



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

AGENDA

2nd Meeting, 2012 (Session 4)

Tuesday 17 January 2012

The Committee will meet at 10.00 am in Committee Room 1.

1. **Decision on taking business in private:** The Committee will decide whether to consider item 4 in private. The Committee will also decide whether its consideration of a draft report on the educational attainment of looked after children should be taken in private at future meetings.

2. **Kinship Care:** The Committee will take evidence, in a round-table discussion, from—

Robert Swift, Chair of the Adoption and Fostering Subgroup, Association of Directors of Social Work;

Alison Todd, Director of Policy and Practice, Children 1st;

Lindsay Isaacs, Kinship Care Service - National Co-ordinator, Citizens Advice Scotland;

Mike Callaghan, Policy Manager - Education, Children and Young People Team, COSLA;

Anne Black, Independent Social Work Consultant;

Tommy McFall, New Fossils Group.

3. **Appointment of a European Union Reporter:** The Committee will appoint a member to serve as its European Union Reporter.

4. **Inquiry into the educational attainment of looked after children:** The Committee will consider issues arising from the chamber debate on the inquiry.

EC/S4/12/2/A

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The papers for this meeting are as follows—

Agenda Item 2

Written Evidence

EC/S4/12/2/1

Agenda Item 3

EU reporter

EC/S4/12/2/2

Agenda Item 4

PRIVATE PAPER

EC/S4/12/2/3 (P)

Education and Culture Committee

2nd Meeting, 2012 (Session 4), Tuesday, 17 January 2012

Kinship Care Round Table

Introduction

1. At its meeting on 20 December 2011, the Committee agreed to have a round table discussion on kinship care with the following theme: To review the effectiveness of current support mechanisms for kinship carers, particularly the extent to which support varies across local authorities.
2. Time permitting, the round table may also allow the Committee to explore some of the following issues—
 - variation in local authority practice in relation to:
 - their provision of financial support to kinship carers, both of looked after children and non-looked after children
 - the effect on children moving into kinship care in different local authorities
 - how they plan for long term kinship care arrangements
 - implementation of the 2009 regulations;
 - the interaction of kinship care legislation with other benefits relevant to kinship carers of looked after children;
 - the resources available to provide non-financial support to kinship carers;
 - How policy and support for kinship carers of looked after and non-looked after children differs.

Written Evidence

3. The following written evidence was received by the Committee:

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Association of Directors of Social Work

ADSW believes that kinship carers can be the best people to look after children who cannot live with their birth parents.

Kinship carers have a challenging role, often finding themselves in a position to care for children, who have experienced loss and trauma, at short notice. This can be at a time when the kinship carers themselves may be experiencing loss and trauma. There are sometimes difficult tensions between kinship carers and the parents of children they care for. Kinship carers should be able to access practical and personal support when they need it.

The profile of children being looked after, both formally and informally, by kinship carers is often similar to that of children looked after by foster carers. However kinship care is different from foster care because of the bonds that exist and the sense of claiming that is around.

There is a wide variation in the type and extent of support available to kinship carers across Scotland, because of the different approaches being taken by different local authorities, which are balancing different needs and priorities.

ADSW believes that the primary responsibility for providing financial support to kinship carers should be the state through the taxation and benefits systems. The potential of kinship carers to access benefits more easily, and in particular Guardian's Allowance, should be explored. Local authorities and partner agencies and voluntary organisations should focus on providing personal support to kinship carers.

Local authorities have a number of powers through which they can provide financial support to kinship carers, though such provision can impact on the eligibility of kinship carers to state benefits. The provision of financial support should always be preceded by a "better off" welfare benefits calculation.

There are different views about the costs of bringing up a child, whether that is within a birth family, a kinship care arrangement or a foster care family. The benefits and taxations systems set down a certain benchmark. A different benchmark is set in terms of fostering allowances, which themselves vary around the country. There is not currently a consensus about the cost of bringing up a child in kinship care and about who should be responsible for meeting these costs.

In recent years there has been a sharp rise in the number of children who are formally looked after by kinship carers. This has not been accompanied by a fall in the number of children in other forms of formal care. There has not been corresponding additional funding from central government to meet this rising need. The demands on local authorities are increasing in relation to children who are looked after in all settings.

