

### COLLATED TABLE RESPONSES FROM THE (INFORMAL) KINSHIP CARE EVENT ON 17<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2014

#### 1 . Story behind the baseline - Causes

- **There were a range of reasons stated why families providing informal kinship care may not perceive seeking support from LA as positive:** seen as a personal arrangement between family members; fear of child being removed from the family if they ask for help – having a judgement on them as ‘unsuitable’; stigma of having involvement from social services - this can be particularly difficult for families who have had prior Social Care involvement, either with their own birth children or when they were children themselves -their prior experiences of Social Care and social workers will likely have some impact on their decision making; loyalty to the birth family; not knowing there is help available.
- **There were a range of reasons stated why extended family may not offer to be/have difficulties being (informal) kinship carers:** loyalty to the birth family; tension in the family if they take on care – get blamed by family and may have to lose contact with some family members; birth family may not talk about their problems so extended family can’t help; wider family connections are unknown and birth family do not tell about them; families particularly worried about financial implications of caring, or having to give up work -some carers want to keep working and this is an important part of their identity but they need support with childcare; stigma of having involvement from social services - this can be particularly difficult for families who have had prior Social Care involvement, either with their own birth children or when they were children themselves -their prior experiences of Social Care and social workers will likely have some impact on their decision making; families concerned that there would be a lack of support offered and worried how they would manage to take on care of the child/ren; families dispersed geographically; financial differences between foster carers and Kinship Cares is a barrier and leads to financial strain; absence of financial support; (past) housing strategy in the city – families not able to request localities where other families living were as preferred location; families are worried and daunted by the whole process and worried about being assessed and ‘judged’ - they are having to share their most personal information and sensitive life experiences – the skill of assessing social workers is key in helping families feel more reassured and comfortable with the process; some potential carers are put off by their complex family dynamics and the views and attitudes and feelings of other members of the family network - caring not only changes their relationship to the child/children but also with birth parents and other family members; abandonment fears.
- **There were a range of reasons why stated LCC practitioners may not promote (informal) kinship care:** professional anxiety by social workers and team managers as to whether the family are ‘suitable’; can be an assumption that no-one else in the family can provide adequate care; if child is placed with foster carers and settled, then there may be a reluctance to move them to family/ child may not want to move; social worker may be

unaware of the extended family; the tight timescales, (particularly since the Care Planning Regulations), which means less time for identification and assessment of potential kinship carers; poor communication between agencies; high caseloads for social workers; lack of training; not all family members are invited to Family Group conferences (parental preference).

- **There were a range of suggestions for making (informal) kinship care easier:** good use of Family Group Conference; Information Sharing about/with other agencies – Adult/ Children’s Services “Think Family Approach” Rather than 2 separate agencies; sharing information with family as they don’t always know what’s going on; having a preventative strategy rather than crisis approach; access to information and support pre and post accepting child; carers seek CSWS support around contact/relationships with birth family; independent advice needed outside of LA; there is still a ‘change of culture’ required in the LA to “how can we rule this family member in?” LA tends to be very risk adverse, though this is getting better. We need to think around potential risks and concerns more imaginatively and with open minds as to “how can these risks be managed/what protective factors are in place or can be put in place to make this placement safe and viable?”; high support and challenge needs to happen earlier;
- **There were a range of opinions on the participation of children and young people:** do we ask children enough about their needs and wishes - are they listened to; children’s voices not always acknowledged; lack of child’s involvement in decision making; observe the children in placement;

## 2. Partners

- Children (Advocacy for Child?) - is the proposed arrangement in line with their wishes and needs
- Families - maternal and paternal/birth children/support carers/babysitters
- Children’s Centre
- Schools/education providers - colleges, schools, Universities and others
- Youth Services
- Third Sector - drugs and alcohol; Platform (drug agency); welfare rights; advice lines;
- Health Visitors/Doctors
- Judges/ Magistrates
- Peer Support - carers to develop peer support e.g. volunteers
- Mediators
- Expand Family Group Conference – to offer formal and informal support – Move out of the Statutory Sector.
- Midwife
- Agents who can publicise support.
- Equivalent agency to Childline/First4Adoption – A National helpline that can signpost locally as well as provide general information

