



Kinship Care

Advice service for Scotland



WHAT NOW?



“Hello, my name is Michelle and I am a Kinship Carer to my two granddaughters.

When I first became a Kinship Carer I got a call out of the blue asking me to look after my granddaughters for a few weeks while social work got things sorted out at home. Five years later they are still with us.

The day they arrived I heard the words Kinship Carer - something I had never heard of before and knew nothing about. My husband, daughter and I looked like rabbits caught in headlights with two little children. We were given no help, advice or guidance as to what to do or what was expected of us, and we felt so very alone and angry. We had no contact numbers and did not even receive a phone call.

Five years on I found out about the Kinship Care Advice Service for Scotland (KCASS) and helpline, and I was so angry as had I known about it the first thing I would have done would have been to call them for support. If I had been given this booklet then it would have made things a little easier. Just to know that we were not alone and that help was out there, it would have been an absolute lifeline.

I suggested developing a booklet like this at the KCASS advisory group which I am a part of. I didn't want anyone else to go through the horrible, sometimes debilitating situation I was left in. This booklet would have helped so very much. That is why I am so very passionate and determined that it should be given to all Kinship Carers when they take on the care of a child, just so they know that they are not alone and have all the information they will need.”

Acknowledgements

All staff from the Kinship Care Advice Service for Scotland (KCASS) would like to thank the members of the Advisory group for their input and suggestion of the development of this What now? booklet. At initial Advisory group meetings the members highlighted the lack of information shared with them, particularly when they first became Kinship Carers, and how helpful it would have been if they had been provided with some general information and contact details of where they could receive help and support. Some members were not aware of KCASS and we are rising to the challenge of raising awareness of our service and Kinship Care in Scotland.

Introduction

As you have received this booklet you will be a Kinship Carer or are considering becoming one. Wherever you are on your Kinship Care journey we welcome you and hope that you find the information within this booklet helpful and informative.

At KCASS we highly value the role that you as Kinship Carers take within our society, we know that you often step in at extremely short notice and in difficult circumstances to take on the care of children.

Though at times challenging we hear of the love and devotion shared with Kinship children, with Kinship Carers telling us they want only the best for the child in their care. We hear regularly of the magnificent achievements of children brought up in Kinship Care. Our aim is to help all Kinship families achieve the best for the children in their care.

“ The most rewarding part of kinship care is, you raising the child, seeing the hugs and kisses and love she brings to the family I would have missed out on if I hadn't chosen to care for her ”

Kinship Care

Where parents are no longer able to care for their children the best option for children, where it is possible, is to remain within their own family or with people they know.

Children can come into Kinship Care in a variety of ways when parents cannot provide the care that a child requires; every Kinship situation is different though there may be similar challenges experienced.

The Scottish Government is committed to keeping families together in Scotland. Therefore in the circumstance that a child needs to be removed from parental care it is important that extended family are considered as the first option where the child has existing relationships and a familiar environment. The Promise 2020 states that “Kinship care must be actively explored as a positive place for children to live”.

The Service

We are the national Kinship support service in Scotland, we are an independent and impartial service which is currently funded by the Scottish Government. The service offers support, training, workshops and resources to Kinship families and practitioners. By being in a safe loving environment a child can start to recover from adverse childhood experiences and we will endeavour to support your Kinship family as you continue on your journey.

See below for what we do and how you can link in with the service.



Helpline - responding to any Kinship carer or Kinship related enquiry

Work with Kinship Care peer Support group

KCASS Advisory Group - influencing service developments and changes to the Kinship environment



Providing evidence to the Scottish Government which will enhance support for Kinship Care

We listen



What do we do?

Website providing vital information for Kinship Carers and professionals at www.kinship.scot

Influence change for Kinship Families by taking part in consultations and research

Training programme for both Kinship Carers and professionals

Work with local authorities to help improve practice in supporting Kinship Families via the practitioners forum



CPAG - work in partnership with the experts on welfare benefits



Social media presence on twitter and Facebook


Kinship Care Week in Scotland - a platform to celebrate and raise awareness of Kinship Care

Dedicated email for enquiries from both Kinship Carers and professionals



Access to the KCASS legal consultant.