There is a need to divert children from the need to be formally looked after where this is appropriate. The care of children can be “secured” with kinship carers through the civil courts by the awarding of residence orders. (Such children are not “looked after”). The legal costs associated with these processes can be significant. Local authorities can sometimes help with these costs, but there are financial constraints. There may be a financial disincentive to kinship carers if children are discharged from being looked after. Some, but not all, local authorities provide similar levels of financial support to children subject to residence orders to those they provide to kinship carers of looked after children.

Kinship carers who care for children who are not formally looked after are at a disadvantage in term of accessing financial support from local authorities compared to kinship carers who care for Looked After children. It may, however, be easier for them to access state benefits. Local authorities vary in the way they interpret the legislation in relation to section 25 of the children (Scotland) Act. Some local authorities consider that children they have been active in “placing” with kinship carers are formally “looked after” and others consider that they are not looked after. The eligibility for financial support from the local authority can be affected by this.

ADSW believes that the interests of the child must remain paramount when decisions are made about who should bring up a child. ADSW supports the concept of proportionate assessments of kinship care arrangements based on the child’s plan, as contained in guidance to the Looked After Children Scotland Regulations (2009). However, ADSW is aware of increasing numbers of babies and very young children being accommodated, particularly as a result of parental substance misuse. There can sometimes be a number of competing offers from kinship carers to care for such children. These potential carers may or may not know the child. These offers require careful assessment. ADSW does not support the payment of financial support by local authorities to kinship cases in relation to very young children who are to be cared for by kinship carers on a permanent basis, unless such children would otherwise attract an adoption allowance.

It should be acknowledged that there are examples of good practice in relation to the support of kinship carers by local authorities and their partners, including the development of support groups, training initiatives, advocacy and support.

Robert Swift
Chair of the adoption and fostering subgroup of ADSW

Anne Black – Independent Social Work Consultant

I would want to start by confirming that I see many kinship carers providing exceptional care to many children across Scotland. The fact that a child can stay within their family is a very positive experience for the majority of children where their parents are not able to provide them with the stability and care that each child needs.

I was the Chair of the Moving Forward in Kinship and Foster Care Group set up by the Government in 2007 as well as coordinating the work of a group which developed an assessment and support plan for kinship carers. In the main Moving Forward report we identified a vision for kinship care which would protect children and which would allow them the normality of family life rather than being dependent on having a looked after status.

This plan was predicated on the need for Central Governments to recognise the financial requirements of kinship carers in the same way as it is recognised that the legal guardians of children need to receive basic benefits to help to meet the costs of maintaining the children in their care.

The Task Group report is attached [the full report is available from clerks upon request – an extract is annexed to this paper] and contains the vision for kinship care. It also identifies a range of desired outcomes for children who are being cared for by kinship carers.

I am concerned that the current arrangements draw over 3000 children into the statutory system of care so that allowances to approved kinship carers can be available from Councils. The Moving Forward Group saw the role of Councils as investing in support services to children in kinship care and their carers but not becoming income maintenance agencies for these carers and children. The Group also recognised that some of the children living with kinship carers required the additional protection of becoming a looked after child.

The complexities of central benefit payments and the impact of kinship care allowances on those entitlement has been a nightmare and despite endeavours at Central and local government levels and by voluntary organisations there is still considerable variations in central government benefits agreed for approved kinship carers as well as variations in the allowances paid by Councils where the child is looked after.

Working to the principles of GIRFEC I think that it is important that universal services provide the bulk of services to families – including kinship care families.

Where there is an assessment that a child in kinship care may need additional support, protection or other help then that is where I see Councils having a significant contribution to make.

Helping kinship care families and children to cope with the impact of early childhood trauma and possible neglect is an area of work where support should be available to

families but it should not be dependent on the legal status of the child. Each child in Kinship care with looked after status will require formal reviews of their care twice a year as a minimum and many will be within the Children's Hearings system where additional reviews will be required. These reviews can feel intrusive to families and children speak of their fears that a review may mean they can no longer stay with their kinship carers.

