



AFKA Cymru Kinship Carer Support Plan

DRAFT Guidance Notes

DRAFT:

These guidance notes are in the draft stage and will be finalised December 2025.

Please submit any comments on these notes to amy.shepherd@afkacymru.org

Why?

Assessing support needs should be an integral part of every kinship assessment. Many kinship carers have support needs that need to be addressed specifically, particularly where these needs are integral to suitability recommendations and in recognition of case law (*Knowsley MBC v X and Ors [2018] EWFC 42*).

Support planning enables assessors and carers to work together to understand what the future may hold, identify available support within the carer's own network, anticipate potential challenges, and clarify what level of local authority support may reasonably be expected. This transparency helps kinship carers feel prepared, valued, and confident in their role—contributing directly to placement stability and child wellbeing.

A distinct support plan ensures that current and potential kinship carers, foster panel, decision makers and, where applicable, the family court, have a clear understanding of how any identified vulnerabilities will be mitigated and support needs met.

Where an assessment concludes that a potential kinship carer is unable to care for the child, even with additional support, this should be clearly outlined in the recommendation and analysis. In such cases, it is important to record that a support plan has not been developed and to explain the reasons for this.

Understanding barriers

Kinship carers often describe the assessment process as fraught with fear, where they can be reluctant to disclose support needs for fear of being deemed unsuitable to care for the child. Likewise kinship carers may not be able to predict what the future holds and need the support of an experienced practitioner to develop their understanding.

A sensitive approach needs to be taken to support the kinship carer to think through current and potential future support needs that avoids minimising or failing to highlight need. Kinship assessments require specialist knowledge, cultural competence, and emotional intelligence and social workers should be provided with robust supervision, support and training to ensure support needs are properly evaluated within the assessment.

Trauma informed approach

Support planning must be rooted in a clear understanding of the individual child's experiences and the unique strengths and needs of their kinship carers. This includes



recognising the lifelong impact of loss, disrupted attachments and trauma, and being mindful of how these may shape future support needs.

A trauma-informed approach requires empathy, curiosity and respectful engagement throughout the assessment process, ensuring that carers are not pathologised, and children's needs are not overlooked or minimised.

Anti-discriminatory practice

As practitioners, we hold significant influence in how families are described and understood. It is essential to reflect on our own values, assumptions and biases—both individually and through supervision—and how these may shape our assessments and recommendations.

All language used should be simple, kind and respectful. Avoid professional jargon, deficit-based descriptions or language that excludes, disempowers or reinforces stereotypes. Be thoughtful in how identity is represented, including ethnicity, gender identity, disability, faith, and other intersecting experiences.

Wherever possible, use the words and terms that families themselves prefer, and ensure all assessments reflect dignity, fairness and a commitment to anti-racist, person-centred practice.

How?

The support plan should be developed collaboratively between the kinship carer, assessing worker, the team that will be responsible for supporting the kinship carer, the child's social worker, and where appropriate, the child. All contributors should be clearly identified and sign agreements for provision of support. When independent or sessional social workers conduct the kinship assessment, collaborative support planning ensures expectations are realistic and achievable.

The support plan is made up of two key parts, each serving a distinct purpose:

- **Sections 1-8**

These sections guide a thorough exploration of the kinship carer's support needs across all relevant areas. The reflective questions are designed to ensure nothing is missed and to promote honest, open discussions with the carer. These sections:

- Complement the support needs assessment
- Enable detail to be recorded where appropriate / necessary
- Clarify which needs can be met, how they will be met, and where there are limitations
- Support transparency and manages expectations from the outset

- **Final Table – Needs, Outcomes, Actions, Resources, and Timescales**

The table at the end of the plan is where practitioners should summarise specific and agreed actions arising from Sections 1–8. This includes:

- Practical steps to meet identified needs
- Who is responsible for each action
- Any resources or funding required
- Clear timescales for completion or review

Only include actions that are agreed, time-bound, and realistic. Where an issue has been discussed in the main body but no action is being taken, ensure this is explained clearly in the relevant section to avoid confusion later.

