

## **DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH COMMITTEE – 25 FEBRUARY 2013**

**REPORT ON: KINSHIP CARE STRATEGY 2013-2018**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK**

**REPORT NO: 83-2013**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report brings forward for Committee approval the proposed Kinship Care Strategy which sets the strategic direction for the development and delivery of services and supports to kinship carers, and the children for whom they provide care in Dundee.
- 1.2 An Executive Summary of this report is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' reference. The full report is also attached at Appendix 2.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Social Work and Health Committee:
  - 2.1.1 Approves the report and the proposed Kinship Care Strategy as detailed in Appendix 2 and summarised in the Executive summary at Appendix 1.
  - 2.1.2 Remits the Director of Social Work to develop an action plan to support the implementation of the proposed Kinship Care Strategy.
  - 2.1.3 Remits the Director of Social Work to bring back a progress report to Committee in 12 months time.

### **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. As actions and projects are developed and have financial implications, these will be reported to Committee in due course.

### **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 For many years the ways in which kinship carers have been supported, whether the children become looked after by the local authority or not, and what financial support is offered to them, has been exceptionally varied across the country. In recent years there have been a number of Scottish Government initiatives and policy developments in the area of kinship care, and these have sought to raise the profile of kinship care and achieve greater uniformity for children in kinship arrangements, and for their carers themselves.
- 4.2 In December 2007 the Scottish Government published *Getting it right for every child in kinship and foster care* (Scottish Government, 2007) a national strategy which focuses on the needs of both children who are unable to be looked after by their parent(s) and on the needs of their carers. Following the publication of the national strategy further work was undertaken by a National Reference Group which resulted in the publication of *Moving Forward in Kinship and Foster Care* (Scottish Government, 2008).

- 4.3 Dundee City Council has for a number of years been one of the lead authorities in supporting kinship care placements, recognising the benefits to children of having continuity of care in existing family and support networks. This has resulted in Dundee having a consistently high proportion of children living with kinship carers, with around 30% in Dundee compared to 20% in the rest of Scotland during 2010. While the average Scotland figure is beginning to increase (24% in July 2011), the Dundee proportion of 29% at July 2011 is still higher.
- 4.4 The population of looked after children in Dundee doubled during the ten year period from 2001 to 2011, from 350 to over 700 and continues to rise. During the period from 2007 to 2010 there was a 60% increase in the number of looked after children, including a 59% increase in the number of looked after children staying with relatives/friends as kinship carers.
- 4.5 From these figures, it is clear that kinship carers now provide almost a third (32%) of placements to all looked after children in Dundee, and as evidenced by the wide body of local and national research now available, this figure is set to continue to rise. Such a rise will be driven both by the overall continuing increase in children becoming looked after and the Scottish Government's policy to support children to remain in the care of their extended families, where it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- 4.6 This is Dundee City Council's first Kinship Care Strategy. It takes account of national guidance and sets the strategic direction for the further development of kinship care services in the city, laying out a set of short, medium and long term actions, designed to promote a consistent and coherent approach, and to strengthen the quality of assessment and support services delivered to kinship carers and the children for whom they care. These sets of actions are presented under the three separate, but inter-related categories of:
- Assessment, Approval and Review
  - Financial Support
  - Advice and Support Services
- 4.7 The proposals contained in this report were the subject of consultation with a number of kinship carers in Dundee, who attended a consultation event held on 20 December 2012 at the premises of the Kith 'n Kin Project run by Aberlour Outreach Service; the Kith 'n Kin Project provides an individual and group based support service for kinship carers in Dundee. Views were also obtained through the completion of a targeted questionnaire by a number of individual kinship carers currently receiving a service from the Social Work Department.
- 4.8 In general those kinship carers involved were in agreement that a strategy is required, and they were strongly supportive of the proposed strategic direction, as well as the more detailed actions contained in the report.
- 4.9 At the consultation event there were very clear views and feelings expressed by carers who confirmed that the task of providing care for a child is frequently challenging. Those present highlighted the stresses for them associated with managing the child's behaviour, dealing with family relationships, and supporting contact with parents, as being very difficult for them at times.
- 4.10 For this reason the majority of the carers who were consulted supported the proposals to establish the practice of developing individualised kinship carer support plans, along with the actions contained within the strategy designed to improve the supports and services available to kinship carers themselves. Some carers also recognised the value of improving access to therapeutic services for individual children to help them to deal with past trauma and loss.

- 4.11 The carers involved also took the opportunity to emphasise that in their experience the assessment process leading up to formal approval of them as kinship carers frequently took too long. Many were in support of the proposal to develop specialist workers in Children's Services, who can develop knowledge, expertise and improved efficiency in completing and progressing kinship carer assessments up to the point of approval.
- 4.12 Dundee City Council Social Work Department believes that kinship carers have a crucial role to play in enabling children to remain within their families by providing stability to them during times of crisis and change, and beyond.
- 4.13 The Council is committed, through its work with planning partners, to provide the advice and support necessary to kinship carers to enable them to carry out their caring role. The Department will actively seek the views of kinship carers, children and young people, in or leaving kinship care, when reviewing existing statutory and voluntary provision. Through such feedback and the eventual establishment of a forum for consultation, kinship carers will have an integral role in developing services which continue within all available resources to develop and evolve to best meet the needs of kinship carers and the children for whom they care.

## **5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and will be made available on the Council website <http://www.dundee.gov.uk/equanddiv/equimpact/>

## **6.0 CONSULTATIONS**

The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal services have been consulted in preparation of this report. This report has also been the subject of consultation with Managers and Staff in Children's Services, and with Kinship Carers, as described at paragraph 4.7 above.

## **7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

**Alan G Baird**  
**Director of Social Work**

**DATE: 31 January 2013**



**DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**  
**SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT**  
**KINSHIP CARE STRATEGY 2013-2018**  
**Executive Summary**

**JANUARY 2013**

# DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

## KINSHIP CARE STRATEGY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Kinship care in Scotland has long been a very real source of support, love, stability and care for many children who have had to leave the home of their birth parents. For many years however, the ways in which kinship carers have been supported, whether the children become looked after by the local authority or not, and what financial support is offered, has been exceptionally varied across the country. In recent years there have been a number of Scottish Government initiatives and policy developments in the area of kinship care, and these have sought to raise the profile of kinship care and achieve greater uniformity for children in kinship arrangements, and for their carers themselves.

In December 2007 the Scottish Government published *Getting it right for every child in kinship and foster care* (Scottish Government, 2007) a national strategy which focuses on the needs of both children who are unable to be looked after by their parent(s) and on the needs of their carers. Following the publication of the national strategy further work was undertaken by a National Reference Group which resulted in the publication of *Moving Forward in Kinship and Foster Care* (Scottish Government, 2008). This, Dundee City Council's first Kinship Care Strategy takes account of national guidance and sets the strategic direction for the further development of kinship care services in the city.

#### 2.0 WHAT IS KINSHIP CARE?

Kinship care is an arrangement for a relative or close friend of a child to provide care for the child (or young person - all referred to in this report as 'child') when his/her parents cannot look after him/her. A kinship carer is the relative or friend who takes over the care of the child.

The formal definition of a kinship carer is contained in regulation 10(2) of the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009. These Regulations allow for kinship carer status to be accorded to a range of people who may be involved in a child's life, specifying a carer as being someone who is:

- 'related to the child' as described in Regulation 10(2)(a) **or**
- 'known to the child and with whom the child has a pre-existing relationship' as described in Regulation 10(2)(b)

The Regulations also state that if the carer is the relative of the child, that relationship can include blood, marriage or civil partnership ties (Regulation 10(4)).

All of the carers who come to provide care for the children of their family or friends are called kinship carers. However such carers fall into the two separate categories of formal or informal carers, depending on the route by which children come to be, and continue in a kinship arrangement. This distinction is significant because of the different legal responsibilities local authorities have to children living in formal, as compared with informal kinship care.

Broadly a child living with relatives or friends is in a formal kinship care arrangement when the child is looked after by a local authority in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and is subject to formal supervision by the Social Work Department. Those kinship carers who have the care of the child, or are seeking to assume the care of the child, must be formally assessed and approved by the local authority in accordance with the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009.

The term informal kinship care applies to all other situations when the child is not looked after and is in the care of relatives or friends. This includes situations where: the child may have been formally looked after by the local authority in the past, and is no longer; the child has been subject to some Social Work involvement, but not become looked after; the carers of the child have applied to the court and been granted a Residence Order under Section 11 Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to secure the child legally in their care; the child is in the care of relatives or friends under a voluntary arrangement with the child's parents without any legal order being in place.

### **3.0 STRATEGIC PROGRAMME FOR CHANGE**

Dundee City Council's Kinship Care Strategy contains a range of short, medium and long term actions which it is proposed should be taken forward in Dundee, both to promote a consistent and coherent approach, and to strengthen the quality of assessment and support services delivered to kinship carers and the children for whom they care. The short term actions will be addressed in 2013-2014, medium term 2015-2016 and long term 2017-2018. These sets of actions are presented under the three separate, but inter-related categories of:

- Assessment, Approval and Review
- Financial Support
- Advice and Support Services

#### **3.1 Assessment, Approval and Review**

At present social workers in case-holding teams in Children's Services undertake kinship carer assessments in conjunction with the development of child plans, and they put in place supports (which may include services from partner organisations) for the children and families involved. This work is carried out in consultation with birth parents and/or the child's current carers and takes account of the views of all concerned.

However this work competes with child protection work and other statutory duties, such as those required by the Children's Hearing and court systems, and there can be delays both in the completion of assessments and then the approval of kinship carers. Some para-professional staff in Children's Services or workers in the Out of Hours Team also undertake, or contribute to such kinship carer assessments to ensure that the required assessments can be allocated and completed within the necessary timescales.

The format and quality of kinship carer assessments are broadly consistent with local and national guidance, but they are variable across Children's Services. Approval takes place through the Fostering Panel, and reviews of placements are undertaken in the first year by the Looked After Child Review Team.

There is however no formal carer review structure in place beyond that, with an expectation that Social Work Teams ensure the regular review of kinship carers and placements as part of the casework service provided to individual children and families on a six monthly basis. The approach to this task is not consistent and is influenced by capacity and other factors within Social Work Teams. The following actions have been agreed to improve on the current assessment, approval and review arrangements in place.

#### **In the short term we will:**

- promote the positives of kinship care placements and ensure that placement in the wider family is pursued as the first option, if safe and in the best interests of the child.
- emphasise the importance of a robust assessment, which includes finding out what care the carers and wider family can provide.
- encourage workers to use family meetings more routinely when planning for the child's future care, from the point when it is identified that there is a risk the child may no longer be able to remain at home.