“ My child struggled to play with toys, I had to teach her to play and when she started to play on her own I was crying as I was so happy ”

GET IN TOUCH

You can contact the service in a variety of ways including telephoning the freephone KCASS helpline **0808 800 0006** which is staffed by experienced Kinship Care Advisers.

Please leave a message if you require a call back outside of this time.

Visit our website at: www.kinship.scot

Email: advice@kinshipscot.org

 [kinshipcarecas](https://www.facebook.com/kinshipcarecas)

 [@kinshipscotland](https://twitter.com/kinshipscotland)



Glossary

No matter where you are on your Kinship Care journey you are faced with a lot of terminology which you may find confusing, as the terms often used within legislation can sometimes seem a bit clunky and bewildering.

We have tried to make things a bit clearer below, however you can always contact the service to clarify anything.

We and other professionals will often refer to the legal status of the child and there are a number of legal mechanisms/orders which are designed to support a child living with you. Orders can be made only where it is necessary and even then, only the minimum intervention into people's lives is allowed. The views of the child and their participation in decision making throughout the process is a fundamental principle. Decisions about a child must represent what is in their best interests with their welfare being the paramount consideration.

To know the legal status (that is "Looked After" or "Non Looked After") of the child in your care is particularly important as it will determine what financial and practical support you and your family may be entitled to. LAC stands for "Looked After Child".

Some children in Kinship Care are formally "Looked After" by the local authority and some are not. It doesn't mean looked after in terms of being clothed, fed and loved on an everyday basis. It's a legal term that describes the duties the local authority has towards a child.

Generally the local authority has more legal duties to provide services to a child who is "Looked After" than a child who isn't. It can also make a difference to any money the local authority may give you to help you care for the child.

Considering how the child came to live with you will help to determine the legal status of the child. This will include establishing what legal orders are in place for the child you care for.

There is more information on legal orders in our factsheet understanding legal orders and you can view this on our website here: <http://kinship.scot/download/understanding-legal-orders-2/>



“Looked After” Children and those who are “Non Looked After”

Where a child is deemed as “Looked After”, the Local Authority has legal obligations towards the child to provide advice, guidance and support- which can include financial support. They must safeguard and promote the child’s welfare, access services for the child and promote contact with certain family members, where appropriate. A child is a “Looked After” child if they are cared for under:

- Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) or Interim Supervision Order issued by the Children’s Hearing System
- Permanence Order (PO) applied for by the local authority and issued by the Court
- Section 25 arrangement - where the parent’s consent is usually given
- Child Protection Order or Emergency Protection order granted by the Court

A Child is NOT “Looked After” if cared for under a:

- Kinship Care Order (KCO)
- Informal arrangement within the extended family
- Guardianship Order

Having knowledge of the status of child in your care will ensure you receive the correct information when dealing with other agencies including the Social work Department, DWP and HMRC among others.

The status of each individual child can change, and there can be different statuses of children within your care e.g. two brothers one may be “Looked After” and the other “Non Looked After”.

There is an area at the end of this booklet where you can record the status of the child in your care and any legal orders in place, you can refer to this when dealing with different agencies and professionals.

“ I felt a mix of emotions shock, anger loss.. and being honest I was scared ”



Financial Support

When you care for a child, there will be additional financial pressures.

There may be immediate one-off expenses – items such as a bed, stairgate or pushchair. Then there are the ongoing expenses including food, clothing, toys and school-related costs.

Taking on caring responsibilities can also affect your ability to work, and you may have to give up work or reduce your hours. You may also have to use savings you had set aside for retirement. There is help and advice available if you are in this situation.

Where you are in receipt of Kinship Care Allowance and claim child benefits, in some cases Kinship Care Allowance and child benefits can be means tested depending on which Local Authority provides your payment and also your income threshold, so it is important to contact KCASS or welfare rights to explore your individual circumstances. You should also make sure that the benefits agency understands that you are a Kinship Carer. A letter from your local authority outlining the legal status of the child in your care and the legal mechanism they use to make payment is helpful.

Dependent on your household's circumstances you may be able to claim other benefits, such as Universal Credit, Guardians Allowance and Pension Credit, provided you meet the criteria for these benefits.

You can contact our service via the helpline or by submitting an email. A benefit check carried out by our specialist advisers will establish your entitlements. (See contact details on page 5 or the back of this booklet).

