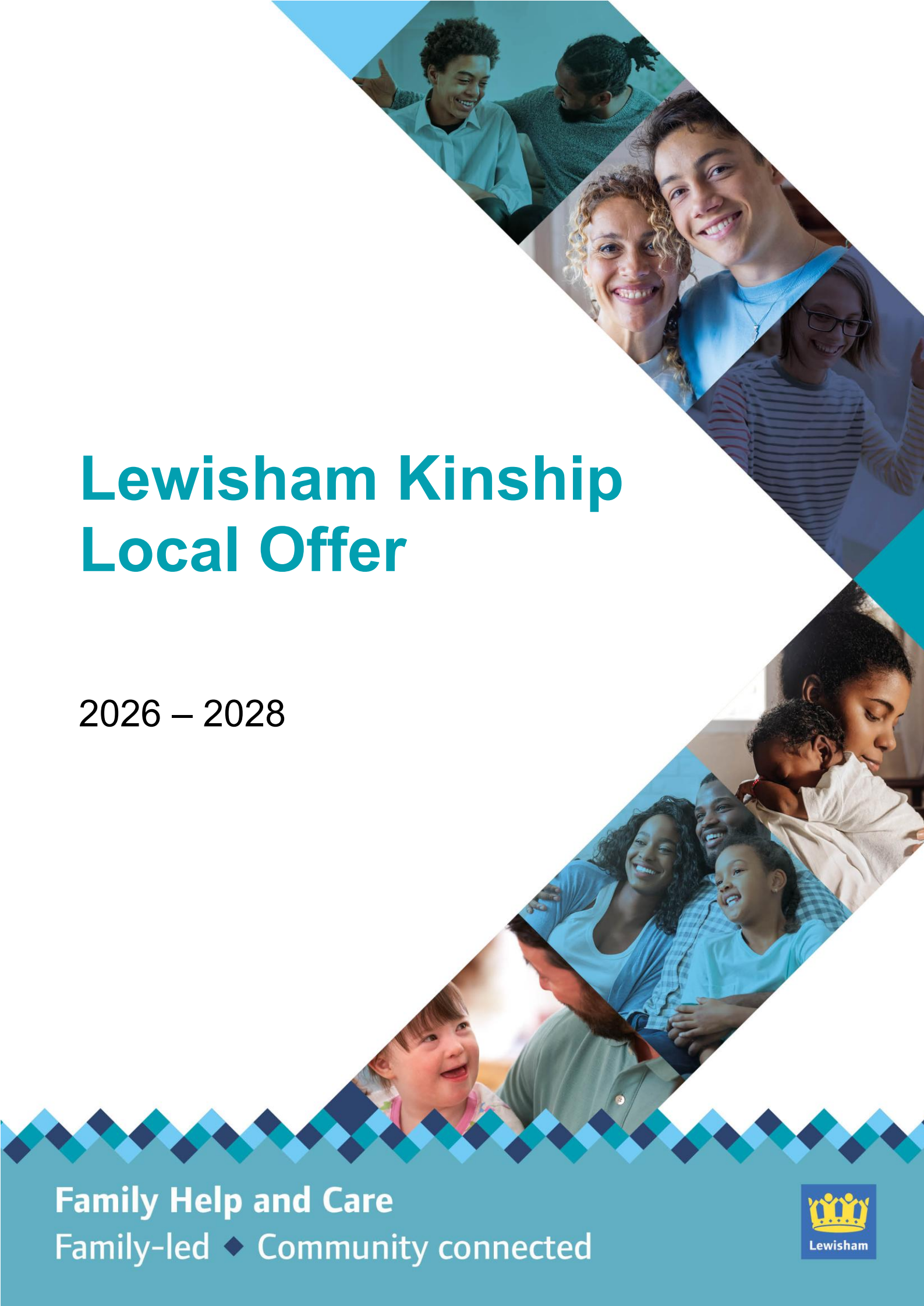




Lewisham Kinship Local Offer

2026 – 2028

Family Help and Care
Family-led ♦ Community connected



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Introduction

We believe children do best when they can grow up with family, where it is safe for them to do so. Kinship care helps children stay connected to the people they know, love and trust.

We want all kinship families to get the right support at the right time. We work with health, education and children's services to help families navigate challenges at home, at school and in everyday life. Whether you need support with housing, finances, health, family relationships or your child's wellbeing, we're here to help.

This booklet sets out our Kinship Local Offer. It is for anyone caring for a child who cannot live with their parent/s and is being looked after by a family member, friend or other trusted adult. It explains the advice, information and support available to kinship families.

We aim to make support fair and easy to access. You do not need a legal order to access information or advice. The support available depends entirely on your family's circumstances and the child's needs.

We review it at least every two years to make sure it reflects what families need and stays up to date. We work with kinship carers, children, young people and partner organisations to understand what's working well and where we can improve.

Guidance and review

This offer was developed and approved against the Department for Education's *Kinship Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities* published in October 2024. It also reflects the National Kinship Care Ambassador's February 2026 insight report, *Improving the Kinship Local Offer and Approach to Kinship Care*, and the Foundations Practice Guide on Kinship Care. Revised statutory guidance was also published in October 2026, after this offer had been completed and approved. We will review the offer against the revised guidance, including the National Kinship Standards, the Children's Social Care National Framework and *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, and make any changes needed.

How we consulted

The draft offer was shared for two rounds of consultation. We also met with kinship carers to hear directly about the information and support they wanted to see included. In response to their feedback, we added further supporting information, including more detailed information about Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services and support.

