

Meeting	Trustee Board meeting
Date	23 March 2023
Title	Kinship strategic grant
Agenda item	8
Paper by	Victoria Southwell

1.0 Purpose of paper

To provide Trustees with information to enable them to approve 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 enabled the voices of kinship carers to be heard and helped 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 was a significant review of Children's Social Care in England, and the voices of kinship carers played a key role in highlighting the vital role kinship carers play in supporting the needs of vulnerable children and young people. The Review 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. Within the report kinship carers were described as "*the silent and unheard majority in the children's social care system*".

A further £30,000 one-year grant in March 2023 provided Kinship with an opportunity to build on the Care Review recommendations. The grant contributed to work in three key areas; **Policy and Public Affairs Manager**: a contribution to the salary of this vital post that plays a pivotal role in enabling Kinship to secure significant changes to policy and legislation. Responsibilities include helping to develop policy positions and

stakeholder engagement (i.e. Parliamentarians, MPs and Lords). **Media engagement:** Working with a consultant to invest in securing high impact media coverage that places public attention on kinship care families in the children's social care system. The funding also enabled a focus on developing Kinship's press office and infrastructure (e.g. their approach to building a case study bank) so that they can be responsive and capitalise on media opportunities as well as creating their own media stories proactively. **Parliamentary monitoring system:** enabling Kinship to better monitor this information through unbiased data and analysis, which can be tailored to their requirements and allow them to make the most of political opportunities effectively.

3.0 Suggested way forward

The paper below sets out a proposal of support from Kinship to help them capitalise further on the recommendations from the Care Review. The spotlight that was shone on kinship carers continues to present a unique opportunity for Kinship to push for significant change to the way in which kinship carers are recognised and supported. With an imminent General Election there is scope to work with all parties to ensure that Kinship Carers appear in Manifesto commitments and that both sitting and new candidates are aware of the needs of kinship carers in their constituencies. A grant from Triangle Trust would help them to take this work forward and potentially achieve lasting change at a systemic level.

This issue is a good fit for a legacy strategic grant that impacts the carers sector. And whilst not directly, kinship care crosses over into our work around young offenders, as 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.

And whilst primarily the focus of legacy strategic grants is young carers, and this project goes 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. So, this does have a strong link.

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 an increasing number of open doors waiting to be pushed that will help them achieve at least some of the wins that they are expecting. The presentation that Kinship made at the December 2022 Trustee meeting highlighted the strong progress that they have made with the one-year grant and showed that there was still much more that was possible. 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 £90,000 over three years is awarded as per the request in the proposal in Appendix A.