FAMILY TOOLKIT

Adoptive, Foster and Kinship Families

FASD is common among children who have been in care. Here is what to know, what to ask for and who can help.

FASD Compass · fasdcompass.co.uk/adoptive-foster-kinship/

Many children who have been in care were exposed to alcohol before birth. National FASD reports a UK study in which 75% of children having adoption medicals had been exposed to alcohol in the womb. It estimates that nearly 29,000 children in care across the UK are likely to have FASD, and that most are undiagnosed (National FASD).

If you are caring for a child who may have FASD, this page brings together what you need to know, what to ask for and who can help.

Trauma, Attachment or FASD?

🧩 It can be more than one

Children who have been in care have often had early trauma and loss too. Trauma, attachment difficulties and FASD can look similar, and a child can have all three. Ask that any assessment considers prenatal alcohol exposure as well as early experiences. SIGN 156 says alcohol exposure should be actively considered as a possible cause of developmental difficulties.

🔍 Why it matters

National FASD highlights research suggesting that when children have both alcohol exposure and trauma, their difficulties may be driven mainly by the effects of alcohol, and strategies designed for FASD may work better than those designed for trauma alone (National FASD). Trauma still matters. The point is that FASD should not be missed.

Getting the Information You Need

📁 Records to ask for

- [ ] **Child Permanence Report** and any later life story information
- [ ] **Adoption medical reports** or **health assessments** from when the child was in care
- [ ] **Social work chronology** or court reports that mention alcohol or drug use during the pregnancy
- [ ] **Birth and maternity information**, if it can be shared
- [ ] **Information about brothers and sisters**, including any diagnoses

📝 Things to ask the social worker

- Is there any record of alcohol use during the pregnancy, at any level?
- Was the birth mother asked about alcohol? If she stopped when she found out she was pregnant, when was that?
- Has anyone raised FASD before?
- Do brothers or sisters have FASD or other diagnoses?

National FASD advises that if one child in a sibling group has FASD, the others should be assessed or noted for follow-up. Take what you find to the GP with the **evidence checklist**.

Adoptive Families

🏛️ Adoption support needs assessment

In England and Wales, your local authority must carry out an assessment of your need for adoption support services if you ask. Ask for FASD to be considered as part of it. If needs are identified, the local authority can apply to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund on your behalf.

💶 The Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (England)

The ASGSF funds therapy and specialist assessments. The fair access limit is £3,000 per child per year, and a specialist assessment of up to £2,500 comes out of that total. It does **not** fund a standalone FASD assessment. An FASD assessment can be funded only as part of a wider specialist assessment focused on trauma and attachment. Families cannot apply directly. The local authority or regional adoption agency applies for you.

🏫 School

Adopted children who were previously in care attract Pupil Premium Plus. The rate for 2026 to 2027 is £2,690 per pupil (GOV.UK). Tell the school about the adoption order so it is recorded. Every state school has a designated teacher for children previously in care, and the local virtual school can give advice. See the **School Advocacy Toolkit**.

📞 Support

Adoption UK information and support line: 0300 666 0006. In Wales, choose option 5. National FASD has a page for **adoptive families**.

Foster Carers

🩺 Health assessments

Every child coming into care has an initial health assessment with a doctor, usually within 20 working days. Reviews follow every six months for children under five and every year after that. Ask that any known or possible alcohol exposure is recorded and that a referral is considered if the child has significant difficulties, as NICE QS204 recommends.

🏫 School

Every looked-after child has a Personal Education Plan (PEP), and every state school has a designated teacher for looked-after children. Pupil Premium Plus is managed by the virtual school head. Use PEP meetings to share FASD-informed strategies and the child's **support plan**.

🎓 Training and support

Ask your fostering service or supervising social worker for FASD training, support and respite. National FASD has free **training and resources** and a page for **foster carers**.

📞 Fosterline

Free advice for foster carers from **The Fostering Network**:

- England: 0800 040 7675
- Wales: 0800 316 7664
- Scotland: 0141 204 1400
- Northern Ireland: 028 9164 1152

Kinship Carers and Special Guardians

⚖️ Your support depends on the arrangement

Support varies depending on whether you are a kinship foster carer, a special guardian, have a child arrangements order or care for a child informally. Ask the council what support you can get, and ask about a special guardianship support assessment if you are a special guardian. Councils in England are expected to publish a **kinship local offer** explaining what help is available.

💷 Funding and school

If the child was previously in care and is now on a special guardianship or child arrangements order, you may be able to get the ASGSF and Pupil Premium Plus, as for adoptive families. Virtual schools also give kinship carers of children on these orders information and advice on request, whether or not the child was in care (**Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 notes**).

❤️ When it is your own family

Many kinship carers are related to the birth mother. Talking about alcohol in pregnancy can be painful and may affect family relationships. Honest information helps the child get the right support, and professionals should handle it sensitively and without blame.

📞 Support

- **Kinship** advice line, England and Wales: 0300 123 7015, Monday to Friday, 10.30am to 1pm
- **Kinship Care Advice Service for Scotland**: 0808 800 0006
- National FASD page for **kinship carers and special guardians**

Talking With Your Child

💬 Their story and FASD

Children need to understand their story at a level that fits their age and stage. Keep explanations simple, honest and free of blame. Many birth mothers did not know they were pregnant, or were struggling with addiction. Life story work is a good place to include FASD, with help from your social worker. The **For Children** page has child-friendly explanations.

🛟 Ask for help early

National FASD says it is not unusual for FASD to be at the heart of adoption breakdowns. Without support and training, carers can become exhausted. Ask for help early: training, respite, school support and peer support. Use the **Meltdowns and Big Feelings toolkit** and **While You Wait**.

Sources: National FASD: nationalfasd.org.uk/learn-more/practitioners/social-care-workers · ASGSF: gov.uk/guidance/adoption-and-special-guardianship-support-fund-asgsf · Pupil premium 2026 to 2027: gov.uk · Adoption UK: adoptionuk.org · The Fostering Network: thefosteringnetwork.org.uk · Kinship: kinship.org.uk · Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026: legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2026/21

Last reviewed: November 2026 by Dr Inyang Takon, Consultant Neurodevelopmental Paediatrician. For information only. This page does not replace advice from your own doctor.