Councils can also help kinship carers to consider the best route to achieve legal stability for the children for whom they are caring. Some may acquire orders giving them a number of parental responsibilities which will allow carers a more defined role in decision making for the child for whom they are caring. Some carers may work with the Council to apply for a Permanence Order to secure the child's long term future with the kinship carers

As the arrangements stand at the moment there are major variations in the way that kinship carers are recompensed and supported. The economic pressures on Councils affect the way forward. When Scottish Government allocated funding to Councils to fund allowances to approved kinship carers the numbers were less than half of the current population of looked after children in kinship care and the figures continue to rise. The latest statistics up to July 2010 record over 3300 children with approved kinship carers. Supporting and financing the additional placements is significant when allowances and staff time to be available for kinship carers and children are taken into account. From my contacts with Councils I see them trying to provide the best service they can within the very restricted budgets and rising demands. Much support is given to kinship carers whether approved or informal carers but as financial restrictions get more intense, it will be hard for Councils to sustain the level of allowances.

Despite the endeavours of the Scottish Government, the proposition to award Kinship Carers a form of Guardian's Allowance has not been successful. This would have ensured a basic allowance to a kinship carer as part of the UK Benefits system.

I welcome the Committee's consideration of the way forward for kinship care and the children living with kinship carers believing that the current arrangements are not in the best interests of children nor sustainable for the future.

I hope that the section from the Moving Forward in Kinship and Foster Care – accepted by the then Minister for Children and Early Years, Adam Ingram, will give the Committee a picture of the thinking of the Moving Forward Group and the key issues it identified as requiring to be addressed to achieve better outcomes for children cared for by kinship carers. These issues are still pertinent today.

Anne Black
Independent Social Work Consultant
4th January 2012

Annexe A

The Moving Forward Task Group on Kinship Care identified their vision for Children in Kinship Care at an early stage.

It was:

- Children should be cared for and supported within their birth family wherever this is safe and in their best interests.
- If the child has to leave the home of their parents then every effort should be made to ensure that they will be cared for within their wider family wherever this is safe and in the child's best interests.
- Universal services and allowances should be available for all kinship carers so that they do not experience poverty or an absence of the services that they need to ensure the well-being of the child and to provide secure care for the child.
- Kinship carers should be able to access specialist services speedily recognising that the children for whom they are caring may have suffered significant emotional and physical damage during their early years. Many of these children would have required to become looked after and placed with foster carers had the family not stepped in to provide care.
- Formal intervention by a local authority should not be necessary for kinship carers to access the services or allowances that they need to make it possible for them to care for the child.
- The Benefits system and specifically the payments to kinship carers will be simplified and kinship carers will receive universal allowances to help them to meet the needs of the children in their care.

CHILDREN 1ST

[This is an extract from a longer survey report – the full report is available from the clerks on request]

1. Introduction

CHILDREN 1ST has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to develop and implement a national service for kinship carers and their families. The service aims to help kinship carers find their voice, providing emotional and practical support through a free and confidential helpline (ParentLine Scotland) and training, outreach and capacity building.

A key initial task has been to establish the priority needs and concerns of kinship carers to inform the development of the service. Between August and December 2011, CHILDREN 1ST conducted a survey of kinship carers to gather base line information about their current circumstances in terms of the provision of support and their thoughts on what would improve their circumstances and those of the children in their families.

2. Conclusions

- Kinship care has positive outcomes for vulnerable children and young people

One of the key messages to come from the survey and the regional forums is the huge amount of love and happiness that there is in kinship care families. Time and again kinship carers have talked to us about how proud they are of their children, how cherished they are and how much joy having them in their families brings. They have told us about seeing how their love and support has provided their children with the basis for positive physical and emotional development. This demonstrates one of the fundamental positive aspects of kinship care, that it can provide children, who have often had a very difficult and damaging start to their lives, with loving, safe and secure families.

This outcome should not be under-estimated in terms of its contribution to vulnerable children and young people's improved life chances. However, we do need further research on the outcomes for such children and young people which focuses on the softer, qualitative aspects of the impact of kinship care on their lives and wellbeing and considers more tangible factors such as educational attainment and engagement with the Children's Hearing system.

