

## News and information for Kinship Families in Essex



Dear Kinship Carer,

The school holidays are now here, and the much-needed rain has arrived just as they start. Let's hope this warmer weather returns soon!

As always, we would like to keep you up to date with news and developments within the Kinship Post Order Support Team

In this month's edition, we are pleased to provide you with details of this year's It's My Life festival, with the booking now open. We also have our summer picnics and details of charities that may interest you.

Please do contact us at any time, if you need guidance, advice, and support or to just share achievements of the children/young people with us.

Best wishes

Kinship Post Order Support Team

### It's My Life – 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025

We are pleased to announce that this year's It's My Life will be held on **Friday 1<sup>st</sup> August** Time: 10:30 to 14:30. Activities may include climbing wall, archery, laser tag, football, slime, arts and crafts and many more.



Venue: Danbury Outdoor Centre, Well Lane, Danbury, CM3 4AB Further details to follow.

**Please note that you must have pre-booked to attend.**

## **Family Summer Picnics 2025 - Please bring your own picnic**

**Harlow** – Wednesday 6th August 11am to 1pm at Harlow Town Park, Park Lane, Harlow CM20 2QQ. Meet at the café. Park in School Lane.

**Canvey & Basildon** – Thursday 7th August 11am to 1.30pm at Northlands Park Pitsea SS13 1SD

**Clacton** – Friday 8th August 10am at Weeley Village Hall, Clacton Rd, Weeley, Weeley Heath, Clacton-on-Sea, CO16 9DH

**Braintree** – Thursday 21st August 10am at Public Gardens, 43 Bocking End, Braintree CM7 9AE

## **Kinship Conference 2025 – New Date**

**SAVE THE DATE: Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October** at The Keene Hall, Watchouse Road, Galleywood, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 8PT.

If you would like to attend please email Clair at [clair.prior@essex.gov.uk](mailto:clair.prior@essex.gov.uk)

## **Kinship Charity Annual Survey**

As the leading kinship care charity in England and Wales, Kinship has delivered an annual survey of kinship carers since 2016. The surveys are the largest of their kind and give kinship carers the chance to share what life is really like navigating the unique challenges kinship families face. The insights we gather help us to design and deliver high-quality advice and tailored support, so we can be there when kinship carers need us.

Survey responses also equip us with powerful evidence to make a compelling case for much-needed policy change. The figures from our surveys have featured across national and local TV, radio and newspapers helping to boost awareness of kinship care and help more families get the support they need.

[https://kinship.tfforms.net/5117262?utm\\_source=email&utm\\_medium=L\\_A\\_email&utm\\_campaign=annual\\_survey\\_2025](https://kinship.tfforms.net/5117262?utm_source=email&utm_medium=L_A_email&utm_campaign=annual_survey_2025)

## Upcoming Coffee Mornings

You are guaranteed a warm welcome and a cup of tea or coffee, interesting conversations and a chance to meet new friends.



***Please be reminded that it is not appropriate for children to attend our coffee mornings, due to the adult content of some of the discussions.***

Area	Venue	Date and Time
Basildon	Mother's Kitchen Café 6 Felmores End, Pitsea, Basildon SS13 1PN	Thursday <b>18<sup>th</sup> September</b> and 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2025 <i>9.30am to 11.30am</i>
Clacton	Weeley Village Hall, Clacton Rd, Weeley, Weeley Heath, Clacton-on-Sea, CO16 9DH	Friday 5 <sup>th</sup> September and 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2025 <i>10am to noon</i>
Canvey Island	Leigh Beck Infant School, Point Road, Canvey Island, SS8 7TD	Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> September and 16 <sup>th</sup> October 2025 <i>9.30am to 11.30am</i>
Cressing	St. Barnabas Church Hall, Claud Ince Avenue, Cressing, CM77 8HG	Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> September and 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2025 <i>10am to noon</i>
Harlow	Woodlands Family Centre, 9 Peterswood, Harlow, CM18 7RJ	Wednesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> September and 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2025 <i>10am to noon</i>
Virtual	Via Teams – link sent out the day before	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> September and 7 <sup>th</sup> October 2025  <i>10am to noon</i>

## Charities, Grants, Support Services and Training Opportunities

### **New entitlement to free school meals for all children in household on Universal Credit:**

From the start of the 2026 school year, every pupil whose household is receiving Universal Credit will have a new entitlement to free school meals regardless of if they are working or have other income. As long as you are in receipt of Universal Credit, the child/ren will be entitled to free school meals.

