Supporting Caring Families: Approaches in an Australian Context

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Quick introductions

- Wave
  - Families
  - Workers
  - Researchers
  - Policy / government
  - Have we missed someone?
A little about us...
What my research says

Policy considerations for the involvement of extended family in family support services where children have substantiated child protection concerns and are living with their parents

Jennifer
Children in child protection, Victoria, 2012-2013

Notifications:
- Children’s court orders
- Substantiations
- Substantiated concerns, child living with parents
Family support work in Victoria

- Diversionary

- Family preservation / family reunification

New directions – more integration of services and providing services to children and families earlier
How I did the research

- 3 surveys
- Intent of the policy
- Scope of the policy
- Essential elements for practice
What the policy should achieve (intent)

- Improved safety and wellbeing for children
- Individuals and the Family feel more together and supported
- Workers stay longer
- Agencies work better together
Broadly... (scope)

- One program across family support and kinship care
- Voluntary participation
  - Families at transition points
  - Indigenous and non-Indigenous; culturally responsive and respectful
What a program would include

• Initial assessment – 2 stages
• Collaboration – beginning with family-led decision making
  • Review – finish or continue
  • Return to the program
Principles of the policy (essential elements)

- relationship-based practice

- informed by the principles of:
  - therapeutic engagement,
  - collaborative case management
  - strengths-based approach.
What’s on offer? (essential elements)

- Family counselling / family therapy
- Information & support about trauma and attachment
- Advocacy
- Peer support group
- Personal counselling
- Some discretionary funds for families and for workers
Now... it’s your turn

How can we have genuine collaboration and sharing of responsibility?

What will we see if a program from this policy is working? How will we measure it?
Kinship Care in Australia....

‘is the care provided by relatives or a member of a child’s social network when a child cannot live with their parents.’

(Department of Human Services 2009)
Kinship Families: A new phenomenon
Statutory Kinship Care in Australia

AUSTRALIA
19,426 children

VICTORIA
3,248 children

At 30.6.13
Source: AIHW 2013

Estimates from U.S. & U.K. suggest 95% of kinship care arrangements are private and non-statutory

(Selwyn & Nandy, 2011; Annie E Casey Foundation, 2012)
Statutory Kinship Care in Australia
Where does it fit?

AUSTRALIA
40,549 children
26,597 non-Indigenous
13,952 Indigenous
(10.6 x rate of non-Indigenous)

VICTORIA
6,542 children
5,455 non-Indigenous
1,087 Indigenous
(15.7 x rate of non-indigenous)

Source: AIHW 2014, as at 30.6.13

AUSTRALIA 47.95%
VICTORIA 49.6%
Statutory Kinship Care in Victoria
What’s happening?

• Since 2006 kinship care has been the first option when children are removed from the care of their parents (Children, Youth and Families Act 2005)

• Between 2006 and 2009 a support model was developed by the Department of Human Services Victoria (DHS), and there are now 27 funded kinship programs; 16 mainstream, and 11 Indigenous
Statutory Kinship Care in Victoria
What’s Happening?

The programs provide:

• **Establishment support** (for up to 6 months)

• **Case management** for long term orders

• **Information**-also available for non-stat carers

• The programs can support **750 kinship care arrangements** (another 2500 are supported by DHS child protection officers)
Statutory Kinship Care in Victoria
Issues-for Carers

• Contact
• Legal issues
• Unmet support needs
• Lack of information
• Educational issues

(“We love caring for all the children and see them develop and gain confidence. It is not an easy path at times but it is not dull!”
Kiraly 2011)

(Brennan et al 2013, Kiraly 2011(2))
Statutory Kinship Care in Victoria
Issues-more broadly

- Permanency
- The needs of Indigenous children
- The ‘fit’ of kinship care in the welfare system
Statutory Kinship Care in Victoria
Promising practice & developments

• Focus on contact
• Mirabel-support
• Winangay assessment tool & other specialised processes for Indigenous children and their carers
• Proposed changes to permanency laws
A Framework for Statutory Kinship Care

Issues:

• Kinship care is complex and unique

• ‘Square peg in a round hole’

• Inadequate practice guidance

Confusion of carers and workers

Inconsistent practice
A Framework for Statutory Kinship Care

The nature of statutory kinship care

Standard of care

Quality care

Role of government

Quality practice

Carer and practitioner roles

CARERS

PRACTITIONERS
Questions for you…

• Where does statutory kinship care fit? Family care / foster care?
• What is the role of government?
• What is the standard of care—same as a parent / a foster carer?
• What is important with good quality practice and good quality care?
Indigenous assessment tool

www.winangay.com
Thank you

• Donna and all at CWLA
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• Berry Street
• Our research participants

MOST IMPORTANTLY – TO YOU,

The wonderful audience who took a chance and participated
References


• Kiraly, M. & Humphreys, C. (2011), They need that connection. Kinship carers and support staff speak about contact between children and their families, Report # 4 Family Links: Kinship Care and Family Contact Research Series, Child Safety Commissioner, Melbourne, Australia.

