



# Kinship Care

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# The Citizens Advice Network

- 80 bureaux across 200 service point locations
- Dealt with over 550,000 new issues in 2009/10
- Helped around quarter of a million clients with new problems last year

# Kinship care

- Lots of definitions
- Residential care provided by non-parental relatives or family friends.
- Children can be cared for in formal local authority care or in an informal agreement
- Around 13,500 children in kinship care in Scotland – 1 in 70 children

# Recent policy changes

- Relatively unrecognised and unsupported prior to 2007.
- Scottish Government policy in 2007 stated that kinship care is first option for a child
- Agreement with COSLA commits local authorities to provide allowances to kinship carers by 2011.
- Most LAs now providing allowances

# The Kinship Care Project

- CAS has run a national advice and information service for kinship carers since April 2008
- 1,414 enquiries from kinship carers to bureaux and CAD
- Advice includes the status of the child, benefit entitlement, kinship care allowance, legal issues, and many other areas.

# Relative Value

- CAS published the *Relative Value* report in October 2010
- Based on the advice needs and experiences of 368 kinship carers who accessed the Kinship Care Project in 2009
- Focuses on the situation of the carer when they accessed advice – rather than the outcome after the advice

# Profile of kinship carers

- **Gender** – 87% seeking advice were female
- **Age** – majority between 45 and 59
- **Employment** – less likely to be in employment
- **Relationship** – 75% were the grandparents of the child, 20% were the aunt or uncle
- **Age of children** – 2/3<sup>rds</sup> under the age of 10 (younger than other children in care)
- **Housing** – more likely to live in social rented accommodation

# Family problems leading to kinship care

Situation leading to kinship care	Proportion of kinship carers
Addiction problem	36%
Bereavement	24%
Neglect/abandonment	16%
Prison	13%
Health problems	5%
Violence	4%



# The experiences of kinship carers

- Impact on children
- Pressure on relationships
- Giving up work
- Problems with childcare
- Health problems
- Financial problems
- Relationship with parents

# Kinship Care Allowance

<b>Kinship Care Allowance (per week)</b>	<b>0 to 4 years old</b>	<b>5 to 10 years old</b>	<b>11 to 15 years old</b>	<b>16 to 18 years old</b>
Average payment	£79.10	£91.76	£113.65	£139.72
Median	£70.41	£87.43	£107.46	£140.91
Lowest	£23.50	£23.50	£40.00	£40.00
Highest	£148.18	£168.78	£210.12	£255.57
<i>Fostering Network – recommended min. allowance for fostered children</i>	<i>£125.09</i>	<i>£142.49</i>	<i>£177.38</i>	<i>£215.74</i>

# Benefit entitlement

- Complexities about entitlement to Child Benefit.
- These complexities and differences in allowance levels cause considerable differences in the levels of support to kinship carers
- A minority of carers can be worse off by taking the allowance

# Informal kinship carers

- Estimated to be around 10,000 children in informal kinship care arrangements
- Not automatically entitled to the allowance (but some LAs do offer allowances)
- Experience the same problems and support needs as formal carers

# Local authorities

- Big improvement in support to kinship carers – but further progress needed
- A minority of local authorities yet to offer allowance
- Some are reducing payments or means testing
- Kinship carers can experience poor advice

# Recommendations

- Recognise the needs of informal carers
- Look at levels of allowance
- Reduce complexity of benefit entitlement
- Wider support needs – child care and respite care
- Importance of peer support groups
- Support carers to stay in employment
- Ensure that social workers have adequate training