
Report to People Committee

Date of Meeting: 18 November 2021

Subject: Kinship Care Support

Report by: Gillian Buchanan, Service Manager, Corporate Parenting

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update the People Committee on the on-going developments of the kinship service within Clackmannanshire and to seek views on a Draft Strategy and Implementation Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Committee note and comment on the development of kinship services and the contents of this paper.

3.0 Considerations

- 3.1. Supporting children to remain in their communities with strong family links is a key priority objective for Clackmannanshire and for The Promise. Within Clackmannanshire there is still a high dependency on placements for accommodated children outwith their local area. A comparator with other local authorities based on Scottish Government figures, highlights that Clackmannanshire's reliance on purchased fostering and residential provision is significantly greater than the national average. Whilst this overall imbalance of placements outwith authority is reducing as the number of kinship placements increases, this remains a key target for the service to keep children and young people in their local community wherever possible in line with The Promise.
- 3.2. The Promise reinforces the need for more children to live safely and thrive within their own family and community. The national Promise Plan 21-24 has Five Priority Areas and Whole Family Support is one of the 5 priority areas. As the People Directorate develops its plans to deliver on the Promise, it is anticipated this will create and further support a culture where practice has a focus on family supports and networks, including any potential kinship options, for children. This is likely to further increase kinship care placements in Clackmannanshire.

- 3.3. Kinship care whilst having elements of similarity with foster care ie the child is looked after within a family based environment, and requires the provision of support, guidance and advice to carers in their own right; also has some very distinctive features. The carers have existing relationships with the birth parents, and there needs to be a robust assessment to explore how they will manage children who have invariably experienced trauma, and the challenges and complexity in meeting these needs alongside managing complex family dynamics and divided loyalty. Equally, children in kinship placements have similar experiences to children in other types of alternative care in terms of exposure to adversity and trauma in their early years. Kinship carers therefore require ongoing support to meet the needs of children and young people in their care.
- 3.4. During 2020/21, linked to COVID-19, there has been an increase in demand and complexity of need and this has resulted in an overall increase of looked after children to 267 by July 2021, up 8% from 248 in July 2020. The biggest and most significant change in our care experienced population has been a doubling of the numbers of children and young people placed with kinship carers (mostly family members) over the past four years. To illustrate in 2016/17 there were 64 children with looked after status with kinship carers, but as of 31 August 2021 there were 122. When children cannot safely return to their parent(s) and they require long term stability, known as permanence, kinship carers are supported to progress Residence Orders. In Clackmannanshire there are currently an additional 62 children and young people secured by a residence order. Of our looked after population in kinship placements, three quarters have been able to remain in their local area.
- 3.5. Kinship placements currently account for approximately 55% of our looked after population in Clackmannanshire and this reflects a clear objective to identify family and friends as a first option for a home when a child can no longer live with their parents and requires alternative care. Kinship care, traditionally seen as a 'cheaper' option for children who can no longer live at home, is now a preferred option for supporting children to remain in their local communities and connected with their friends and family wherever possible. The increase in kinship placements can be linked to the implementation of a small stand alone Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) Team in Children's Services. The team was initially established in 2018 and then relaunched with a ring-fenced team in June 2020 and they have worked across the service to develop safe family plans with immediate and extended families recognising family assets, and that families are the experts of their lived experiences.
- 3.6. In light of the growing provision of kinship care, the existing service provision required development, both to meet the demand for support and assistance for kinship carers, but also to ensure timely and robust assessments of kinship carers takes place. Additional monies from Covid funding have supported the reduction of a backlog of 30 outstanding kinship care assessments and to date 20 of these are underway using a pool of independent assessors.

- 3.7. As part of ongoing service redesign to meet demand and changing requirements, 2 posts have been identified within Children's Services to champion kinship provision as well as a team leader post. As part of the Service plans to #KeepthePromise, this team will drive change, applying the principles of the Scottish Approach to Service Redesign, seeking and designing services around children and families, involving them from day one. This includes consultation with our kinship carers about the supports they need to help them care for their children.
- 3.8. A Draft Kinship Strategy and Plan is attached at Appendix 1 This details the key priorities for the service in its early stages of development. This will be further developed as part of the Promise and updates will be brought forward to People Committee, and as part of reporting on the Children's Services Plan 2021-2024.