It is helpful for the service to know the legal status of the child in your care (see section under glossary). Kinship Care financial entitlement can be confusing and you may need to contact our specialist service which will provide advice and support at any time in your family's journey and we are always here to help.

“I got my child from birth and had to buy everything from scratch”

Support for Kinship Care

Who is eligible?

The Local authority where you are living will provide assistance where you and the child are eligible. If you have a KCO, (or are applying for one) or a specific Guardianship Order, granted in England and the child is predominately living with you, assistance will be provided to safeguard, support and promote the wellbeing of the child.

The child must be under the age of 16 and subject to a KCO or, if older, was just before turning 16, subject to a KCO. The Local Authority will need to be satisfied that the child was previously a “Looked After” child or, was at risk of being a “Looked After” child when the kinship care arrangement started.

What type of assistance is available?

The provision of assistance includes counselling, advice and information and subsidising services the local authority provides.

Importantly it also relates to financial support, or support in kind, of any description.

Kinship Care Allowance

Foster carers receive an allowance for the care of “Looked After” children living with them. Similarly, kinship carers will receive payment from the local authority to help support the care of eligible children. The local authority sets the level of the allowance and it is linked to the level of the fostering allowance in that area. This payment does not include the fee which foster carers receive.

Contact your local authority to determine if they make any additional payments in relation to birthdays or holidays as part of the Kinship Care Allowance.

What if I am not eligible for Kinship Care Assistance?

Where there is no Kinship Care Order and the arrangement is informal, the local authority can still help. You should approach your local social work department telling them about your situation. They can make an assessment of needs and provide assistance where appropriate.

👉 What do I do, what and who have I got to support this child in terms of food, clothes and toys? 🗨️



Additional financial support

You may be able to apply for help with school clothing and free school meals (all primary 1-5 children are entitled to free school meals) by contacting the child's school or by completing an application form on the council's website. You will need to meet the local authority's criteria to receive this support.

Where you meet the criteria you may be able to apply for the Best Start Grant which consists of three payments and Best Start Food. The first is the 'Pregnancy and Baby Payment' followed by the "Early Learning Payment" and the "School Age Payment".

The Scottish Child Payment helps towards the costs of supporting your family. It's a weekly payment of £25 that you can get for every child you look after who's under 16 years of age.

There is also support available in each local authority area and this can include food banks and household goods. The Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grant can offer financial assistance. Various third sector charities offer assistance, these may require a professional to refer you, again you can contact the service to find out what support you require, and we will provide information on what is available in your local area and assist with your application.

If you are worried about debt you can get information from the Citizens Advice service.

Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland has a number of factsheets on its website : www.cpag.org.uk which will be of interest and they include:

- Kinship Carers and Universal credit
- Kinship Care and Benefits - the essentials
- Scottish Child Payment and Kinship Carers
- Care-Experienced Young People and Benefits
- Benefits for Care Experienced Students

“ If you are worried about debt you can get information from the Citizens Advice service. ”



Formal Kinship Assessment

Early Identification

If you wish to be considered to care for a relative or friend's child it's important that you directly contact the local authority social work department that the child's parent resides in and they should undertake an assessment of your suitability. You have the right to ask for extra time to consider any request made of you and you also have the right to say no to taking a child into your care.

“ We were told if you don't take this child she will go into foster care ”

Allocation

You should be allocated an assessing worker. This assessment should usually be completed by a qualified social worker. The assessment should take no longer than 12 weeks. It is important for you to record the date the kinship assessment officially started.

The assessing worker should meet with you at a time that is convenient for you, if you cannot make any meetings let the social worker know.

Financial Support

It is important that you discuss in detail with the assessing worker any immediate needs for the child and ongoing financial support required. Consider what you need for the child in order for them to be comfortable and have what they need.

It will depend on your local authority kinship policy when you receive the full Kinship Allowance. Some local authorities provide an interim payment which is less than the allowance until the assessment is complete. It is important to ask about this at the beginning of the assessment and for you to know how and when any financial support will be paid to allow you to budget and plan ahead.