You can share your views through surveys, events, workshops, support groups and conversations with the Kinship Team. Your feedback helps us shape and improve the support we offer.

Helpful contacts

The Kinship team is here to support you and help maintain safe and stable placements for children. You can contact us for advice by:

Email: kinshipsupport@lewisham.gov.uk

Phone: 020 8314 8949

Our phone line is open:

- Mondays 9am–1pm
- Tuesdays 10.00am–1pm: in-person drop-in session at 45 Bromley Road
- Wednesdays 1–5pm
- Thursdays 9am–1pm
- Fridays 9am–1pm

Emergencies and out-of-hours support

If you are worried about a child's safety or need urgent help, support is available **24/7**.

During office hours (9am–5pm)

Families First Contact Point: 020 8314 6660 – this is for any immediate safeguarding concerns.

Outside office hours

Emergency Duty Team: 020 8314 6000

Immediate danger

If a child is in immediate danger, **always call 999**.



Understanding different kinship care arrangements

There are different ways a child can be cared for by a family member or family friend if they cannot live with their parent. The type of arrangement affects who can make decisions for the child, whether a court order is needed and what support may be available. Our team can help you understand which arrangement is right for your family.

Informal family and friends care

A child lives with a relative or family friend through a private family arrangement. The child's parent keeps parental responsibility and there is no court order.

Connected person care or foster care

If a child is looked after by the council, a relative or family friend may be approved to care for them. The child remains looked after by the council and the carer receives fostering equivalent support and allowances.

Child Arrangements Order (CAO)

A court order that says who a child will live with. The carer can make most day-to-day decisions, while parents usually continue to share parental responsibility.

Special Guardianship Order (SGO)

A court order that gives a child a secure, long-term home. The Special Guardian can make most decisions about the child's upbringing until they are 18.

Adoption by a relative

The adoptive parent becomes the child's legal parent and takes full parental responsibility permanently.

Private fostering

A child lives with someone who is not a close relative for 28 days or more in a private arrangement made with their parent. The council must be told about the arrangement so it can check the child's welfare.

The support available will depend on your family's circumstances and the legal arrangement in place. The Kinship Team can provide advice and help you understand your rights, responsibilities and support options.

Visit our website for more information on looking after someone else's child:

lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/children-and-young-people-service/looking-after-someone-elses-child

Different kinship care arrangements

This table gives a quick guide to the main types of kinship care. It shows who can make decisions for the child, whether the child is looked after by the Council and if a court order is needed.

If you are unsure about your rights or responsibilities, our team can help.

Arrangement	Who Has Parental Responsibility?	Child Looked After?	Court Order Required?
Informal Family and Friends Care	Parent(s)	No	No
Private Fostering	Parent(s)	No	No
Connected Person (Reg.24)	Local Authority/Parents	Yes	No
Connected Person Foster Care	Local Authority/Parents	Yes	No
Child Arrangements Order	Parents and Carer	No	Yes
Special Guardianship Order	Special Guardian (enhanced PR)	No	Yes
Adoption	Adoptive Parent(s)	No	Yes



The support available for kinship carers

What our service offers

Our service supports kinship carers to give children a safe, stable and loving home.

Support may include emotional, practical, financial or specialist help, depending on your family's needs.

You may need support when things change, such as a move, loss, family change or school transition.

Assessing support needs

We may talk with you or complete an assessment to understand what your family needs.

Support may include:

- Family support
- Access to therapeutic services
- Financial support, where eligible

Emotional and practical support

We offer practical and emotional support to help kinship carers in their caring role. This includes advice, peer support, training and family events. We can also help you connect

with local services, activities and community groups that may be useful for you and your family. Our team can help you access:

- Education and Virtual School support
- Emotional wellbeing and therapeutic services
- Youth activities and community services
- Family Hubs and local support
- Housing advice where this affects family stability
- Family network meetings and Family Group Conferences
- Mediation may also be available to help families work through disagreements and find practical solutions together.

Preparing for kinship care

If a child is going to live with you, we can help you understand what to expect. This may include information about:

- The role of a kinship carer
- Family relationships and contact arrangements
- Assessments and approval processes
- Supporting a child through change and uncertainty

Sip & Chat peer support groups

Our team runs regular Sip & Chat support sessions for Special Guardians and kinship carers. Sessions are informal and take place online and in person. Dates are shared in the regular service newsletter or by email. Carers can:

- Meet and connect with other kinship carers
- Share experiences and tips
- Ask questions and access advice from the Kinship Team

Ongoing support after a court order

Once an SGO or other kinship arrangement is in place, our team can continue to support you. This includes:

- An introduction to the Kinship Local Offer and available support
- Advice and practical help with parenting, education, health and behaviour
- Support with family relationships and contact arrangements, including family network meetings
- Peer support groups, training and online sessions
- Newsletters and regular updates
- Family activities and events throughout the year

Where life story work would benefit a child, we aim to make sure it is considered at the earliest opportunity. The Kinship Team can discuss your child's needs and help identify the right support.

Support from Family Hubs

Family Hubs provide community-based support for kinship carers by bringing different services together in one place. They are designed to make it easier for families to get advice, ask questions and find the right support. Family Hubs are available across the borough and families can drop in without a referral.

