

Appendix Four Engagement and consultation with Special Guardians

Voice and Influence of Kinship Carers from 2017 to 2019 (Leeds CC)

Updates below provided for 6 monthly voice and influence reports. Latest summary report can be found [here](#) alongside our newsletters about parents carer family voice and influence in Leeds.

Highlights from 2017

- One of the kinship carers identified the need for support around emotional well-being and in response Wendy Gledhill (Lead for kinship) worked with a website designer for Mindmate to get more information on the website for kinship carers.

ACTION New Kinship Carer webpage on Mind Mate website
<https://www.mindmate.org.uk/im-a-parent-or-carer/kinship-care/>

- A Leeds kinship carer shared her story in this [film](#) which was developed to raise awareness about kinship care.

ACTION

- A representative from kinship carer's voice and influence group shared the film and gave a presentation at the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership Board Meeting to raise awareness of the challenges for kinship families.



- Group members offered their support in raising awareness. In response Hannah Lamplugh (VIC Team) went to meet the group and in response shared the film and issues they want schools to be aware of with the voice and influence lead staff in all schools in Leeds.
- Kinship carers participated in the launch of parent Carer Family Voice and influence month and learnt about other opportunities to have their voices heard. Report is available [here](#).

Highlights from 2018

Kinship Voice and Influence Group

- Contributed to the Family Support Review and the Patient Experience for Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust.
- Kinship carers regularly attend the city wide Kinship Care Reference Group to consider how to support and expand support to kinship families

Issues that Kinship carers raise on continuing basis are:

- Access to support services and this can vary according to what kinship arrangement or legal order is in place
- Ongoing concern that schools do not listen or appear to understand the needs of kinship children

Actions taken: The group developed a list of what they would like to change / improve in schools that the group coordinator shared with virtual schools and school improvement to share with staff working with schools.

Feedback from Kinship Voice and Influence Group July 2018

- That carers /parents know their children and request that schools **listen** to what they have to say.
- In turn **listen to the child** rather than accepting what other children say about them: **believing the child.**
- There can be mismatch between how the child presents in school and in the home. So back to listening to the parent/carer.
- For schools to appreciate the story/narrative that the children live their lives by, as to how and why they came into kinship to minimise bullying: as they are at greater risk.
- They consider that many teachers do not understand or appreciate how their children's early life experiences of loss, trauma and change in the family impacts on their ability to learn.
- Thus they would wish for greater awareness of kinship themes and challenges; training in complex trauma and attachment for staff so they are more attuned to the children's needs.
- That children's presentation of poor concentration; difficulty or slowness to learn can be the result of these experiences and not to label the child as a result with demerits in planner/behaviour programme and /or exclusions.
- That these children are vulnerable and have the same needs as a child who is looked after however they do not attract the same resources.
- That primary schools being smaller with greater emphasis on pastoral care are more nurturing for their children.

- This cannot be said of secondary/high schools and there as high level of frustration with lack of communication between home and school and also between teachers/other staff.
 - That transitions need to take account of each child's capabilities and that expectations can be unrealistic and then child fails. This reinforces poor self -esteem in the child and interest in school. Therefore academic level to be set for the child and not for the outcomes the school wishes to aspire too.
 - Details of child's past journey needs to transfer seamlessly from one school to another and from one class to another.
 - That Ofsted should monitor how the needs of kinship children are met in schools as a requirement they are measured against.
 - Greater scrutiny of Pupil Premium Plus spending.
 - How well can SENCO/ Designated Teacher respond to the large number of vulnerable children and including the hidden informal carers?
- Group members expressed an interest in being involved in training sessions for school staff but as group coordinator left the council this action was not progressed.
 - The Kinship V&I Group attended and contributed to the Kinship Care Event 25th April looking at national research on outcomes for young people who have grown up in kinship families.

Update from April 2019

New kinship carer voice and influence group started April 2019