

## KINSHIP CARE POLICY

### POTENTIAL OPTIONS

1	<p><b>Option 1 – Accept responsibility for all</b>          The Local authority accepts that they have a duty to offer defined support and services to all children living in Kinship arrangements. Policy is developed to ensure that there are robust services and the service and support including financial support is accessible to all</p>		<p><b>Potential Saving of?</b>  <i>None although in the longer term it may be that savings from use of Independent agencies are made due to an improvement in the capacity to place in house</i></p>
	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enables children to live within kinship arrangement.</li> <li>• Does not discriminate against a particular group of children – fair access to services and support</li> <li>• Reduces threat of legal challenge by a kinship carer</li> <li>• Staff have a clear framework in which to work and offer services</li> <li>• Continuity of service delivery for kinship carers</li> <li>• Potential for a reduction in number of referrals for crisis intervention</li> <li>• Potential for a small decrease in number of children becoming looked after by the local authority</li> <li>• Decrease the need for LA fostering and residential provision</li> <li>• Potential for a small decrease in use of care proceedings</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial pressure – potential for a dramatic increase in the use of financial support</li> <li>• Unable to predict future demand</li> <li>• need to create a service which is able to respond to a wide range of needs and have capacity and flexibility to change with demand</li> <li>• Need to increase staff base to deliver service</li> <li>• It will be ahead of any potential governmental policy/guidance</li> <li>• Potential to give a message that families shouldn't accept responsibility for their own.</li> </ul>	<p><b>How long before any cost benefit is realised?</b>   <i>Longer term</i></p>
	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop existing preventative and support services including those offered by independent and voluntary / 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations</li> <li>• Change of approach from intervention and removal of children to support and maintenance within the family.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats/Risks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial</li> <li>• Policy may not be sustainable or realistically implemented</li> </ul>	<p><b>What resources will be required to implement the option</b></p> <p><i>Significant Finance</i></p> <p><i>Support services identified and developed</i></p> <p><i>Policy and Protocol with partners and other services</i></p> <p><i>Staff training</i></p> <p><i>Legal advice</i></p>

<p><b>Option 2 –Accept no responsibility and have a view that families are responsible for looking after their own.</b>  Local authority decides not to provide defined support services including financial support to Kinship carers.  Expectation would be that a child would need to be identified as a child in need and support accessed via this route if appropriate.</p>		<p><b>Potential Saving of?</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No, or less demand on financial resources</li> <li>• Don't have to create any additional service provision</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't recognise that children in kinship care are a vulnerable group of children who require a specialist service</li> <li>• Potential increase in number of children looked after via local authority fostering and residential services as a result of the kinship arrangement breaking down</li> <li>• Potential increase in number of children requiring services as children in need</li> <li>• Increases the potential for ad-hoc arrangements being agreed via court negotiations or worker and family</li> <li>• Current economic climate reduces the capacity of some families to be able to afford to care for the children which increases number of children living in poverty.</li> </ul>	<p><b>How long before any cost benefit is realised?</b>  N/A</p> <p><b>What resources will be required to implement the option?</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b>  None identified</p>	<p><b>Threats/Risks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal challenges</li> <li>• Current media interest in how LA /Government are supporting kinship arrangements</li> <li>• Leaves the council vulnerable to criticism and challenge from a number of potential sources</li> <li>• Cost implications associated with the placement of placing children re entering care and need to purchase placements via the independent sector</li> <li>• Potential impact upon workloads for all officers involved with children in need, safeguarding and looked after children cases.</li> </ul>	

<p><b>Option 3 – Accept some responsibility</b>  Local authority accepts a duty to support kinship arrangements. Policy is designed to offer different levels of support to different arrangements e.g. greater support including financial support arrangements to those children previously looked after or where the local authority has opened care proceedings.</p>		<p><b>Potential Saving of?</b> <i>none</i></p>
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets support to the most vulnerable group of children.</li> <li>• Enables children to live within kinship arrangements</li> <li>• Staff have a clear framework in which to work and offer services</li> <li>• Potential for reduction in number of children re entering care.</li> <li>• Potential for a reduction in number of referrals for crisis intervention</li> <li>• Decrease in demand for Local authority fostering and residential provision</li> <li>• Potential savings in the future on spend for independent provision as demand for in house provision is reduced which increases capacity as children will only need these placements if they don't have a family member able to safely care for them.</li> <li>• Reduces risk of legal challenge by kinship carer</li> <li>• Potential to increase fostering resource base via the family member becoming interested in fostering other children</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires greater financial expenditure than current spend</li> <li>• Unable to accurately predict what the increase in financial resources will need to be</li> <li>• Potentially Increases the number of children looked after however will also increase the number of children eventually discharged from care into SGO or RO arrangements</li> <li>• Potential increase in workload for staff and need for increased staffing in all areas including social workers , solicitors and fostering officers required to assess family members as foster carers</li> <li>• Greater number of legal proceedings initiated and impact on workload of Legal services and officers</li> <li>• Potential legal challenge for discriminating against those children where Social care are not involved</li> </ul>	<p><b>How long before any cost benefit is realised?</b> <i>N/A</i></p> <p><b>What resources will be required to implement the option?</b> <i>As option 1</i></p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential to increase fostering resource base via the family member becoming interested in fostering other children</li> <li>• Opens up awareness of need for foster carers to a potentially untapped group</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats/Risks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in number of children looked after and capacity of the support services to manage the increase in service delivery demand</li> <li>• Impact upon neighbouring local authorities if court services and family advocates are appreciative of this approach and start to demand a similar approach from them.</li> </ul>	