Lewisham Family Hub locations and contact details

Family Hub	Address	Contact number
Bellingham Family Hub	109-111 Randlesdown Road, London SE6 3HB	07720 152903
Deptford Family Hub	Clyde Nursery Building, Alverton Street, London SE8 5NH	020 8692 3653
Downham Family Hub	Downderry Primary School, Shroffold Road, Bromley BR1 5PD	020 8695 5915

Family Hub	Address	Contact number
Eliot Bank Family Hub	Thorpwood Avenue, London SE26 4BU	020 8613 0172
Honor Oak Youth and Family Hub	50 Turnham Road, Honor Oak, London SE4 2JD	020 3924 2383
Kaleidoscope Family Hub	32 Rushey Green, London SE6 4JF	020 7138 1100
Ladywell Family Hub	30 Rushey Mead, London SE4 1JJ	07720 152904

Note: Activities previously delivered at the Evelyn Family Hub have moved to the nearby Deptford and Honor Oak Family Hubs. Evelyn is no longer operating as a Family Hub location.

What you can access at a Family Hub

At a Family Hub, carers can:

- Drop in to speak with professionals from Health, Housing and the Department for Work and Pensions
- Get advice and help with problems straight away, without needing multiple appointments

Help navigating other services

Family Hubs also provide clear guidance and signposting to other support, including:

- Education and the Virtual School
- Health and emotional wellbeing services
- Youth clubs and activities
- SEND services
- Community and family support services

This approach helps families understand what support is available and how to access it, reducing barriers and ensuring help is offered early and locally.

Through this joined-up approach, Family Hubs make it easier for kinship carers and their families to access support, advice and specialist services. This helps families receive assistance early, build resilience and access the right support before difficulties escalate, in line with Lewisham's Families First and Family Help approach. The Kinship Team will continue to develop signposting information to help families identify activities, support networks and opportunities available across Lewisham, including community-based services and local learning opportunities.

Visit the Family Hubs website to find out more about available services and watch short videos about the support on offer lewishamfamilyhubs.org.uk

Support from Kinship Charity

Kinship is a national charity funded in part through Department for Education investment to support kinship carers across England and Wales. Membership is free and provides access to information, advice, training, peer support networks and regular events.

Kinship offers a range of free online and in-person workshops, training opportunities and peer support groups throughout the year, helping carers develop skills, increase confidence and connect with others in similar situations.

They offer a wide range of support to help carers, including:

- Practical advice and information
- Emotional support and one-to-one help
- Legal information and guidance
- Peer support networks and groups
- Training and learning opportunities

Kinship Charity also provides online tools to help carers navigate services and understand their rights. They work at a national level to raise awareness of kinship care and improve support for families. You can find out more or access support directly at kinship.org.uk

Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)

The Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) is a government-funded scheme that helps families access specialist therapeutic support.

The fund supports children and young people affected by emotional, behavioural or developmental difficulties linked to trauma, neglect or instability in early childhood.

Who the fund is for

The ASGSF may support children and young people living in England who are:

- Adopted (including from overseas)
- Living under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and were previously in care
- Living under a Child Arrangements Order (CAO) and were previously looked after
- In situations where an adoption or SGO placement is at risk of breaking down

Support is available for children and young people:

- Up to the age of 21, or
- Up to 25 if they have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

How to apply

Speak to the Kinship Team or Post-SGO Support if you'd like to apply. They can:

- Talk to you about whether the fund is right for your child
- Assess your child's needs
- Help with the application
- Find a suitable therapist or support provider
- Submit the application on your behalf

This helps families get the right support when they need it. For more information, visit adoptlondon.org.uk/adoption-support/adoption-support-fund or call 020 7525 4491.

The Post Adoption Helpline is open Monday to Friday from 9.30am–4pm. Outside of these hours, please leave a message with your name and contact details and a Social Worker will endeavour to contact you the next working day.

Therapeutic, educational and birth family support

Fostering and Kinship Family Therapist

Lewisham plans to offer help from a family therapist for kinship carers, foster carers and children.

This support will help children who have been through loss, trauma or big changes.

We will share more information about who can use this service and how to ask for help once it is ready. The family therapist can help with:

- Understanding your child's behaviour and feelings
- Practical ways to respond when things are difficult
- Support to strengthen family relationships and help arrangements stay stable

This support can help families understand children's needs, reduce stress and keep relationships strong.

Therapeutic interventions

We support kinship families to access therapeutic help where children or carers need extra support with relationships, emotions or family contact.

Therapy and emotional help

Therapy may help children and families to:

- Manage difficult family relationships
- Cope with loss, separation or bereavement
- Support children's emotional wellbeing after trauma or change

Support will be based on what the child needs and will focus on safety, stability and family relationships.

Family network meetings

Family network meetings can help when family relationships are difficult or people disagree.

They give families a chance to talk, listen and agree practical steps that support the child.

They can help families to:

- Improve communication

- Manage conflict
- Agree practical steps that support the child's wellbeing

Assessing and supporting contact with birth family

Sometimes we may help you plan safe family time with birth family members. This can help to:

- Understand any risks to the child
- Support safe, positive and child-focused contact
- Keep family relationships safe and focused on the child's needs

Nurturing care and stability

We want children to grow up in safe, stable and loving homes with people they know and trust. Stable relationships help children feel secure, build confidence and develop a strong sense of belonging. Our team can help by:

- Supporting carers when challenges arise
- Bringing families together through family network meetings
- Signposting to advocacy and other support services
- Helping children stay connected to their family, culture, heritage and community

Engaging family networks

We support families to work together so children can remain safe, stable and connected within their family network. This work forms part of Lewisham's Families First for Children Pathfinder and the borough's wider Family Help approach.

