

Meeting	Trustee Board meeting
Date	23 June 2022
Title	Kinship strategic grant
Agenda item	7
Paper by	Victoria Southwell

1.0 Purpose of paper

To provide Trustees with information to enable them to make an informed decision about whether to support the proposed grant application from Kinship (Appendix 1).

2.0 Background information

Trustees will recall that in December 2020 a strategic grant was awarded to Kinship (at the time called Grandparents Plus) to help them to develop work in the North East with kinship carers. This campaigning project would enable the voices of kinship carers to be heard and help them develop campaigning skills to raise awareness and secure local change.

The project recruited a number of kinship carers who had previously described feeling 'invisible'. As their confidence grew, they set up local campaign groups and participated in multiple opportunities to tell their stories and get their points across. This included meetings with Newcastle City Council and the Middlesborough group meeting with the Mayor of Middlesborough, who has committed to supporting kinship carers.

Alongside this there has been a significant review of Children's Social Care in England and the voices of kinship carers have played a key role in highlighting the vital role kinship carers play in supporting the needs of vulnerable children and young people. It also has shone a light on the key issues kinship carers face and the things that need to be put in place to strengthen the role of kinship carers and the ability of relatives to take on this role.

Having strong voices that draw on lived experience, alongside well-planned policy work that is led by sector experts, provides an opportunity for Kinship to build on the Care Review recommendations.

3.0 Suggested way forward

The paper below sets out a proposal of support from Kinship to help them capitalise on the recommendations from the Care Review. The spotlight that was shone on kinship carers presents a unique opportunity for Kinship to push for significant change to the way in which kinship carers are recognised and supported. A grant from Triangle Trust would help them to take this work forward and potentially achieve lasting change at a systemic level.

This issue cuts across both of our focus areas. Carers have been a key area of support for Triangle Trust for many years but kinship carers haven't featured significantly in our funding portfolio to date. However, the issues they face can be as challenging and significant as other unpaid carers that we are more familiar with. And whilst this project does go beyond supporting just young carers, many kinship carers are older siblings who often give up education to provide a stable environment for a younger brother and/or sister.

Looked after young people are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and are a priority group for our funding programme that focuses on young people with criminal convictions. Kinship care provides an opportunity for a child or young person to stay within their family and not be placed in care. This has a significant impact on their future life outcomes and the Care Review recommendations are very clear that kinship care is a preferred outcome for a child. Therefore, we can also assume that supporting this project would impact young people in terms of reducing future offending.

Rarely do we get a chance to support a piece of work when an organisation is so genuinely on the cusp of being able to affect real change. Whilst Kinship may not be able to achieve all the outcomes that they hope for, nor all of those linked to the Care Review recommendations, it does feel as though there are several open doors waiting to be pushed that will help them achieve at least some of the wins that they are expecting. Therefore, I feel that this will be an exciting piece of work to support that provides us with a strong opportunity to be part of achieving real change for kinship carers.

4.0 Recommendation

A grant of £30,000 is awarded as per the request in the proposal in Appendix A.



Kinship and The Triangle Trust 1949 Fund

About us

We are Kinship, the leading kinship care charity operating across England and Wales. Kinship carers are relatives or friends who step in to care for a child because their parents are unable to; generally due to neglect, or parental drug or alcohol misuse. We support the emotional, financial and practical needs of kinship carers to enable children to stay within their family and out of care.

We recently launched our strategy for 2022 – 2025. Our new strategic plan places an emphasis on changing lives - delivering services - and changing the system - raising awareness and influencing policy, practice and legislation. We recognise that these are inter-connected, and uniquely, we bring together extensive on-the-ground service delivery and connections with kinship families to influence systemic change at local and national level.

Kinship and The Triangle Trust 1949 Fund

In 2021 we received a strategic grant from The Triangle Trust 1949 Fund which catalysed our work in the campaigning space. With your support we developed and delivered, 'North East Kinship Campaigners', our first fully funded campaigns project. North East Kinship Campaigners evidenced what we already knew, kinship carers are hungry and motivated for change. It demonstrated that with the right tools, resources and training, kinship carers can come together to make positive change happen. North East Kinship Campaigners was a project with incredible impact that exceeded our expectations of what could be achieved over the course of a year.

We now stand at an exciting moment, the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England has shone the spotlight on kinship care, describing kinship carers as "*the silent and unheard majority in the children's social care system*". While our campaign for change, now bolstered by Comic Relief funding that our Triangle Trust funded project was key to securing, is also building momentum.

We are determined to capitalise on this moment, holding policy makers to account for delivering on the recommendations of the Care Review. Below we propose two ways to in which The Triangle Trust 1949 Fund can help us to achieve this.

1. Developing our public affairs approach to influence systemic change nationally

The Review's strong recommendations around kinship care offer a once in a generation opportunity to improve the lives of kinship care families across England. To capitalise on this moment, we need to act quickly to realise current and upcoming opportunities. Our priority is to keep the spotlight on kinship care, to build strong relationships with the right parliamentarians and to use the media strategically to raise kinship care's profile.