### **Virtual School**

The Essex Virtual School is dedicated to supporting children in care (CIC), previously looked-after children (PLAC), and those under Special Guardianship Orders, helping them to thrive as learners. They aim to enhance educational outcomes by providing guidance and support that raises aspirations and expectations for these children and young people. They work with designated teachers, social workers, carers and other partners at times of difficulty and need.

Their aim is to:

- improve understanding of the unique barriers to learning and education experienced by many of our children and young people
  - promote and foster a culture that takes account of children and young people's views according to age and understanding, identifying, and meeting their educational needs
  - work in partnership with all of those who support our children and young people to raise aspirations and expectations and build capacity to make a positive difference to their educational experiences and outcomes
  - provide support and challenge where needed to ensure that the educational needs of our children are prioritised
- For support and advice contact them on [virtual.school@essex.gov.uk](mailto:virtual.school@essex.gov.uk)

<https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupil-support-and-wellbeing/essex-virtual-school>

For further guidance please contact [virtualschool@essex.gov.uk](mailto:virtualschool@essex.gov.uk) or [www.essex.gov.uk/virtualschool](http://www.essex.gov.uk/virtualschool)

## Social Media Parental Controls

We often are asked about parental controls on social media and gaming consoles. This website has easy to use guides for the most popular sites and apps for all ages. [Social Media parental controls & privacy settings | Internet Matters](https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/social-media/) <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/social-media/>



## Training Opportunities through Kinship Compass

Compass is an independent online information, advice, and support hub just for kinship carers nationally run by Kinship. They hold a number of free workshops. With the following planned for August. You can sign up for these using this link [workshops and roadshows](https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/training-and-events/) or by searching <https://kinship.org.uk/support-and-advice/training-and-events/>

- EHCP/SEND Processes
- Preparing for Sensitive Conversations
- Understanding trauma and attachment

From January 2025 Kinship are extending their training with new workshops which are now available to book.

- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome – understanding FAS
- Raising a biracial child – understanding the importance of identity, impact of racism
- Life story work – practical tools and resources to support kinship children to understand their family history.
- Understanding aggressive and challenging behaviours

As always, they also have their peer support and Someone Like Me services running, as well as our online and phone line advice support. <https://compass.kinship.org.uk/> or call them 0300 123 7015.

## Essex Kinship Post Order Support Team - Contact Details:



The team has a dedicated duty number - 033301 39860, open Monday to Thursday from 9.00am to 5.30pm and Friday 9am to 4.30pm. Our aim is to answer your queries, offer support and advice or signpost you to a partner agency where necessary for additional support and advice.

You can also e-mail us at any time on [kinship.support.gov.uk](mailto:kinship.support.gov.uk) – this mailbox is monitored daily Monday to Friday.

You can also access our website <https://www.essex.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/special-guardianship>

Please be mindful that urgent requests or concerns regarding the welfare of a child should always be called through to:

**Children & Families Hub: 0345 603 7627**

**After hours - Emergency Duty Team: 0345 606 1212**

Mon - Thurs 5.00pm - 8.45am and Fri 4.30pm - Mon 8.45am inc. Bank holidays

If you no longer wish to receive our newsletter, please let us know by emailing [kinship.support@essex.gov.uk](mailto:kinship.support@essex.gov.uk) and we will remove you from our mailing list.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for the wonderful caring task you do every day!!

