

# Relative Poverty: family and friends care in London

## Executive Summary and Recommendations

Roth D, Aziz R, Ashley, C  
and Lindley B



## 1. Introduction

The overarching aim of this study was to examine the circumstances of family and friends carers in London, and the children they are raising, including levels of financial and material deprivation, and to recommend measures for local and national government to improve policy and practice for these children and carers.

No previous study had specifically focused on this section of the capital's population. Earlier national studies have demonstrated that family and friends carers are very likely to be living in poverty.<sup>1</sup> They take on the extra expense of raising an additional child or children, often children who have experienced trauma or abuse and need high levels of skilled care and attention<sup>2</sup>; they are likely to lose income through having to give up work or reduce their working hours<sup>3</sup>; and unless they are approved as family and friends foster carers for the children (a small minority), the financial and practical support provided by local authorities is discretionary and highly variable.<sup>4</sup> All the ingredients are there for families, even where the carers have hitherto been living comfortably, to find themselves in challenging financial circumstances, as a result of stepping in to assist when children they knew needed to be safeguarded.

The study collected and analysed data from various sources:

- An internet survey of 493 family and friends carers nationally that was carried out during an earlier phase of this project; in this stage, we identified the participating carers who had lived in or were raising children from London, and compared information about their circumstances with carers and children from other regions, and with England and Wales nationally<sup>5</sup>;
- Individual interviews with eleven family and friends carers, nine of whom were from the two London boroughs which had agreed to work as our partners in this project (Wandsworth and Lambeth), as well as a focus group of carers and a focus group of practitioners from one of the boroughs; and
- An interrogation of data from the family and friends care policies of all the London boroughs whose policies were publicly available, in order to investigate what public statements local authorities themselves are making about the services they provide for family and friends carers.

We also drew on available official data: however, there is a lamentable paucity of central government, local authority and court statistics and data about these carers, which needs to be addressed urgently.

Considerable thanks is due to all the carers and practitioners who participated in the research that contributed to this study and so generously shared their experiences, time, knowledge and views. The work was funded due to the generosity and commitment of the Trust for London and Tudor Trust.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Farmer and Moyers (2008) *Kinship Care: Fostering Effective Family and Friends Placements* (Jessica Kingsley); Nandy, S. Selwyn, J. Farmer, E. and Vaisey, P. (2011) *Spotlight on Kinship Care: Using Census microdata to examine the extent and nature of kinship care in the UK at the turn of Twentieth century* (University of Bristol); Ashley, ed, Aziz, Roth & Lindley (2012) *Understanding family and friends care: The largest UK survey* (FRG)

<sup>2</sup> Hunt, J and Waterhouse, S (2012) *Understanding family and friends care: the relationship between need, support and legal status* (FRG)

<sup>3</sup> Ashley, ed, Aziz, Roth & Lindley (2012) *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Hunt, J and Waterhouse, S (2012) *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> References to nation-wide figures in the report are actually referring to data for England and Wales

## 2. Key findings:

### 2.1 Demographics

- Analysis of the 2001 census<sup>6</sup> found that there was a higher prevalence rate of family care arrangements (i.e. number of children living in kinship care arrangements without a parent in the household as a proportion of the total number of children in the population) in London than any other region in England or country in the UK. The prevalence rate for Inner London was 2.8%, and for Outer London 1.6%, both figures being higher than the figure for any English region, and significantly above the national average for England (1.3%), Scotland (1.3%), Wales (1.4%) or Northern Ireland (1.1%).
- All three of the local authorities with the highest prevalence rates in the United Kingdom were to be found in Inner London: Newham, Tower Hamlets and Lambeth. In Lambeth, one of the authorities which participated in this study, one in every thirty children was being raised by a relative; in Wandsworth, the other authority, the figure was one in fifty.<sup>7</sup> Unsurprisingly, a higher proportion of family and friends carers lived in London than any other English region.
- In London, 45% of family and friends care households had one child living in them, according to the internet survey, very close to the national average of 46% of kin households. 22% of London family and friends carers had three or more children in the household (22% v 25%), in some households these were birth as well as kin children. Such large households are particularly vulnerable to being adversely affected by some recent and forthcoming welfare reforms, including the benefits cap.
- According to the internet survey, 12% of family and friends carers in London were raising three or more kin children, similar to the figure for England and Wales.
- Kin children living in London were far more likely than kin children elsewhere to be black or from a minority ethnic community. Fewer than half (49%) of the children were identified as being white British, while 28% were of mixed ethnic background and 21% were black or black British according to the internet survey. These figures were not very dissimilar from data for looked after children and confirm the distinctiveness of London in terms of the ethnic composition of the population.
- The interviewed carers were highly likely to be an exact ethnic match to the child they were raising, and some of the black carers expressed how important they felt this was for the child's sense of identity.
- London included the highest proportion of older carers age 65 or over (20% v national average 8%) according to the internet survey responses.
- The internet survey found London carers were among the most likely to be single carers (46% v national average 32%). This can be an indicator that household income is likely to be lower, with only one potential earner in the household and less flexibility to arrange childcare.