We know that the Review Chair's aspiration was to deliver a set of recommendations actionable within the current Parliament (before 2024) and we've developed strong relationships with Minister Quince, who is responsible for children and families at the Department for Education and we are cultivating a relationship with Secretary of State Zahawi, who has recently remarked

that decision-makers “should be obsessed with kinship care” and understands the wide ranging benefits that investing in well supported kinship care brings. Therefore, we feel confident that the next year is crucial in terms of securing government commitments to implementing the key recommendations around kinship care in the Care Review.

For Kinship and kinship families, key wins in the coming year would be the introduction of financial allowances on a par with the national minimum fostering allowance and the introduction of kinship care leave on a par with adoption leave, both of these for kinship carers who are Special Guardians or who have a Child Arrangement Order – whilst our long-term aspiration is to see this support available for kinship carers (i.e. those without legal orders), we are confident that securing it for carers with formal legal arrangements is a crucial first step. Another key win would be further investment from the Department for Education in peer-to-peer support services for carers across the whole of England.

The impact these changes would have on kinship families would be transformational. Our 2021 Financial Allowances survey found 82% of kinship carers have worried about money and academic research estimates that 76% of children in kinship care grow up in a deprived household – as the cost-of-living rises, we know that increased access to financial support for kinship families is especially vital. Likewise, we know around half of kinship carers give up their jobs when stepping up to raise a child – paid kinship care leave on a par with adoption leave would make a huge difference to these families longer term financial security, so kinship carers no longer need to choose between working or raising a child they love. We also know from our own delivery of peer support groups that these groups are lifelines for kinship carers and provide them with emotional support, practical advice, and information – from people who understand what it’s like to be a kinship carer who can help others feel less alone and isolated.

The decision-making process for the changes we want to see urgently won’t involve legislative change but will need ultimately the Secretary of State for Education (backed by Senior Civil Servants and his junior Ministers) to make the implementation of these recommendations a priority action for his department to undertake, and to do this, will need to secure additional investment from Her Majesty’s Treasury (HMT), who hold the purse strings. Whilst we believe there is will within the Department for Education to deliver these changes and alignment with Secretary Zahawi’s focus on disadvantaged children, we also know that Ministers and Officials will need to reaffirm the Care Review’s ‘spend to save’ case to HMT to secure the necessary investment, and both the Department for Education and HMT will need to feel a mixture of both support and pressure in order to prioritise making the case for kinship care, when many other high-profile issues will also be of interest to Ministers.

In terms of a public affairs approach, this means that we need to continue to engage supportively with Ministers, Senior Civil Servants and those who influence them (for example, key centre-right think tanks) behind the scenes, whilst mobilising a groundswell of cross-party political support in a more public-facing way to keep up the pressure and momentum to prioritise kinship care through further development of our parliamentary engagement and activity.

To achieve our ambitious strategy, we need to bolster the capacity and infrastructure of our public affairs team. Full capacity and adequate infrastructure within our public affairs team will ensure we are able to influence Westminster and Whitehall to implement the Review’s recommendations.

We are therefore asking The Triangle Trust 1949 Fund to invest £30,000 in the following:

- **Policy and Public Affairs Manager:** We are currently recruiting to this new post, which will play a pivotal role in enabling Kinship to secure significant changes to policy and legislation at such a critical time. Their responsibilities will include helping to develop policy positions and stakeholder engagement (i.e. Parliamentarians, MPs and Lords).
- **Media engagement:** Working with a consultant we will invest in securing high impact media coverage that will place public attention on kinship care families in the children's social care system, focusing on developing our press office and infrastructure (e.g. our approach to building a case study bank) so that we can be responsive and capitalise on media opportunities as well as creating our own media stories proactively. We will also work to amplify kinship carers' experiences, expertise, and aspirations for change through local outlets, applying political pressure through local and national news and social media channels. We would like to work with a number of our North East campaigners, whose interest in influencing change, confidence in sharing their experience and expertise and in campaigning has flourished as part of our Triangle Trust North East Campaigners project. We would like a media consultant to work in an empowering and meaningful way with a number of these carers from Newcastle, Middlesbrough, and Stockton to support them to share their stories, expertise, and aspirations for change with local and national media, and on Kinship's owned channels.
- **Parliamentary monitoring system:** staying abreast of political and policy developments can be challenging and time consuming. A parliamentary monitoring system will enable us to monitor this information through unbiased data and analysis, which can be tailored to our requirements and allow us to make the most of political opportunities effectively.

Timeframe

August 2022 – March 2023.

To increase our chance of achieving the strongest implementation of the Review's recommendations around kinship care we would begin to use funding from the Triangle Trust at the soonest opportunity, to increase our public affairs capacity.

Expected outputs

- 10 meetings secured with key political or policy maker stakeholders
- Briefings on kinship care policy asks sent to all potentially interested MPs and Peers
- A Parliamentary debate secured
- 5 Parliamentary questions tabled
- 1 visit by a key minister to a Kinship project or group

Budget overview

- Total cost £30,000
- Contribution to salary of Policy and Public Affairs Manager: £10,000
- Parliamentary monitoring system: £10,000
- Contribution to media consultant: £10,000