Family Group Conferences

Lewisham's Family Group Conference (FGC) Service helps families come together to make plans for a child's safety, stability and wellbeing. This includes:

- Bringing together relatives, friends and other important people in the child's life
- Helping the family agree a clear plan that supports the child
- Supporting families to take the lead in finding solutions

Family Network Support Packages can help put these plans into action. Reviews and follow-up meetings may also be offered to continue strengthening kinship arrangements over time.

Family time with birth family

Our kinship team also supports carers to plan, manage and review safe and positive family time between children and their birth family. Some children may have indirect contact arrangements, sometimes referred to as letterbox contact. Following adoption, these arrangements are generally coordinated by Adopt London South.

Where children are subject to Special Guardianship or other kinship arrangements, support may be available to help carers consider how meaningful and safe family relationships can be maintained.

This may include support around:

- Sibling relationships
- Family time planning
- Family network meetings
- Mediation
- Supporting children to express their wishes and feelings about family time
- Understand what healthy and child-focused family time looks like
- Manage disagreements or complex family relationships
- Support children emotionally before and after family time
- Balance family time with school, routines and the child's wellbeing

This support helps ensure family time is safe, meaningful and centred on the child's needs.

Supporting identity, life story and belonging:

Children in kinship care often benefit from support to understand their personal history, family relationships, culture, heritage and identity. The Kinship Team may support children and carers through:

- Life story work.
- Family trees and genograms.
- Exploration of family history.

- Support to understand family relationships.
- Activities that promote cultural, linguistic, faith and community identity.
- Maintaining connections to people, places and traditions that are important to the child.

Support with learning and education

Lewisham offers support to help children in kinship care settle, learn and do well at school and in early years settings.

Children who have experienced loss, neglect or trauma may find learning and relationships at school more challenging. Changes such as moving school, changing classes or managing transitions can also be difficult. The Kinship service can help carers understand what support is available and how to access it.

Help with school and education

Carers can receive advice and guidance to support their child with:

- School routines, attendance and transitions
- Behaviour, friendships and relationships with teachers
- Understanding what help a child may be entitled to in school

Where concerns arise regarding a child's education, emotional wellbeing or behaviour in school, the Kinship Team may work with schools and partner agencies to facilitate Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings to assess needs, coordinate support and review progress.

Learning beyond the classroom

Lewisham recognises that children learn and develop through a wide range of educational, cultural and community experiences. Carers may wish to explore opportunities such as:

- Museums, including the Horniman Museum
- Libraries and reading programmes
- Community learning projects
- Faith-based learning opportunities
- Home education networks

- Alternative educational pathways
- Cultural and heritage activities

The Kinship Team can help signpost carers to information and local opportunities that support children's learning, aspirations and sense of belonging.

Pupil Premium Plus

If your child was previously looked after by a local authority, they are likely to be entitled to Pupil Premium Plus. This is extra funding given to schools to:

- Support children's learning and wellbeing
- Help address the impact of early experiences
- Improve education outcomes

Ask your child's school how Pupil Premium Plus is being used to support your child.

Early Years Support (ages 0–5)

Lewisham's Early Years Service supports children from birth to age five and helps families access:

- Free childcare and early education entitlements (up to 30 hours for eligible families, including some kinship carers)
- Support for children with additional needs or SEND
- Information and advice about childcare options

Visit lewishamearlyyears.org.uk for more information.

Support from the Virtual School

The Virtual School supports the education of children in kinship care and those who have previously been looked after and offers the following advice and support:

- School attendance and exclusions
- In-year school moves
- Education planning
- Accessing funding and extra support

They also work to strengthen cooperation between carers, schools and children's services, helping ensure children in kinship care receive the same priority as those in foster care.

We would encourage you to contact Lewisham Virtual School directly for the most up-to-date information regarding available programmes.

Send mail to: Lewisham Virtual School, London Borough of Lewisham, Laurence House (2nd Floor, East C)1 Catford Road, London SE6 4RU

Website: lewishamvirtuelschool.org.uk



Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Information, Advice and Support

Some children and young people living in kinship care may have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and need extra support from education, health, social care, or community services.

Lewisham provides a range of services designed to help children and young people with SEND achieve positive outcomes, access the right support, and reach their full potential. Families and carers should be involved in decisions about support and planning for their child.

Access to some services is subject to assessment, eligibility criteria, and available resources.

Services, referral pathways, and contact details may change over time.

Families should always refer to the Lewisham SEND Local Offer for the most up-to-date information about local support and services.

Lewisham SEND Local Offer

The Lewisham SEND Local Offer is the main source of information about services and support available for children and young people aged 0 to 25 with SEND and their families. It explains what support is available and how families can access it.

The Local Offer includes information about:

- Early years support schools and colleges.
- Specialist educational provision.
- Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- Health and wellbeing services.
- Short breaks and respite support.
- Community activities and youth services.
- Financial support and benefits.
- Preparing for adulthood.
- Parent and carer support groups.

For more information, visit [lewisham.gov.uk/localoffer](https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/localoffer)

Family Hubs and SEND Support

Lewisham Family Hubs provide support, advice, and guidance for families with children and young people, including those with SEND and disabilities. They bring together health, education, family support, and community services in one place.

Family Navigators

Family navigators can be accessed in person at the family hubs or virtually via the following website: [lewishamfamilyhubs.org.uk](https://www.lewishamfamilyhubs.org.uk)

Family navigators can support you through the following ways:

- Provide advice and information on a range of different topics
- Signpost you to local support and services
- Introduce you to services located within the Family Hubs and elsewhere
- Provide a listening ear
- Support you with form filling (excluding DLA and PIP)
- Much, much more!