Gathering Information and Checks

The assessing worker will gather information on you, your family and household and permission should always be sought from you to complete checks which may include the following;

- PVG for you and any other applicants
- Disclosure check on any adult over 16 living in the household
- GP health check on both applicants
- Health and safety check on the home and bedroom
- Observations of the child if already placed
- Local authority information system check
- Outwith local authority check
- Referees
- Financial checks
- Housing checks
- Checks with education

“ Why are these checks being done on me, you feel like you're the one that's under scrutiny ”

Having checks carried out on you and your family may feel uncomfortable, but they are necessary to ensure that children are being placed in an appropriate environment which is safe and to consider the needs of the child as well as identifying any support needs for you.

The most important thing is to be honest with the worker about your situation - tell them about any criminal convictions or health issues even if these are of a minor nature and occurred a long time ago.

Analysis of Suitability

The assessing worker will consider the child's needs and if these needs will be met by you and your family. They will consider any future support or training needs.

It is important to be honest with the worker about your feelings on what you can and can't manage. Expectations of support needed should be discussed in detail particularly in relation to contact with parents and brothers and sisters, access to education, transport and child care. This should be considered now and in the future as the child develops and needs change.

To hear children's views the worker may wish to speak to the child outwith the family home and speak to your own children about their views on the child living with you. The children's views must always be considered when making decisions.

The worker may wish to speak to anyone involved with you or the child and people you have identified as emergency contacts or childcare supports to ensure that this is a suitable arrangement for the child.

You should be provided with information on any particular needs, diagnosis, or conditions the child has, you should have access to the child's plan and be given information so that you can understand the impact of any trauma on the child now or likelihood in the future. If the child has suffered a bereavement or has a disability or condition there are specific organisations that can provide additional support listed within this booklet.

Recommendation

The assessing worker will either recommend approval or not based on the information gathered as highlighted above. You should be able to read the assessment report in advance of its finalisation to be sure of accuracy and to include any of your own reflections or comments and should know clearly what the worker is recommending and why. You should also have your own copy of the report. The worker should explain the next steps of the process, and this may vary depending on your local authority kinship policy.

Kinship Approval Process

Once the assessment is completed in most local authorities in Scotland this will be signed off by a senior manager or the assessment may be taken to be considered at a Kinship Panel depending on your local authority kinship policy.

If you are approved as a Kinship Carer this should be clearly stated in the assessment. It should also state whether the arrangement is short-term or long-term and include details of the ongoing support you will receive. Good practice is to have an outlined support plan within this assessment recording any ongoing training and development needs, financial support, access to practical support, peer support and support with managing contact.

If you are not approved you should be advised in writing about this and any rights of appeal and timescales for this.

If you need advice about your Kinship assessment you can contact your local social work department or the KCASS helpline.

You will be asked to sign a Kinship Care agreement which sets out the responsibilities of the local authority to support you and your responsibilities as Kinship Carers in the care you will provide to the child.

Kinship Care Reviews

Following approval there should be an annual review carried out on you, again this may vary depending on your local authority. The purpose of the review is to record any changes in circumstances for you, your family and the child, to consider any additional support needs and to update any checks.

PVG checks are usually updated every 3 years. You should inform the local authority of any new health conditions or convictions.

Health checks every 2 years

Health and safety checks every year

Financial check every year

This may vary depending on your local authority and these may be undertaken sooner if a support need or concern has been identified.

“ It is important that you discuss in detail with the assessing worker any immediate needs for the child and ongoing financial support required. ”

“ Seeing the transition the children make in your care makes it worth it ”



Kinship Care Orders and Permanence Orders

At any point during your Kinship journey, you may be considering or advised to consider gaining a Kinship Care Order (KCO), sometimes referred to as a Residence Order. You will apply to the courts for this order which will confirm your home as the settled place of residence of the child. A Kinship Care Order will change the legal status of the child from “Looked After” to “Non Looked After” and can mean that there is no longer social work involvement in the child’s life. It will give some or all of the Parental Rights and Responsibilities for the child to you as the Kinship Carer. It may mean sharing some PRRs with the birth parents or some of these PRRs remaining with the parents.

