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# Family Rights Group

We are the charity that works with parents in England and Wales whose children are in need, at risk or in the care system and with members of the wider family who are raising children unable to remain at home.

We advise parents, grandparents, relatives and friends about their rights & options when social workers or courts make decisions about their children's welfare

# What we do

- Free advice service for families Tel: 0808 801 0366 Mon-Fri 9.30-3.00 p.m. [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)
  - On-line discussion boards for parents & kinship carers
  - FAQs & advice sheets + new section for mothers subject to DV & practitioners
  - films reconstructing a child protection conference and a family group conference
  - Online publications e.g. on kinship care, sibling carers, engaging with fathers
- Action research projects e.g. on young parents; effective practice in working with families where there's domestic violence
- Families' voices – Parents' Panel and Kinship Care Panel
- Family-led decision making e.g. Family Group Conference Network; Parental Advocacy
- Policy & lobbying including Kinship Care Alliance, Your Family, Your Voice Alliance

# Advice service trends

- FRG advises 6000+ families pa. Demand for the advice service by families has more than doubled since 2010/11 & is continuing to rise (22% rise in Apr-Sep 15 compared to Apr-Sept 14).
- DfE funding for the service has been cut by 19% in the last 2 years so we've had to suspend our email advice. Can assist fewer than 4 in every 10 callers. DfE grant end 31 March 2016.
- Numbers of mothers we advised, where domestic violence is a key factor resulting in children's services' involvement, has increased by 217% since 2010/11.
- In 2007/8 parental mental ill health, substance misuse & DV were the main underlying problems reported – now we get far more cases related to DV: 2007/8 DV 13% of categorised cases within our remit - by 2014/15 it was 35%

# New Young Parents Project

Aim: decrease the risks of young parents losing their children.

Vulnerable young parents with complex needs are especially at risk of losing their children, particularly

- Young parents who are care leavers
- Young parents who've had a child/children removed before
- The young parent viewed as 'not engaging' possibly because of own experiences as a child
- The young parent's age being viewed as a risk factor

Increasingly they have to demonstrate their parenting capacity within a very short timescale (e.g late intervention by LAs in pregnancy, 26 week care proceedings timescales, foster for adoption) often without established support and without financial or housing stability. The risk of removal exacerbated because their children likely to be babies/very young.

# Young Parents Project

The 20 months project will identify, and address, the structural and systemic factors which disempower young parents & can result in them being unnecessarily separated from their children.

Actions include:

- Developing a young parents' panel to steer the project & promote the research findings
- Action research with young parents & practitioners
- International practice review with report setting out clear recommendations and a conference to consider the findings
- Training of youth organisations to advocate for young parents subject to statutory intervention
- Provide indepth additional advice/advocacy to 180 young parents e.g. drafting letter, negotiating with the LA
- Develop an interactive advice mobile accessible advice site for young parents



The aims of the Kinship Care Alliance are to:

- Prevent children from being unnecessarily raised outside the family
- Enhance outcomes for children who cannot live with their parents and who are living with relatives
- Secure improved recognition & support for kinship carers.

# Kinship Care: 2011 census analysis

- Recent 2011 census analysis by Wijedesa (2015) for England found:
  - 152,910 children who were not living with their parents and were being raised by relatives has risen by 7% since 2001.
  - 51% of kinship carers are grandparents & 23% older siblings.
  - 76% of children in kinship care are living in a deprived household.
  - 2.7% of black children are raised by kinship carers, compared to 1.2% of white children
  - Highest prevalence of kinship care in Brent, Lambeth, Newham, Sandwell, Blackburn & Darwen



# Doing the right thing: FRG survey of kinship carers (2015)

On-line survey with 579 kinship carers responding who were raising 895 children

- 50% of the kin children had some form of long term illness, special needs and/or special educational needs. A staggering 43% were judged by the kinship carer to have emotional and behavioural problems.
- 49% of kinship carers had to give up work permanently to take on the children
- 57% of kinship care households are receiving child tax credit and 30% housing benefit.

