

## **Parliamentary Taskforce on Kinship Care: Terms of Reference**

### **A) Aim/Purpose**

The aims of the Taskforce are:

- To raise greater awareness in the Houses of Parliament, in Government, and across the country, of kinship care and the challenges faced by kinship carers and the children they raise
- To work with kinship carers, their kin children, support organisations, and parliamentarians from all sides to promote first-class government policy for kinship carers and the children they raise.

To enable these objectives to be met the Taskforce will:

- Raise awareness of the advantages, strengths and opportunity that kinship care provides to children
- Engage with kinship carers to listen and learn from their personal experience of: raising children in kinship care; and their experiences of the child welfare, family justice, wider welfare and education systems which they encounter.
- Work to influence policy, service delivery, professional practice and legislation through the production of policy recommendations to improve the lives of kinship care households in the short, medium and longer term.

### **B) Membership**

Membership is open to all parliamentarians External organisations with particular expertise in kinship care<sup>1</sup> can join in an advisory capacity to inform the work of the Taskforce.

The Taskforce is chaired by its convenor, Catherine McKinnell, MP for Newcastle upon Tyne North, whose primary responsibility is to oversee the coordination of the taskforce and its individual working groups.

### **C) Expectations of members of the Taskforce**

Members agree to participate in one of the three work streams. Members contribute to their streams' investigation and analysis of their particular focus Work streams meet regularly to progress their work and the Taskforce as a whole also meets to ensure coordination and oversee the steams of activity/work

Members are also encouraged to arrange discussion meetings with kinship care support groups in their area and to feed this evidence in to the work of the Taskforce.

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<sup>1</sup> Including experience of: specialist advice provision to kinship carers or kin children; delivery of support groups/support services to kinship carers and the children they raise; research, policy and legal analysis in relation to kinship care and the child welfare, family justice and wider welfare systems.

To avoid duplication, it would be helpful if this was done in liaison with the Taskforce's secretariat.

#### **D) Administrative arrangements**

The Office of Catherine McKinnell MP and Family Rights Group provide the secretariat for the Taskforce. Notes from each meeting and notification of future whole-Taskforce meetings are circulated to all interested Members. The whole Taskforce will meet at least once per month, with intermediate meetings by the work streams running concurrently.

#### **E) Decision making**

Each work stream is responsible for the direction of its investigation and analysis, provided it also coordinates with the wider group to ensure there is no duplication, that there is consistency in approach across the Taskforce, and that it retains its focus. In the absence of consensus, the matter/issue at hand shall be discussed by the full Taskforce. External individuals/organisations may be invited to attend to discuss a particular issue or help to inform the Taskforce's investigations. Final recommendations shall be made with agreement from all participating Members.

#### **F) Wider engagement**

The Taskforce will engage widely with individuals and organisations who have experience and knowledge of kinship care. This will include, but not be limited to: individual kinship carers, kinship care support groups, the Kinship Care Alliance, voluntary sector organisations providing advice or other forms of support to kinship carers and their families, the Local Government Association, local authorities and academics.