- review the current procedures for assessing and approving kinship carers, and ensure they are consistent with the national assessment and approval guidance, as well as research evidence about best practice.
- ensure that assessments are completed within the timeframes outlined in the Looked After Children (Scotland) 2009 Regulations and associated Guidance.
- require social workers undertaking assessments to fully explore with kinship carers what caring for the child is going to mean for them and identify the supports they will need.
- promote the use of family group conferencing (as provided by Children 1st) in more complex family circumstances where a higher level of support is required, in order to involve the wider family in developing the plan for the care of the child.
- ensure that the child's plan is in place, that the plan of support for the child and carers is fully detailed and that the child's well-being is central to this planning process.
- ensure that kinship carers are given support to understand the child's heritage and to help them maintain the child's contact with birth parents and siblings safely and in accordance with the child's best interests.

**In the medium term we will:**

- consult with kinship carers as to whether they feel supported by the assessment process and decision making regarding the services to be put in place.
- collect and analyse information on turnover rates and reasons for termination or breakdown of kinship placements to better understand the causes of placement disruption.
- use all of this information to identify the supports and services carers require to help them sustain children in placement.
- provide improved development opportunities, and support workers undertaking or contributing to the assessment and review of kinship carers to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills.
- promote effective short and long term planning for all looked after children living with kinship carers.

**In the longer term we will:**

- give due consideration to the establishment of a Kinship Care Resource Team, whose role it would be both to provide specialist assessment and review, advice and support to kinship carers and to co-ordinate the provision of support services for each carer.

### **3.2 Financial Support**

Dundee City Council was among the first Councils in Scotland to pay an allowance to kinship carers. The Council currently pays a weekly allowance to formal kinship carers, and the main criteria for such a payment is that the child is looked after and placed with the carers as a result of statutory social work intervention. In addition the Council also pays the same rate of allowance to those informal carers where the Social Work Department has been involved in facilitating the placement, and they have been assessed as meeting the criteria for payments.

Kinship carers are often unaware of their financial entitlements and many are dependant on state benefits or have low incomes. The additional costs associated with providing care for a child can often have a significant detrimental impact on the carer's financial situation and it is the responsibility of the local authority, in promoting the best interests of the child, to ensure that carers have access to robust financial advice and support to maximise their income.

The following actions are to be taken forward to ensure that the most appropriate financial support arrangements are in place for kinship carers and the children in their care whose needs they are financially responsible for meeting.

**In the short term we will:**

- review allowances for kinship carers for looked after children
- ensure that all kinship carers have a 'better off' calculation undertaken by the Welfare Rights Service and are supported to secure all their individual benefit entitlements
- ensure that all kinship carers are aware of and can access other specialist sources of financial advice and support when required
- make known that the local Citizens Advice Bureau/Welfare Rights Service is accessible to all kinship carers and agencies.

**In the medium term we will:**

- continue to press for universal benefits for kinship carers and the children living with them to ensure that kinship carers receive the level of allowances they require to meet the care costs for the child
- have in place clear guidance about discretionary payments for kinship carers and speedy, defensible decision-making processes

**In the longer term we will:**

- encourage corporate parents to support the allocation of additional finance when needed to give the child extra supports in their family, community and in school.

**3.3 Advice and Support Services**

Currently some of the support for kinship carers in Dundee is provided by the allocated social worker for the child. However this work has to be undertaken alongside child protection work and the statutory duties required by the Children's Hearing and court systems. Therefore the level of support that can be offered to kinship carers is directly related to the workload capacity available at any given point in time.

The Social Work Department also provides a range of supports and services to kinship carers through their family support staff in Children's Services, and through commissioning support services from voluntary sector organisations. But it is recognised that it can be a challenging task for kinship carers to provide care for a child whose past experiences may have adversely affected their behaviour or development, and a range of specialist advice and support services is required to support carers in this task, and to help the individual children they care for.

All of this means that there needs to be a more consistent, more robust and better co-ordinated approach to the provision of such supports and services in Dundee. The following are the actions planned to improve the quality of the advice and support services for kinship carers and the children for whom they care.

**In the short term we will:**

- support and encourage kinship carers and children to access universal services and additional support from health and education, as well as other services from partners in local areas, when carers and the child they care for need it.
- review the roles, responsibilities and expectations in respect of kinship carers and ensure that they are clear and realistic.
- review the support offered to kinship carers by both the Social Work Department and commissioned services with a view to promoting improved use of resources, co-ordination of support arrangements and evaluation of impact.
- further develop workers' knowledge and skills in the area of providing support to kinship carers.



**In the medium term we will:**

- encourage universal services to recognise the specific needs of kinship carers and ensure that they are given the support and services they require to better meet the child's needs.
- ensure school staff are informed about and encouraged to recognise the specific needs of children in kinship care and provide children with the additional support they may require to achieve their potential.
- produce a Kinship Carer handbook which will act as a valuable source of information, help and advice for kinship carers.
- improve access to specialist support for families providing kinship care.
- enhance access to parenting programmes for kinship carers.
- increase skills development opportunities for kinship carers.
- provide more opportunities for kinship carers from different families to support each other.
- improve development opportunities for agency staff from specialist providers on the role and needs of kinship carers.
- develop specialist services to support kinship carers to recognise and meet the child's individual needs.
- identify a manager who will be responsible for monitoring needs and leading on the development of kinship care services, so that carers do get access to services that meet their support needs and those of the children for whom they care.
- establish a reference group of kinship carers to actively seek their views on existing provision and identify how services could be further developed to better support them in carrying out their role.
- ensure that the Council and its Community Planning partners give due consideration to the development of services which are available to all kinship carers, not only those with a child who is looked after.
- arrange for corporate parents, community planning partners and senior managers in health and other agencies outwith the Council who contribute to the Children's Services planning processes to participate in awareness raising events about kinship care.
- review priorities in the commissioning of services for kinship carers and the children they care for to ensure that all of the resources available are used to improve support and outcomes for both kinship carers and the children themselves.

**In the longer term we will:**

- give due consideration to the development of a dedicated service for kinship care, so that the resource needs of this service are not eclipsed by child protection, foster care and adoption/permanence planning demands.
- improve public information on kinship care.
- enable statutory and voluntary services to support kinship carers to create a learning household, including ensuring that carers have opportunities to develop new skills that will help them to care for the child in the short and longer term.
- promote multi agency discussions to ensure that services and the resources available are being used in the most appropriate way to support the individual child and kinship carers.
- develop a skilled, competent, confident and well resourced workforce drawn from a range of professions to work with children and their kinship carers to ensure the child's safety and well being and promote best outcomes.
- collect data about the outcomes of placements with kinship carers to ensure continuous improvement in services to kinship carers and the children in their care.
- assist corporate parents and community planning partners to consider actively what they can do to invest in additional supports for children in kinship care.
- ensure that the Council as corporate parents, together with all partners continue to review their priorities in the commissioning of services and adopt a co-ordinated approach to the provision of both Council and commissioned services for kinship carers and the children they care for.

## **Conclusions**

Dundee City Council Social Work Department believes that kinship carers have a crucial role to play in enabling children to remain within their families by providing stability to them during times of crisis and change, and beyond.

The Council is committed, through its work with planning partners, to provide the advice and support necessary to kinship carers to enable them to carry out their caring role. We will actively seek the views of kinship carers, children and young people, in or leaving kinship care, when reviewing existing statutory and voluntary provision. Through such feedback and the eventual establishment of a forum for consultation, kinship carers will have an integral role in developing services which continue within all available resources to develop and evolve to best meet the needs of kinship carers and the children for whom they care.



**DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**

**SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT**

**KINSHIP CARE STRATEGY 2013-2018**

***JANUARY 2013***

# DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

## KINSHIP CARE STRATEGY

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Kinship care in Scotland has long been a very real source of support, love, stability and care for many children who have had to leave the home of their birth parents. For many years however, the ways in which kinship carers have been supported, whether the children become looked after by the local authority or not, and what financial support is offered, has been exceptionally varied across the country. In recent years there have been a number of Scottish Government initiatives and policy developments in the area of kinship care, and these have sought to raise the profile of kinship care and achieve greater uniformity for children in kinship arrangements, and for their carers themselves.

In December 2006 the Scottish Government published the National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy. A year later *Getting it right for every child in kinship and foster care* (Scottish Government, 2007) was also published as a national strategy which focuses on the needs of children who are unable to be looked after by their parent(s) and on the needs of the carers of these children.

The national strategy for kinship and foster care states that the kinship carers of looked after children are families to whom financial and emotional support should be provided by the local authority. It was recognised that such financial and other supports would help to ensure that the child has a secure home, acknowledging that looked after children are often particularly vulnerable because of their past life experiences and that carers require additional support to help children realise their potential.

Following the publication of the strategy, further work was undertaken by a National Reference Group which resulted in the publication of *Moving Forward in Kinship and Foster Care* (Scottish Government, 2008). This policy document sets out a vision for kinship and foster care which emphasises that:

**'Children should be supported to live with their extended family without the need for formal intervention, unless they need protection. Their kinship carers should be supported by adequate services and finances.'**

*(Scottish Government, 2008; 6)*

Dundee City Council's Kinship Care Strategy takes account of the content of this national guidance and builds on the good practice to date in the city in respect of kinship care. It records what has been done to date and sets the strategic direction for the further development of kinship care services in the city. The Strategy contains a range of short, medium and long term actions which it is proposed should be taken forward in Dundee both to promote a consistent and coherent approach, and to strengthen the quality of assessment and support services delivered to kinship carers and the children they care for. These sets of actions are presented under the three separate, but inter-related categories of:

- Assessment, Approval and Review
- Financial Support
- Advice and Support Services

### 2.0 WHAT IS KINSHIP CARE?

#### 2.1 Definition

Kinship care is an arrangement for a relative or close friend of a child to provide care for the child (or young person - all referred to in this report as 'child') when his/her parents cannot look after him/her. A kinship carer is the relative or friend who takes over the care of the child.

The formal definition of a kinship carer is contained in regulation 10(2) of the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009. These Regulations allow for kinship carer status to be accorded to a range of people who may be involved in a child's life, specifying a carer as being someone who is:

- 'related to the child' as described in Regulation 10(2)(a) **or**
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The Regulations also state that if the carer is the relative of the child, that relationship can include blood, marriage or civil partnership ties (Regulation 10(4)).

All of the carers who come to provide care for the children of their family or friends are called kinship carers. However such carers fall into the two separate categories of formal or informal carers, depending on the route by which children come to be, and continue in a kinship arrangement. This distinction is significant because of the different legal responsibilities and duties local authorities have to children living in formal, as compared with informal kinship care.