- Emotional and Mental health/ adult services
- Drug and Alcohol services
- Leeds Carers/ Carers Leeds
- Private sector- legal and financial partners
- Housing
- Faith organisations
- Probation and youth offending services
- Grandparents Association (specialist third sector service); Grandparent Plus; Family Rights Group
- Signpost – via Cluster services
- Kinship Children’s Services (LA)
- Families First
- Specialist respite/support services
- Media
- Coram
- Voice and Influence
- CAFCASS
- Clusters
- Children’s Social Care
- Adult Social Care
- Public Health
- Private business sector
- Sports clubs and leisure centres
- Police
- YOT
- Food banks

### **3. Low Cost Ideas/Off the Wall Ideas**

- Supermarket for help and Advice –website

- Family Group Conference at an earlier stage (Invest to save) – Adult Services Access to Family Group Conference.
- Pre Social Work Involvement.
- “Think Family Protocol” – a priority.
- Using Kinship Carers to talk about own personal experiences to groups of professionals. Other agencies and Social Workers
- Informing Local Agencies of Kinship arrangements- their needs and requirements
- Family Information Service. “Looking after a family member” search button
- National helpline/for Kinship? Parent Line
- Mandatory training for Social Worker on Kinship Care.
- Flexibility and Tailored support for families.
- Kinship Employment rights/ leave.
- Celebrating Kinship Family Week.
- Effective use of pupil premium
- Social media-knowledge networks/peer support/buddying
- Gaining children’s story using arts form
- In depth consultation with Kinship Carers to determine their “top 10 priorities” in terms of what support they feel would benefit them. Also obtaining ‘real life’ experiences form Kinship Carers to being people’s situations to life. This information can then be better presented to Partners and help/encourage them to better understand what they have to offer Kinship Carers and children in Kinship arrangements and what impact their support will have.
- More FGCs to help prevent children coming into care, and also to help more children to safely return to family.
- Awareness raising – via internet/social media
- Ideas for cost free activities
- Business cards/calling cards for staff
- Pre court hearing it would be helpful for the families to have an agreed ‘Action Plan’ so they know feel more prepared for the sudden (even if anticipated) arrival of a child in their care
- Starter packs for families embarking on the kinship care role – Grandparents Association are already working on these
- Clear long term planning for children beyond the start of any fostering, SGO or CAO arrangement. This includes anticipation of problems in the future.
- Information leaflets made available to children’s centres, schools and cluster services about kinship care services. These should make it very clear that there in ‘no stigma’ attached by approaching the LA for guidance and advice

- Involvement of business community in terms of awareness of kinship carers in the workforce and in terms of supporting endeavours for kinship carers in the community
- SGO leave for employees and employment rights
- Apprenticeships to take a specified quota of children looked after (including those on kinship arrangements)
- Support in relation to public transport for kinship carers
- Better reporting on all data collected
- Key people to spread the word and to circulate electronically the guide widely
- Reporting from EHA carers relationship to child
- Talking about it more
- add to assessment paper work and reviews
- Links with universities re training
- Raise knowledge via social media and radio
- Kinship care sharing support from post adoption support extending also to wider kinship carers
- Buddy process for kinship carers going through the system
- Package of items that comes with a child when move into Kinship Care: such as, clothes/toys/leisure vouchers e.g. cinema to mark move into new family. To be funded by private sector.
- Children move around between families so aware of needs and can reside in either home.
- To raise the profile from those who have been in kinship care thus endorsed by a celebrity and becomes an ambassador for Leeds.
- Form partnerships with construction firms or building college so changes to homes can be completed to accommodate needs.
- Leeds will be hosting the rugby world cup in 2015. This could be a fantastic platform to promote kinship care and the support of kinship care arrangements.

#### **4. Data Need**

- Data needs – How many Kinship Care arrangements are there, that haven't had an FGC??