



Fostering for the future: improving the foster care system

**Renewing fostering: homes for 10,000
more children**

Government call for evidence

Launch date: 4 February 2026
Respond by: 17 March 2026

Contents

Introduction	3
Who this is for	3
Issue date	3
Enquiries	3
Additional copies	4
The response	4
About this call for evidence	5
Respond online	5
Other ways to respond	6
Deadline	6
Issue 1: Financial Transparency	7
Questions:	8
Issue 2: Introducing a national foster care register	9
Questions:	10
Issue 3: Amending the fostering limit	11
Questions:	13
Issue 4: DBS checks and vetting for prospective carers	14
Questions:	17
Issue 5: Consistency in handling of allegations for those inside and outside of the care system	18
Questions:	20
Issue 6: Innovation	21
Questions:	22
Issue 7: Removing barriers to kinship and known adults providing care	23
Questions:	24

Introduction

This **call for evidence** focuses on areas where we want to gather further information from the sector and those with lived experience of care about possible future reforms to the fostering system.

This is alongside the publication of our **action plan**, which sets out the steps we are taking to transform foster care and to increase the number of foster carers in England, so that more children can find loving homes.

We are also issuing a **consultation** that focuses on changes to the assessment process and to the handling of allegations of abuse and standards of care concerns in foster care.

Who this is for

- Current and former foster carers
- Care experienced people
- Kinship carers
- Local Authority staff
- Independent Fostering Agencies
- Fostering panel members
- Organisations and charities who regularly engage with foster carers, and/or children and young people in foster care.

We have also produced a version of this [document for children and young people in the care system](#).

Issue date

The call for evidence was issued on 4 February 2026.

Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the call for evidence, you can contact the team on: fostering.CONULTATION@education.gov.uk

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation and call for evidence website or the consultation or call for evidence process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email:

coordinator.consultations@education.gov.uk, telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the [DfE Contact us page](#).

Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

The response

The results of the call for evidence and the department's response will be [published on GOV.UK](#) in Summer 2026.

We may use computer based tools, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), to help review and summarise the responses we receive. These tools can assist us in identifying themes, grouping similar comments, and processing large volumes of information more efficiently. Any insights generated by AI are always reviewed by our analysis team, and all final conclusions are made by people. The use of these tools does not replace human judgement.

All personal data will continue to be handled securely and in line with data protection legislation.

About this call for evidence

Lack of clear national leadership over the last decade has driven a crisis in foster carer recruitment and retention, with poor outcomes for children. A new rulebook is essential to deliver ambitious change.

An action plan, published alongside this call for evidence, sets out our ambitions for reform of the whole fostering system and the investment we will make in the next two years to begin to drive it. It also sets out the direction of travel on reforms to existing standards and guidance on fostering and care planning; we will consult on new versions of these in the coming months.

There are complex areas of practice which we want to change quickly to enable our reforms. We are therefore consulting on changes in a separate consultation document.

However, this is just the beginning. We know we need to do more to achieve the ambition set out in our action plan and fully reform the fostering system to place relationships at its centre. This is both because we may need to introduce new primary legislation to achieve the change required, and because we have more learning to do on how best to improve the system.

We want to take this opportunity to ask about what else might need to change, and how we can spread the best evidence on what works. We are therefore launching this **call for evidence**, to gather views and strengthen our evidence base on a number of key issues:

- Financial transparency
- A foster care register
- Amending the fostering limit
- DBS checks and vetting for prospective foster carers
- Consistency in handling of allegations for those inside and outside of the care system
- Innovation
- Removing barriers for kinship care.

Respond online

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit [DfE consultations and calls for evidence on GOV.UK](#) to submit your response.

Other ways to respond

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may request an alternative format of the form.

By email

fostering.CONSULTATION@education.gov.uk

By post

Fostering Placement Market Reform
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Deadline

The call for evidence closes on **17 March 2026** at 23:59.

Issue 1: Financial Transparency

Background and rationale

Significant inconsistencies in fostering financial arrangements have long been a source of concern for many within the sector. The Government is clear that while foster care is not employment, foster carers should receive the financial support they need to look after the children in their care.

The Department for Education sets out the National Minimum Allowance (NMA) for each financial year. This amount is uplifted annually using a calculation based on predictions for future inflation, and average earnings data published each year. These rates are then publicly released for reference [online](#).