However, while it is clear that kinship carers will do everything in their power to keep their children within their families and to provide them with all the love and support that they need, it is also clear that many families are facing very real and ongoing difficulties in being able to access the types of support that they and their children need.

- many kinship care families experience poverty and would benefit from more consistent and more adequate financial support

One of the strongest themes to emerge is the considerable and ongoing financial hardship faced by a significant number of kinship carers. We have heard many stories of individuals being faced with taking on a child or children with no preparation or warning and finding that they cannot get any financial help to meet the immediate and practical needs that they have, such as providing the child with a bed or clothing. Many kinship carers were already living on a low income and it is clear that meeting the considerable additional costs of caring for a child or children is causing many families substantial and ongoing difficulty.

The introduction of kinship care allowances has helped to address the financial situation of kinship carers but the importance attached to the need for improved allowances suggests that many families are still struggling financially. The lack of consistency across local authorities and the lack of parity with foster care allowances is clearly something that rankles. It is not right that kinship care families who are performing a vital function in terms of protecting and nurturing vulnerable children are consigned to poverty for their efforts. The inadequacy and inconsistency of allowances needs to be addressed urgently.

But financial hardship could also be alleviated by imaginative and creative use of other financial benefits available to local authorities (and other agencies). Extending eligibility for other forms of support, such as free school meals and clothing grants, as well as providing ancillary financial supports would help families considerably. For example, many carers talked about how free or reduced cost access to leisure activities would make a significant difference to their ability to provide their children with positive and rewarding activities.

- Kinship care needs to be respected and resourced as a care arrangement in its own right

One of the things that we heard frequently, both in the survey and at the regional forums, was kinship carers talking about how they wanted to be 'treated the same' as foster carers in terms of financial and other support. This is because of a commitment made by the Scottish Government in its 2007 Concordat with local authorities – which local authorities signed up to – to create parity for kinship carers with foster carers.

More work is required to understand what kinship carers mean by this. Foster caring is different and is a more professionalised care arrangement. One of the key strengths of kinship care is that it differs from foster care as its focus is on keeping children within the more informal setting of their wider family. To proceed on the basis that kinship care families want absolute parity with foster carers requires caution: it could result in increased regulation and formalisation of kinship care which would be detrimental to these families.

It is understandable that kinship carers feel some sense of resentment to what they see as the vastly better levels of finance and support that are available to foster carers. We want to explore these issues further with kinship carers and consider how a framework of support could be provided that is comparable to that of foster carers but which recognises the unique nature of kinship care and is able to address the specific needs of carers and their children.

- Kinship carers would benefit from information, advice and support to enhance their caring capabilities and roles

The kinship carers we have spoken to are very clear that they want increased levels of better and more accessible support. However, they are also very clear that they want it delivered in a way that is appropriate for them and their families. Many are resistant to any suggestion that they need any sort of 'training' in being a parent but they are interested in advice, information and support on issues that will help them better understand and support their children.

They would like access to clear, accurate and unbiased advice and information on areas such as legal rights, benefits entitlements and access to health and educational services. The challenge now is to develop and deliver this in ways that enable more kinship carers – particularly those that harder to reach – to participate and benefit. Throughout the lifetime of the national kinship care service, CHILDREN 1ST will be working to meet this challenge by developing workshops, factsheets, good practice guides and web resources based on the issues that kinship carers have told us are important to them.

- The complex legal structure around the status of kinship care families needs streamlined

The survey findings suggest that the legal status of the child can have an impact on the type and level of support made available to both kinship carers and their children. This was echoed by some of the carers who attended the regional forums who talked of being unable to access support or it being withdrawn when the child stopped being officially looked after. It is also unhelpful that different statutory provisions give rise to different entitlements in terms of financial and other support. This situation is compounded by the approaches by different local authorities to providing support for non-looked after children: many do not provide allowances to children in such informal arrangements. Indeed, some families with children who are looked after and children who are not find themselves receiving allowances for only some of the children in their family.