Note: Impact of welfare reforms

# Doing the right thing: FRG survey of kinship carers (2)

**When you took on the care of the kin child/ren, did you feel you knew enough about the legal options and the consequences for getting support, to make an informed decision?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	15.0%	77
No	79.5%	408
Don't know	5.5%	28
answered question		513

# FRG survey of kinship carers (3)

## Is there any support you did not receive but which would have made a difference?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No additional help or support needed	9.4%	41
Regular contact with child(ren)'s social worker	17.1%	74
Regular contact with my own social worker/link worker	11.3%	49
Someone working directly with the child(ren) e.g. on life story	34.6%	150
Counselling for children	37.1%	161
Mediation with other family members	17.7%	77
Training courses	28.3%	123
Contact with other family and friends carers	29.7%	129
Counselling for family and friends carer	21.4%	93
Emotional support for family and friends carer	43.5%	189
Help with child(ren)'s own behaviour/emotional difficulties	42.6%	185
Respite care	36.4%	158
Support with managing child(ren)/family contact	31.6%	137
Assistance with prison visits	3.0%	13
Other (please specify)		50
answered question		434

# FRG survey of kinship carers (4)

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate the help you have received from children's services?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	47.0%	234
2	21.1%	105
3	18.1%	90
4	9.2%	46
5	4.6%	23
answered question		498

# FRG survey of kinship carers (5)

Since you have been a kinship carer, have you ever received any help of this kind from children's services?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Regular contact with child(ren)'s social worker	30.9%	151
Regular contact with my own social worker	18.4%	90
Someone working directly with the child(ren) e.g. on life story	9.0%	44
Counselling for children	13.1%	64
Mediation with other family members	3.9%	19
Training courses	22.1%	108
Support group for family and friends carers	18.8%	92
Other support group	5.3%	26
Counselling for carer	2.2%	11
Help with child(ren)'s behaviour/emotional difficulties	16.4%	80
Respite care	3.7%	18
Support with managing child(ren)/family contact	9.8%	48
Assistance with prison visits	0.2%	1
No help	41.9%	205
Other (please specify)		113
answered question		489

# Your Family, Your Voice: Alliance of families & practitioners working to transform the system

- To counter the stigma, negative presumptions and judgemental approaches to families whose children are subject to, or at risk of, state intervention by influencing how these families are perceived by the public and portrayed by the media and politicians;
- To influence law, policy, practice and service design and delivery so that our child welfare, child mental health, youth justice and education systems promote effective human functioning and healthy relationships;
- To enable these families to have a voice in policy and decision-making circles.



**Your Family Your Voice**  
An Alliance Of Families And  
Practitioners Working Together  
To Transform The System

# Parents' Charter

A Charter setting out what parents can expect from agencies & what they can expect of parents

- Respect & honesty e.g. not to be blamed from things that are beyond our control
- Information sharing e.g. to check with us that the information & decisions recorded are accurate & to document our response
- Support e.g. to be asked what support we need, when & for how long
- Participation e.g. to have meeting times and venues agreed with us beforehand
- Communication e.g. there is transparency in decisions made and who is accountable.



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# Your Family, Your Voice current & future activities include:

- Events – next one 2<sup>nd</sup> December in Manchester
- Survey of social workers' motivations when joining the profession & their experiences now – please complete <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YourFamilyYourVoiceSocialWorksurvey>
- On-line discussion forum <http://www.frg.org.uk/YfyvForum/>
- Research with families being undertaken by Professors Morris & Featherstone
- Campaigning & lobbying <http://www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/your-family,-your-voice/your-family,-your-voice-briefings>
- Twitter account @yrfamilyyrvoice , films, blogs..
- Knowledge inquiry –still working this through!



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**To join on-line**

**<http://www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/your-family,-your-voice>**