The allowance is not a wage but instead is designed to cover the additional costs of caring for the child. Beyond the NMA, fostering services across England provide additional financial support such as fees, expenses (for example, for birthdays or holidays), council tax discounts or exemptions, retention payments, and non-monetary incentives such as free local parking or discounted days out in the local area. The discretionary nature of these incentives leads to significant variation in support offers¹.

However, there is no consistent system for reporting or comparing financial offers, creating significant gaps in transparency. This lack of clarity can leave prospective carers uncertain about the financial support available.

We are also aware that some fostering services do not clearly distinguish between allowances – intended to cover the cost incurred by looking after the child – and fees, which compensate carers for their time and expertise. This makes it harder for carers to plan effectively and for agencies to benchmark their offer against others.

Options and considerations

The Department would like to understand more about the benefits and challenges involved in increasing the financial transparency of all foster services, including all Local Authorities and all Independent Fostering Agencies which operate in England. We are defining financial transparency as clear, accessible and public information about fostering services, including allowances, fees and expenses (including in-kind expenses).

We would also like to understand whether improved transparency of a fostering service's full financial offer, including all discretionary incentives, would affect the foster carer's decisions about which agency to register with.

¹ The Fostering Network's ['Out of Pocket: Fairer fees for foster carers' report](#)

Questions:

For all

Questions 1 to 8 ask for personal details.

9. To what extent do you support the idea of increased financial transparency?

Select one from: Strongly support; Somewhat support; Neither support nor oppose; Somewhat oppose; Strongly oppose; I don't know.

10. In your view, what (if any) are the potential benefits of increased financial transparency? **(Free text).**

11. In your view, what (if any) are the potential challenges of increased financial transparency? **(Free text)**

12. In your view, how important is it for foster carers to know the full financial offer, including incentives (e.g. discounted council tax or free parking in local authority car parks), of different fostering services before making an enquiry?

Select one from: Very important; Somewhat important; Not very important; Not at all important; I don't know.

For fostering services

13. What information on fees, allowances and expenses does your fostering service already publish?

Please select all that apply: Allowance rates; Fee structure; Council Tax discount or exemption; Discounted or free entry to local authority run leisure facilities; Discounted or free parking in local authority parking spaces and car parks; Discounts or vouchers for local family days out e.g. cinema vouchers; Other:

Please describe 'other' (Free text); Not applicable.

For foster carers

14. In your view, how important is it for foster carers to understand the different components of the pay they receive? For example, understanding which component is the allowance, which component is the fee or other expenses.

Select one from: Very important; Somewhat important; Not very important; Not at all important; I don't know; Not applicable.

Issue 2: Introducing a national foster care register

Background and rationale

Section 31 of The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 require fostering services to maintain a register of all carers who foster for the service. However, the information held in these registers is limited to that service alone.

Several fostering stakeholders have called for the introduction of a national foster care register in England. National or regional registers have been introduced in other countries, and this is also being considered in devolved nations within the UK. In this call for evidence, we are seeking views from those in the fostering sector on this issue.

Local authorities have a duty to find safe, loving homes for children. When seeking a home for a child, local authorities can only routinely access information about carers who are registered with them directly. This means that they may not know about other suitable carers who live close to the child, but who foster for another local authority, or for another independent fostering agency. Local authorities report that the fragmentation of this information can make it difficult for them to identify the most suitable placement available, which can lead to children being placed outside of their community and existing support network.

Fostering services also report that they do not routinely know whether a prospective foster carer has previously fostered, or applied to foster, for another service, and that they are reliant on self-declaration from the prospective carer.

Foster carers also report frustration about difficulties in being able to transfer to a new fostering service (for example, after moving house) and being required to start the application process from the very beginning.

Proponents argue that a national fostering register could address these issues.

We recognise the possible benefits but are mindful that the introduction of a national foster care register could also bring additional bureaucracy to fostering services. A national foster care register would need to be regularly updated (alongside locally held records) to ensure that it is accurate, and to ensure that possible benefits can be realised. A national foster care register would also hold sensitive personal data and would need to be managed carefully.

Options and considerations

We want to hear views from the sector about a national foster care register, including on the areas cited above, and any other possible benefits or challenges involved.

Questions:

15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with introducing a national foster care register?

Select one from: Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; I don't know.

What (if any) would be the potential benefits of a national foster care register?

(Free text).

16. What (if any) would be the potential challenges of a national foster care register?

(Free text).

17. What features do you think would be most important to include on a national foster carer register for it to be effective?