When considering a KCO there are a few suggested questions you can ask:

- Will some or all of the Parental Rights and Responsibilities be transferred to you and what will they be?
- Will you be able to give approval for medical/dental treatment?
- Will you be able to give approval for attendance at school and educational events?
- Can you apply for a passport on behalf of the child you have care of and take them out of the country on holiday?
- Will the local authority cover all or only some of the legal fees involved – and will they pay legal fees if the child’s parent(s) challenge the Order at a later date?
Please note: It is important to know that the child’s birth parent(s) can challenge the granting of an order in court and once an order is granted, can return to court after six months to apply for it to be removed. There is no limit to the amount of time this can happen.
- Will the local authority continue to facilitate contact between the child and their parents and or siblings and what will that arrangement be?
- What will be the impact on your financial situation, will any Kinship Allowance payments be affected and what will that be?

Please note that where the child is no longer “Looked After” and reaches the age of five years, if you are in receipt of Universal Credit, or are in the future, you may be subject to the work-related requirements, you can check this out with your local jobcentre. Where the child ceases to be “Looked After”, this will affect their future eligibility to receive continuing care and after care when they reach the age of 16.

It may be helpful to ask the social worker to confirm the answers to these questions in writing, and it is important to remember that you are under no obligation to pursue a Kinship Care/Residence Order, if you do not feel that it is the right thing for your family.

A Permanence Order is pursued by the local authority, rather than the Kinship Carer. A Permanence Order can authorise the continued care and residence of the child with the kinship carer. Parental Rights may be shared between the local authority



“ A Kinship Care Order will change the legal status of the child from “Looked After” to “Non Looked After” and can mean that there is no longer social work involvement in the child’s life. ”

and the Kinship Carers or the local authority may hold all Parental Rights and Responsibilities in this case the legal status of the child remains as “Looked After”, and a supervising social worker remains in place.

There are a few suggested questions you could ask when a Permanence Order is being suggested:

- Will the current arrangements for contact with the social worker change?
- Will there be any changes to the current arrangements for contact with the child’s parent(s) – i.e., will there be more or less contact and who will supervise this contact?
- Will there be contact arrangements for any siblings and what will they be?
- What decisions regarding the child will I be able to make e.g. can I take them abroad and make medical decisions?

For more information on legal orders which may be in place for the child in your care you can read our factsheet understanding legal orders here: <http://kinship.scot/download/understanding-legal-orders-2/> or you can request a copy.

Peer Support

Legislation states “there can be a specific value in peer support models for Kinship Carers and guardians in reducing isolation and stigma. Local groups can provide a strong support network for Kinship Carers, guardians and children.”

Kinship Care peer support groups, including a dedicated Facebook group, exist throughout Scotland, with a few exceptions. They consist of groups of Kinship Carers who gather or chat safely to share common problems and experiences associated with being a Kinship Family.

In the Kinship Care support groups members truly understand what you are going through and can share the type of practical insights that can only come from first hand experience. The individual groups make up varies, with some being totally independent, others facilitated by third sector agencies or local authorities. When you as a Kinship Carer don't know many or any other Kinship Carers who are going through what you are coping with, you can feel isolated and overwhelmed. Support groups help Kinship Carers feel connected and understood. Talking to others in similar situations will help to reduce anxiety, improve self-esteem, and helps your sense of well-being overall. If a group is not for you then a dedicated online Facebook page may be the answer.

A Kinship Carer told us “The kinship group was a lifeline for my husband and I. We felt very lost and alone not knowing what was expected of us as Kinship Carers.”

If you just need someone to listen to you our helpline advisors will welcome your call and will listen no matter the circumstances.

You can view our list of Kinship peer support groups here: <http://kinship.scot/support/support-groups-2/> along with the Facebook page. The Facebook group is private and membership is for Kinship Carers only.

“ In the Kinship Care support groups members truly understand what you are going through and can share the type of practical insights that can only come from first hand experience. ”



KCASS Advisory Group:

The Advisory Group is central to the way the Kinship Care Advice Service for Scotland operates.

The Kinship Care Advisory Group is made up of Kinship Carers who have indicated an interest in becoming a member. We operate a waiting list for potential members.

The purpose of this group is to ensure that Kinship Carers, and by virtue of this the children that they care for, have a say in how the services which support the Kinship family are developed and operated.

This group also provides an avenue for raising current matters which affect Kinship Families and decide the best approach available for achieving positive outcomes.