Kinship care arrangements which are categorised as **formal** are those where the child is "looked after" by a local authority under a specific section of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. The legal responsibilities and duties of a local authority to a looked after child are set out in Section 17 Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Under the 95 Act, a local authority's paramount concern must be to safeguard and promote the looked after child's welfare and make use of the services available to the child and whoever provides his/her care (whether it is birth parents or another adult) to ensure that the child's needs are safely and appropriately met. These duties mean that the local authority is accountable for any placement of a looked after child with kinship carers. Children who are looked after in kinship care arrangements include those who are the subject of permanence orders, which are granted to secure their long term care with relatives or family friends.

However there are a number of other ways in which children come to be living in kinship care arrangements and these all fall within the category of **informal kinship care**. These include the following different levels of involvement with the local authority and legal routes:

1. A private arrangement may have been made by the child's parents for the child to stay with relatives or family friends with no involvement from the local authority.
2. The local authority may have been involved in facilitating such an arrangement within their duties under Section 22 Children (Scotland) Act 1995, and a decision made that the child did not require compulsory measures of care or supervision to ensure the security of the child's placement with the carer, because there is parental consent to the kinship arrangement.
3. The child may have been the subject of a supervision requirement under Section 70 Children (Scotland) Act 1995 naming his/her relatives or family friends as kinship carers, and this order has now been terminated, as it is not considered necessary to have a supervision requirement in place to ensure the security of the child in placement.
4. A relative or family friend may have applied for and been granted a Residence Order by the Court under Section 11 Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to allow him/her to take on the care of a child/secure the child's continuing residence with him/her as kinship carer, as a legal route to achieving permanence for the child.
5. A person may be a kinship carer because he/she is the child's guardian, as set out in the parent's will, or appointed through the Court in terms of Section 11(2)(h) Children (Scotland) Act following the death of the child's parents.

The more detailed differences between formal and informal kinship care arrangements and the responsibilities and duties which local authorities have in terms of assessment, approval and support that go with each are outlined later in this Strategy. However it is relevant to note that Guidance states it is good practice for local authorities to monitor the support they provide to kinship carers of non-looked after children, as well as carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all looked after children placed with formal kinship carers (Scottish Government 2011a).

### **3.0 VISION FOR KINSHIP CARE IN DUNDEE**

Our vision for kinship care in the city is based upon the following principles developed largely through the work of the National Reference Group and published in *Moving Forward in Kinship and Foster Care* (Scottish Government, 2008):

- The wider family will be involved whenever a child needs to leave the care of his/her birth parents.
- Family meetings will be part of the planning process for the child.
- Placement in the wider family will be the first option, if safe and in the best interests of the child.
- The assessment of kinship carers will start from the child's plan and consider what supports the carer(s) will need to ensure the child's well-being and best outcomes.
- The child will be actively supported to retain a sense of family, identity and heritage.
- Kinship carers will be supported where appropriate not to be reliant on the child having a statutory legal relationship with the local authority.
- Kinship carers will be encouraged and supported to have access to adequate universal benefits and other financial support where required.
- Kinship carers will be able to access specialist services where the needs of the child require that.
- Kinship carers will be able to develop their skills and understanding about child development, the impact of loss and trauma, and how best to support the child to achieve his or her potential.

### **4.0 OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN KINSHIP CARE**

Dundee City Council promotes positive outcomes for children through the provision of effective assessment and support for kinship carers. The outcomes promoted for children in kinship care are that they are safe healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included, in line with national (SHANARRI) outcomes set for all children in Scotland. We seek to secure these outcomes for each individual child by ensuring that:

- Children have continuity of care in their own home or within their wider family.
- Children live with kinship carers without formal legal intervention unless their needs require a level of protection that can only be achieved through formal measures.
- Children in kinship care who are looked after live with carers who have had their suitability as carers appropriately assessed and approved.
- Children live with carers who have been involved with workers in creating the child's plan, in discussing how they can meet the needs identified in that plan and in identifying what supports they will need to do this.
- Children have their identity, heritage and family ties enhanced by kinship care.
- Children are successful learners within a learning household which improves their educational outcomes and enhances their all round well-being.
- Children live with kinship carers who have sufficient resources to meet their needs.
- Children living with kinship carers receive help to deal with early trauma, learning deficits or the impact of neglect to enable them to build resilience and succeed in adulthood.
- Children in kinship care who are looked after have regular multi-agency reviews of their progress and have decisions taken about what long-term care will be best for them.
- Children achieve positive placements as the result of support from their corporate parents and effective community planning.
- Children who live in kinship care have their needs recognised in service planning.

In order to achieve these outcomes for children in Kinship Care, Dundee City Council will undertake a number of short, medium and longer term actions. These actions will form part of the overall strategy to further develop and support the role of kinship care and kinship carers in the City.

## **5.0 NATIONAL CONTEXT AND POLICY DRIVERS**

The Scottish Government has indicated its determination to improve support for all kinship carers. It has recognised the needs of kinship carers of looked after children by allocating central financial resources to local authorities to meet an agreed commitment within the Concordat with local authorities (Scottish Government and COSLA, 2007b) to pay a weekly financial allowance to all approved kinship carers of a looked after child.

The Scottish Government has also indicated its intention to work with partners in local government and the voluntary sector to develop and implement new policy to better support those carers who step in when children need them most. These policies include the following:

### **5.1 Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)**

In December 2007 the Scottish Government and COSLA published the national strategy *Getting it Right for Children in Kinship and Foster Care* (Scottish Government, 2007). This states that kinship care should be the first choice of placement for children whose parents can no longer continue to provide them with appropriate care and/or protection, unless there are clear reasons why potential carers would not be suitable. The Strategy also promotes the use of family group conferencing, the need for effective assessment and care planning, and the payment of kinship care allowances for looked after children.

In 2008 the Government also established a Reference Group to further consider issues in foster and kinship care. The resulting report, *Moving Forward in Kinship and Foster Care* (Scottish Government, 2008) sets out a vision for kinship care which re-states the need for finance, support and services for kinship carers, but emphasises that children should be able to live with kinship carers with the minimum level of formal intervention by the local authority, unless they are in need of protection.

To better address the financial support needs of kinship carers the Scottish Government provided funding to establish the Citizen's Advice Scotland Kinship Care & Advice Project which was launched on September 16<sup>th</sup> 2008. This three year funded project provided advice to kinship carers of looked after and non looked after children, along with training and support to local authorities. The funding for this service is no longer available, but kinship carers can still access information and advice from their local Citizen's Advice Bureaux. A national confidential Kinship Care Helpline is also still available to kinship carers for information and advice.

In 2010 the Government also announced funding for Children 1st, a voluntary sector organisation, to provide advice and support to kinship carers (Scottish Parliament; Written Answers 30th August 2011). The Kinship Care National Training and Outreach Service now provide a national Kinship Care helpline run by ParentLine Scotland, as well as delivering training and skills development for kinship carers through locally run groups, workshops and networks.

### **5.2 The Early Years Framework 2008**

The publication of the Early Years Framework was followed by the establishment of the Early Years Task Force in 2011. The *Vision and Priorities* paper (Scottish Government, 2012) builds on the priorities outlined in the Scottish Government's Early Years Framework, and sets out some of the practical steps and priorities that are to be adopted by all partners.

Those which are relevant to kinship carers include:

- using the collaborative strength of existing early years services across health, early learning and social work to use prevention and early intervention to tackle problems before they escalate

- helping children, families and communities to secure positive outcomes for themselves
- promoting an increasing emphasis on partnership working across early years services and agencies to ensure better help for those who need it
- recognising the support given to a child by kinship carers as a positive early intervention, if children cannot stay safely with their parents

### **5.3 Corporate Parenting**

Corporate Parenting refers to the partnerships between the local authority departments, services and associated agencies who are collectively responsible for meeting the needs of looked after children and young people (as defined in The Children (Scotland) Act 1995) and care leavers. In *These Are Our Bairns: A Guide for Community Planning Partnerships* (2008) on being a good corporate parent, the Scottish Government summarised the three key elements of corporate parenting as:

- The statutory duty on all parts of a local authority to co-operate in promoting the welfare of children and young people who are looked after by them, and a duty on other agencies to co-operate with councils in fulfilling that duty.
- Co-ordinating the activities of the many different professionals and carers who are involved in a child or young person's life, and taking a strategic, child-centred approach to service delivery.
- Shifting the emphasis from 'corporate' to 'parenting', taking all actions necessary to promote and support the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of a child from infancy to adulthood.
- Corporate parenting is not just a responsibility. It is also a real opportunity to improve the futures of looked after children and young people. Success relies on many different organisations - including local authorities, health boards, the police and schools - recognising they have a critical contribution to make.

This guidance seeks to encourage local authorities to adopt a corporate parenting approach for all looked after children, and this includes children in kinship care. However it is recognised that one of the challenges in addressing the needs of children looked after by kinship carers is that such children and carers can be less 'visible', and there is therefore a need for a more proactive approach by corporate parents to the identification, assessment and provision of supports and services to kinship carers and the children they care for.

### **5.4 Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 (published in 2011)**

Before the introduction of the 2009 Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations (which updated those dating back to 1996) kinship carers of looked after children were either approved as foster carers, or they were assessed in a variety of other ways by local authorities, without much consistency across the country. The new LAC Regulations set out detailed requirements for the assessment and care planning of all looked after children, including those placed in kinship care, to promote greater uniformity of approach for children cared for in this way, and for their carers.

Sections 10-16 of the LAC Regulations allow a local authority to assess and approve a kinship carer to care for a specific child or children, but are only concerned with arrangements for the care of children who are in the looked after system, and for the assessment and approval of placements with kinship carers that are planned or already in existence. They do not cover those situations where there are arrangements made by families and friends, which do not involve the looked after system or local authorities in making placements. The system is similar to that for foster carer assessment and approval, although different in some details. There are fewer provisions overall, and they do not include regulations relating to carer reviews or terminations of kinship approval.

Further details regarding the duties that the LAC Regulations place on local authorities, and how they are implemented in practice with looked after children in Dundee, are laid out later in this Strategy.



## 5.5 Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007

A review of social work inspections from 2005-09 found that permanency planning for children in kinship placements was less well developed than for children in foster care (SWIA, 2010). This was prior to the coming into force of permanence orders, the 2009 LAC Regulations and related guidance.

The Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 introduced permanence orders, which are flexible orders designed for use where a child cannot be with his or her parents on a long term basis. Such orders can be used as a prelude to adoption (a permanence order with authority to adopt), but it can also be used to secure a long term placement.