(Free text).

18. Please explain why you think these features are most important. *In your response, please ensure that you are clear which feature(s) you are referring to.*

(Free text).

Issue 3: Amending the fostering limit

Background and rationale

Schedule 7 of the Children Act 1989 limits the number of children who may be fostered by a foster carer. The standard limit for foster carers is up to three children at any one time. The schedule outlines that a person fosters a child if: they are a local authority foster parent in relation to the child; they are a foster parent with whom the child has been placed by a voluntary organisation; or they foster the child privately. Other children who are not in care do not count towards the fostering limit (e.g. birth children, adopted children, or child on a Special Guardianship Order).

Carers can exceed the standard limit when:

- More than three children are all from the same sibling group
- The carer is granted a formal exemption by their local authority's Agency Decision Maker, allowing them to foster more than three children.

Exemptions are placement-specific, naming the children a carer may foster and any restrictions or time limit, and the exemption can be modified or cancelled at any time.

Local authorities should be satisfied that placing additional children with a foster carer will not negatively impact the wellbeing of any children in the household and will make a judgement based on factors such as accommodation provisions, the relationships between the carers and children and amongst the children themselves, as well as the duration of the placement.

More specific examples of where an exemption might be granted are:

- A placement is needed to keep siblings together. For example, a foster carer already looking after two children may be given able to care for two additional children if they are siblings and would otherwise be separated due to lack of an alternative placement
- A child previously lived with the foster carer and the placement was disrupted, and returning to the know carer helps to provide stability
- The foster carer has unique skills or experience crucial to meeting a child's needs, such as cultural, language or faith requirements or experience of caring for children with disabilities.

Options and considerations

The fostering limit exists to ensure that children in a household can receive high-quality, individualised care. However, there will be cases where foster carers are well equipped with the necessary experience, skills and suitable accommodation to provide care to more than three children and the current standard limit may be a potential barrier to more children being in a loving home.

The standard limit on the number of children a foster carer can look after at any time also applies to respite and short-term break arrangements. This means foster carers cannot provide this kind of support for each other if doing so would result in more than three children being cared for in total. This restriction creates a significant barrier to the much-needed flexibility and strengthened use of support networks that we want to see in the system.

It may therefore be appropriate to remove the standard three-child limit and allow social workers to make judgements about the appropriate number of children a carer should look after on a case-by-case basis.

Alternatively, we could maintain the standard limit of three children but allow exemptions on a carer-specific basis. This would mean that carers who have already been assessed as capable of caring for more than three children would receive a general exemption. As a result, they would not need to repeatedly seek approval from the Agency Decision Maker for each additional child, reducing administrative delays, improving flexibility in placement decisions.

Questions:

20. What challenges do foster carers report when caring for more than three children in care, including sibling groups?

Select all that apply: Higher risk of placement disruption; Limited short break opportunities; Managing challenging sibling dynamics; Workload pressure; Lack of training & support; Other: please explain 'other' (Free text).

21. What key criteria should inform decisions about the number of children cared for by a foster carer?

Select all that apply: Suitability of the living space/environment; Emotional and physical needs of the individual children; The relationship between the children; Child-specific factors such as age, gender and cultural identity; The skills and experience of the carer; Other: please explain 'other' (Free text).

22. What safeguarding arrangements would be most important to implement if the standard limit were to be removed?

Select one from: More robust training for carers; Enhanced monitoring and reviews to assess the welfare of each child; Stronger feedback mechanisms to take into account the views of the children; Comprehensive care plans that address issues like managing privacy, boundaries and discipline practices; Other: please explain 'other' (Free text).

23. Which of the following approaches do you prefer:

Select one from: Retain the statutory three-child limit; Remove the statutory three-child limit and instead rely on case-by-case social worker judgement; Retain the statutory three-child limit, but allow exemptions on a carer-specific rather than a placement-specific basis; No preference, I don't know.

If desired, please explain your response (Free text).

24. To what extent do you agree that amending the standard limit would allow foster carers to provide greater support to each other?

Select one from: Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree, Strongly disagree; I don't know.

If desired, please explain your response (Free text).

Issue 4: DBS checks and vetting for prospective carers

Background and rationale

We are seeking views and evidence to inform our review of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks as part of vetting procedures for prospective carers, such as foster carers, kinship carers, and adopters. This call aims to build a deeper understanding of how DBS checks operate in practice within vetting processes and to identify opportunities for strengthening safeguarding and assessment.

