



**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01420**

**Name of petitioner**

Teresa McNally on behalf of Clacks Kinship Carers

**Petition title**

To recognise the real value of kinship carers and give them parity with foster carers across Scotland

**Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take action to ensure that all councils across Scotland pay kinship carers the recommended allowance (as suggested in the Scottish Government's Local Government Concordat for 2008-2011 ) and that any such allowance should be ring fenced, with resourced support equable with fosters carers.

**Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition**

Informally met with local councillors, MSP's & MP following a cut in kinship carers allowances without any consultation with carers. The result was that the Council officials and the elected portfolio meet with kinship carers quarterly and council officers meet with a sub-committee monthly  
Contacted the media and received local newspaper coverage.  
Gained support from the local CVS office and a NHS Community Development worker.  
Contacted and met with senior Council officials.  
Handed in a signed petition to the Council, signatures gathered from local people, supporting kinship carers. The Council reviewed the allowances and re-instated 40% on the original cut to kinship carers, for one year only, at its budget setting in February 2011  
Circulated a petition to go to the Scottish Parliament.  
Became a constituted group recognised by the Council as a representatives from the wider community, which meets quarterly at an open meeting which includes kinship carers, supporters, council official from social services, education, NHS community staff and representatives from local MSP's.  
Surveyed local kinship carers on their needs as carers of looked after children.  
Requested specific training for kinship carers.  
Applied for and successfully received funding from the Big Lottery to enable the group to raise awareness of the needs of kinship carers and their looked after children.  
Made contact with other kinship carer groups.  
Wrote to all political parties asking for a commitment to kinship carers across Scotland. We had acknowledgement from the SNP & Labour political parties and a supportive

letter from the Green Party.

Held an event, in April 2011, inviting public agencies and kinship carers and their looked after children to attend and participate in workshops and gather and share experiences.

Designed a logo and compiled an information leaflet (in second publication).

Made a DVD about Clacks Kinship Carers, history and their experiences.

Built up a network of organisations e.g. Other kinship carer groups, Poverty Alliance, Truth Commission, Children 1st etc.

Held various fund raising activities within the area and organised social activities for looked after children.

Started a monthly drop-in session, with professional advisors attending to give advice to kinship carers, group or one-to-one.

## Petition background information

We are asking the Scottish Government, to keep to its manifesto promise “to continue their activity to assist kinship carers” across Scotland and to take swift action on introducing a fair allowance that is ring fenced for kinship carers with resourced support equable with fosters carers. As the SNP Manifesto a commitment was made to “Work to secure proper recognition for kinship carers within the UK’s benefits and support system”.

There are currently estimated to be around 20,000 kinship carers across Scotland , looking after at least 15,000 children. Without the support and dedication of these kinship carers, many of these young people would end up in short and long term foster care, which both emotionally and financially is a poor alternative to a loving home and family.

Clacks Kinship Carers Group was founded in 2010, following Clackmannanshire Council’s decision to cut kinship care allowance to 67% of the Scottish Government’s recommended pay structure , without any consultation with kinship carers. Clacks Kinship Carers recognises that Clackmannanshire Council was only one of two councils in 2008 in Scotland to introduce the recommended allowances, at a rate equivalent to payments made to foster carers.

Age of child Payments:

	Payment 1.4.09 (before cut)	Payment at 1.3.10	Payment at 01.10.10
0 to 4 years	£121.68	£62.36	£41.57
5 to 10 years	£138.61	£71.04	£47.35
11 to 15 years	£172.55	£88.43	£58.95
16 to 18 years	£209.86	£107.55	£71.69

Rates from April 2011

0 to 4	58.20
5 to 10	66.29
11 to 15	82.53
16 to 18	100.37

Monthly child benefit payments would be deducted as usual. Child benefit for 1st child would be £20.25 per week then £13.51 per child for any others.

We ask the Scottish Government to recognise that a postcode lottery on Kinship Care is unacceptable and leads to health inequalities and impoverishment for the young people who are already vulnerable. In light of the Government’s Change fund / reshaping care and the overall focus on caring within community and homes, supporting families and carers is cost effective for all concerned including the public purse.

The Clacks Kinship Carers group meets weekly to support each other on issues that affect them and have campaigned to highlight the ever increasing daily struggle that

faces kinship carers and their looked after children. The group have held public meetings quarterly which Clackmannanshire Councillors, their officials including social services, education and NHS representatives attend. These open meetings have discussions about the challenges and explore avenues where the group and the council can work together to support kinship carers. The group have recently launched a monthly drop-in session open to all kinship carers who look after other members of their family's children and need advice or information from a professional.

On the 5th March 2011 at Clackmannanshire Council's Budget meeting, it was agreed to increase kinship carers' allowances, from a range of £41 to £71 to a new range of £58 to £100 but only for one financial year i.e. 2011/2012, the amount still remains less than it originally was prior to the cut in January 2010. The 2009/2010 expenditure was £349,969 for kinship carers and £1,656,274 for foster carers .

The financial cost of foster care in Scotland in 2009/10 stood at £132 million, on average costing £29,000 per child. For every £5 spent on foster care an equivalent of £1 is spent on kinship care.

Prior to the May 5th 2011 Scottish Parliament elections the Clacks Kinship Carers group wrote to all the major political parties to ask for kinship care to be included in each manifesto. All parties that responded, other than SNP gave no firm commitment to kinship cares but gave their support to carers generally.

#### Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01420>

#### Related information for petition

#### Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

NO

#### How many signatures have you collected so far?

1198

#### Closing date for collecting signatures online

N/A

#### Comments to stimulate online discussion