A child who is subject to a permanence order remains looked after by the local authority, with the local authority taking on some of the parental responsibilities and rights for the child, but these can also be shared with another person, such as a kinship carer. The use of permanence orders can promote positive outcomes for children who need a permanent commitment from their kinship carers throughout their childhood and into adulthood. Since their introduction in 2009 there has been a steady increase in the use of permanence orders across Scotland and locally in Dundee.

Adoption removes all parental responsibilities and rights from the birth parents and transfers them to the adoptive parent. Although it does happen, it is rare for relatives to become 'kinship' adopters. In 2010 out of 455 adoptions only 1.5% were grandparent adoptions and 4.8% were adoptions by other relatives (Scottish Government, 2010).

## 5.6 Children and Young People Bill

The Scottish Government are currently consulting on the proposed new Children and Young People Bill, in which consideration is being given to recognising in legislation the parenting role of kinship carers through the introduction of a new legal order as a route to permanence for kinship care arrangements. The new Bill will not come into force until 2014, and this Strategy will be reviewed to take into account any new order and wider changes which the introduction of the new legislation brings for kinship carers and the children for whom they provide care.

## 5.7 Scottish Care Inspectorate

Following the most recent joint inspection of Child Protection Services in Dundee (May 2012) the Care Inspectorate noted that "*senior managers need to ensure services have the capacity and resources to sustain and build on these achievements (made in the development of services for kinship carers and children) and continue to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families*". Effective assessment and the provision of material and emotional supports to kinship carers, who are often dealing with complex family situations, are also highlighted in this inspection report.

## 6.0 LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

When a local authority is involved with a family in assessing the needs of an individual child and determining the basis on which any kinship arrangements should be made and/or supported, a decision needs to be taken as to whether the child requires 'looked after' status in order to safeguard his or her welfare.

For some children, particularly those where there are known risk factors and additional supervision is required, compulsory measures of supervision may be necessary to protect the child, secure him or her in placement, and ensure that his/her needs are being appropriately met. For such children it is necessary to have their kinship care arrangements formalised through the Children's Hearing system or the Courts.

For others, becoming looked after is not required, and there is an alternative **not** to have any legal order in place where it is considered that the needs of the child can be appropriately met without any compulsory measures being pursued by the local authority.

Kinship care placements can therefore be made under a range of legislative requirements. The following is a brief summary of the legislation relevant to children living in kinship care placements, which acts as a guide to the legal options available when decisions are required regarding the route to securing a child's short and longer term living arrangements with extended family or others known to the child. The regulatory requirements placed on local authorities relating to these different formal and informal kinship arrangements are also described.

## **6.1 Looked After Legal Route Options**

Where a child is considered to be in need of compulsory measures of supervision and is looked after by a local authority under a specific section of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, those kinship carers who have the care of the child, or are seeking to assume the care of the child, must be formally assessed and approved by the local authority in accordance with the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009. The children to whom this duty applies are those who are looked after subject to the following legislative requirements.

### **6.1.1 Section 25 Children (Scotland) Act 1995**

The child requires to be accommodated and is placed by a local authority with relatives or family friends with the consent of the parent involved. There is no legal security for the kinship placement under this section of the legislation, should the parent seek to remove the child.

### **6.1.2 Section 57 Children (Scotland) Act 1995**

The child is accommodated subject to a Child Protection Order approved by a Sheriff and placed by the local authority with relatives or friends as a short term emergency measure to protect the child from an immediate risk of harm.

### **6.1.3 Other Relevant Sections under Children (Scotland) Act 1995**

The child is made the subject of an order, authorisation or warrant under Section 2, 3 or 4 of Part II of the 95 Act. These include a Child Protection Order, a Child Assessment Order, an authorisation from a Justice of the Peace to remove a child to a Place of Safety, removal to a Place of Safety by a police constable, or a warrant to keep a child in a Place of Safety made by a Children's Hearing or a Sheriff. All of these provide the legal basis for securing a child's temporary placement with relatives or friends pending further assessment and decisions as to the most appropriate plans for the child's future care.

### **6.1.4 Section 70 Children (Scotland) Act 1995**

The child is made subject to a formal supervision requirement by a Children's Hearing, requiring him/her to live with identified relatives or friends for the duration of the period of supervision. This allows the child to be looked after by a kinship carer for a maximum of one year at a time, but the supervision requirement can be renewed following annual review by the Children's Hearing, supporting a continuation of the placement.

### **6.1.5 Section 80 Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 - Permanence Order**

Permanence orders and adoption under this legislation and attendant regulations are relevant when considering longer term plans for children in kinship care. Where it is decided that the child already accommodated by the local authority should not be returned to the care of his/her birth parents and requires a placement that can offer him/her greater stability, then permanency plans are made. In situations where it is assessed as being in their best long term interests, looked after children may be placed with kinship carers for the first time following permanency discussions, and permanence orders are then an option to secure the child's long term future in the kinship placement. However such orders require that the children involved remain looked after, and therefore they may be the preferred legal route for only a very small number. Adoption also is an appropriate option for only a very limited number of children in kinship care placements.

There are alternative routes to achieving permanency in informal kinship care arrangements, such as via a residence order as described below. A distinction needs to be made between the identification of potential kinship carers as part of permanence planning assessments for accommodated children, and the evolution of an emergency or temporary placement into a long-term arrangement with kinship carers.

## 6.2 Non Looked After Legal Route Options

When a local authority is involved with a family in assessing the needs of an individual child, there is an option not to have any legal order in place if the needs of the child are assessed as being appropriately met without any compulsory measures of intervention by the local authority. The approach of the child's birth parent(s) is key in this context, and if the parent is supportive to any arrangement with kinship carers, this can mean that it is not necessary to seek security for the placement through statutory intervention.

Any assessment of a child and kinship carer in such circumstances will take account of the fact that, regardless of the legal status of any kinship care arrangement, the carer also does still have legal duties towards the child, despite not having parental rights and responsibilities,. Anyone with care and control of a child under the age of 16 must do what is reasonable in all the circumstances to safeguard the child's health, development and welfare. In particular a kinship carer in this situation can give consent to any surgical, medical or dental treatment or procedure where:

- the child is not able to give such consent on his or her own behalf; and
- it is not within the knowledge of the person that a parent of the child would refuse to give the consent in question.

In kinship situations where the local authority determines that such duties, together with parental consent, are on their own sufficient to safeguard the welfare of the child, it may be concluded that no formal intervention is required by the local authority to secure the placement of the child with the kinship carer.

Such informal kinship care arrangements, together with those described below (where there is a different form of legal order in place to secure the child's placement with kinship carers) are **not** subject to the requirements of the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009. However it is important to note that if a child is living in informal kinship care with relatives or family friends, the local authority still has a duty to provide services, if the child is assessed as being "in need". Such services can include allowances for those informal carers where the Social Work Department has been involved in facilitating the placement, and they have been assessed as meeting the criteria for payments.

The following is a description of the different informal kinship care arrangements and the legal basis for such arrangements, which the local authority needs to consider as options when deciding upon the level of assessment, support and intervention required to protect the best interests of the child involved.

### 6.2.1 Section 22 Children (Scotland) Act 1995 - Provision of Services by Local Authority

Section 22 is the section of the 95 Act under which a child living in the care of a relative, subject to a voluntary arrangement with the child's parents, would receive services from the local authority, if assessed as being "in need". This Section would apply in situations where the child has been assessed as not requiring to be "looked after", although it can include those situations where the Social Work Department has had some role in facilitating these care arrangements.

Section 22 also applies to any child who has been looked after in the past, but whose supervision requirement has been terminated and there is no formal supervision from the Social Work Department in place. It is under Section 22 that the local authority has a responsibility to continue to provide services to any child in the care of a kinship carer, if the child has been assessed as continuing to be "in need". This can include the provision of financial assistance.

6.2.2 Foster Children (Scotland) Act 1984 and Foster Children (Private Fostering) (Scotland) 1985 - Private Foster Care

This legislation should be used in respect of any child who, under a voluntary arrangement with the child's parents, is in the care of a family friend who has already cared for/or intends to care for the child for more than 28 days. Although such an arrangement is private, the carer and the child's parent are required to notify the local authority, and the local authority has a responsibility to carry out specified checks to ensure the child is safe, and to monitor the child's welfare. These checks include carrying out regular visits to the child; undertaking an assessment to determine if the placement is appropriate; obtaining a full medical assessment of the child and medical certificates in relation to the carers; and visit the child every 3 months up to 1 year in placement, thereafter every 6 months for as long as deemed necessary.

6.2.3 Section 11 Children (Scotland) Act 1995 - Residence Order

This section of the 95 Act may be relevant to any child who is in the care of kinship carers, and a route to permanence needs to be established. Section 11 states that any person can apply to the Court to make an order 'in relation to parental responsibilities, parental rights, guardianship or the administration of a child's property'. Whether or not the child has been formally looked after by the local authority, the carer can apply for and be granted through the court a Residence Order. If the child has been hitherto subject to a supervision requirement, this can be terminated and the child will no longer be looked after or subject to formal supervision by the Social Work Department.

6.2.4 Section 11(2)(h) Children (Scotland) Act - Guardianship

This sub-section of Section 11 of the 95 Act is applied to any child who is in the care of a relative or friend who wishes to be appointed to act as guardian in the event of the death of the child's parents. Guardianship provisions can either be set out in the parents' will or appointed by a Court under this section of the 95 Act.

**6.3 Regulatory Requirements under Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009**

These regulations replace the Arrangements to Look After Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996 and Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996. They bring together the regulation of the care **planning** services offered to looked after children and their families with the care **provision** required when children are separated from their birth parents. They also reflect more detailed and consistent requirements when children are looked after by kinship carers.

