

## **PARLIAMENTARY TASKFORCE ON KINSHIP CARE BRIEFING FOR MPs AND PEERS**

### **What is kinship care?**

Kinship carers are family and friends who have stepped on to take on a child, who cannot live with their parents due to tragedy or trauma. They are commonly grandparents, but can be brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, or even close family friends too. More than 180,000 children are raised by relatives in the UK and there are others cared for by friends, such as a school mate's parent or father's ex-girlfriend

### **What are the challenges?**

Half of kinship carers have to give up to work to raise the child, in part because unlike adopters, they are not entitled to paid leave for the child to settle in. Too often kinship care households end up in severe poverty, dependent upon benefits, isolated and struggling to get the help, such as bereavement counselling, that the child needs. The number of children in the care system is at the highest level since 1985. Kinship care could be an alternative for many of these children but it is too often not explored or not effectively supported.

### **What is the taskforce?**

We are a cross party group of MPs and peers, convened by Anna Turley MP, working to raise awareness of kinship care and to improve the support available to kinship carers across England and Wales.

The taskforce has three working groups looking at different aspects of kinship care:

1. Assessment and access to services – including financial support like welfare benefits, therapeutic or emotional help, and other support
2. Decision-making and family engagement – how families are identified and what advice do they require
3. Reshaping the system – moving away from 'in loco parentis' and involving the wider family.

The taskforce is seeking evidence from kinship carers and young people raised in kinship care, and are encouraging carers to contact their own MP to share their experiences.

The group are also engaging with kinship care support organisations within the Kinship Care Alliance, local authorities, and public agencies, amongst others. It will publish its final recommendations in 2019.

## **How can you help?**

- Join one of the taskforce's working groups
- Meet with kinship carers in your constituency and feedback their responses to the taskforce – many areas have local support groups and the questions attached could provide a basis for a discussion with them
- Kinship carers have been writing to their MPs to share their most important issues. It would be helpful if you shared this feedback with the taskforce
- Raise the importance of kinship carers in Parliament and think about how different committees or work that you're engaged with could consider the needs of children raised by these carers.

## **Social Media**

Twitter: @kinshipcarept #KinshipCare

Facebook.com/KinshipCareTaskforce