

Kinship care: a sense of belonging, a sense of security

Transcript

Kim Irwin, Independent kinship care assessor for the City of Edinburgh Council

With kinship care, children benefit from a sense of identity. All families have their own culture, their own values, their own beliefs, their own ways of doing things, their own rules. Within your own family that can continue your understanding of your past and what experiences you know, have come before you - just history of the whole family dynamics. There's a sense that you belong, that you are wanted that, okay, Mom maybe isn't able to look after you, but your grandparents want you, they love you. There is a sense of being wanted or being accepted and security. And with that, we try to ensure that consistent factors remain in the child's life like schooling or nursery, these factors have been a big, big part of their life. This gives a child a sense of permanence, a sense of belonging, a sense of being accepted, a sense of security, a sense of knowing who they are. When you go into a kinship care placement when a child's already in situ, there is a sense that this placement is going to be a good placement for the child, there is a sense that it's going to work because it's a grandparent or it's an aunt or an uncle, so it's going to work, it has to work. However, it's not always the case. Kinship placements are the second riskiest to rehabilitating a child at home. You have to be aware that, okay, the child's there and the child is comfortable and the child knows its surroundings. But you really have to rely quite heavily on observations, and your assessment skills and also all the external factors, the referees who you talk to, the nurseries, or the other agencies that are involved, to ensure that that child is stable, that child has settled and the child themselves depending on the age and stage of understanding, you have contact and discussion with them in some way, whether it's to play or whether it's to do one to one discussion.

If you seriously feel that that child isn't benefiting from that placement. And you do have to counsel our carers and say this isn't the appropriate placement for the child. But it's documented that disruption of placements is very detrimental to young people and so on. So you have to balance the risk factors and the positives within a placement to that of removing a child. We are asking carers to deal with a multitude of behaviours and it maybe not prevalent at that point in time, you maybe have a three year old who is quiet and inhibited. That may not be apparent at that point in time, but behaviours could become quite testing for carers in later years. So you have to look at longevity when you're doing Placement Assessment as well. And yes, placements do break down. I mean,

that's a fact of life. You do try to look at every eventuality, you discuss scenarios with carers and what ifs and buts and how would you respond and when did you respond to your child? You know, when they were a child, how did you respond to this? However, when it comes to the reality, you know, it doesn't always work.

©CELCIS