To access the family navigators, scan the below QR Code:



Family Hubs can help families access:

- SEND information and guidance
- Activities and events for children with additional needs
- Parent and carer support groups
- Information about health, education and SEND pathways
- Short breaks and community opportunities
- Emotional wellbeing support and signposting to specialist services

Family Thrive

Family Thrive works with families who have children aged 0 to 18 years, (and up to 25 years for SEND) who may require tailored parenting support to help them be happier and healthier. We work closely with schools and other professionals with consent. We provide tailored parenting support and undertake direct work with children and young people.

For detailed information, please click the below links:

lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/children-and-families-information-service/family-hubs/family-thrive

Integrated SEND Services

Lewisham's Integrated SEND Services bring together specialist education and therapy services to support children and young people with SEND. Services may include:

- Educational Psychology.
- Specialist Teaching Services.
- Occupational Therapy.
- Early Years SEND Services.
- Portage.
- Specialist inclusion and advisory services.

Head to our schools' website for more information schoolsservices.lewisham.gov.uk

Lewisham SEN Team

The SEN Team coordinates Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Email: SEN@lewisham.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 8314 6303 / 020 8314 6369

Portage Service

Portage is a specialist educational home-visiting service for pre-school children with developmental needs or disabilities. It works alongside parents and carers to support learning and development through play.

Email: portage@lewisham.gov.uk

Website: lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/children-and-young-people-service/local-offer/education-and-learning/portage

SEN Support and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

Most children requiring SEND support will receive support through SEN Support at their school or educational setting.

Where a child has more complex needs, an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment may be requested. Following assessment, some children may receive an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), bringing together support from education, health and social care services.

Families can seek support and advice from:

- Their child's school or SENCO.
- Lewisham SEN Team.
- SENDIASS.
- The Lewisham SEND Local Offer.

Email: ehcp@lewisham.gov.uk

SENDIASS

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) provides free, confidential and impartial advice for parents, carers and young people aged 0 to 25 with SEND.

SENDIASS Can Help With

- Understanding SEND rights and legislation.
- SEN Support.
- EHCP assessments and reviews.
- School meetings.
- Mediation and disagreement resolution.
- SEND Tribunal processes.
- Finding additional support services.

Telephone: 020 3319 2163

Email: lewisham@kids.org.uk

Website: kids.org.uk/sendias/services/lewisham-sendias

Lewisham Parent and Carers' Forum (LPCF)

The Lewisham Parent and Carers' Forum are an independent parent-led organisation supporting families of children and young people with SEND.

LPCF Provides

- SEND information and resources.
- Parent workshops and webinars.
- Peer support opportunities.
- Parent engagement events.
- Opportunities to influence local services.

Website: lewishamparentcarer.org.uk

Resources for autism

Resources for Autism offers a variety of services catering to young people, parents/ caregivers, and professionals in Lewisham. They offer workshops and coffee mornings specifically for parents/carers and practical services for children with a diagnosis of autism. Resources include weekly youth clubs, holiday schemes, parent support groups, music

therapy and volunteer befriending services offering a safe, non-judgemental space for CYP with autism to thrive, supported by staff with autism training.

Resources are available for Lewisham residents at resourcesforautism.org.uk

Lewisham HAF Programme

The HAF programme provides a varied holiday programme with funding from the Department for Education. A wide range of providers in Lewisham are supporting the delivery of this programme, offering various fun-packed sessions, including arts, crafts, sports, and trips.

DfE's current HAF guidance says the programme is primarily for children on benefits-related FSM, but local authorities are encouraged to use up to 15% of their HAF funding for children not on FSM who would nevertheless benefit. Children in kinship care at crisis or transition points could be included within that cohort.

You can find more information on our website lewisham.gov.uk/holiday-activities

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Some children and young people with SEND may also need support with their emotional wellbeing or mental health.

Lewisham CAMHS provides specialist assessment, treatment and support for emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties.

CAMHS can support with

- Anxiety and low mood
- Emotional regulation difficulties
- ADHD
- Neurodevelopmental difficulties.
- Mental health assessments.
- Therapeutic interventions.
- Crisis mental health support.

Telephone: 020 3228 1000 / 020 3228 1001

Email: lewishamCAMHSadmin@slam.nhs.uk

Website: slam.nhs.uk/lewisham-camhs

Urgent mental health support

NHS 111 - Option 2 for mental health support

In an emergency call 999 or attend the nearest emergency department.

Kaleidoscope Centre for Children and Young People - Health and Wellbeing Support

Kaleidoscope is Lewisham's specialist integrated centre for children and young people. It brings together a range of health and specialist services in one location, making it easier for families to access coordinated support. Children and young people with SEND may access a range of health services depending on their individual needs.

Services Available

- Community Paediatrics
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Children's Community Nursing
- Complex Needs Nursing
- CAMHS
- Health Visiting.
- Portage
- Looked After Children's Health Services

Address: 32 Rushey Green, Catford, London SE6 4JF

Telephone: 020 3049 1100

Website: lewishamandgreenwich.nhs.uk/kaleidoscope

Family Help, Children with Disabilities (CWD)

The Children with Disabilities Service is a specialist social work service for children and young people with significant disabilities and complex needs.

Eligibility

A child may be eligible where they:

- Have a diagnosed severe or profound disability, developmental condition, or complex health need.
- Require significantly more care and supervision than children of a similar age.
- Experience substantial difficulties with communication, mobility, personal care, or independence.
- Require support from more than one specialist service.
- Have needs that significantly affect family life and caring responsibilities.

