

Contact us to find out more - we are here to help:

For further information please visit www.kinshipcarersliverpool.co.uk where you will find a range of further guidance, information leaflets and resources related to:

- Local Legal Advice Services including free Law Clinics & specialist legal advisers in Liverpool.
- Our Activities Programme for Kinship Carers, Kids & Families.
- Information & Links about Legal Orders related to Kinship Care.
- Money & Benefits Advice & Links.
- Early Help & Wellbeing Information.
- Schools and Learning Resources & Links.
- Signposting to national Kinship Websites & Guidance.

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Kinship Carers Liverpool

Child Arrangement Orders - A Guide for Kinship Carers

We advise you to take specialist legal advice at the earliest possible stage about your options & implications related to becoming a kinship carer. Not doing so may have far-reaching implications in terms of the financial & support services you can access at a later stage.

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Q. What is a Child Arrangements Order (CAO)?

A. A Child Arrangements Order is a legal order where the court decides either where a child will live or who a child can spend time with and for how long. This leaflet is about the first kind, which establishes who the child will live with.

Q. How do I go about obtaining a Child Arrangements Order (CAO)?

A. You apply to the court for an order. You can apply through a solicitor or apply yourself as a 'litigant in person'. It's worth checking whether legal aid is available in your case (see our Legal Aid leaflet).

Often the child will have been living with you for some time and you want to formalise the arrangement and take on parental responsibility. Or you may want to secure children with you in an emergency situation.

When the court is deciding whether to grant a Child Arrangements Order, the child's welfare is its primary consideration. It has to follow the 'welfare checklist', which covers lots of points including the child's wishes and feelings, their needs and the likely effect on the child of any change in circumstances.

The court will usually ask either the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services (CAFCASS) or your local Children's Services Department to prepare a welfare report.

Applying for a Child Arrangements Order is a big decision, and you should never feel under any pressure to apply unless it's the right thing for you and the child.

Questions

Child Arrangement Order (CAO)

Do arrangements have to be approved?

Yes, by the Court.

How long does the arrangement last?

It lasts until the child turns 18 unless the court states otherwise before.

Are arrangements supervised/reviewed?

No.

What are the responsibilities of kinship carers?

Parental responsibility shared with parents. Carer for most part can make most important decisions on behalf of child without needing the permission of the parents.

What are the rights & responsibilities of parents?

Parental responsibility shared by parents and holder of the Child Arrangements Order.

What support is there?

Once you've got your CAO, there's no additional entitlement to support, although you will be able to claim Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits if applicable.

Is there any financial support?

Local authorities have discretion to pay an allowance to a carer with a CAO which is more likely to be paid if the child was previously looked after by the local authority, but even then there is no automatic entitlement. Any allowance will be means tested and reviewed annually. LA may assess the child as a child in need and provide support under Section 17 of Children's Act 1989 – see Early Help section of our website for more guidance.