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<sup>6</sup> Nandy et al (2011) ibid

<sup>7</sup> Nandy et al (2011) ibid

## 2.2 Circumstances of the placement

- 43% of the kin children in London were living with their family and friends carers because of parental drug abuse, compared to 36% nationwide, according to the internet survey. The second cited factor was neglect (38% in London v 49% nationwide). Emotional abuse (22% v 28%) and parental mental ill-health (20% v 19%) were also significant factors.
- In London, 38% of the kin children had not been with their parents before coming to their family and friends carers, and this was the second highest regional figure after East Midlands (40%). While relatively low numbers of these children had either been living with another relative (4%) or were newborn babies who had been placed straight from hospital, over a quarter (27%) came from local authority care placements, either with unrelated foster carers or from a children's home, higher than the England and Wales figure of 21%. This raises significant practice questions, for example had family placements including living with the current family and friends carer been properly explored by the local authority sufficiently early, such as through offering the family a family group conference, and whether some initial placements, prior to the child coming to live with their current carer, could have been avoided, in the child's interests (and potentially at some savings to the local authority).

## 2.3 Accommodation

- Overcrowded housing was a significant factor for many, with one in four London carers needing larger accommodation in order to take in the kin child. However, fewer than half of the London authorities' family and friends care policies that were examined had sections dealing with overcrowding, and only two policies mentioned protocols for arranging transfers for carers who were living in social housing.
- Housing was also a significant issue for some of the individually interviewed carers: one had been grossly overcrowded for years before the intervention of an independent housing rights officer forced the council's hand, resulting in a transfer to accommodation with more bedrooms. Two others were living with their kin child in one bedroom accommodation, one of them being an older sister raising her now-teenage brother.
- London family and friends carers were the most likely of any region to be living in social housing (35% v England average 26%), according to the internet survey. They were also considerably more likely to be living in social housing than the general London population (24%).

## 2.4 Legal representation

- London's carers were amongst the least likely to have had legal representation in court proceedings, only East Midlands (49%) had a lower figure than London (52%). This percentage is likely to increase as a result of legal aid restrictions. Carers who are not legally represented will either be

completely deterred from applying for a permanent legal order for the child or have to act as litigants in person. Moreover, having legal representation can assist carers with getting the right outcome to ensure they will get the support they require from the local authority or other agencies in order to meet the child's needs.

- Although legal fees and expenses can represent a huge financial outlay for family and friends carers, few of the policies that were audited stated whether the local authority would consider paying the legal fees of actual and potential family and friends carers: only two out of 19 examined stated that this was a possibility.

## 2.5 Employment, income and benefits

- The UK government poverty line is where household income is below 60% of median UK household income. In 2009/10 the poverty line for a lone parent with 2 children was £256 or below. For a couple household with 2 children it was £345.
  - London family and friends carers were more likely than carers in other regions to be managing on a low income of £200 or less per week (15% v 8%) according to the internet survey.
  - It is also by no means the case that the kin carers with the lowest income were raising only one child. In London, a higher number of kin carers with after-tax weekly income of £200 or less a week were raising two children than were raising one. In all, 20% or one in five of the kin households in London who were living off £350 per week or less were raising two or more children.
- London family and friends carers were significantly less likely than the national average to be in paid employment (29% v 55% were employed), according to the internet survey.
- In London 31% of family and friends carers had permanently given up work (either because they'd taken early retirement and/or lost their job or had to give up work); and a further 15% had to give up work temporarily, according to the internet survey. In other words, almost half (46%) of London family and friends carers answering this question had to give up their jobs, permanently or temporarily. This is significantly higher than the 38% of carers participating in the survey nationally who had to give up work permanently or temporarily, and is likely to be the most significant factor that has led family and friends carer households in London to face financial hardship.
- Nine of the eleven individually interviewed carers reported that becoming a family and friends carer had some impact on their employment or education: the only exceptions were two carers who had already left the employment market because of health or retirement. Two carers abandoned or postponed plans to go to university, while others gave up their jobs, reduced their work commitments, or were advised that they should not seek to return to work so they could be available for the child.
- London family and friends carers were far more likely than the general London population to be claiming income support, according to the internet survey (23% compared to 5.4%<sup>8</sup>). London family and friends carers were also more