4.0 Sustainability Implications

- 4.1. The development of a more robust kinship service is integral to the overall care strategy within Children's services.

5.0 Resource Implications

5.1. Financial Details

- 5.2. The budget forecast for the total spend on kinship for 2021-22 is £1,215,000 with a current projected overspend of £185,990. This total includes both children looked after and those children where their placement has been secured by a residence order. It is important to note that whilst the budget for kinship is likely to be exceeded, kinship would still be the preferred route for any child who can no longer live at home.
- 5.3. A Kinship placements currently amount to approx. £10k per year. In comparison, an external residential placement can exceed £200k per annum whilst a purchased foster placement is on average £45k per annum. Not only are both these provisions more costly but they also invariably mean that a child has to move outwith their local areas and community. Growth in kinship should be viewed as progress - as a spend to save investment with generally better outcomes.

5.4. Staffing

There are no implications for staffing arising from this report.

6.0 Exempt Reports

- 6.1. Is this report exempt? Yes (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No **X**

7.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

(1) Our Priorities (Please double click on the check box)

Clackmannanshire will be attractive to businesses & people and ensure fair opportunities for all	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our families; children and young people will have the best possible start in life	X
Women and girls will be confident and aspirational, and achieve their full potential	X
Our communities will be resilient and empowered so that they can thrive and flourish	X

(2) Council Policies (Please detail)

8.0 Equalities Impact

8.1 The development of kinship services and support addresses the history of inequality and negative outcomes often faced by the care experienced community.

Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?

Yes No X

9.0 Legality

9.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes X No

10.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Strategy and Development Plan

11.0 Background Papers

11.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)

Yes X (please list the documents below) No

The Promise – update report to People Committee 25 March 2021(<https://www.clacks.gov.uk/document/meeting/264/1064/6958.pdf>).

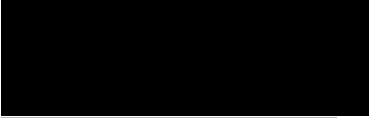
The Promise – update report to People Committee 16 September 2021
(<https://www.clacks.gov.uk/document/meeting/264/1094/7120.pdf>)

The Scottish Approach to Service Redesign
(<https://www.gov.scot/publications/the-scottish-approach-to-service-design/>)

Author(s)

NAME	DESIGNATION	TEL NO / EXTENSION
Gillian Buchanan	Service Manager Corporate Parenting	01259 225000

Approved by

NAME	DESIGNATION	SIGNATURE
Lorraine Sanda	Strategic Director (People)	

Clackmannanshire Council Kinship Care Team

Draft Strategy and Development Plan

Date: October 2021

Introduction

Kinship care is becoming an increasingly used type of placement for children who require to be looked after away from home. The advantages are obvious; it allows children to often remain with their own families or with those who know them well, can improve a sense of identity and often allow them to remain rooted in their own communities. There are also significant challenges, particularly in relation to managing family dynamics and in some cases addressing historical parenting issues of the applicants. However, kinship care is still viewed as a positive placement for many young people, and is consistent with The Scottish Government review of looked after children, The Promise (2020), which has an identified aim of improving the number of children and young people who can be looked after within their own communities and network of family and friends.

Remit of the Team

Clackmannanshire Council introduced a new kinship care team in May 2021, with the aim of working closely with our colleagues in core childrens' services and our Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) team to identify appropriate kinship care options. Once these are identified, the role of the kinship care team will be to :

- Complete kinship assessments on prospective carers;
- Establish and manage a kinship care panel;
- Make recommendations to the panel about whether prospective carers should be approved;
- Provide ongoing support to kinship carers, either through individual support, groupwork provision or training;
- Ensure financial arrangements are put in place to support placements, and are reviewed regularly;
- Assess any new kinship care enquiries.

