

Kinship Care Alliance's response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England - Case for Change

The Kinship Care Alliance

The Kinship Care Alliance is an informal network of organisations working with kinship carers which subscribe to a set of shared aims and beliefs about kinship care. Since 2006, [members](#) have been meeting regularly to develop a joint policy agenda and agree strategies to promote shared aims which are:

- To prevent children from being unnecessarily raised outside of their family and friends network
- To ensure that the opportunities and resources available to children living with kinship carers maximise their chances of positive outcomes
- To secure improved recognition and support for kinship carers and the children they are raising.

We believe that children and young people are best placed with family and friends where it is in the child's best interests and safe to do so, and that these families should receive support and help to do this.

Family Rights Group provide the legal and policy secretariat to the Kinship Care Alliance.

Our response

We very much welcome the focus the Review, in its initial stages, has placed on kinship care. The Case for Change is the first time a policy document from or commissioned by government has placed kinship care in such a prominent position, giving it the recognition that for too long has been missing from policymaking.

We are pleased the Review has recognised the value of supporting children to live safely and thrive in their family and the benefits of kinship care. We welcome the call for focused action on kinship care to promote its use and ensure that more children grow up and thrive in long-lasting and loving homes.

Key issues identified by the Review in the Case for Change are consistent with the findings of the Care Crisis Review and the inquiry by the Parliamentary Taskforce on Kinship Care. We recognise many of them from our experiences working with and for kinship carers and their children.

The Review has identified the lack of sustained support for kinship carers and their children, - including practical, emotional, financial, legal and trauma-informed support - and how this impacts negatively on their quality of life. We welcome this recognition and would stress that any strategy for promoting the use of kinship care must adequately address the supportive scaffolding that is available to families and their children to ensure that they can reach their full potential.

The Review must follow through the focus placed upon the value of kinship care in the remaining stages of the Review, its future outputs, and critically in the government's response. This includes through measures designed to:

1. Explore the wider family, both domestic and abroad, as a first port of call when children may not be able to remain safely with the parents
2. Ensure that local authorities and other public agencies recognise and meet the needs of children in kinship care in their area – including emotional, therapeutic and educational support - regardless of their legal status and are funded to do so. There is a particularly



urgent need for better data to ensure that children in kinship care and their carers are visible to the system.

3. Ensure specialist advice, including legal advice, is available to family and friends who are considering, or have taken on a child, so they understand their rights and options
4. Support kinship carers to remain in the labour market, including through measures such as paid kinship leave.
5. Prevent kinship carer households from falling into financial hardship including through reforms to the benefit system and the introduction of a kinship financial allowance.

The Review poses the question, what can we do to support and grow kinship care? We would start by directing the Review to consider our [Agenda for Action](#). This sets out recommendations that we think need to be implemented to ensure that children who cannot safely live with their parents have the opportunity to remain within their wider family, and that these arrangements are adequately supported.

The report of the Parliamentary Taskforce on Kinship Care goes into greater detail on many of these measures and we would encourage the Review to consider its analysis and recommendations. We would also suggest that the Review looks at housing issues for kinship households and the Taskforce made recommendations in this regard. In relation to financial support for kinship carers, particularly financial allowances, we would be happy to discuss in more depth possible approaches which could be taken.

The Review must continue to hear directly from kinship care families – carers, other family members including birth parents, and also young people who are growing up, or have grown up in kinship care. And from practitioners and decision-makers working with kinship care families. Organisations within the Kinship Care Alliance can assist. We look forward to contributing to the Review further as it considers solutions to the challenges highlighted.