Kinship carers want to provide stable and permanent homes for their children and know that one route for doing this is to take out residency or permanency orders but in many areas they find that this leads to a reduction or withdrawal of the support that is available to them. It is clear that, where appropriate, providing a secure and permanent foundation for kinship care families is in the best interests of the children involved but

this does not mean that the need for financial and other support for kinship carers is reduced or that the difficulties that some children experience, suddenly disappear. Kinship carers need access to support to be based on their family's and children's needs rather than on what can appear to be arbitrary decisions based on the legal status of the child.

- Children and young people in kinship care would benefit from support from other public sector agencies

We know that kinship carers are often caring for very vulnerable children whose experiences with their parents have left them with multiple and complex difficulties. Kinship carers are doing their very best to support their children and to provide them with the love and security that they need. However, a consistent message from the survey and the regional forums was that many children are in need of additional support from professionals to help them overcome their difficulties. In particular carers talked of children needing counselling support, help with behavioural problems, more support at school and help with managing their relationship with their parents.

Since 2010, all looked after children have a presumed need to additional support in education through the amended Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. Yet, many kinship carers are unaware of this and gave little indication in our survey that their children were receiving the additional support they need in their learning environments. This needs to be addressed urgently.

It is apparent, despite the obvious need, many carers find accessing a range of supports for their children from different public sector agencies difficult. The situation is compounded by access to these kind of supports also being dependent on the legal status of the child. And failure to provide access to such supports has a potential impact on the sustainability and success of kinship care placements, in terms of the outcomes for children and young people. Kinship carers have indicated that they need increased and improved access to support for their children. They need clear pathways that enable them to access a range of support that is based on recognition of children's individual needs.

Citizens Advice Scotland

Introduction

1. Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) is the umbrella organisation for Scotland's network of 81 Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) offices. These bureaux deliver frontline advice services throughout over 250 service points across the country, from the city centres of Glasgow and Edinburgh to the Highlands, Islands and rural Borders communities.
2. In 2010/11, bureaux across Scotland helped clients to deal with 560,303 new issues. This represents nearly 15,000 more issues than in 2009/10, a 3% increase.
3. CAS welcomes the invitation to provide oral evidence to the Education and Culture Committee on kinship care. This written submission is intended to support our oral evidence.

The CAS Kinship Care Service

4. The CAS Kinship Care Advice and Information Service, including the helpline, was formally launched in September 2008. The project ran under an initial agreement with the Scottish Government until September 2011. A six-month project extension has currently been agreed with the Scottish Government, until March 2012, at a reduced level of funding. CAS is currently in discussion with the Scottish Government regarding extending the service beyond March 2012.
5. The service provides:
 - advice for kinship carers through their local Citizens Advice Bureaux and a free, confidential helpline service
 - assistance for kinship carers to maximise their incomes through detailed benefits support work. For many kinship carers, an increase in disposable income can represent a financial lifeline – and improved family finances can help lead to better outcomes for children and young people
 - advice and training to local authorities on a range of issues, including the impact of allowances on kinship carers
 - information to advisers and policy makers through briefings and reference materials, designed to increase the accuracy and consistency of support received by kinship carers
 - opportunities for national and local stakeholders to come together to share information and effective practice
 - the most effective support for kinship carers through effective partnership working at both national and local levels.
6. Direct advice to clients is delivered by citizens advice bureaux and, via a helpline number, by Citizens Advice Direct (CAD). Support for bureaux and for CAD is provided by:

- two part-time national co-ordinators based at CAS in Edinburgh
- four regional officers, providing second-tier support for bureaux and working closely with local authorities.

Enquiry Numbers and Routes into the Service

7. Levels of enquiry to bureaux and to the helpline show that the service has supported a significant number of kinship carers. As the scene changes for a carer, whether externally driven (e.g. through a Local Authority changing its policy and/or practice or UK government introducing changes to the benefit tax/system) or internally driven (e.g. through the child they care for becoming non looked after) carers who have already received advice from the service may need to seek advice again.