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<sup>8</sup> DWP Information Directorate: Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study and Department for Social Development in Northern

likely to be claiming income support than their counterparts nationally (22% v 14%). The proportion claiming Housing Benefit (23% v 19%) and Council Tax Benefit (32% v 27%) were also slightly higher for London than for family and friends carers nationally; eligibility for both of these benefits is based upon being either unemployed or on a low income.

- Nearly half (48%) of the family and friends carers and their families had not been able to take or book a holiday in the previous year, compared to 44% of family and friends carers nationally; again a sign of financial hardship.
- Financial struggles were also a common theme of the individually interviewed carers, even those who were working often describing how easily their income seemed to 'just go'. Two carers stated that they go without so that their kin children don't have to, and two spoke of getting into debt; others described a struggle to pay bills and keep up with expenses. Only two of the eleven interviewed did not feel they were struggling financially.

## 2.6 Local authority financial support

- 32% of London carers surveyed stated that they had a special guardianship order, and 30% stated that they were receiving a special guardianship order allowance. However, while 30% of London carers surveyed stated that they had a residence order, only 12% stated that they were receiving a residence order allowance. This indicates that special guardians are more likely to be paid an allowance by the local authority than carers with a residence order.
- The experiences of the individually interviewed carers also reflects this, with all four who were special guardians being paid an allowance, while only two of the four with residence orders were being paid an allowance. A sibling carer who, at the age of twenty became responsible for raising her five younger siblings alone, following parental bereavement, had received no financial support whatsoever, despite requesting it.
- Most local authority policies did not provide information about financial support from the local authority that would be helpful for the carers. The majority did not mention section 17 financial support, residence order allowance or special guardianship order allowance, and of those where this support was mentioned only a small number provided any specific details. For example, only three of the nineteen policies contained full information about eligibility to receive the special guardianship order allowance, and only one (Hillingdon) had full information about eligibility to receive the residence order allowance. Further, only one policy (Islington) gave details about how much the special guardianship allowance would be.
- Although statutory guidance and case law is very clear about the level of fostering allowance that should be paid to family and friends foster carers, very few of the local authority policies examined stated this, with only one policy providing specific figures for the weekly allowance.
- Surveyed carers often had to spend significant sums in order to care for the kin child: all London carers who took part in the survey reported having to buy the child new clothes, while 88% bought a new bed and 93% new bedding. One in four London carers reported having to buy a different or bigger car,

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Ireland: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rep-i-income-support-claimants> for the period August 2011, the period when the study was conducted

and nationally 42% of family and friends carers reported having spent over £1,000 on purchases. Only 31% of London carers stated that they had been financially helped by the local authority with these purchases, meaning that many of them are likely to have been significantly out of pocket.

## 2.7 Non-financial support

- 37% of London family and friends carers reported that they had received no non-financial help or services from the local authority, slightly lower than the national figure of 44%, according to the internet survey. The most common form of help that was received was regular contact with the child's social worker (37%). Only 16% of London family and friends carers received help with managing contact, despite that often being a matter of considerable stress for carers and only 4% had received any respite care. Just 16% had been offered places on training courses, and only 14% had been offered attendance at a family and friends carers' support group and even fewer (12%) of the kin children had received counselling.
- Only 5 out of the 19 local authority policies examined made any mention of support groups for family and friends carers, despite this being an effective and cost-effective way of assisting family and friends carers.
- The carers' focus group in this study took place at a longstanding support group, which had evidently been running with some success in meeting the needs of its carers to attend a support group. Part of the group's success at least seemed to be based on the common demographic of this particular group of carers (mainly older grandparent carers with residence orders).
- The focus group of social workers who were interviewed showed a good awareness of the sort of issues, such as contact and family relationships, that may be important to family and friends carers; this was particularly true of the practitioners from the specialist Family Plus team.
- Some of the individually interviewed carers were very unhappy with the social work support that had been provided, particularly so with two carers whose kin child had been placed by an authority other than the one they lived in. Two carers felt strongly that they needed, but did not get, the same support as non-kin foster carers, a point that was acknowledged by one of the social workers in the practitioners' focus group; the social worker and the family and friends carer had both observed siblings of kin children, who were in the care system while the kin child was not, being provided with financial support and a range of practical assistance that was denied to the kin child and their carers. It was felt to be unfair that children from the same background, with very similar needs, should be treated so differently.
- Although some family and friends carers are receiving a sympathetic and well-resourced support service, as evidenced by the focus groups of carers and practitioners, this is clearly not a universal experience. Carers described experiences such as: social work support being withdrawn at the point when they became carers; support from the local authority where they live not matching up to the support from the authority which had placed the child; no response to concerns about difficulties with the child's parents about contact; and a lack of understanding when they approached the local authority for support.