This structure allows for rich, honest exploration in Sections 1–8 while keeping the final table focused and actionable — a clear, shared reference point for the team around the child and carer.

[AFKA Cymru](#) offers training and workshops on support planning for kinship carers, which can support you and your team to embed good practice and make the most of this resource.

The AFKA Cymru Kinship Carer Support Plan aligns with the Welsh Government-endorsed [All Wales Special Guardianship Support Plan](#) supporting consistency across fostering panel and court processes. Where both fostering and special guardianship are being considered concurrently the alignment ensures that information can be mapped across both plans where necessary.

For kinship foster care the support plan should be informed by the [Foster Wales Good Practice Guide for The Assessment and Support of Kinship Foster Carers](#), with particular reference to section 9.

The support plan is fully mapped to [the AFKA Cymru Competency Framework: Skills and Qualities for Kinship Foster Carers in Wales](#). This competency framework is guidance only and has been developed to support decision making for kinship / connected person foster care. If this competency framework is being used by the fostering service current and potential kinship foster carers should be informed and provided with a full copy of the framework.

Guidance for each specific section:

1. Children with existing care and support plans

This section should contain brief information confirming whether the child subject to the kinship care arrangement has an existing care and support plan.

If the child does have a care and support plan detail if this has been shared or when this will be shared with the kinship carer.

If the child does not have a care and support plan, then this section should detail how an understanding of the child's needs has been ascertained.

Include a brief description of how the kinship carer has been supported to understand the child's needs.

2. The child/ren's support needs

The child's support needs in section 2 should replicate or refer to any part 4 or part 6 care and support plan. If additional needs are identified these must be clearly highlighted alongside the actions taken to initiate a review of the child's care and support plan.

This section is not intended to duplicate the assessment of a child's needs or any existing care and support plan. It is intended to record the salient details of a child's needs so that there can be clarity over any support the kinship carer needs to meet these. Therefore, care must be taken to provide an accurate summary of needs as opposed to a copy of detailed information.

Remember that foster panel would not routinely be provided with the child's Part 6 Care and Support Plan but do need sufficient understanding of the child's needs to inform their recommendation with regards to kinship foster care.

There may be aspects of a child's needs that are addressed through a fostering family's **safer caring or protective care plan**, where this is the case, it is sufficient to make reference to the family plan without duplicating information there-in.

3. The kinship care's current and potential future needs

3.1 Universal / general support

Record frequency of visiting, duty and team support and out of hours support.

This section should include information about general support to the family including:

- Newsletters, peer support groups and training events, including those provided by the local authority and those by third sector organisations.
- Details of local early help, family centres or parenting support services, including eligibility criteria and referral processes.
- Details of local benefits, finance and welfare rights, Citizen's Advice Bureau and any other community legal services

Any kinship carers who reside in a different locality to the responsible authority for the child / their fostering service should be given information about services they can access locally.

3.2 – 3.11 The kinship care's current and potential future needs

A kinship carer's role often arises from an urgent family situation, as a result, they may be juggling other responsibilities—such as work, parenting, or caring for others which need to be carefully weighed in determining support needs.

Be mindful that potential kinship carers may not have a throughout understanding of the social care system or how decisions about children's futures are made. It is even more difficult take in this new information if given during a time of stress or crisis.

3.2: Support needs should be assessed holistically, with practitioners remaining curious and sensitive to any other caring roles a current or potential kinship carer may hold. This includes unpaid care for other adults within the family network. The impact of the proposed fostering arrangement on any unpaid care or own care and support needs must be carefully considered.

3.3 & 3.4 : Review section 2.5 – Use this section to explore any areas for development in supporting the carer's understanding of the child's needs, including the impact of developmental trauma across the family system. Consider practical, tailored support (e.g. training, peer support, reflective conversations) that builds confidence and emotional resilience over time.