	Sep 08 – end of Mar 09	Apr 09 – end of Sep 09	Oct 09 – end of Mar 10	Apr 10 – end of Sep 10	Oct 10 – end of Mar 11	Apr 11 – end of Sep 11	Total since start of project
Enquiries to helpline	133	244	266	187	216	134	1,180
Enquiries in bureaux	161	116	202	440	435	346	1,700
Total	294	360	468	627	651	480	2,880
Note: some enquiries in bureaux may be generated by follow up to helpline enquiries							

8. Between April 2011 and September 2011, approximately 79% of calls to the Kinship Care Helpline were made by kinship carers themselves, with the remaining calls being made by social workers and other agencies. This is slightly different from the pattern of calls made to the helpline in the previous six month period, when 85% of calls were made by kinship carers.
9. Clients are referred to the project via a number of different routes, including housing associations, health visitors, social workers and Children 1st. Approximately one fifth of callers to the helpline were given the telephone number by friends, support groups, health workers or social workers, demonstrating the success the project has made in terms of raising the profile of its work amongst these key groups.

Types of Kinship Care Enquiry

10. The two biggest overall areas of enquiry for CAB kinship care clients are i) 'Benefits' and ii) 'Relationships'.

Benefits

11. In 2010/11, around 46% of the issues brought by kinship care clients to bureaux and the CAD helpline related to 'Benefits' (or 'Benefits, Tax credits and NI' to give the category its full title). Over the same time period, 36% of the issues brought by *all* clients to bureaux related to 'Benefits', indicating that kinship care clients are disproportionately affected by benefit issues.
12. Within the 'Benefits' category, the most common issues for kinship carers concerned 'Child Benefit' and 'Child Tax Credit'. And, for both of these benefits, the most common issues on which kinship carers wanted advice were 'entitlement' and 'the claiming process/backdating'

Relationships

13. In 2010/11, approximately 43% of issues brought by kinship care clients to bureaux and the CAD helpline related to 'Relationships'. Over the same time period, only 4% of the issues brought by *all* clients to bureaux related to Relationships, indicating that – not surprisingly - kinship care clients are disproportionately affected by relationship issues.
14. Within the 'Relationships' category, the most common issues for kinship carers concerned 'Social services and support' and 'Children'. Within the 'Social services and support' category, most issues related to 'Level of local authority payment' and 'Local authority/social services'. Within the 'Children' category, most issues related to 'Residence issues', and 'Child protection'.

Complexity of Kinship Care Enquiries

15. Although some may have their issues resolved during a single call to the Helpline or visit to a CAB, typically a client will require a number of separate contacts depending on the complexity of the issues raised. Repeat callers accounted for around 6% of the total calls made to the helpline between April 2011 and the end of September 2011. This represents a reduction of 14% compared with the previous six months.
16. The following provides an example of the significant workload that can result from a complex case. In this instance, the case involves a grandmother who had been looking after her grandsons who had been placed with her and did not receive kinship care allowance from the local authority. She then acquired parental rights via a Section 11 Residence Order. The children were then placed back with their mother for a very short period of time, during which the mother was paid kinship care allowance:

Three client and Regional Officer visits to bureau

- A total of 27 phone contacts with client
 - In addition, 16 phone contacts with other relevant agencies and individuals: children's Social Worker, Social Work Team Leader, Children's Services Fieldwork Manager, Scottish Child Law Centre, CL@N
 - A total of five email contacts with Children's Services Fieldwork Manager
 - Twelve items of correspondence prepared by Regional Officer on behalf of client, to be sent to Social Worker, Social Work Team Leader, Children's Services Fieldwork Manager, local authority Social Work Complaints service
 - Additional support to client to pursue complaint through appropriate process with local authority
 - In the event of an unfavourable outcome from complaints procedure, client has expressed a desire to contact her local councillors and MSP, and will be supported to do so.
17. This case demonstrates that the advice and support needs of kinship carers are often complex and require significant expertise and resource to resolve. There is no such thing as a 'typical' kinship care case.

