



# Kinship (Kinship Advice Law Clinic) Law Firm Partnership Opportunity

## About your organisation

Kinship (formerly Grandparents Plus) was established almost twenty years ago in 2002 by the social worker Jean Stogden and social entrepreneur Sir Michael Young. We are the leading national charity for kinship carers in England and Wales and now deliver support to kinship families across 83 local authorities. Kinship carers are any friend or relative raising children because they are unable to live with their parents, often due to parental substance misuse, death or imprisonment. We develop evidence-based programmes that support kinship carers and their families and have a track record of excellence in this area. We are proud that our work influences national and local government kinship care policy and practice. Everything we do contributes to our mission: to ensure that kinship carers and the children they care for get the support and recognition they need.

## What is the Need

There are around 200,000 children being raised in kinship care across the UK, according to the 2011 census, with a clear correlation between the prevalence of kinship care and deprivation. This is almost three times the number of children being raised in kinship care than foster care, yet kinship families receive considerably less support. Kinship carers are often older, poorer and in worse health than others raising children. Kinship children are also likely to have had similar difficult early childhood experiences as those being raised in statutory care.

Last year the advice service at Kinship (Kinship Advice) provided advice to 2,966 kinship carers, dealing with 3,615 cases, on a range of issues including welfare benefits, housing, legal orders, local authority support and contact with birth parents. Although we can provide high quality advice, we are not qualified legal experts, which means we often need to signpost our clients for legal advice. We currently signpost to other organisations and solicitors who can provide free one-off legal advice, but we would like to provide access to this much needed advice in-house through a pro bono legal advice clinic to ensure kinship carers are able to access this in a timely manner.

Getting accurate legal advice at the start of their journey as a kinship carer, and subsequently making the right decisions, is essential to ensuring the very best future for the child coming into their care. Kinship carers often require advice about which legal order is best for them in terms of formalising the care of the children, whether they should be assessed as foster carers, issues related to contact with birth parents, getting the right support to meet the specific needs of the children long-term, among other issues.

Many kinship carers contact our advice service with queries relating to housing so it would be helpful to have access to a solicitor who could provide free advice about this too, particularly in relation to challenging decisions regarding homelessness, etc.

## Kinship Advice Law Clinic

This is an exciting opportunity to be a part of a new Kinship Advice Law Clinic which we are setting up at Kinship. We recognise that many of the kinship families we advise need legal advice beyond what we offer about their rights and options regarding the care for their children. The families we work with have limited finances and cannot always afford to pay for the legal advice they need.



We would like to develop a new Kinship Advice Law Clinic providing essential one-off legal advice to kinship carers, to help them make the right decisions to secure a bright future for them and their kinship children. We have also recently started to develop our work in Wales and would like to provide access to the Law Clinic in both England and Wales.

## Law Firm Partnership Opportunity

We are looking for partners to work with us to provide free legal advice remotely to kinship carers via pre-arranged appointments. The appointments would be arranged through the advice service to kinship carers in England and Wales.

We are looking for solicitors:

- who have experience of working with kinship carers and providing legal advice on related issues
- who have experience of providing housing legal advice
- who could commit to 3-4 hours per week to provide advice by telephone or through Zoom/Teams calls
- who have knowledge of legal issues affecting kinship carers in England or Wales

We are also keen to engage with any firms who are interested in developing strategic partnerships and making a financial contribution to support our free advice service and develop our Law Clinic into a bigger project.

Our ultimate goal is to develop a clinic to reach more kinship carers with a designated advice worker overseeing the work.

At Kinship, we always welcome conversations with those who have a real interest in our work, so would be happy to discuss ideas about ways in which we can work together to achieve the best support and results for our kinship carers.

Benefits of being involved in Kinship Advice Law Clinic:

- Providing vital legal advice to some of the most vulnerable families across England and Wales.
- Promotion of your firm by being included in our lawyers list, which is available on our website for kinship carers, without paying the usual fee.
- Contributing legal expertise to the development of an exciting new project, which could be life-changing for many kinship families.
- Demonstrating your commitment as an organisation to staff development and community engagement.
- Fulfilling your Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) objectives.
- Invitations to events run by Kinship regarding kinship care, including our Kinship Professionals Network (made up of 1,000 social workers and other professionals working with kinship carers), Kinship Community (made up of over 8,000 kinship carers), etc.