- Other than from children's services, the type of non-financial support most commonly reported by London carers from the internet survey was that which they received from their own family and friends (64%). This was also the source of informal support most likely to be mentioned by the individually interviewed carers, although their experiences of family support could be more variable. Well after this, for the surveyed carers, came the child's school (45%), CAMHS (33%), the health visitor (33%) and their GP (19%) – all provided by the health and education services.
- The types of support that London family and friends carers were most likely to feel they needed but had not been provided with was respite care (47%) and counselling for the children (42%). Around a third would also have liked counselling or emotional support for themselves, help with the children's emotional and behavioural difficulties or support with managing the children's family contact. Only 8% did not feel they had needed any form of help that had not been provided.
- The individually interviewed carers identified a wide range of types of support that they felt could have made a difference to them, but the most commonly mentioned were the opportunity to meet other carers or attend a support group, and counselling for themselves or the child.
- It was found that 19 out of the 33 (58%) London authorities had a family and friends care policy that was published and publicly available on the council website, despite the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011 deadline for publication in statutory guidance.

## **2.8 What it is like to become a family and friends carer**

From the interviews with family and friends carers, it was clear that becoming responsible for the kin child had been a life-altering experience for them. Other than the changes to their employment or education, their lifestyle had often been drastically altered. Carers were able to take fewer holidays than before, or had to stop taking holidays altogether. Finance became a big worry, with some spending their savings and having to borrow money. Space in the home became more restricted, and in some cases there was unacceptable overcrowding. The carers' lives had to revolve around the child, and this affected their social lives, and in some cases their relationship with their partner.

This meant that carers often had to put plans for their own lives on hold, whether this had been to go to university or to enjoy a quiet retirement. Some carers reported regret for the life they had missed out on, and some felt they had to contain their own feelings about events that had led to the child becoming their responsibility, e.g. the death of a loved one.

When asked whether taking on the care of the children had a negative impact, only 11% of London family and friends carers participating in the internet survey stated that there had been nothing negative, exactly the same percentage gave that response nation-wide. 76% cited the negative impact on their social life and 70% the negative impact on their finances (compared to 86% nationally).

Carers often felt that, on reflection, they had not had the support they needed from social workers, and even where social workers had been involved they did not show



enough understanding. There were also complaints that social workers were not being straight with them, or passing on all the information that they needed. One carer felt wary of talking freely to social workers, in case what he said was misinterpreted, and chose mainly to attend other forms of support group.

When asked by the internet survey to rate the support they had received from Social Services/Children's Services, half (51%) of London family and friends carers rated it very poor (compared to 56% nationwide) and a further 20% poor (cf 16% nationwide). However, this experience was certainly not universal, and 9% did rate the support they had received as excellent (compared to 5% nationwide). Carers overwhelmingly felt that their decision to raise the kin child had been the right thing to do, and it had been rewarding, both for them and for the kin child. As carers, they had a sense of achievement about what they were doing, felt rewarded by keeping the child in the family, and by the child's love.

### 3. Recommendations

#### 3.1 Recommendations for local authorities:

Family and friends care statutory guidance was published in March 2011 setting out a clear framework for improving local authority support for children in family and friends care according to their needs. However, given the evidence in this study that it has not been properly implemented, the overarching recommendation to local authorities is that they should implement this guidance immediately. We also make the following specific recommendations:

##### Family and friends care policies:

Every local authority should:

- Ensure that they have formulated, published, and made freely and widely available a family and friends care policy which complies with the requirements and expectations of statutory guidance<sup>9</sup>.
- Act in accordance with their published policy, and regularly review and update the policy.