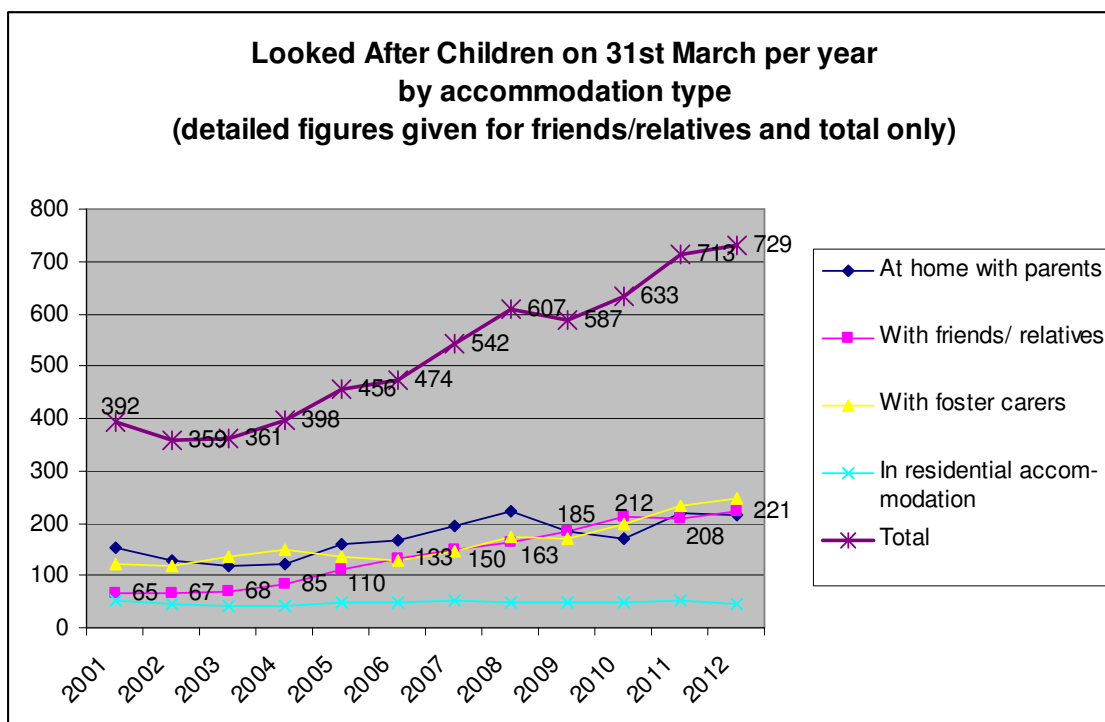
The Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 provide local authorities with the power to assess and approve a kinship carer to care for a child or children (in terms of Regulation 10 (1)) if he or she fits the definition laid out in Regulation 10(2). They only apply to approval for the care of a specific child or children, and are only concerned with arrangements for the care of children who are in the looked after system, where placements with kinship carers are planned or already in existence.

Approval of kinship carers under the LAC (Scotland) Regulations 2009 remains discretionary in some situations, even when children are looked after. The system is permissive and not mandatory, and local authorities do not automatically have to approve all kinship carers of looked after children. Specifically where children are looked after through the Children's Hearing system and are subject to supervision requirements with family or friends, these carers do not have to be approved kinship carers, although that is clearly recognised as best practice. It is acknowledged in this context that there are occasions when a local authority may assess and not consider it appropriate to approve a kinship carer of a looked after child, but that a Children's Hearing still has the option to make a supervision order requiring the child to remain with that carer, as this is considered in the Hearing's view to still be in the child's best interests.

## 7.0 NATIONAL AND LOCAL DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Dundee has always had a relatively high proportion of children living with kinship carers, with around 30% in Dundee compared to 20% in the rest of Scotland during 2010. While the average Scotland figure is beginning to increase (24% in July 2011), the Dundee proportion of 29% in July 2011 is still higher.<sup>1</sup>

The population of looked after children in Dundee doubled during the ten year period from 2001 to 2011, from 350 to over 700 and continues to rise. During the period from 2007 to 2010 there was a 60% increase in the number of looked after children, including a 59% increase in the number of looked after children staying with relatives/friends as kinship carers.

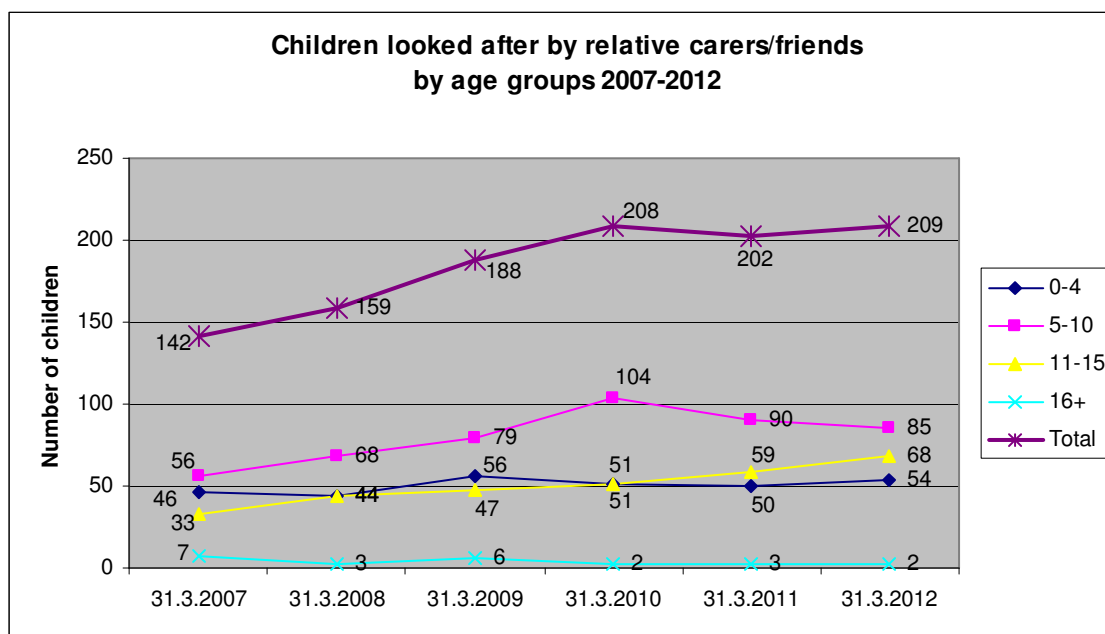


From these figures, it is clear that kinship carers now provide almost a third (32%) of placements to all looked after children in Dundee, and as evidenced by the wide body of local and national research now available, this figure may be set to rise further. Such a rise will be driven both by the overall continuing increase in children becoming looked after, and the Scottish Government's policy to support children to remain in the care of their extended families, where it is safe to do so.

The biggest increase in Dundee's looked after population took place for the age group 5-10, where figures more than tripled from 80 in 2001 to 265 in 2012. This age group is particularly frequently looked after by kinship carers, and figures in kinship care for 5-10 year olds more than quadrupled from 14 in 2001 (4% of all looked after children in Dundee) to 87 in 2012 (12%).

Figures peaked for this age group in 2009/10 when 13% of all looked after children in Dundee aged between 5-10 years were in kinship care. However, this is now the only age group category in kinship care where figures are decreasing (from 104 in 2010 to 87 in 2012). Children in this age group seem currently to move into foster care, where the biggest increase in numbers has been for 5-10 year olds (increase from 62 to 89 children in the same period).

<sup>1</sup> Kinship / link and relative/friend carers figures here are provided for all categories as previous records do not always separate these figures



There has been an increase in the proportion of children living with friends or relatives after leaving care in Scotland. In 2001, 6% of children ceasing to be looked after that year went to live with friends or relatives (114 children). In 2010, the proportion was 12% (137 children) (table 2.5, Scottish Government 2011d). In Dundee the number of children living with relatives or friends after leaving care was almost twice the national figure at 23%. It is relevant to note that whilst these children are no longer looked after, they are still categorised as being in kinship care.

## 8.0 ASSESSMENT, APPROVAL AND REVIEW OF KINSHIP CARERS

Currently the assessment and support of kinship carers in Dundee is undertaken by the allocated social worker for the child, or other social workers or family support staff in Children's Services. This work competes with child protection work and the statutory duties required by the Children's Hearing and court systems, resulting at times in delays in the assessment process being completed for kinship carers, and potential drift in planning for the child's future care.

The presentation and standards of assessments can also vary, as can the robustness of the child's plan, the analysis of support needs and level of detail addressed regarding the provision of services and supports for the placement. This section of the report lays out the assessment, approval and review processes to be consistently adopted in Dundee, alongside the actions that are required to support the integration of these processes into everyday practice by all relevant Social Work staff.

### 8.1 Broad Guidance on Assessment of Kinship Carers

Guidance is available through the Scottish Government Website on the assessment of kinship carers, at [www.scotland.gov.uk/kinshipassessmentreport](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/kinshipassessmentreport). This guidance recognises that the shape of an assessment of a kinship carer who already knows the child and has an existing relationship with the child should be different from the assessment of foster carers, where a child being placed is very unlikely to have any past or present ties with the foster carers.

Within the Scottish Government assessment and approval guidance, the following key recommendations for practice are set out:

- A robust assessment should be carried out where the child is formally looked after and a kinship carer is being considered for placement.
- Family meetings should be held throughout the process to help to identify who in the family may be able to support the kinship carers and the child.
- An assessment should consider the child's needs and well-being, the carers' capacity to meet those needs and the support required to keep the child safe and developing healthily.
- The impact that substance misuse in the birth family may have had on the child's emotional and physical development needs to be understood by the kinship care family. Specialised support and/or information may be required to achieve this.
- The assessment must cover the key areas where kinship carers may have particular struggles or tensions with the birth family, recognising that the complex relationships within families can cause major dilemmas and distress to carers and the child.
- Children in kinship care should be given the security of knowing where they will grow up. Permanency discussions should therefore be integral to the child's plan.
- Workers undertaking assessments of the kinship carers or the child must be supported to develop the necessary skills and to time spend with the children and carers during the process. This support should continue after approval and may be delivered by a partner agency.
- During the assessment, kinship carers must have access to specialist advice on financial matters. Welfare Rights Services should provide a benefits assessment to analyse the impact of kinship care allowances on carers' existing entitlements, so that a "better off" calculation can be made.
- Written Agreements with kinship carers should set out what is expected of the carers and what the agency agrees to provide to support the carers.
- Approval processes should provide independent scrutiny of the decisions of the workers involved.
- Looked after children reviews must consider both the progress of the child with the kinship carer, and any changing support needs of the family

## 8.2 Child's Plan

In kinship care, the *Getting it Right for Every Child* practice model can be used proportionately to assess and to plan to provide the child and family with the help they need. The starting point is, with child and family, identifying concerns against the eight well-being indicators, then gathering information about the child from the *My World Assessment Triangle* and analysing this against the *Resilience Matrix*. The child's plan can then be constructed, detailing needs and the extent to which they are being met against the well-being indicators, so progress can be tracked and reviewed. Appendix 1 lays out diagrammatically the Child's Plan in Kinship Care based on the My World Assessment Triangle.

Depending on the child and carers' circumstances, the plan could be a single agency plan outlining the services to be provided by health or education. But given the needs of many children who cannot remain at home with their parents, it is more likely to be a multi-agency plan based on the need for help from more than one agency that is indicated. If the child is looked after, there will need to be a full multi-agency child's plan put in place. Undertaking a more complex assessment and planning process should not prevent help from being put in place for the kinship care family immediately, while further assessment proceeds.