Support may include:

- Social work support.
- Family support services.
- Specialist short breaks.
- Community access support.
- Care packages.
- Transition planning into adulthood.

Children with Disabilities Referrals (Family First Contact Point)

Telephone: 020 8314 6660

lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/children-and-young-people-service/services-for-children-with-complex-needs-and-disabilities/children-with-complex-needs

Lewisham Short Breaks

Short breaks give children and young people with disabilities opportunities to have fun, make friends, learn new skills, and take part in community activities. They also provide valuable support for families and carers.

lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/children-and-young-people-service/services-for-children-with-complex-needs-and-disabilities/short-breaks/types-of-short-breaks

Universal Short Breaks involves providing details of activities on Lewisham's Local Offer that are available within Lewisham local community that have specific groups or classes for children and young people with disabilities. These services are available to all children and

young people and will enable parents/carers to get a short break from their caring responsibilities, while their child or young person engages in a fun activity. Parents/carers can also contact the Short Break Team for universal signposting on where to access activities and support in their local community.

Lewisham Council - Universal short breaks for children and young people with disabilities and their families

In addition, the Short Breaks service provides two types of short breaks: a Targeted Short Break and a Specialist Short Break. These services are aimed at children, young people and families with different levels of need.

Targeted Short Breaks: These are for children and young people with a disability who are unable to access universal activities because of their disability.

If eligible for this support, the parent/carer will be offered a support package by the Short Breaks team to enable them to have a short break while their child or young person is being cared for or supported in a community activity. The short breaks package for approx. 2 hours per week (100 hours per year) could include either direct payments, enabling parents/carers to choose and buy their own support; brokerage support, where the Short Breaks team would access the support, the family has; or allocated time at our short break provision - Rockbourne.

[lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/children-and-young-people-service/services-for-children-with-complex-needs-and-disabilities/short-breaks/types-of-short-breaks/targeted-short-breaks-for-children-with-disabilities-and-their-families](https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/children-and-young-people-service/services-for-children-with-complex-needs-and-disabilities/short-breaks/types-of-short-breaks/targeted-short-breaks-for-children-with-disabilities-and-their-families)

Specialist Short Breaks: These are for children and young people with a disability who are substantially and adversely affected in their ability to carry out normal day to day activities because of their disability and have been assessed by a social worker as needing support.

[lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/children-and-young-people-service/services-for-children-with-complex-needs-and-disabilities/short-breaks/types-of-short-breaks/specialist-short-breaks](https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/children-and-young-people-service/services-for-children-with-complex-needs-and-disabilities/short-breaks/types-of-short-breaks/specialist-short-breaks)

The assessment will determine what support the child or young person needs and the Short Breaks team would put in place the support based on this assessment.

lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/children-and-young-people-service/services-for-children-with-complex-needs-and-disabilities/children-with-complex-needs

The types of provision that could be put in place include direct payments for parents/carers to choose and buy their own support; domiciliary care (care in the home, which could include personal care); and allocated time at our specialist short breaks provisions.

Activities and events

Find things to do for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/children-and-young-people-service/local-offer/activities-and-events

Disability Register and Max Card: For families who sign the disability register, Lewisham offers a Max Card, which provides discount incentive to children and young people aged 0-17 years. Lewisham Council - Joining the disability register

Short Breaks WhatsApp Channel: The channel offers an easy way to keep updated about events and activities both locally and further afield. The channel is updated by the Short Breaks team to share useful information.

Click the link to join: whatsapp.com/channel/0029VbCGMaa2ZjCim9BtUr0K

Moving from children's social care to adult social care

Find out how we help young people move from children's services to adult social care and prepare for adulthood.

Lewisham Council - Moving from children's social care to adult social care

Preparing for adulthood

Prepare for the next stages of adult life, career or education if you are a young person with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/children-and-young-people-service/local-offer/preparing-for-adulthood

What to expect from Adult Social Care

Discover what services and support you can get from adult social care and how they can help.

lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/socialcare/adult/what-to-expect

SEND Information and further support

lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/children-and-young-people-service/local-offer

Lewisham Youth Services

Lewisham Youth Services offer access to safe spaces, trusted adults, activities and opportunities that help young people feel confident, supported and connected in their community. Available for children and young people aged 8 to 19, and up to 25 for those with additional needs.

Young people can take part in:

- After-school, evening and holiday activities in local youth clubs and community spaces
- One-to-one youth work for young people who need extra or more personalised support
- Support with emotional wellbeing, relationships, education, life skills and confidence

Youth voice and participation

Youth Services support young people to have a voice and be involved in shaping services through Youth forums and other participation and engagement activities.

Specialist advice and support

Additional specialist support is available, including:

- Insight Lewisham, which offers confidential advice on drugs, alcohol, sexual health and relationships

- Information, advice and signposting to services such as sexual health support, Young Minds and Future Men

Find out more at: youth.lewisham.gov.uk

Leaving Care services

Lewisham Leaving Care Services support young people aged 16 to 25 who have been in the care of Lewisham Council. Support is designed to help young people prepare for adulthood and move towards independence.

Leaving Care Services are guided by national law and focus on ensuring young people:

- Have someone they can turn to for advice and support
- Are supported with education, training and employment
- Can access housing, health and other services
- Are helped to develop independence and life skills

What this means for young people in kinship care

When a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) is made, the child is no longer looked after by the local authority. This means they do not automatically qualify for Leaving Care support.

However, some young people living under SGOs may still be entitled to Leaving Care support, depending on their care history.