Vision for the Service

Wherever possible, we want children who can no longer remain at home to be supported by their wider family network so they can remain in their local community and maintain the connections and relationships that are important to them. Our kinship service will develop supports based on robust assessments and what carers tell us they need.

Our Strategy

- Get to know our kinship population, exploring individual circumstances and providing supports based on that knowledge.
- Develop a range of supports that are proportionate to those needs
- Work alongside partner services to ensure children’s needs are being met
- Ensure assessments of kinship carers are timely and focused on building capacity to meet the needs of children they are or will be caring for
- Prioritise the identification of kinship placements that require more immediate intervention and support to prevent placement breakdowns and disruption for children.

The action plan below sets out the key priorities and tasks for the service development for 2021-22.

Action Plan

	What is the planned outcome?	How will we achieve this?	Timescale	How will we know outcomes have improved?
1	Everyone within wider social work services, carers, young people and other agencies are aware of the role and remit of the kinship care team.	Team and management to draw up role and remit for the team, circulate and attend core & duty team meetings to discuss.	November 2021	Referrals to the team are appropriate.
2	The team is fully staffed and able to concentrate on their specific remit.	The vacancy within the Team is filled. The current social worker within the team has her caseload re-allocated if necessary to allow her to perform her new role.	January 2022 December 2021	Support to carers improves as the team is fully staffed and able to dedicate their time to supporting and assessing carers.
3	We are aware of all kinship carers and young people we are supporting.	The kinship TL works with business support to pull together up to date database of carers and young people.	December 2021	There is confidence that the database is accurate and up to date, with communication with carers improved.
4	Referral protocol for FGDM, kinship and PCA teams in place and all social work staff aware of this.	Referral protocol to be drawn up by TL’s for FGDM, kinship and PCA and thereafter disseminated to other social work teams.	November 2021	Referral process is working well – FGDM do initial work to scope out preferred kinship options before kinship team do assessments, simultaneous to PCA assessment, with reduction in drift of

				permanence plans for children.
5	The service is aware of the circumstances, support requirements and risks for carers who have a residence order.	Kinship TL to carry out a review of all children / young people in residence order placements to establish if they need ongoing social work support.	December 2021	All children and young people receive the support which is proportionate to their needs, identified by feedback from carers and young people.
6	Financial support is fair, needs-led and has review systems in place that are clear and not labour intensive.	Review of financial processes and allowances to take place, involving management, staff and business support. Once review is agreed, this should be disseminated to carers for consultation.	December 2021 January 2021	Carers feel supported financially and this is based on the needs of the children. Procedures are easy to understand with review process built into this
7	Clackmannanshire Council has clear and concise policies and procedures.	The team and kinship TL to develop appropriate policies and procedures, which will be consistent with the Promise, and thereafter disseminate to the other SW teams.	December 2021	All teams are aware of our policies and procedures and how to access them – these are comprehensive and mean that there is a guide to resolve any eligibility or procedural issues.
8	Kinship Panel is established and provides independent scrutiny of kinship assessments.	Kinship Panel to be set up, using previous members of the Panel – attempts to be made to ensure at least one person on the Panel is care experienced.	November 2021	Assessments are independently scrutinised and support required by carers identified at an early stage.
9	Support and training needs of kinship carers are identified.	Survey to be carried out into support and training needs of carers. From this survey feedback, support and training plan to be drawn up with partner agencies.	November 2021 December 2021	Carers feel greater support is on offer, both formal and informal, and training opportunities increase their knowledge. Attendance at support groups improves.
10	Carers who need more intensive individual support are identified and given assistance to scaffold their placements.	Regular discussions to take place at allocations meeting to identify families in need of extra support from the kinship team.	Ongoing	Placements are stabilised and there are fewer placement breakdowns.

11	Protocol for transition to TCAC team is devised, with carers, young people and all social work staff aware of this.	Kinship & TCAC TL to draw up a protocol for transition between kinship and TCAC, for consultation with the wider team and young people before being rolled out.	January 2022	Young people do not fall through the gap between kinship and TCAC.
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