See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/gettingitright/publications>.

## 8.3 Kinship Carer Assessment Process in Dundee

Evidence is emerging from across Scotland and more locally in Dundee that kinship care placements have a higher turnover rate than previously believed. As the number of kinship placements continues to increase in Dundee, it is essential to improve workers' ability to robustly assess and review kinship carers, to identify the supports they need and to predict and minimise the risk of any potential triggers leading to placement breakdown for any individual child or young person.

In Dundee the following have been agreed as the key steps to be followed in the process of assessing those who are identified as kinship carers, alongside the assessment of the needs of the child involved.

The work with kinship carers during the assessment process will focus on how the carers are to meet the needs of the child and what additional supports they might need to do that. As recommended in the national guidance, the assessment process should use family meetings to engage the wider family in helping to create a safe and supportive plan for the child's care.

The guidance recommends that the assessment of the child and the capacity of the kinship carers to care for the child must be addressed together, and the supports that the carers will need to provide secure and nurturing care for the child identified as part of that process.

This Strategy outlines the recommended procedures for assessment and approval of kinship carers of looked after children, and those whose placements with kinship carers the Social Work Department has had a role in facilitating. The information to be considered as part of the assessment process is set out in Schedule 3 of the Regulations and includes:

- standard of living, past and present employment
- criminal record disclosure checks
- parenting capacity and motivation in seeking the placement

As part of the overall assessment the worker involved, after obtaining appropriate consents, will carry out disclosure background checks, obtain medical reports from the carer's General Practitioner, and take up character references (one verbal and one written) in respect of each kinship carer involved in caring for the child.

To have kinship carers approved and formally registered, the worker involved will complete a Kinship Care Assessment Report (KCAR). The KCAR is not a stand-alone assessment, but is completed alongside the child's plan. This report will set out why the child is best placed with these kinship carers and will in particular explore the key issues of identity and placement security for the child. The worker will notify the Senior Officer ( Adoption and Fostering) that a child has been placed with kinship carers to be given a date for presentation of the KCAR to the Fostering Panel.

Interim payments for the kinship carers should then be discussed with the Manager in Children's Services with responsibility for co-ordinating payment arrangements pending the carers applying for benefits in respect of the child and/or receiving approved kinship payments from Dundee City Council (when and if registered as kinship carers).

The worker will then send pages 1 - 3 of the KCAR by e-mail to the Welfare Rights Service to request a benefits assessment, given the change in family circumstances. The purpose of this check is to assess whether the carers will be better off financially by either receiving benefits directly from the Benefits Agency or kinship payments from Dundee City Council.

A copy of the benefits check carried out by the Welfare Rights Service will be e-mailed to the worker to be submitted together with the KCAR. At the time of writing both the KCAR and the referral pathway to the Welfare Rights Service are currently under review.

Once all information has been gathered and the KCAR is fully completed, it is then presented to the Fostering Panel for consideration, with a recommendation as to whether the carers of the child involved should be formally registered as kinship carers.

#### **8.4 Decision-making**

In undertaking this work it may become clear that a carer is unlikely to be able to care for the child in the way required as they may have for example, serious health problems, very negative views of the child's parents or may have committed offences which could place the child at risk. As for any looked after child, the Council has to take responsibility for the safety and welfare of the child, and if the assessment indicates that the kinship carer should not be put forward for approval, or if when presented the Fostering Panel and/or Agency Decision Maker do not consider it appropriate to approve the kinship carer as suitable for the child, approval may not be given to register the carer.



## **8.5 Approval Process - Temporary or Short Term Kinship Care Placements**

The current practice in Dundee City is that the Fostering Panel is used to formally consider kinship carer assessments and to make kinship care placement decisions for the children involved.

The KCAR, references, GP letter and any other relevant information (including better off calculations completed by the Welfare Rights Service) will be passed by the worker who has been involved in completing the assessment to the Senior Officer (Adoption and Fostering) 14 days before the scheduled date, for inclusion on the Fostering Panel agenda.

The worker who has completed the assessment, as well as kinship carer(s) will be required to attend the Fostering Panel and answer any questions regarding the carer's capacity to care for the child and the placement which they will be providing.

The recommendation of the Fostering Panel will then go to the Agency Decision Maker (appointed by the Chief Social Work Officer) who will approve the final decision. The outcome will be recorded on an agency decision sheet which will be forwarded to the relevant worker. A letter will then be sent by the Agency Decision Maker to the kinship carer confirming approval or otherwise, along with the completed kinship carer agreement when appropriate.

## **8.6 Assessment and Approval Process - Permanent Kinship Care**

The 2009 Regulations require that within six months of becoming looked after, there should be discussions about permanence, when decisions need to be made as to whether the child might be able to return home, or that this will not be in the child's best interests. In Dundee it is now the approach that kinship carers should, wherever possible and appropriate, be assessed and dual approved as temporary and permanent carers from the outset, with the recommendation for dual approval being presented to the Fostering panel within 12 weeks of the placement being made.

From the outset in every case, there should be active consideration of the purpose of a child becoming looked after and of the possible outcomes. In its broadest interpretation, permanence planning, should cover all options, with the aim of a stable living situation for a child which meets his or her needs for consistent, sustainable positive relationships, normally within a family setting. The local authority will usually work to maintain the child within, or the restore him/her to birth parents and, failing that, to the kinship network, unless it is clear that this is contrary to the best interests of the child.

Efforts to ascertain if there are members of the child's extended family who may wish to provide a permanent home for the child should therefore be made at the earliest possible opportunity, and a family meeting(s) used to discuss the care options for the child and any support potential kinship carers may require to allow them to offer the child a permanent home.

If a member of the child's wider family expresses an interest in caring for the child, then an initial assessment of that relative's capacity as a permanent carer will be undertaken. Should the initial assessment be favourable, a KCAR will be completed, in conjunction with an updating of the child's plan which will include making a case for permanence with the identified kinship carer.

If long term kinship care is the desired option, then the child may remain looked after, or may no longer need the extra support from the local authority that being looked after affords. He/she could live in kinship care with no order in place if there is appropriate parental support for the placement, or alternatively a residence order could be sought, or in exceptional circumstances proceedings started for a permanence order or adoption (Scottish Parliament, 2012). This recommendation for permanent substitute care (or parallel planning in preparation for this eventuality) will normally be made at the Looked After Child Review.

Once the assessment process and relevant checks have been completed, the Senior Officer (Fostering and Adoption) will schedule a date for the assessment and accompanying reports to be represented to the Adoption & Permanence Panel. This will usually be within 3 months following the Looked After Child Review (Children's Services Operating Procedure 4.2.1).

The Adoption and Permanence Panel recommendations will go to the Council's Agency Decision Maker. If approved, then a matching discussion will be held to consider whether the kinship carer(s) can meet the needs of the individual child for a permanent placement into adulthood, and to agree the legal basis for securing that placement. The agreement of the Council's Agency Decision Maker will be required at each stage of this formal decision-making process.

### **8.7 Kinship Care Agreement**

Following assessment, an agreement is drawn up between the kinship carers and the local authority (Schedules 4 and 5). This agreement includes:

- arrangements for the payment of an allowance to the carers
- arrangements for contact with the child's parents
- arrangements and procedure for kinship carers to make representations to the local authority
- arrangements for the support and training of kinship carers
- arrangements for review of the placement
- agreement to co-operate with the local authority's arrangements
- agreement not to use corporal punishment
- agreement to allow the child to be removed if the placement is terminated

### **8.8 Kinship Carer Reviews**

The Regulations do not lay out requirements for reviews of kinship carers, and the approach to this task in Dundee is inconsistent. However, kinship carers do have similar review needs to foster carers with regard to their support, development and training needs, and they require regular opportunities to reflect and discuss their situation, if for instance the plan for the child's placement becomes more long term than initially anticipated. This opportunity can be built into the Looked After Child Review meetings held to review the Child's Plan, and these meetings should allow time to focus on the carers' needs in their own right, as well as those of the child.

In Dundee reviews of kinship placements are undertaken by the Looked After Child Review Team in the first year of the child becoming looked after and accommodated. However there is no formal carer review structure in place beyond that, with an expectation that Social Work Teams ensure that the regular review of kinship carers and placements take place as part of the casework service provided to individual children and families on a six monthly basis. The consistency with which this task is managed is influenced by capacity and other factors within Social Work Teams. It is recognised that the provision of a more robust review process would allow for support plans for carers to be reviewed and updated, resulting in more effective support for kinship carers and potentially improved stability for the children in their care.

### **8.9 Kinship Carer Deregistration**

Kinship carers no longer caring for a child will, in due course, be de-registered by the Agency Decision Maker after consideration by the Fostering Panel. Such a decision may need to be made because the child has returned home to live with his/her parent(s) after a successful period of parental rehabilitation, or there may have been a breakdown of the placement, or childcare concerns regarding the carer(s). The Senior Officer (Fostering and Adoption) and Fostering Payments Section will in such circumstances be informed of this change in the child's placement by the case-holding worker.

### **8.10 Strategic Programme for Change - Assessment, Approval and Review**

#### **Current Position**

At present social workers in case-holding teams in Children's Services undertake kinship carer assessments in conjunction with the development of child plans, and they put in place supports (which may include services from partner organisations) for the children and families involved. This work is carried out in consultation with birth parents and/or the child's current carers and takes account of the views of all concerned.

However this work competes with child protection work and other statutory duties, such as those required by the Children's Hearing and court systems, and there can be delays both in the completion of assessments and then the approval of kinship carers. Some para-professional staff in Children's Services or workers in the Out of Hours Team also undertake, or contribute to such kinship carer assessments to ensure that the required assessments can be allocated and completed within the necessary timescales.

The format of kinship carer assessments is broadly consistent with national guidance, but this and the quality of assessments are variable across Children's Services. Approval takes place through the Fostering Panel, and reviews of placements are undertaken in the first year by the Looked After Child Review Team.

There is however no formal carer review structure in place beyond that, with an expectation that Social Work Teams ensure the regular review of kinship carers and placements. The approach to this task is not consistent and is influenced by capacity and other factors within Social Work Teams. The following actions have been agreed to improve on the current assessment, approval and review arrangements in place.