DBS checks and the sharing of relevant information, including soft intelligence, play a vital role in ensuring the suitability of prospective carers. Enhanced DBS checks (with a check against the children's barred list) are a statutory requirement for anyone applying to foster, adopt, or provide kinship care. The use of DBS checks in vetting processes is designed to protect children by ensuring that the appropriate authority has access to the information necessary to make an informed suitability decision, ensuring that individuals with relevant criminal histories or safeguarding concerns are not placed in positions of trust.

Enhanced DBS checks are subject to filtering rules and can also include additional local police information (sometimes called 'soft intelligence') about an individual. There is further detail provided on this below.

The filtering rules which determine what criminal record information is automatically disclosed on enhanced checks are set in legislation. Chief officers' decisions on whether to disclose 'soft intelligence' must be in line with Home Office [statutory guidance](#). Prospective carer roles as well as other roles that involve direct, regular or unsupervised contact with children, such as teachers, club leaders and youth coaches, are eligible for these checks.

We are mindful that there may be a higher level of risk and access within home-based settings, particularly where children will be living in 24/7, family-based care with low levels of supervision (compared to other settings). We also know that children in care can face higher levels of vulnerability. Research also suggests that "the vast majority of children entering foster care are provided with safe family placements, but a minority of children across the UK do experience harm each year from those responsible for their care".²

We therefore want to gather evidence from the sector on the suitability of current DBS checks as part of vetting approaches for prospective carers.

² <https://pure.york.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/keeping-children-safe-allegations-concerning-the-abuse-or-neglect/>

How does the system currently work?

Filtering Rules

Filtering removes certain old or minor convictions and cautions from DBS certificates after a set period, provided strict criteria are met. This is intended to balance safeguarding with rehabilitation and an individual's right to a private life.

- *Convictions*: Filtered after 11 years (or 5.5 years if under 18 at the time), provided they are not for specified serious offences and there was no custodial sentence.
- *Cautions*: Filtered after 6 years for adults. Youth cautions are not disclosed.
- *Specified Offences*: Serious crimes (e.g., sexual offences, violent crimes) are never filtered.
- *Custodial sentence*: Convictions which had a custodial sentence are never filtered.

Filtering means that not all past offences will appear automatically on an enhanced DBS certificate.

Fostering and adoption agencies should still consider suitability holistically, including any disclosed information and references.

Options and considerations

As part of this call for evidence, we want to know whether the filtering rules applied to DBS checks are widely understood and any views that the sector has on these. For example, whether social workers and agency decision makers understand that a “clean” DBS check (i.e. one which contains no criminal record or police information) does not necessarily mean that a prospective carer has no history of involvement with the police.

Wider police intelligence and non-conviction information

Police forces often hold wider information about their prior interactions with individuals that would not automatically appear on a DBS check. For example, this can cover allegations, or patterns of concerning behaviour, even if no criminal charge was brought. It could also include information about arrests and trials that did not result in a caution or conviction, ranging to broader information about police visits to a person's home, or details about an individual's lifestyle or mental health, where there has been police involvement.

Enhanced checks may include wider police intelligence and non-conviction information, if the police deem it to be relevant and proportionate to disclose, in line with statutory guidance set out by the Home Office. The guidance sets out that there should be no presumption either in favour of or against providing a specific item or category of information.

As part of this call for evidence, we want to hear views and evidence on the disclosure of this type of intelligence, and how it is used in practice.

Questions:

25. To what extent do you agree that the current arrangements on the filtering of DBS checks is appropriate for foster care, kinship care and adoption?

Select one from: Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; I don't know.

If desired, please explain your response (Free text).

26. To what extent do you agree that the current arrangements on the disclosure of soft intelligence is appropriate for foster care, kinship care and adoption?

Select one from: Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; I don't know.

If desired, please explain your response (Free text).

27. In your view, how well are the DBS filtering rules understood by assessing social workers and children's services?

Select one from: Very well understood; Mostly understood; Somewhat understood; Not very well understood; I don't know.

If desired, please explain your response (Free text).

28. In your view, how confident are social workers and children's services in using the information provided through DBS disclosures to inform their decisions when assessing prospective carers?

Select one from: Very confident; Somewhat confident; Neither confident nor unconfident; Not very confident; Not at all confident; I don't know.

If desired, please explain your response (Free text).

29. Do experiences of the DBS process in assessment differ between kinship carers, foster carers, and adopters?

Please explain your response (Free text).