The group works directly with the service to help improve the experience of Kinship Carers and the children they look after, to influence and inform local and national policy and practice and to ensure the voices of Kinship Carers and the children that they care for are properly represented in consultations and research. Representatives of this group sit on the KCASS steering group and the Kinship Care Collaborative Group which is an important strategic group with priorities for improving the Kinship Care landscape in Scotland

If you feel this is something you would like to be involved in you can contact the service either by email or phone and a note of interest will be taken.

Advisory group testimonies

“I understand that people really do want to hear from kinship carers”.

“People were really interested and were listening and I feel that there will be a lot of positive changes”

“It’s important that education and health settings could also have access to the booklet to share with any Kinship Carer they are aware of. This would be important in engaging any Kinship Carers who are not involved with any other agency”



The Promise

The Promise Scotland is responsible for driving the work of change demanded by the findings of the Independent Care Review which was undertaken in 2017



the promise

KCASS is committed to #KeepThePromise which was made to care experienced infants, children, young people, adults and their families to ensure that every child grows up loved, safe and respected and able to realise their full potential.

You can view additional information on The Promise at: <https://thepromise.scot>

Continuing Care and After Care

Reaching the age of 16 or approaching 16 can be a pivotal time for children in Kinship Care and there may be lots of uncertainties as to what the future holds.

Children in Kinship Care who reach the age of 16 and are still classed as “Looked After” may be entitled to Continuing Care and After Care support. Scotland’s Continuing Care and After Care forum (Staf) is Scotland’s national membership organisation for all of those involved in the lives of young people leaving care.

They have produced a toolkit on their website which you and the young person in your care may find informative and can be viewed here: www.therealtoolkit.sco/the-workforce-themes/kinshipcare it will take you to a specific page for Kinship Care with lots of links to other relevant areas.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with the service as this can be a confusing and often challenging time for families. Your local authority will also be able to offer some information and support at this time.

Care Experienced Bursaries

Young people who have lived in Kinship Care and previously been “Looked After” may be entitled to a Care Experienced Bursary, if they are continuing their education and studying for any eligible Full-time Course including Higher National Certificate (HNC), Higher National Diploma (HND), Degree, PGDE (a course you study after your degree that qualifies you to teach). Separate funding packages are available for Nursing and Midwifery and Postgraduate courses. Care experienced bursaries are also available in further education (so called “non advanced course”).

Further information can be viewed on the Student Awards Agency Scotland website at www.saas.gov.uk/files/468/saas-care-experienced-quick-guide.pdf

At the time of printing the information in this booklet is correct however please check with the service for clarification.

“Watching the child playing without a care in the world as they are not scared anymore.”

Recording Area

We would recommend that you keep all information shared with you by relevant agencies including the local authority, social work department, lawyers, the Children's Hearing system, DWP, HMRC, Social Security Scotland and any appropriate others.

Some of this can be written here for ease of access when required.

Legal orders in place:

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Name and date and or date of expiry:

.....

Legal status of child date and when changed if appropriate:

.....

Interim payments in place amount and date of award:

.....

KCA in place amount and date of award:

.....

CHB in place and CHB number:

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Other child related benefits:

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Personal benefits:

.....

Contact details of social work department:

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Other notes:

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Useful Contacts

FASD hub Scotland: www.fasdhub.scot helpline number 0300 666 0006

Who Cares Scotland: www.whocarescotland.org helpline number 0330 107 7540

Citizens Advice Bureau: www.cas.org.uk

Clan Child Law: www.clanchildlaw.org

Children 1st: www.children1st.org.uk

Children's Health Scotland: www.childrenshealthscotland.org

Child Poverty Action Group Scotland (CPAG): www.cpag.org.uk/scotland

Child Bereavement UK: www.childbereavementuk.org helpline number 0900 02 88840

Scottish Children reporter Administration (SCRA): www.scra.gov.uk

Scottish Government: Looked after children: Kinship care - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

GET IN TOUCH

Call our helpline: 0808 800 0006 (freephone)

Lines open 10am-2.30pm, Mon to Fri

Please leave a message if you require a call back outside of this time

Visit our website at: www.kinship.scot

Email: advice@kinshipscot.org

f [kinshipcarecas](https://www.facebook.com/kinshipcarecas)

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