

North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium

Overview of the Key findings identified by special guardianship carers:

72% of carers have a child aged 5-10.

32% of the carers are grandparents. 44 % indicated they were related in the other category, this needs further exploration.

92% thought the assessment went well.

56% indicated that the social worker who undertook the assessment should stay involved 'as and when support is needed'.

68% want an arrangement where they contact the Family Plus team, whilst 32% want a flexible arrangement which included receiving a phone call to see how things were.

24% indicated they attend the support group. In relations to the best things about the support group, 100% stated the best things were 'hearing other peoples experiences', 71% stated 'meeting other carers'.

In relation to the question about receiving support from universal services, the overwhelming majority, 80% found information on web sites most useful and 72% indicated help from other special guardians was helpful. Receiving financial support was given the lowest score (1%).

In relation to the question about what support would you like, 50% want more financial support and 50% want more support from the support group.

79% indicated they are getting the support they need.

75% want support with speaking to their child about why they cannot live with their parent. 62% want support with contact issues.

Comments that were provided highlight:

The assessment went well, people felt comfortable, did not feel judged and were provided information by the social worker. For others, the experience took too long and they felt confused. Those attending court felt ill prepared. Carers identified that an information pack would have assisted. (This is now in place).

In a significant number of cases, the support group is not attended because of distance to travel or working commitments. Finding a means to include these carers needs to be explored.

An issue that has emerged is that special guardian's financial situation is very variable. For some, the financial support they receive is felt very sufficient, for most it is not, especially if loss of earnings is a factor. A further issue is that in most circumstances, the best arrangement is for the carer to be available to the child rather than be at work especially during the initial transition. However, this need is

not recognised by the benefit agency nor recognised in working practices, (as it is by employee's in adoption cases).

Comments about managing contact and speaking to their child about their early history and why they cannot live with their parent is a source of conflict and pain.

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