

Case Study 3

Kinship Carer



We first met this woman during the delivery of our 'It's Your Child's Life' parental engagement programme in a deprived inner city school. She had been identified by the school as someone needing support as she was the grandmother and full-time carer of children in Reception and Year 1.

She was very keen to attend the programme as she felt totally out of her depth saying she had no idea how to help the little ones with their work.

However, it soon became apparent that her problems were way bigger than helping with schoolwork. She had taken charge of the two small children because her own daughter was incapable of keeping them safe due to her addiction to drugs.

At this point no legal order had been made, as the family had not wanted to involve Social Services for fear that the children could end up in the care system, so the daughter had agreed to her mother taking care of them, recognising her own inability to do so. When we first met her she brought with her a 4 week-old baby as she had just discovered that her daughter had given birth to another child.

The grandmother was now really struggling both emotionally and financially and clearly needed more help than a school setting can offer. We were able to take her to a session established in a local children's centre. Here she met the specialists who could help her in the process to gain 'Special Guardianship' of the three children, giving her heightened parental authority over them. The experts were able to signpost her to all the relevant services which would improve the family's current situation in relation to education, early help and wellbeing support for her and the three children. The grandmother was also signposted to local legal advice from a pro bono law clinic and was guided to other local agencies which supported her with financial matters. Up until this point she had been receiving no benefits or financial support whatsoever.

As well as the physical exhaustion of taking care of three small children, the grandmother was also beside herself with worry for her daughter who was in the clutches of addiction and was desperately hoping for her recovery so she could resume care of her own children. On top of that she was dealing with other people's judgements as to whether her age afforded her the capabilities needed to properly care for the young children.

At the session, not only did she access all the practical help that she needed, she also met lots of people in the same situation as herself and was able to make friends with people whose lives had also been impacted greatly by their challenging roles as kinship carers. She told us that it had made such a difference to their family life in both practical and financial ways and also in a social sense and she was so happy that some of the stigma she had once felt had now disappeared.