinship care groups.

**METHODS AND ENGAGEMENT WITH KINSHIP CARERS** (August –October 2025)

**Activities:** Facilitated peer groups discussions (urban/rural mix, LA-led and third-sector-led), practitioner roundtables, and KCASS Management Information review.

**Participants:** Kinship carers with varied legal routes (looked after, Section 11, private arrangements)

**Approach:** Open-ended questions; thematic analysis; consent and anonymisation applied; no social workers present during carer sessions to reduce perceived power dynamics.

**Equity considerations:** Accessible timings; expenses/childcare support where possible; plain-English materials.

**What we heard**

- The various legal orders were not understood well and carers often didn't know what their rights were
- Carers often experience financial hardship when they become kinship carers and financial systems are complex to navigate.
- Carers often felt abandoned and 'left to get on with it' and found it difficult to know how to access the right help, often having to fight for it.
- Education and mental health supports for children and young people are hard to access.
- Mental health support for carers was difficult to access, although carers said they needed it to deal with the complex needs of the children they cared for and the traumatic and strained family relationships they experienced
- Housing barriers disrupt stability.
- Stigma and lack of recognition.
- Carers spoke highly of their local authority kinship team in areas where they had them
- Carers described peer support groups as a lifeline
- Carers spoke warmly of their love for the children they cared for and their pride in children's achievements in the face of adversity



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