The key factor is whether the young person was looked after immediately before the SGO was made.

Support that may be available

Where a young person is eligible, Leaving Care Services can offer:

- Advice and support with education, training and employment
- Help with housing and planning for independent living
- Support to access health and other services
- Practical help to prepare for adulthood, including life skills

The support available to young people leaving care depends on their care history and legal status. The law recognises four categories of care leavers:

1. Eligible Child
2. Relevant Child
3. Former Relevant Child
4. Qualifying Care Leaver

Most young people subject to Special Guardianship Orders are likely to be Qualifying Care Leavers. The support available differs depending on leaving care status. The local authority responsible for providing leaving care services will usually be the authority that last looked after the young person.

Young people and carers are encouraged to discuss leaving care eligibility and transition planning with their social worker or Leaving Care Service well before the young person's eighteenth birthday.

You can find out more at lewisham.gov.uk/leaving-care

Housing advice

Special guardians and connected carers can get housing advice and support from the Council.

While the Kinship team cannot secure housing or give priority for housing applications, we can help you access housing services and provide supporting information regarding the child's circumstances where appropriate.

When housing affects placement stability

If housing problems are making it harder for you to provide a safe and stable home for a child in your care, the kinship team and post-SGO support service may be able to offer advice, guidance and practical support. We can help you understand your options and access other services where appropriate. This may include:

- Talking through how your housing situation is affecting your family
- Information about housing services and other support available
- Letters or supporting information where appropriate
- Considering financial support that may help meet a child's needs and maintain stability

- Working with Housing Services and other agencies where needed
- Any support will be based on the child's needs and your family's circumstances.

Any support provided will be based on an assessment of the child's needs and the family's individual circumstances.

Housing advice and support

Kinship carers and special guardians who require housing advice can also contact Lewisham Housing Options directly for information, advice and assistance regarding housing need, homelessness prevention, housing applications and housing options:

Lewisham Housing Options service

Laurence House, 1 Catford Road, London SE6 4RU.

Telephone: 020 8314 7007.

Email: housingoptionsenquiry@lewisham.gov.uk

Website: lewisham.gov.uk/homeless

The Kinship and Post-SGO Support Service can help carers understand how to access housing services and, where appropriate, provide information regarding the impact of housing difficulties on the child's welfare and placement stability.

Important information

- The Council cannot guarantee access to social housing, rehousing, or a housing transfer.
- Housing decisions are made by Housing Services in accordance with housing legislation, local allocation policies and available housing resources.
- Any request for support will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must demonstrate how the housing situation is affecting the child's welfare, stability or care arrangements.
- Support from Children's Social Care is intended to promote the welfare of the child and maintain stable family arrangements wherever possible.

If housing difficulties are affecting your ability to care for a child, please contact the Kinship and Post-SGO Support Service to discuss your circumstances and any support that may be available.

Legal advice and support

We recognise that becoming a Special Guardian is a significant legal commitment. Prospective Special Guardians need to understand both the legal implications of the order and the support that may be available to them and the child.

Funded independent legal advice for prospective special guardians

As part of the Special Guardianship assessment and court process, Lewisham Council may fund up to **two hours of independent legal advice** for prospective Special Guardians.

This advice is intended to help applicants:

- Understand the legal implications, rights and responsibilities associated with a Special Guardianship Order (SGO).
- Consider the long-term impact of becoming a Special Guardian.
- Understand the proposed Special Guardianship Support Plan and the support available to the child and family.
- Make informed decisions during court proceedings.
- Seek clarification on matters relating to parental responsibility and the legal effects of an SGO.

The funded legal advice:

- Is available to prospective Special Guardians who are being assessed in connection with court proceedings.
- Is available regardless of the applicant's financial circumstances.
- Is funded by the Local Authority at agreed legal aid rates.
- Requires an agreed estimate of costs before instruction.

Any request for funding beyond the standard allowance must be approved by the relevant Head of Service and will only be considered where there are exceptional circumstances

and where it is considered necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of the child. The availability of funding is discretionary and assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Legal advice after an SGO is granted

Once a Special Guardianship Order has been made, Special Guardians are responsible for obtaining their own legal advice. In most circumstances, ongoing legal costs cannot be funded by the Council.

However, the kinship team and post-SGO Support Service can provide information, advice, signposting and guidance about sources of independent legal support where legal issues arise after the order is made.

Independent legal advice services

The following organisations may be able to provide free or low-cost independent legal advice to Lewisham residents.

- **Citizens Advice Lewisham**

Provides free, confidential and independent advice on a range of issues including housing, benefits, debt, employment and family-related matters.

Telephone: 0800 231 5453

Website: citizensadvicelewisham.org.uk

Address: Leemore Community Hub, Bonfield Road, London SE13 5EU.

- **Lewisham Law Centre (operated by Southwark Law Centre)**

Provides specialist legal advice and representation for Lewisham residents in areas including housing, immigration, welfare benefits, employment, public law and education. Appointments are generally arranged in advance, and eligibility criteria may apply.

Telephone: 020 3145 1490

Email: enquiries@southwarklawcentre.org.uk

Address: The Leemore Centre, 29-39 Clarendon Rise, London SE13 5ES.

- **Community Legal Centre (CLC) - Action for Community Development (AfCD)**

Provides advice, advocacy and support in immigration, nationality and asylum matters. Initial consultations are available by appointment.

Telephone: 020 8692 2277

Website: actionforcd.org

Organisation: Action for Community Development (AfCD).