30. We are interested in evidence and examples that illustrate how DBS checks are working as part of vetting procedures for prospective carers.

If you wish, please provide **anonymised** case studies or examples that illustrate how current processes on DBS disclosures / police intelligence have influenced assessments on carer suitability. **(Free text).**

Issue 5: Consistency in handling of allegations for those inside and outside of the care system

Please note: as well as this call for evidence, we are also consulting on the wider approach to allegations and standards of care (proposal 2). That consultation focuses on:

- *the definition of an allegation and a standard of care concern;*
- *support for children and carers who are experiencing an allegation;*
- *making the allegations process fairer and more transparent.*

Background and rationale

The Children Act 1989 sets out duties to assess children under section 17 (child in need) or section 47 (child protection). Any concerns about a child's safety should be referred into the local authority so that a decision can be made about the threshold of assessment required (if any). Suffering or being likely to suffer significant harm is the threshold for child protection enquiries under section 47. Where this threshold is not met, local authorities may decide to undertake an assessment of the needs of the child and family under section 17 and may choose to offer services so that a child can maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or so that their health and development is not significantly impaired.

Any concern about abuse of a child in foster care should be referred to the local authority through the usual referral mechanism so the right safeguarding process can be followed for the child, including a section 47 investigation when needed. At the same time, referrals need to be made to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who has oversight of information about safeguarding concerns and manages allegations against adults who work with children in any capacity.

Section 47 inquiries will not be undertaken in response to *all* allegations of harm against a child. Multi-agency practitioners carefully consider whether the threshold for actual or likely significant harm is reached and therefore whether an investigation is needed and justified, as the child needs a protective response.

Foster families are not the same as all families. Foster carers look after children who are often vulnerable by virtue of their past experiences or current needs, on behalf of the local authority. As the corporate parent, local authorities must ensure that the children in their care are safe.

This means that they may investigate a foster carer, even where the nature of the allegation made against them would not have been investigated under section 47 if the information was received about a non-fostering family.

The investigation can be difficult for both children and foster families and we hear it can sometimes lead to unnecessary placement endings with children separated from foster

families and relationships broken. We also hear that there are inconsistencies in when and how investigations are undertaken between areas and services.

Not all issues regarding the carer's actions or approach are or need to be investigated as allegations. Some issues raised are handled as Standard of Care Concerns, through less formal routes focusing on the wider context of the care that children in the household are receiving. For example, when a foster carer's practice does not meet the expected guidelines or best practice standards, but there is no claim that abuse has occurred.

Options and considerations

We want to gather evidence from stakeholders about whether services currently make the right decisions about the level of investigation needed in response to an allegation made against a foster carer.

We would like to hear views about whether the section 47 threshold could and should be used in differentiating between what constitutes an allegation and what should be treated as a standard of care concern.

Questions:

31. To what extent do you agree that services currently make the right decisions on whether an investigation into a foster carer is required?

Select one from: Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; I don't know.

If desired, please explain your response (Free text).

32. To what extent do you agree that services currently make the right decisions on how to protect children during investigations into allegations against foster carers?

Select one from: Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; I don't know.

If desired, please explain your response (Free text).

33. To what extent do you agree that incidents should only be treated as formal allegations when the Section 47 threshold is met (i.e., where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm)?

Select one from: Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; I don't know.

If desired, please explain your response (Free text).

34. To what extent do you agree that incidents that do not meet the Section 47 threshold should be handled through less formal routes (such as Standards of Care concerns)?

Select one from: Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; I don't know.

If desired, please explain your response (Free text).

Issue 6: Innovation

Background and rationale

We want to encourage bold innovation to diversify fostering provision and ensure that a broad range of prospective carers are able to foster.

Fostering services currently operate under a regulated framework (including provisions in the Children Act 1989, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, National Minimum Standards) which aim to ensure there is safety and consistency of practice across the foster care system, but can also create rigidity and prevent innovation.

Sector feedback suggests there are successful new models of foster care emerging in the sector, but that the opportunity to innovate and be flexible is often stifled by:

- Administrative burdens
- Funding constraints
- Misalignment between new models and the regulatory framework.

We want to enable flexibility while maintaining safeguards so that we understand where new models of care are being successfully implemented so we can support good practice more widely.

Options and considerations

We want to hear from the sector about new approaches to foster care and to understand whether the current framework is an enabler or a barrier to these approaches.