3.5 & 3.6: Kinship care can change the nature of family relationships, it is not uncommon for kinship carers to experience friction from one or both sides of the child's family, ultimately this can serve to undermine the stability of the child's care if not addressed.

Any support needed to navigate the changing roles, understand changes to decision making, develop relationships or trust should be carefully considered. Consider whether family group conference or family meeting would be relevant.

3.7: Review section 2.5 - Discuss the role the kinship carer will take in supporting the child's understanding of their identity and life story.

- How comfortable do they feel answering questions from the child about why they are living with them?
- Are there aspects of the child's history the carer may find difficult to talk or think about?

Explore the emotional impact of being part of the child's kinship network. These conversations can be more emotionally complex for kinship carers than for unrelated carers. Use empathy and curiosity to understand any challenges, and what support carers might need to build confidence in having open, honest conversations with the child over time.

3.8 & 3.9: Expectations must be clearly understood and support to fulfil these determined. The current and potential future impact of the role must be carefully evaluated, ensuring that kinship carers understand any potential for a child's plan to

change in the future and what this means for any changes they may have considered making to their career, work or education.

3.10: Consider the wider context of the kinship family. Are there any practical or environmental factors (e.g. housing, finances, education, employment, support networks) that may affect the carer's ability to meet the child's needs and maintain stability?

Include:

- **Financial support:** Specify what is agreed (e.g. fostering allowance, discretionary payments like nursery fees or vehicle costs), whether support is means-tested, and how often it will be reviewed. If funding is pending, state this and note any upcoming panel dates (these can also be listed in the table at the end of the plan).
- **Benefits:** Note whether the carer is eligible for child benefit and how to apply. Access to welfare benefits advice /services should be included in 3.1.
- **Housing:** Include any support with housing needs (e.g. transfer to larger property, private rental assistance).
- **Support networks:** Practical or emotional support being provided by family or friends. (Respite/babysitting should be recorded in Section 7.)
- **Contingency planning:** Outline any arrangements being considered in case the carer is unable to continue in their role, particularly where age or health is a factor.

3.11: Having a stable loving relationship with their primary care-giver is the most important factor in a child's recovery from adverse childhood experiences. In order to provide this supportive scaffolding carers need to be able to maintain their wellbeing through times of challenge. Consider utilising the [AFKA Cymru Foster Carer Wellbeing Action Plan](#) or principles there-in to support discussions.

4. Household and other family members, especially dependent children, current and potential future needs

Think broadly about the needs of others connected to the kinship care arrangement. Consider whether they understand the background to the arrangement and whether they need support to adjust to the child's presence in the home.

This may include:

- Support for the carer's own children, individually or with the kinship child, to help them understand and adapt to the change in family roles and relationships
- Support to strengthen or rebuild relationships within the wider family, such as between maternal and paternal relatives, or to clarify everyone's role in the child's life
- Support to process any loss or changes in contact or relationships

Identify any emotional or practical needs and consider how these can be met to help maintain a stable and supportive environment for the child.

5. The parents needs

Use this section to explore if the parents have any support needs that could impact the kinship care arrangement. Consider:

- **Family time/contact arrangements:** Identify any emotional, practical, or supervisory support needed to help the parent manage family time in a way that is safe and positive for the child and any other persons present. Reflect on how family dynamics, risks, or unresolved tensions might affect these arrangements.
- **Relationship with the kinship carer:** Consider any support needed to help the parent and carer strengthen or repair their relationship, particularly where trust is still developing or past difficulties are present.
- **Life journey work:** Think about how the child's developing understanding of their story may influence their feelings before or after family time. Consider how any differing perspectives between parents and carers could be managed—do parents understand what will be shared with the child? Do they agree with the narrative, or are there points of disagreement? What impact might this have on the child, the carer and their relationship with the parents? Has the timing of life journey work been considered and who will inform parents so they can be prepared for questions at family time?