**In the short term we will:**

- promote the positives of kinship care placements and ensure that placement in the wider family is pursued as the first option, if safe and in the best interests of the child.
- emphasise the importance of a robust assessment, including finding out what care the carers and wider family can provide.
- encourage workers to use family meetings more routinely when planning for the child's future care, from the point when it is identified that there is a risk the child may no longer be able to remain at home.
- review the current procedures for assessing and approving kinship carers, and ensure they are consistent with the national assessment and approval guidance, as well as research evidence about best practice.
- ensure that assessments are completed within the timeframes outlined in the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 and associated Guidance.
- require social workers undertaking assessments to fully explore with kinship carers what caring for the child is going to mean for them and identify the supports they will need.
- promote the use of family group conferencing (as provided by Children 1st) in more complex family circumstances where a higher level of support is required in order to involve the wider family in developing the plan for the care of the child.
- ensure that the child's plan is in place, that the plan of support for the child and carers is fully detailed and that the child's well-being is central to this planning process.
- ensure that kinship carers are given support to understand the child's heritage and to help them maintain the child's contact with birth parents and siblings safely and in accordance with the child's best interests.

**In the medium term we will:**

- consult with kinship carers as to whether they feel supported by the assessment process and services put in place.
- collect and analyse information on turnover rates and reasons for termination or breakdown of kinship placements to better understand the causes of placement disruption.
- use all of this information to help identify the supports and services carers require to help them sustain children in placement .
- provide improved development opportunities, and support workers undertaking or contributing to the assessment and review of kinship carers to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills.
- promote effective short and long term planning for all looked after children living with kinship carers.

### **In the longer term we will:**

- give due consideration to the establishment of a Kinship Care Resource Team, whose role it would be both to provide specialist assessment and review, advice and support to kinship carers and to co-ordinate the provision of support services for each carer.

## **9.0 FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO KINSHIP CARERS**

Kinship carers are often unaware of their financial entitlements and many are dependant on state benefits or have low incomes. The additional costs associated with providing care for a child can often have a significant detrimental impact on the carer's financial situation and some may find themselves in financial difficulties. It is the responsibility of the local authority, in promoting the best interests of the child, to ensure that carers have access to robust financial advice and support and/or services to maximise their income.

### **9.1 Kinship Care Allowance**

The Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 state that local authorities shall make payments to kinship carers of looked after children as they see fit and may also make payments to other kinship carers under the 1995 Act and the Children Act 1975. There is no requirement for any particular amount of payment and there is great variation in payment levels and practice by local authorities across the country. The Scottish Government has indicated that it considers that local authorities are best placed to make decisions about the entitlement criteria for the payment of kinship care allowances and the rate of allowance paid, taking account of the child's needs and the carers' overall financial circumstances, as well as the local context in each local authority area (Scottish Parliament 2011b).

### **9.2 Concordat**

The Concordat between the Scottish Government and COSLA, agreed in November 2007, stated that by 2011, local authorities would provide allowances for kinship carers of looked after children to treat them on an equivalent basis to foster carers. Foster carers receive an allowance, but the amount they are given is at the discretion of each individual local authority.

Separately from the Concordat agreement, in September 2009, a new Kinship Care Allowance was introduced by Regulation 33 of the 2009 Looked After Child Regulations. It provides that local authorities shall, subject to such conditions as they consider necessary, pay an allowance as they see fit to foster carers and to kinship carers of looked after children who:

- are assessed and have an agreement under the 2009 regulations;
- have a child placed with them under a supervision order; or
- have a child placed with them under a permanence order.

Although Regulation 33 makes separate mention of supervision orders and permanence orders, it is clear all kinship carers of looked after children have to be assessed under the 2009 regulations.

Many councils are supporting carers financially to reduce the pressures on the kinship carer and the likelihood of the child needing care outwith the family. Some Councils are also reviewing their support to kinship carers where the child is not looked after. They hope that they can give kinship carers and others more clarity about who is likely to receive payments for the child. As regulations and Scottish government and local funding arrangements stand at present, these payments will continue to be discretionary and will be dependent on the allocation of additional funding to local authority kinship care services.

At present in Dundee the local authority provides weekly carer allowances to all formal kinship carers providing care for looked after children, placed with the carers as a result of statutory social work intervention. In addition the Council also pays the same rate of allowance to those informal carers where the Social Work Department has been involved in facilitating the placement, and they have been assessed as meeting the criteria for payments.

Financial support to carers where the child is not looked after varies from Council to Council. In Dundee residence allowances are paid to those kinship carers, where the Social Work Department has been involved in facilitating the placement, and they have been assessed as meeting the criteria for payments.

### **9.3 Other Discretionary Payments**

Other legislation provides a broader discretion for local authorities to make payments to children "in need", including children who are not living with their families who are **not** looked after. Such discretionary payments are made under wider legislation, as compared with the specific allowances provided for under the 2009 LAC Regulations that most local authorities use as a basis for making payments to kinship carers, as follows.

- Section 50 Children Act 1975 enables local authorities to make payments for maintenance or accommodation for children not living with their families.
- Section 22 Children (Scotland) Act 1995 allows local authorities to make services available to children "in need". These services may include giving assistance in kind or, in exceptional circumstances, in cash.

### **9.4 Child Benefit**

Whether a kinship carer is entitled to claim child benefit for a child in their care is dependant on whether the local authority is making regular payments for accommodation and/or maintenance to the kinship carer. If no payments are being made then child benefit is payable for the claimant whom the child normally lives with, and whom HM Revenue and Customs deem is responsible for the child.

Kinship carers who are not receiving payments from the local authority should therefore be able to claim child benefit, but those who are in receipt of allowances under Regulation 33 of the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009. are unlikely to be considered entitled to this benefit. It is important to note that should a previous carer of the child (for example, a parent or other extended family member) fail to notify HMRC of any change in the child's circumstances (in this situation, a move of the child to another carer) and should that person continue to claim child benefit, this can result in a delay in the kinship carer receiving payments. It is essential that HMRC is notified of such a change in circumstance as soon as possible after it takes place.

### **9.5 Child Tax Credit**

If a child is looked after and the local authority is paying towards the child's maintenance and/or accommodation, the kinship carer is not considered entitled to child tax credit in respect of the child. This is because the tax credit rules prevent the claimant being treated as responsible for a child where the child is provided with, or placed in, accommodation under Part II of the 95 Act, and the cost of the child's accommodation or maintenance is borne wholly or partly out of public funds.

A kinship carer may still qualify for child tax credit if s/he has other dependent children who do not fall into this category.

## 9.6 Disability Benefits

When the child has care and support needs as a result of a disability, specialist advice should be sought regarding applying for disability benefits for the child.

Further information on benefits entitlement is available in [Kinship care and benefits - the essentials](#) and [Children's Handbook Scotland](#) published by the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland (CPAG).

## 9.7 Strategic Programme for Change - Finance

### Current Position

Dundee City Council was among the first Councils in Scotland to pay an allowance to kinship carers. The Council currently pays a weekly allowance to formal kinship carers, and the main criteria for such a payment is that the child is looked after and placed with the carers as a result of statutory social work intervention. In addition the Council also pays the same rate of allowance to those informal carers where the Social Work Department has been involved in facilitating the placement, and they have been assessed as meeting the criteria for payments.

Kinship carers are often unaware of their financial entitlements and many are dependant on state benefits or have low incomes. The additional costs associated with providing care for a child can often have a significant detrimental impact on the carer's financial situation and it is the responsibility of the local authority, in promoting the best interests of the child, to ensure that carers have access to robust financial advice and support to maximise their income.

The following actions are to be taken forward to ensure that the most appropriate financial support arrangements are in place for kinship carers, and the children in their care whose needs they are financially responsible for meeting.

### In the short term we will:

- review allowances for kinship carers for looked after children.
- ensure that all kinship carers have a 'better off' calculation undertaken by the Welfare Rights Service and are supported to secure all their individual benefit entitlements.
- ensure that all kinship carers are aware of and can access other specialist sources of financial advice and support when required.
- make known that the local Citizens Advice Bureau/Welfare Rights Service is accessible to all kinship carers and agencies.

### In the medium term we will:

- continue to press for universal benefits for kinship carers and the children living with them to ensure that kinship carers receive the level of allowances they require to meet the care costs for the child.
- have in place clear guidance about discretionary payments for kinship carers and speedy, defensible decision-making processes.

### In the longer term we will:

- encourage corporate parents to support the allocation of additional finance when needed to give the child extra supports in their family, community and in school.

## 10.0 ADVICE AND SUPPORT FOR KINSHIP CARERS

### 10.1 Advice and Support Needs of Kinship Carers

Kinship carers generally value and need support to help them deal with the many issues that arise when caring for a child from within their wider family - often their grandchild. Relationships with their son or daughter can be put under significant strain, especially when the birth parents of the child do not agree that they are unable to care for their child appropriately.

Coupled with the stress of having a son or daughter who has a learning disability, may be abusing substances, or experiencing mental health issues, kinship carers may also try to help all members of the family, but find that they may have to make difficult choices. Some find that they have to be strong enough to exclude the parent of the child, if they present any risk to the child. The emotional toll of such stresses and responsibility can be high, and support to talk through any tensions and dilemmas is essential.

Many kinship carers under-estimate the impact that caring for a child from their wider family is likely to have on all areas of their life. When they take on the care of a child, they can find that they have less money available and some may get into debt. Many kinship carers are older and feel that they are out of touch with the school curriculum and use of computers and smart technologies, as well as having to cope with the additional demands that caring for a child can place on their physical energies.

Kinship carers have spoken about the level of activity from workers when a placement starts, but state that this reduces over time and then many seldom see a social worker. Some kinship carers would value more regular support, as well as being able to return for help and advice, as the needs of the child and their own capacities change. Kinship carers voice a need for practical services like after school clubs, holiday schemes and respite breaks. All of these services are important for kinship carers whether or not they have a formal relationship with the Council, and whether or not the child is looked after.

Therefore key areas where such support can be vital include:

- Regular, accessible and reliable support from social work and/or from a range of universal services to ensure the well-being of the child
- Social work and key universal services understanding the issues for children in kinship care and for carers themselves
- Support to tell children about their early life and why they are living in kinship care
- Support when contact with birth parents becomes problematic to protect the child from adult conflicts
- Support to ensure that safe contact with siblings is maintained
- Access to workers with skills in counselling and mediation to help to resolve potential family conflicts
- Practical help through child care or after school care, occasional respite care, befriending and access to clubs
- Help to access support groups for kinship carers
- Skills development for kinship carers - providing an opportunity to access information, discuss issues and learn from others, on a formal or informal basis, with support tailored to the kinship carer's individual needs. This may be provided jointly with other carers or child care workers
- Help to think through the reasons for a child's anger and how to help the child to express anger without damage to self or others
- Help to develop skills in dealing with challenging behaviour, often as a consequence of early emotional damage from neglect in early years, and in helping a child build resilience
- Quick access to specialist support, for example, Additional Support for Learning, child and adolescent mental health services ( CAMHS)
- Advocacy, where needed, to navigate the carer through legal, educational or health systems
- Advice regarding accessing carer support services, where the kinship carer also provides regular and substantial support for another family member with a disability
- A handbook, like a foster care handbook, with useful information, contacts and explanation of some of the legal and financial issues
- Corporate parenting responsibilities which are taken seriously by all the involved council departments and community planning partners. Education, health, housing and leisure services making services accessible and affordable to children in kinship care placements

Councils can provide discretionary support to informal carers, and several authorities have continued to provide emotional and practical support to kinship carers who have taken the step of pursuing residence for a child under Section 11 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

## 10.2 Advice & Support Services for Kinship Carers in Dundee

Currently some of the support for kinship carers in Dundee is provided by the allocated social worker for the child. At times this can result in workers addressing the competing demands of care and protection work and support to kinship carers. This strategy will result in the potential of dedicated staff to assess, support and review kinship carers.