In particular, we want to understand whether specific regulations or guidance have prevented innovation.

We also want to understand whether current inspection frameworks (which are based off the existing regulatory framework) influence willingness to innovate within the sector.

Finally, we want to hear about innovative practice already happening in the sector which we may want to scale and spread.

Questions:

35. To what extent do you feel that current regulations and guidance limit the ability of fostering services to implement new approaches?

Select one from: To a great extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Not at all; I don't know.

36. What specific regulations or guidance have prevented you from implementing new approaches or being innovative. For each regulation or guidance identified, please explain how you feel this has limited innovation. **(Free text)**.

37. What (if any) innovative or alternative approaches to fostering have you implemented in your service? **(Free text)**.

38. How do current inspection frameworks influence your willingness to innovate? **(Free text)**.

39. What evidence-based models have you tried? **(Free text)**.

40. Please describe any outcomes observed from these innovative or alternative models. In your response, please make clear: which model you are referring to, and how the outcomes have been identified. This may include:

- Supported by published evidence (please provide references)
- Supported by internal research or evaluation
- Anecdotal experience
- What outcomes have you observed from these models?

(Free text).

Issue 7: Removing barriers to kinship and known adults providing care

Background and rationale

Kinship foster care refers to a type of foster care where a child is placed with a relative or someone with a close pre-existing relationship to the child, such as a grandparent, aunt, uncle, family friend or teacher. As of the end of March 2025, 21% of all active fostering households (8,755) provided kinship foster care³. There is currently no significant distinction between kinship and mainstream foster care in terms of definition in the standards and regulations.

We hear that the current legal framework, which necessitates kinship foster carers reaching the same standard of suitability to foster as mainstream carers, is not working effectively. Proposed kinship carers, as well as fostering panels and decision makers, struggle with the expectation of the same standard of suitability for a person, often catapulted into the role of carer during a family crisis, with a mainstream carer who has carefully thought through the plan for taking on the fostering role.

Options and considerations

In order to address this issue, in [Kinship Care guidance](#), published in October 2024, Government emphasised that kinship foster carers should be considered for approval where it is in the best interests of the child. Also, that the fostering panel should not make negative recommendations solely based on prospective kinship foster carers not meeting the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for fostering during the assessment.

This is the text in the kinship guidance:

“When making decisions about kinship foster carers, the fostering panel should not make negative recommendations solely based on prospective kinship foster carers not meeting the NMS for fostering during the assessment. As outlined in MBC & Ors [2018] EWFC 42, the deciding question should be: ‘Is the proposed placement in the child’s welfare interests?’ If the placement aligns with the child’s best interests, then the prospective kinship foster carer should still be considered for approval to foster the child, and then they should be supported by the fostering service to attain the standards.

Where it is assessed that the kinship carer could meet the needs but will require some support or services to be able to do so, these should be specified in the assessment report required under regulation 26 of the 2011 Regulations. Subsequently, the report of the foster carer’s annual review, required under regulation 28 of the 2011 Regulations, should set out how the support provided assisted the foster carer to meet the child’s needs and whether continued or additional support is required. The child’s placement

³ [Fostering in England 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

plan, required under the 2010 Regulations, will set out in detail how the placement is intended to contribute to meeting the child's needs as set out in the care plan including the child's permanence plan, and should make clear any support or services that the kinship foster carer needs in order to meet the child's needs."

If fostering panels are removed for initial assessment, as per proposal one in the consultation document, then this guidance will apply to decisions made by the Agency Decision Maker in the fostering service.

Safeguarding practices should not be weakened for kinship foster carers and that the safety of children should always be paramount. Whilst flexibility of the standards should reflect the realities of kinship care, this should not lower thresholds for child safety or welfare.

We would like to collect evidence on how/if this guidance has shifted practice.

Questions:

41. To what extent do you think the Kinship Care guidance (published October 2024) is applied in practice when assessing prospective kinship foster carers?

Select one from: Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; I don't know.

If desired, please explain your response (Free text).

42. In your view, what would help ensure the Kinship Care guidance is embedded effectively in practice when assessing prospective kinship foster carers? **(Free text).**



© Crown copyright 2026

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3.

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

About this publication:

enquiries <https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe>
download www.gov.uk/government/publications

Follow us on X: [@educationgovuk](https://twitter.com/educationgovuk)

Connect with us on Facebook: [facebook.com/educationgovuk](https://www.facebook.com/educationgovuk)