

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Friday 28 October 2022

Dear Courtney

Thank you for your email about kinship carers.

As you rightly point out, family and friends play a vital role in caring for children who are unable to live with their parents. Quite understandably, most children benefit from living with someone they already know and trust, rather than a stranger.

I am aware that a Private Members' Bill has been tabled by Munira Wilson MP which seeks to provide a statutory definition of kinship care. Further, it intends to make a provision about allowances and parental leave for kinship carers. I can assure you that this Government has long been committed to providing support for kinship carers. I understand that the Department for Education is currently already considering the recommendations made in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. This includes the recommendations to introduce a statutory definition of kinship care, provide kinship carers with paid time off work when a child starts living with them, and provide financial allowances at the same rate as foster carers.

Further, Statutory guidance for local authorities on supporting kinship carers has been issued. This makes it clear that children and young people should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare. It explains that support, including financial support, can be provided under the Children Act 1989. Local authorities should also have clear eligibility criteria in place in relation to the support services they provide.

Local authorities are also required by central government to publish a policy that sets out their approach to promoting and supporting the needs of all children living with kinship carers. The policy should be clear, updated regularly, and made freely and widely available. I would encourage you to contact our local authority for more information about the policy in our area.

I know that the Government understands the difficulties that some grandparents face in continuing relationships with their grandchildren following disputes arising from parental separation. Work is underway to review the operation of the Child Arrangements Programme. I understand ministers will monitor how this work develops before deciding whether something specific is needed in respect of grandparents and, if so, what that might be.

I hope this reassures you that the importance and value of kinship carers in the care system is recognised. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for working tirelessly for those you care for.

Member of Parliament for Darlington

Constituency Office: 34 Duke Street, Darlington, Co. Durham, DL3 7AQ Telephone: 01325 711711

Email: peter.gibson.mp@parliament.uk Website: www.petergibson.org





Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

yours faithfully

Peter Gibson

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