

Peter talks about life as a kinship carer

Transcript

Peter, a kinship carer

We became kinship carers after being contacted by social work to tell us that our daughter was pregnant. And if she went ahead with the pregnancy and stayed in the relationship and the situation she was in, the baby would be taken into care. At first, we were very standoffish thinking, well, we don't know what's involved. And we thought we were getting involved just for a few weeks, or maybe a month or two, to give our daughter the opportunity to work with social work to have her daughter, placed back with her. But very quickly, that became apparent that that was never going to happen. So we became long term, kinship carers.

In the beginning, it was an absolute nightmare, we were having to go to loads of different meetings and assessments to make sure that we were suitable to take her on full time, as well as being assessed at home. And we were still having to facilitate contact with our daughter, which was difficult because she can be very aggressive, become violent very easily, which she did actually do in our house. So we had to stop that. And the family was splintered left, right and centre. The first year was very difficult. After that, it became a lot better because both parents dropped away. My daughter had actually seen my granddaughter for the very last time when my granddaughter was five months old to the day. Our social worker, herself has been really good. But she was very open from the beginning. That was very limited support, she could give us in various things. It's like she was there, basically, just to make sure that the wee one was safe. And there was other support workers were coming in to help us with other things. But they were constantly changing. It was very rare that you seen the same person more than three or four times. Support-wise from the system has not been the best. That again, causes a lot of stress and puts a lot of pressure on the family. We were concerned about the possibility of the placement breaking down or not working out and my granddaughter ending up in foster care, perhaps somewhere else. There were actually times when this was brought up – things along the lines of, well, are you telling us you can't provide this support and help for the wee one, and for her parents, they have a right to see it and stuff like that. And so my wife really was feeling like she was under a lot of pressure or being put under a lot of pressure. They didn't actually say directly, we will remove it if you can't do this. It was things like, well, this isn't going to look very good. If you can't do it, it was it was put in a way of Oh no, I'm doing the wrong thing. I'm going to be the baddy here. I'm stopping the parents from having contact with a child which wasn't the case at all.

Our situation is permanent and settled now. We actually have a permanency order in place at the moment. And that is really important. Especially now that my granddaughter has started school. She's actually just went in Primary 2 and although we've always thought everything was going fine with her development up until now. They've now started identifying quite a few learning issues that she's got coming up which we think is down to her mom's lifestyle while she was pregnant. So the fact that we are now really settled as a family group and she's thriving and really happy is going to make this a lot easier looking into the learning things on the horizon.

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