Profile of CAB Kinship Care Clients

18. CAS's 2010 report *Relative Value*¹ provided a detailed profile of CAB kinship care clients. Kinship carers often find themselves providing care in fraught and acute situations for which they have had little or no time to prepare. They step up to the responsibility of providing care when it is asked of them but, unlike foster carers, they do not deliberately seek it out.
19. The report indicated that around three-quarters of CAB kinship care clients were the grandparents of the children they were caring for. The vast majority (87%) of those seeking advice were female. Most kinship carers (58%) were aged between 45 and 49. More than half (59%) were not in employment and many had given up work to meet their caring responsibilities.
20. *Relative Value* also examined the nature of the family problem or situation that lead to the kinship care arrangement coming about. Addiction problems (36%), bereavement (24%), neglect (16%) and prison (13%) were the most common circumstances leading to kinship care, with many arrangements coming about due to a combination of two or more of these circumstances.
21. Kinship carers experienced a number of difficulties associated with their caring roles. These includes kinship carers having to give up work to meet their care responsibilities; pressure on relationships with partners and children; problematic relationships with the child's parents; health problems of the children cared for;

¹ *Relative Value: Experiences of Kinship Carers Using the Scottish CAB Service*, CAS, 2010; <http://www.cas.org.uk/Resources/CAS/Migrated%20Resources/Documents/Evidence%20reports/Relative%20Value%20FINAL%20October%202010.pdf>

financial problems; difficulties accessing suitable childcare; and strain on their own physical and mental health.

22. Despite the often complex and difficult situations surrounding kinship care arrangements, not a single kinship carer in the research reported that they were considering giving up their caring responsibilities.

Conclusion

23. The Kinship Care Service has made a positive difference to many children in kinship care across Scotland by ensuring their carers have received good advice, often resulting in financial gain, and by supporting all those who work to develop and implement policy affecting kinship care.
24. Kinship carers continue to need the support of the Scottish CAB service, both at a local and a national level. Our experience highlights that advice for kinship carers, particularly that related to benefits and financial issues, remains highly technical. The CAB service is uniquely placed to (a) provide detailed benefits checks; (b) combine this with detailed knowledge of kinship care.
25. The need remains for ongoing advice and support services for kinship carers, and those who support them. This is especially so in light of increasing numbers of kinship care arrangements and ongoing developments in the UK based welfare system. In addition, local authorities continue to need support in developing and delivering effective services and good practice for kinship carers.

Lindsay Isaacs
Kinship Care Service National Co-ordinator

Education and Culture Committee**2nd Meeting, 2012 (Session 4), Tuesday, 17 January 2012****Appointment of EU Reporter****Introduction**

1. The Committee is required to appoint a new EU reporter as the previous reporter, Claire Baker, is no longer a member of the Committee.
2. The full background to the Parliament's EU strategy and the role of reporter was set out in previous committee paper [EC/S4/11/2/3](#)¹. In essence, the strategy provides for the enhanced role of subject committees in EU engagement, while the reporter is to act as 'champion' for EU matters within the Committee. That said, the European Union has no legislative powers in the areas of education and culture.
3. Clerks and researchers to the European and External Relations Committee have analysed the European Commission's recently published annual work programme, which sets out the Commission's intended future legislative and other proposals. Only two possible areas of interest have been identified for the Education and Culture Committee. For information, these are summarised in the annexe. As members will see, the timescales attached to these items are relatively long term, while there is no obligation on the Committee to take any action in relation to these two issues. It is therefore likely that the role of reporter will not involve a major time commitment.

Decision

4. The Committee is invited to nominate and appoint a member to act as EU reporter for the Committee.

1

Annexe

Internationalisation of Higher Education (non-legislative communication, expected 1st quarter 2013)

A growing number of higher education institutions enrol students from non-EU countries, exchange students, staff and knowledge, and engage in international academic and research cooperation. The Communication will deal with the internationalisation strategy of the EU higher education sector. In an increasingly interdependent world, a strategic way of addressing global challenges for the EU is through higher education partnerships which can generate research and teaching capacity, and empower universities as agents of knowledge transfer.

Youth on the Move Card (legislative, expected 2014)

An action of the Youth on the Move flagship initiative should facilitate both the mobility and participation for all young people aged between 13 and 30 years old residing in Europe. It would build on existing cards which already provide young people with benefits in various fields (travel, culture, goods, accommodation, etc.). Existing cards which meet the EU quality criteria could be granted a YoM label.