

## **Section 20 Knowledge Inquiry Reference Group**

### **Sophie Conway**

Sophie is a Young Parent Youth Advocate at the charity Just for Kids Law, providing advocacy, support and assistance to parents ranging from age 16 to 25. Just for Kids Law offers all its young clients a unique combination of specialist legal representation and support which is specially tailored to their particular needs, to help them overcome the often complex issues which are preventing them from fully engaging with society. Just for Kids Law's Advocacy Programme supports young people in difficulty, particularly those in trouble with the law, looked after children, those at risk of exclusion from school - as well as young parents. Sophie is currently offering one to one advocacy support to 15 young parents across London. Her work has given her particular insight into the personal and systemic difficulties that young parents who are care leavers are experiencing, including the enhanced risk they face of having their own children taken into local authority care.

### **Angela Frazer-Wicks**

Angela has worked with Family Rights Group for 11 years campaigning for better support for parents involved with the child welfare system including those who are victims of domestic violence and those who suffer with addiction and mental health problems. She is Co-Chair of the Your Family, Your Voice Alliance and a Trustee of Family Rights Group. Angela experienced mental health problems and addiction from childhood and as a parent suffered severe domestic violence and the loss of two children to adoption 12 years ago. She is happily married with a five year old daughter.

### **Emma Kendall**

Emma is a barrister at St Philips Chambers. Emma studied history at undergraduate and postgraduate level before transferring to the law. She started her legal career in 2009 as a trainee solicitor at Warwickshire County Council. Emma qualified as a solicitor in January 2012 and joined the young people's legal team at Warwickshire County Council. In 2012 Emma was awarded the Outstanding Newcomer in the area of Children Law by the Association of Lawyers for Children. She has been a member of the ALC committee since that time. Emma undertook the Higher Courts (Civil Advocacy) Qualification in 2013 and received recognition in 2014. She was called to the Bar and joined St Philips Chambers in 2016. Emma regularly writes articles for publications such as Family Law and the ALC newsletter. She has recently commented on social work practice in cases of false allegations by a parent and the recent Court of Appeal judgment on secure accommodation for 17 year olds.

### **Her Honour Isobel Plumstead**

Her Honour Isobel Plumstead retired as a circuit judge and deputy high court judge in December 2014 after nearly 25 years on the bench, mainly specialising in Family Law. She was DFJ for Cambridge and Peterborough between 2002 and 2009, and subsequently became Secretary then President of the Council of H M Circuit Judges. She was a barrister and is a bencher of Middle Temple, where she teaches advocacy to students and young practitioners. She continues to be a judge by request of the First Tier Tribunal with jurisdiction over applications concerning Restricted Patients.

## **Robert Tapsfield**

Robert is a social worker with over 20 years local authority experience as a practitioner and manager. From 1999 to 2004 he was chief executive of Family Rights Group. Between 2004 and 2014 he was chief executive of the Fostering Network. Robert now works as an independent consultant in children's social care, working with local authorities and charities. He is a senior associate with Research in Practice, chair of two local authority fostering and adoption panels, a trustee of Family Action and of WeSET, a local sustainable energy charity. Robert has had a long term interest in children in care. He was involved in the introduction of family group conferences to this country; early research into kinship care and *Second Time Around*, published by Family Rights Group in 2001, the first study in the UK of grandparents bringing up their grandchildren. Robert chaired an advisory group that influenced the original legislation on special guardianship, the Kinship Care Alliance until 2014, and the steering group of charities who worked together to produce the Care Inquiry in 2013.

## **Professor June Thoburn**

Professor June Thoburn qualified as a Social Worker in 1963 and worked in local authority child and family social work and generic practice in England and Canada before taking up a joint appointment (with Norfolk County Council) at UEA in 1979. As founding Director of the Centre for Research on the Child and Family and of the Making Research Count collaboration, she has a particular interest in finding innovative ways of helping social workers to make appropriate use of knowledge from a range of sources in their practice, a recent major interest is in international child welfare. She is currently a special advisor to CAFCASS and Chair of the Norfolk Family Justice Board. She was awarded the CBE 'for services to social work' in 2002.

## **Maria Young**

Maria is Head of Service Interim Head of Children, Families & Community Health at Swindon Borough Council. Maria studied social work and psychology at undergraduate and postgraduate level and has 25 years' experience as practitioner and senior manager, within local authority child and family social work in England and South Africa. Maria was involved in a number of innovative projects, ranging from uplifting third world communities, to running support groups for children in secondary schools focussing on healthy relationships and substance misuse. Whilst practising in South Africa, Maria also had a multi-disciplinary private practice delivering family therapy to troubled families. Maria has a particular interest and insight into the journey of children within the local authority's care. A recent interest is commencing a project to support mothers who have had multiple children removed from their care. Maria is also passionate about the use of innovative approaches to elicit the views of children, their families and front line staff to ensure services are tailored to meet their needs.