This policy should:

- be clearly written so that family and friends carers can easily find out about a range of information that will be important for them, including legal information and sources of financial and practical help;
- signpost carers and potential carers to sources of independent legal advice;
- clearly state the principle that support for family and friends carers and their children they are raising will be provided on the basis of need, and not legal status;
- set out what comprehensive family and friends care support service provision is available with information about how to access support, so that carers understand what they can expect of local authority and other agencies providing support and so that social workers are clear about the services they can provide. This should include, for example, help with contact and managing challenging behaviour, respite care, counselling support especially for bereaved children as well as much needed financial help as outlined in statutory guidance.<sup>10</sup>

In addition the local authority should:

- Have procedures that stipulate that an arrangement cannot be deemed to be as 'private' until carers have been given the opportunity to digest information about the various legal options and their implications, and to take independent advice;
- Have a policy of offering all families a family group conference, prior to a child becoming *looked after*, except in an emergency

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<sup>9</sup> Department for Education (March 2011) Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (March 2011) <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/.../DFE-00025-2011>

<sup>10</sup> DfE (2011) Family and Friends Care statutory guidance Chapter 4

## Collaborative work with other agencies/local authority departments

- Local authorities should ensure there are protocols in place to address issues of overcrowding for family and friends carers, both through transfers for those in social housing and through funding extensions for home-owners.
- Local authorities should include family and friends carer households in their list of potentially vulnerable groups to be prioritised for discretionary support under a localised social fund scheme. Similarly they should encourage schools and sixth form colleges to treat children raised in family and friends care as a priority for the discretionary maintenance allowance scheme.
- Local authorities should work with charities and the voluntary sector to ensure that support groups are available in all areas and for all family and friends carers, not just those of a particular legal status or those who have had dealings with the local authority; these support groups should be widely publicised.

## Workforce:

Local authorities should:

- Provide training to all staff coming into contact with family and friends care arrangements. This should cover the law and local authority responsibilities and aim to increase understanding of this unique form of care.
- Have a team with expertise in and knowledge of family and friends care, such as a 'Family Plus' or dedicated kinship care team to conduct all assessments of suitability, assess support needs and ensure that services are provided or carers referred to appropriate services.
- Link all family and friends carers coming to the attention of Children's Services with a specialist worker, to provide them with relevant information including an introductory information pack, and help for the carer and child to adjust to their new circumstances.
- Ensure the Children's Services Department designated manager for family and friends care, which is a role required by statutory guidance,<sup>11</sup> takes the lead in ensuring that social workers, their managers and other practitioners throughout the department have an understanding of the needs and circumstances of family and friends carers and the children they are raising and the local authorities policy on family and friends care.
- Ensure frontline teams are acting lawfully when determining whether the kinship arrangement is a private one made within the family or a local authority placement, and that there is a process for scrutinising the legal status of all new kinship arrangements.

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<sup>11</sup> DfE Family and Friends Care statutory guidance *ibid*

## Informing policy and practice development:

Every local authority should set up:

- A panel of kinship carers and children to inform policies and comment on local practice.
- A system for collecting data and auditing performance on family and friends care and devising a family and friends care improvement strategy involving other local agencies.

### 3.2 Association of Directors of Children's Services:

Directors of Children's Services should:

- Consider how to draw on the experience of local authorities with well-established family and friends care services to promote needs-based support across all local authorities.
- Establish a network of designated managers to provide forums for the dissemination of good practice on family and friends care.
- Pool resources to develop family and friends care training and encourage research into the effectiveness of different models of service provision.

### 3.3 Recommendations for national government:

#### Policy and practice changes:

- Require Ofsted to audit family and friends care policies during the inspection process: does the local authority have one, and to what extent does it comply with the requirements of the statutory guidance? This audit should consider both the content of the policy and the effectiveness of services.
- Ofsted should conduct a thematic inspection of family and friends care services, encompassing all legal arrangements.
- Clarify the guidance on the use of section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and on case law about local authority involvement in placing children with relatives in a child protection context, often in an emergency. This should include
  - requiring local authorities to give carers written information about the legal status of the arrangement, their options and their implications, and to signpost them to independent information and advice.
  - stipulating that carers cannot consent to an arrangement being treated as private until they have had an opportunity to consider this information and to seek independent information and advice.
- Introduce a 'kinship passport', modelled on the proposed 'adoption passport', to provide a clear guarantee of the minimum support kinship families can access nationwide.
- Monitor the combined effect of legal aid cuts and family justice reforms.
- Improve practitioners' understanding of kinship care by ensuring that it is included in basic and post-qualification training for social workers; by disseminating research and good practice; and commissioning on-line training packages for practitioners.
- Commission and adequately fund:

- specialist independent advice services for family and friends carers;
- an information pack for all family and friends carers in hard copy and on-line;
- a network for children raised in kinship care, including on-line and local groups.
- Start to address the dearth of official data on family and friends care, and adapt the Care Monitoring System to collect data on the numbers of residence and special guardianship orders made in favour of family and friends carers.

### 3.4 Legislative changes:

- Amend the Children and Families Bill:
  - So that no child can be placed in a foster for adopt placement until family and friends care have been explored, assessed for suitability to meet the child's needs, and been ruled out.
  - So that local authorities are required to allow children in care contact with their siblings as well as their parents/others with parental responsibility.
  - To ensure that court timetabling is sufficiently flexible to allow for delay where this is constructive and necessary for the child's long term welfare.
  - To ensure adequate external court scrutiny of, and accountability for, long term plans, including sibling placement arrangements, for children who are made the subject of care orders.
  - Give family and friends carers the same rights to paid employment leave and protection as adoptive parents (clause 91).
  - Align the statutory framework for providing non-financial support in special guardianship cases with post-adoption support (clause 4 & 5).
- Amend the definition in section 17 Children Act 1989 of a *child in need* to include 'children living in family and friends care because they cannot live with their parent/s', so as to ensure that all family and friends care arrangements become eligible for an assessment of the children and carers' need for support services and financial support without the carer having to justify why the child's needs should be assessed on a case by case basis.
- Place a new duty on local authorities to:
  - establish a family and friends care support service for children in kinship care under a residence order or where there is no order, modelled on their duties in special guardianship and available to any family where the child is in kinship care because they cannot live with a parent;
  - explore suitable wider family options, including offering a family group conference, before a child becomes looked after (unless there is an emergency).
- Mitigate adverse effects of welfare reforms on family and friends carers, including the benefit cap, job conditionality requirements for job seekers and the 'bedroom tax' so that relatives and friends are not deterred from taking on the care of these children, many of whom would otherwise be in the care system.

- Introduce a national financial allowance for family and friends carers raising children who cannot live with their parents, in line with longstanding Kinship Care Alliance policy<sup>12</sup>. This could be achieved by inserting a new section 77A into the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 for a national financial allowance to cover the real costs of raising a child to be paid to relatives or other carers already connected to the child, and who take on the care of a child for more than 28 days continuously in the following circumstances:
  - the child or qualifying young person comes to live with the person as a result of enquiries or plans made under s.47 of the Children Act 1989; or
  - the child or qualifying young person comes to live with the person following an investigation under s. 37 of the Children Act 1989; or
  - the person has been granted a Residence Order/Child Arrangements Order
  - to avoid the child or qualifying young person being looked after, within care proceedings on the child or qualifying young person or following the accommodation of the child or qualifying young person; or
  - there is professional evidence of the impairment of the parents' ability to care for the child or qualifying young person; or
  - the parents are dead or in prison; or
  - the circumstances described in subsections (2)(d) and 2(e) apply to one of the parents and the person claiming family and friends carer's allowance shows that he was at the date of the claim unaware of, and has failed after all reasonable efforts to discover, the whereabouts of the other parent.

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<sup>12</sup> The Kinship Care Alliance ( <http://www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/kinship-care-alliance>) is a group of organisations who subscribe to a set of shared aims and beliefs on the issue of family and friends care. We meet regularly to develop a joint policy agenda and agree strategies to promote our aims. The aims of the Kinship Care Alliance are to:

- Prevent children from being unnecessarily raised outside the family
- Enhance outcomes for children who cannot live with their parents and who are living with relatives -

Secure improved recognition and support for family and friends carers.

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Second Floor The  
Print House 18  
Ashwin Street  
London E8 3DL

Advice line  
9.30am–3.00pm:  
0808 801 0366

T: 020 7923 2628  
F: 020 7923 2683  
E: [office@frg.org.uk](mailto:office@frg.org.uk)

**[www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)**

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