

5.2 Kinship and Foster Care

Improvement Project Title: Supporting care experienced children and young people who sustain care placements which meet their needs and sense of identity
Executive Sponsor: Rob Polkinghorne (ICS Board Chair)
Project Lead: Isabel McDonnell
Aim statement: Increase in the number of inhouse foster and kinship placements by 2021
Link to Local Outcome Improvement Plan: Stretch Outcome 5. 95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education, emotional wellbeing, and positive destinations as their peers by 2026
Why is this important: Through implementation of the national Permanence and Care Excellence Programme (PACE), we identified that children experience significant drift and delay where they have an approved permanence plan for kinship. Scrutiny of our permanence data highlighted the main area of drift was around the timely completion of kinship assessments. A Kinship Improvement Group was formed and identified that the barriers for timely completion of assessments were around:- <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.The capacity of the Alternative Family Care Service to undertake the assessments of all alternative family care provisions (Adopters/Foster Carers/Kinship Carers);2.The capacity of the Alternative Family Care Service to provide support and deliver training to all alternative care provisions (Adopters/Foster Carers/Kinship Carers);3.An assessment framework that was not fit for purpose; The group also identified that:- <ol style="list-style-type: none">4.We did not have clear picture of our entire kinship population;5.Children continued to experience foster placements prior to being placed with kin;6.A lack of a clear and imbedded process to support staff's understanding of kinship; the types of kinship placements; our statutory financial obligations to kinship cares; confidence to support kinship carers to apply for a legal order Children who grow up within their families have an increased sense of identity and security where they are supported to achieve in all aspects of their wellbeing. Being placed within their family reduces the impact of being away from their community network and research tells us these losses impact on mental and physically health and wellbeing. Children being placed with kin at an early stage, minimises the need for unnecessary foster placements which research tells us is not in the best interests of the child. Foster placements are often out sourced at a significant cost to the local authority.

Measures:**Outcome measures**

- Number of Kinship carers
- % of looked after and accommodated population placed with Kin
- Number and % of kinship placements secured by a legal order

Process measures

- Number of Stage 1 (pre-placement) Assessments undertaken
- Number of children placed with Kin after Stage 1 Assessment outcome
- Number of referrals to Kinship Team for Stage 2 Assessment

Balancing measures

- Number of kinship placement breakdowns
- Number of pre-placement kinship assessments where child was not placed
- Increase in costs associated with kinship placements

Change ideas

The Alternative Family Care Service have published their Kinship Care Improvement Plan for 2018-2019.

The overarching changes identified to support an increase in children being placed with kin are:-

- The establishment of a Kinship Care Team (the remit of the Team and the resource this will provide to assess and support kinship carers);
- Transformation of Kinship Assessment Process (to support staff with the change of culture around kinship where we seek to support kinship carers to apply for legal orders to secure kinship placements at a much earlier stage);
- Redesign of Kinship Assessment Framework (to give cognisance of current legislation; that it is proportionate to the needs of the child and the placement; that it is inclusive of the carer and supports and sustains their strengths and minimise their vulnerabilities);
- Programme of engagement and participation of kinship carers; some examples being; information evenings; training of prospective carers and service planning.
- Formation of a Permanence Monitoring Group (to monitor and identify where children experience drift and delay; to provide operational support to experiencing barriers to achieving timely outcomes for children)

Potential risks and/or barriers to success & actions to address these:

- Capacity of social work teams and kinship care team to respond to an increase in demand
- Overly complicated processes and systems that prohibit, on occasions, a timely response to inhouse referrals
- Financial constraints on our statutory obligations to kinship carers
- Access to appropriate housing for potential kinship carers

Project Team:

- Isabel McDonnell, Project Lead (Children’s Service Manager)
- Laura Gray, Kinship Team Leader
- Tam Walker, Children’s Services Manager
- Family & Community Support worker (tbc)
- Kinship Carer (tbc by Laura Gray)
- LC, Kinship Care Experienced adult
- Neil Carnegie, Communities and Housing Area Manager
- Kelly Hickman, Improvement Adviser

Outline Project Plan		
Project Stage	Actions	Timescale
Getting Started (Project Score 1-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team established • Initial baseline established • Draft charter developed • Charter submitted to CPA Board 	Complete Complete Complete July 2019
Designing and Testing Changes (Project Score 4-7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design changes for initial testing • Test changes using PDSA – Kinship Assessment • Test further change ideas • Evaluate overall achievement to date and plan further PDSAs or move to implementation 	Jul 2019 Ongoing August 2019 onwards Sep 2019
Implementing and sustaining changes that demonstrate improvement (Project Score 7-10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree change ideas tested which are proven to work that we will seek to embed permanently • Continue to gather data • Assess whether improvement levels are sustained 	Nov 2019 Ongoing Jan 2020
Spreading Changes (Project Score 9-10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess opportunities for spreading change as we are currently testing whole system/whole local population 	Jan 2020