The Social Work Department's Children's Services provide a range of supports and services to kinship carers through their family support staff. Dundee City Council also commissions voluntary organisations to provide support services to kinship carers as follows:

'Children 1st' has been given national and local funding for each of the next three financial years to run a service to kinship carers which will include:

- A comprehensive telephone advice service via ParentLine (**08000 28 22 33**) with dedicated staff and volunteers trained in kinship issues
- Training for kinship carers on issues that they, and the children they care for can encounter, including alcohol and drugs misuse and managing relationships within families
- Work to help existing local family support groups or address gaps in local support, as well as the creation of a national forum for kinship carers to strengthen their voice in future policy development
- The provision of family group conferencing - a way of bringing the whole family together to find solutions for problems affecting children within a family
- Training on the working of the Children's Hearings system and implications for families

### **Citizens Advice Bureau**

Advisers at the local Dundee CAB can provide advice on kinship care and can access additional specialist advice for complex cases. A confidential Kinship Care Helpline is also available (**0808 800 0006**) with calls which are free from landlines and most mobiles.

### **Aberlour Kith 'n Kin Service**

This Kinship Care Service was established as a joint project run by a partnership between voluntary sector organisations Tayside Council on Alcohol and Aberlour Outreach Dundee. Support is available to both carers and children in placement in a group setting, on a 1-1 basis, or a combination of both.

## 10.3 Strategic Programme for Change - Advice and Support Services to Kinship Carers

### **Current Position**

Currently some of the support for kinship carers in Dundee is provided by the allocated social worker for the child. However this work has to be undertaken alongside child protection work and the statutory duties required by the Children's Hearing and court systems. Therefore the level of support that can be offered to kinship carers is directly related to the workload capacity available at any given point in time.

The Social Work Department also provides a range of supports and services to kinship carers through their family support staff in Children's Services, and through commissioning support services from voluntary sector organisations. But it is recognised that it can be a challenging task for kinship carers to provide care for a child whose past experiences may have adversely affected their behaviour or development, and a range of specialist advice and support services is required to support carers in this task, and to help the individual children they care for.

All of this means that there needs to be a more consistent, more robust and better co-ordinated approach to the provision of such supports and services in Dundee. The following are the actions planned to improve the quality of the advice and support services for kinship carers and the children they care for.



**In the short term we will:**

- support and encourage kinship carers and children to access universal services and additional support from health and education, as well as other services from partners in local areas, when carers and the child they care for need it.
- review the roles, responsibilities and expectations in respect of kinship carers and ensure that they are clear and realistic.
- review the support offered to kinship carers by both the Social Work Department and commissioned services with a view to promoting improved use of resources, co-ordination of support arrangements and evaluation of impact.
- further develop workers' knowledge and skills in the area of providing support to kinship carers.

**In the medium term we will:**

- encourage universal services to recognise the specific needs of kinship carers and ensure that they are given the support and services they require to better meet the child's needs.
- ensure school staff are informed about and encouraged to recognise the specific needs of children in kinship care and provide children with the additional support they may require to achieve their potential.
- produce a Kinship Carer handbook which will act as a valuable source of information, help and advice for kinship carers.
- improve access to specialist support for families providing kinship care.
- enhance access to parenting programmes for kinship carers.
- increase skills development opportunities for kinship carers.
- provide more opportunities for kinship carers from different families to support each other.
- improve development opportunities for agency staff from specialist providers on the role and needs of kinship carers.
- develop specialist services to support kinship carers to recognise and meet the child's individual needs.
- identify a manager who will be responsible for monitoring needs and leading on the development of kinship care services, so that carers do get access to services that meet their support needs and those of the children for whom they care.
- establish a reference group of kinship carers to actively seek their views on existing provision and identify how services could be further developed to better support them in carrying out their role.
- ensure that the Council and its Community Planning partners give due consideration to the development of services which are available to all kinship carers, not only those with a child who is looked after.
- arrange for corporate parents, community planning partners and senior managers in health and other agencies outwith the Council who contribute to the Children's Services planning processes to participate in awareness raising events about kinship care.
- review priorities in the commissioning of services for kinship carers and the children they care for to ensure that all of the resources available are used to improve support and outcomes for both kinship carers and the children themselves.

**In the longer term we will:**

- give due consideration to the development of a dedicated service for kinship care, so that the resource needs of this service are not eclipsed by child protection, foster care and adoption/permanence planning demands.
- improve public information on kinship care.
- enable statutory and voluntary services to support kinship carers to create a learning household, including ensuring that carers have opportunities to develop new skills that will help them to care for the child in the short and longer term.
- promote multi agency discussions to ensure that services and the resources available are being used in the most appropriate way to support the individual child and kinship carers.

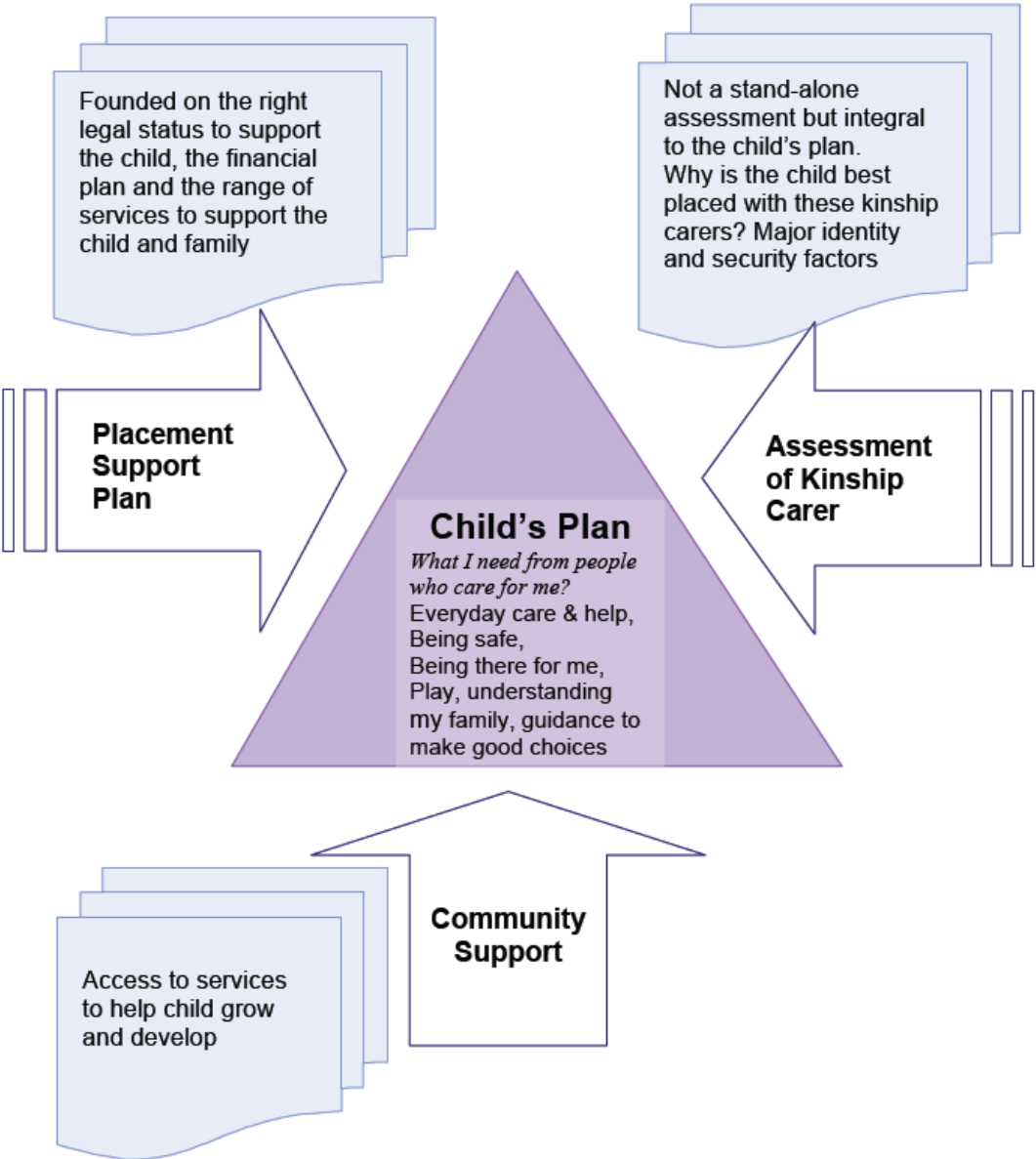
- develop a skilled, competent, confident and well-resourced workforce drawn from a range of professions to work with children and their kinship carers to ensure the child's safety and well being and promote best outcomes.
- collect data about the outcomes of placements with kinship carers to ensure continuous improvement in services to kinship carers and the children in their care.
- assist corporate parents and community planning partners to consider actively what they can do to invest in additional supports for children in kinship care.
- ensure that the Council as corporate parents, together with all partners continue to review their priorities in the commissioning of services and adopt a co-ordinated approach to the provision of both Council and commissioned services for kinship carers and the children they care for.

### **Conclusion**

Dundee City Council Social Work Department believes that kinship carers have a crucial role to play in enabling children to remain within their families by providing stability to them during times of crisis and change, and beyond.

The Council is committed, through its work with planning partners, to provide the advice and support necessary to kinship carers to enable them to carry out their caring role. We will actively seek the views of kinship carers, children and young people, in or leaving kinship care, when reviewing existing voluntary and statutory provision. Through such feedback and the eventual establishment of a forum for consultation, kinship carers will have an integral role in developing services which continue within all available resources to develop and evolve to best meet the needs of kinship carers and the children for whom they care.

Chart 1: CHILD'S PLAN IN KINSHIP CARE based on 'MY WORLD' ASSESSMENT TRIANGLE



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