Further information

The Kinship and Post-SGO Support Service can discuss the support available to prospective and existing Special Guardians and provide signposting to appropriate legal advice services where required. While the Council cannot provide personal legal advice to carers, it is committed to ensuring that prospective Special Guardians have sufficient information and access to independent legal advice to make informed decisions that are in the best interests of the child.

Training and support for kinship carers

We offer training and support to help kinship carers feel confident, informed and supported in their role.

Training opportunities

The Kinship Team provides a range of training sessions designed to support carers at different stages. This may include training on:

- Being a safer carer
- Understanding attachment and the impact of trauma
- Supporting children with life story work
- Managing emotional and behavioural challenges
- Managing Family Time
- Introduction to the Kinship Support Team
- Supporting children's emotional wellbeing

Training focuses on supporting children at home, at school and within the wider family.

Ongoing support

Alongside training, kinship carers can access:

- Practitioner-led support from social care teams
- Support groups to share experiences and learn alongside other carers
- Personalised guidance based on your family's circumstances

You can also access group support and one-to-one guidance.

Financial support

Financial support depends on the care arrangement and the child's circumstances. Our team can explain what may be available.

Special guardians

If you have a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), you may be considered for a Special Guardianship allowance which will be set out in your Special Guardianship Support Plan.

- This allowance is means-tested
- It is reviewed every year
- It is not automatic and is agreed at the discretion of the local authority

The Kinship Team can explain how assessments and reviews work and what information is considered.

- Explain which financial support may apply to you
- Help you understand assessments and reviews
- Signpost you to benefits, grants and other financial help

Other useful community resources and organisations

- Lewisham Libraries: lewisham.gov.uk/libraries
- Horniman Museum: horniman.ac.uk
- Parenting Support: lewisham.gov.uk/help-with-parenting
- Community Learning Opportunities (Adult Learning Lewisham): all.org.uk
- Cultural and Heritage Organisations: wearelewisham.com

- Lewisham Youth Theatre: lewishamyouththeatre.com
- Community Directory in Lewisham: lewishamlocal.com/support-for-community-organisations
- Young Lewisham Project: younglewishamproject.com
- Lewisham Carers – Imago: imago.community/carers-services/lewisham-carers
- Carer Covenant: mycovenant.org.uk
- Community Connections Lewisham: communityconnectionslewisham.org
- Settle: wearesettle.org/about-settle
- Growing Hope: growinghope.org.uk
- Lewisham Wellbeing Hub: together-uk.org/lewisham-wellbeing-hub-community-directory
- Lewisham Music Hub: lewishammusic.org
- Leisure Centres: lewisham.gov.uk/inmyarea/sport/leisure-centres

Feedback and complaints

Kinship carers have the right to raise concerns or make a complaint about any support or service they receive.

We aim to sort problems quickly and fairly, working with families wherever possible.

Step 1: Try to resolve it first

Many concerns can be sorted quickly by talking to:

- Your **Kinship Worker**, or
- The **Kinship Team Manager or Group Manager**

This may help clear up misunderstandings or adjust the support you are getting.

Step 2: Make a formal complaint

If the issue is not resolved, you can make a formal complaint.

Stage 1 – Local resolution

- A senior manager will look into your complaint and speak to the people involved.
- We will contact you if we need more information.
- You will usually receive a written response within 10 working days. If the complaint is more complex, this may take up to 20 working days.

The response will explain our findings and any next steps. If you are not happy with the response, you can ask for **Stage 2**.

Stage 2 – Independent investigation

- An Independent Investigating Officer and Independent Person will review your complaint.
- They will speak to you, talk to any staff involved and review relevant records.
- You will usually receive a response within 25 working days. Complex complaints can take up to 65 working days.

You will receive a written report explaining the findings and the outcome. If you are still unhappy, you can ask for **Stage 3**.

Stage 3 – Review panel

- A panel of **three independent people** will review your complaint.
- You can attend and share your views.
- The panel will usually be held within 30 working days
- **You will receive a written outcome 5–15 working days after the panel**
- The panel may recommend changes or improvements.

If you are still unhappy

If you are still unhappy after completing all three stages, you can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) which is independent from the Council and looks at whether procedures were followed correctly.

Website: lgo.org.uk

Phone: **0300 061 0614**

How to contact the complaints team

Children and Young People's Complaints, Third Floor, Laurence House, 1 Catford Road,
London SE6 4RU

- Phone: **020 8314 6930**
- Email: cyp.casework@lewisham.gov.uk

Reference list

- *Department for Education: Kinship Care Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities.*
- *Department for Education: Championing Kinship Care: National Kinship Care Strategy.*
- *Families First for Children reforms and Family Help model.*
- [Lewisham Council](#) Children's Services policies and procedures.
- [Lewisham Council](#) Family Hubs and SEND Local Offer information.
- [Kinship Charity](#) guidance, resources and support materials.
- [Adopt London](#) guidance relating to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)

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Signature	
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We end with some words from our kinship carers

“Lewisham’s Local Kinship Offer is a wonderful and much-needed idea. Having that wider network of support makes such a difference. It is not only about knowing where to go for advice, it is about having a welcoming community where you can build relationships, feel seen and heard.

“I have also really valued that support recognising the whole family, including other children in the household, through activities and opportunities they can enjoy together.

“In May 1965 my late mother Miriam, came to England at the tender age of fifteen to live with her sister Dorothy in New Cross. It has been a privilege to be directly involved in the consultations and briefings of the Lewisham Local Kinship Offer. A collaborative effort of excellence and full circle moment.”