

Notes from Management Board- Special Guardianship Development Workshop

21 April 2021

Vision - To continue to develop a strategic and planned approach to supporting Special Guardians and kinship carers across the region in order to reduce the number of children looked after and support children to lead happy and healthy lives.

1pm	Check in and Introduction to the session	Julie Jenkins
1:30pm	Recap of work done to date and work in progress-	Sarah Johal
1:55 – 2:10	Reflections	Lucy Peake (CEO Kinship)
2:10 – 2:30	Conversations with Special Guardians	Special guardians
2.30- 3:30	Group work	All
3:30	Feedback and next steps	
4:00	Close.	

In attendance:

Julie Jenkins (Chair) Director of Calderdale, Rob Murray (Assistant Director Calderdale) Vicky Schofield (Assistant Director Wakefield) Elaine McShane (Assistant Director Bradford) Johal (HOS OAWY) Rhian Beynon (Service Manager OAWY), Ruth Cresswell (Team Manager Kirklees), Becky Pearson (Interim Service Manager Calderdale), Ruth Terry (Chief Officer Leeds) Kim Bray (Team manager Bradford), Paul Lydon (Service Manager Bradford) Noushin Mostowfi (Service manager Kirklees); Eva Booth (OAWY) Ancha Stooley (Kinship) Lucy peake (Kinship), Emma Naylor (service Manager Leeds). **Apologies:** Richard Fawcett (Bradford) Cheryl Whitehouse (Wakefield)

Group Work - How can we: Add Value, Work Collaboratively and Make Progress

Feedback:

Provision of advice and information

Both carers' and workers' knowledge of Pupil Premium Plus and Adoption Support Fund are often lacking. Some LAs lacking info packs for Special Guardians. There is a lack of advice and info for social workers.

Lack of knowledge at the front door where families first contact. Can lead to some families being turned away. A central point of contact may help.

- Create resource/information pack to provide more information for carers and share these using TriX. Debs (Kirklees) meeting families/carers to discuss. Adopt Thames Valley prepared an info pack for special guardians which they may share.

- Create a centralised point for information e.g. Web site, which could be used both by workers and carers and which could be kept up to date.
 - The web site could have downloadable information (documents) that workers could print and share with carers.
 - Information could also be used to provide more information to schools.
- Virtual schools could be used to more effectively share SG information / knowledge with schools in the region.
- Need to manage the “flow” of information to ensure the carers do not get overwhelmed but would still have access to information when needed.
- Encourage access to and take up of support mechanisms in place – use of comms
- Consideration of regional newsletter

Action : OAWY To put together an options paper about how this could be progressed.

Benefits and Welfare Advice

There is varying capacity to offer welfare benefit checks across the region, with some LAs having no resource to offer this. ‘Kinship’ can offer some benefits advice through their helpline, but do not have the capacity to offer this to all new SGs in the region.

Bradford/Calderdale would welcome a regional approach to this. Care review and minefield of DWP. Advice needs to look at current situation and projected finances. Advise on issues such as work conditionality.

- Would be helpful to have a view from carers
- ‘Kinship’ could provide regional support through recruiting a specific welfare advisor

Action: OAWY to pull together an options paper for possible approaches which could be taken across the region

Preparation and Support

Often in SGO there is no time for “preparation” before the child moves in with the carer, but the group felt that post-order training for carers was important in topic like Trauma and attachment & Therapeutic Parenting.

Before the carer makes the decision to go-ahead with the SGO they should be given information about the SGO and allowed time to think and reflect on their feelings – even doubts and negative

feelings without being pressured with a threat of the child being taken away from them. Equitable training and time to reflect so have informed choices

Peer Network could possibly provide a safe forum for carers.

Kirklees/Leeds/Calderdale/Bradford interested in a regional approach to preparation. Wakefield??

Kinship ready training is on offer from the Kinship Charity

Action : OAWY will pull together an options paper with the aim to co-produce something with special guardians, coming up with a blended model that is co-produced and co-delivered with carers.

Peer Support/ Advocacy schemes

Discussed how a WY wide peer support scheme would be most effective and sustainable to provide information and support to carers.

- The existing peer support network and the Kinship Facebook group could be used to share information among carers.
- Build community at early stage and peer support from early stage – refer to Kinship early
- Peer support and preparation and advocacy at the beginning support through the process.
- buddying scheme across fostering
- Opportunity for carers to share experiences

Ongoing training for SGs

The group thought that providing training on a regional footprint would be an effective way of doing this, as was demonstrated by the Covid19 schemes.

Contact in SG differs from both fostering and adoption and there should be a dedicated training course for SG to provide tools for carers. The group acknowledged that each carer will ultimately decide what the level and form of the contact will be, but training could help carers to manage the complexities of the contact.

There can be low take up from special guardians re training and difficulties re access – mix of virtual and in-person.

Post order training workshops - could pool resources across region and look at different types of training:

- Ongoing conflict and relationship management
- Impact of abuse neglect and Therapeutic Parenting
- developing skills to foster for connected carers
- Contact issues

- Commission other workshops

Action: OAWY to draft options paper to address these issues

Training for Staff

Discussed how for example workers from different LAs could specialise on certain topics (DDP, NVR, Attachment / Trauma / Resilience) and provide support / training to colleagues from different areas OR provide training to carers across the region.

Discussed the importance to review the practices across the region for example when SWs are providing excellent support before court, but “just disappear” when the court order is granted. There needs to be a change to this. Could this be part of CPD, which is provided on a regional basis? Expectations re post order support – could support be provided for 1 year (inc family time and contact)?

Adoption Support Fund

There is varying capacity in the teams to undertake assessments and apply to the fund. The new quality assurance framework adds more complexity.

OAWY may be able to add value across the region:

- monitoring of contracts through APL
- good admin support

Action Rhian to draft options paper about delivering some assessment/ASF work

Contact

This is a significant identified need for carers. Kirklees already have a specific resource for contact support.

- It would be helpful to have a regional workshop on this, using carers and project workers.

Action: OAWY to look at organising this

Post 18

There has been some feedback from carers re how this legal order can affect the support of children post 18. Issues re access to advice, financial support under Leaving Care Act, support to access further education.

Other Orders

Although the focus of this workshop has been SGO, it is important to keep children in other arrangements in mind.