Refer to **Section 9.1.4 of the [Foster Wales Good Practice Guide](#)** for further reflection. Consider the emotional needs of the parent alongside those of the child and carer, as the quality of these relationships directly affects placement stability and the child's experience of care.

6. Keeping in touch / family time / contact arrangements

This section captures the practical arrangements and decision-making processes around family time/contact and life journey work.

- **Decision-making (6.1):** Confirm who has the authority to make or change contact arrangements. Ensure the kinship carer understands this clearly. If specific contact review meetings are scheduled, include the dates in the table at the end of the support plan.
- **Practical support (6.2–6.5):** Note any support needed to arrange, change, or supervise family time. This may include help with planning (e.g. family meetings or FGCs), transport or handovers, venue provision, monitoring, financial support with travel or activities.

- **Social media (6.5):** Consider if guidance or supervision is needed around the child's independent contact with family through phones or social media.
- **Life journey work (6.6):** Record whether the draft life story book has been shared with the carer and whether a date has been set for the later life letter.

Keep the focus on clarity, consistency and ensuring that everyone involved understands their role in supporting safe and meaningful connections for the child.

7. Quality time spent apart (respite / short break care)

Use this section to explore whether the kinship carer and child have access to natural, relationship-based breaks.

- Has the possibility of regular time apart been discussed in a way that feels normal and supportive rather than formal or stigmatising?
- Are there trusted family members or friends who could gradually build a relationship with the child to allow for this?

If family-based support isn't possible, outline a clear plan to meet the carer and child's need for occasional breaks. Include any financial implications, particularly where respite arrangements may affect fostering allowances or fees.

The focus should be on sustainability — supporting the carer's wellbeing without disrupting the child's sense of security.

8. Transfer / reciprocal arrangements

Where the kinship carer lives in a different local authority area, early identification of local services is essential to avoid delays in support.

- Confirm whether the carer's local authority has been notified of the placement. If not, this should be recorded as an action in the table at the end of the support plan.
- Check that the carer knows how to access universal services in their area (e.g. schools, health services, early help). If further support or signposting is needed, this should also be noted as an action.
- Record any transfer arrangements the carer should be informed about, and whether there is a need to involve their local authority to provide or coordinate support.

Any tasks - such as contacting the local authority, providing information to the carer, or arranging services, should be added to the action table at the end of the plan.

The goal is to ensure the carer and child have smooth access to support close to home, with clear responsibilities across local authority boundaries.

Table: Kinship Carer Support Plan

The table at the end of the support plan is where agreed support is recorded clearly and specifically. It should only include needs that have been discussed, agreed, and require concrete action. Use this table as a shared record of what will happen, when, and who is responsible.

Column	Guidance
1. Specific Need	Clearly describe the identified need. Be specific about who this relates to (e.g. the kinship carer, a child in the household, or a wider family member). Needs should have been identified in the relevant section(s) of the support plan.
2. Outcome	State what you're aiming to achieve through the action or support. This should be child-focused wherever possible, realistic, and measurable.
3. Actions/Services to be Provided	Set out what needs to happen to meet the need and achieve the outcome. This might include providing a service, arranging a meeting, or taking a practical step. Keep the wording clear and avoid vague or open-ended actions.
4. Resources (Person/Agency Responsible)	Name the person, service or agency responsible for delivering or coordinating the action. If the action involves funding, specify whether this has been agreed, and by whom. If funding is pending, note the status and any upcoming decision dates.
5. Timescale	Record when the action will start, how often it will happen (if relevant), how long it will continue for, and when it will be reviewed. Ensure all actions have a clear review point to track progress.

Tip: If a need has been explored but no action is being taken, this should be explained in the relevant section of the plan — only agreed and time-bound actions should appear in the table.

Agreement and signatures

Thus section should reflect those involved in writing, developing, delivering and authorising provision of resources the support plan. Children / young people should only be included where appropriate and determined by the adults involved.