

Thanks everyone for coming,

The whole point of today is to celebrate these amazing campaigners and all their achievements

But before we jump into that I'm just going to set the scene and take you back to the very beginning so you can see just how far they have all come and just how incredible it is everything they have managed to achieve together.

So around about a year ago Kinship started a pilot project in the northeast. This pilot project was called Kinship Campaigners and the whole aim was to create a network of Kinship Carers that wanted positive change within Kinship care and were willing to campaign and lobby for it. The project would bring together people that wanted to campaign, teach them how to campaign and leave them feeling confident and able to continue being a strong campaigner.

Now I think most of you in this room will remember me coming to visit your groups or ringing you up and I think it's very fair to say that whilst there was enthusiasm for change within Kinship Care ultimately no one really thought that as individuals we could change anything let alone achieve anything.

And I think it was Jackie who told me that in her 22 years, Newcastle council have never bothered to listen so we shouldn't get our hopes up too high.

However, thankfully Jackie didn't take her own advice and now Newcastle Campaigners are a group of 8 strong incredible campaigners that have all the passion and enthusiasm to take on the world, let alone Newcastle council.

Way back in the beginning we did a lot of unpicking and brainstorming out what are some really key problems within Kinship Care and what on a local level if we waved a magic wand would really benefit Kinship Carers and make that kinship care journey that little bit easier.

Lack of information and signposting and professional and public awareness of Kinship Care came top of the list. So Newcastle campaigners decided to focus on ensuring all Kinship Carers are able to make informed decisions on their lives and the children they care for.

Targeting local authorities, primary care and education.

So, what exactly have they achieved....

- Together, they have successfully lobbied Newcastle City council and have got them to commit to improving their information and signposting around Kinship Care and also the understanding their professionals have on Kinship.

Newcastle have:

- Created a brand new webpage on Kinship Care
- Are creating a Kinship specific newsletter to go out to Kinship Carers – that the group are feeding into to make sure its actually helpful
- Are sending out physical leaflets to new Kinship Carers

They have also committed to:

- Inviting the campaigners to attend their staff briefings to improve the understanding of social workers on Kinship Care
- Collaboratively working towards specific Kinship Care training for social workers
- Ensuring all social workers know PW will be allowed in on 1-1 meetings to support KCs

These are incredible commitments, and we know will make a big impact on future Kinship Carers. But these commitments didn't happen on the whim of the council, they were well and truly lobbied by 4 dynamic and persuasive women. Jackie, Cath, Mandy and Barbara.

Jackie and Cath were the first campaigners to set the scene to Newcastle and really lobby them on what they wanted. Jackie spoke so powerfully about the lack of change in all her time being a Kinship Carer and Cath really eloquently brought in her experiences of becoming a Kinship Carer and the impact that has had. Together they made a formidable team and Newcastle were blown away, genuinely shocked at what they were hearing, and I think its fair to say had a lot of lightbulb moments in the meeting.

The follow-up meeting was Jackie, Barbara and Mandy – now they all went into it not 100% convinced Newcastle would actually deliver on what they promised.... However, between the 3 of them they really ensured Newcastle were pinned down and actually delivering on things that were useful and needed. Mandy did an incredible job at sharing her story is such a compelling way to make sure Newcastle really understood why social worker consistency was so important. She brought the realness of Kinship Care to Newcastle and made them sit up and listen, and Barbara did an incredible job at pushing them even further to step up and be a leading LA and commit to the Care Review recommendations for Kinship Care. Barbara has a wonderful ability to hone in on what needs to be said and Newcastle needed to hear that. and Jackie was a mighty force in ensuring that Newcastle didn't weasel out of what they had committed to and were actually delivering useful and beneficial things.

Some incredible campaigning!

It takes a lot of guts to share your story, especially to a room full of strangers, and it takes a lot of skill to be able to share it in a way that gets your point across in an impactful way but also that really resonates with people. That is a skill that both Lilian and Lynne have.

They attended a team meeting for Zone West, Newcastle to raise awareness and ensure better understanding of Kinship Care.

The team members took out their notebooks and pens and within 30 seconds of Lynne speaking had shut their books and were completely captivated. Lynne has a really powerful way of taking people on a journey when she shares her story that really ensures what she is saying resonates and sticks in people's minds. Lilian spoke next and again at no point did anyone's attention waver. Lilian has a really astute way of understanding what gaps are needed and how to fill them with her own experiences. She pours emotion into her words that again leave people completely captivated. Together they created a powerful double act and absolutely ensured the team would not forget about Kinship Care and were completely motivated to act and wanted to know how they could support.

Commitment from them to;

- Promote Kinship Care through their networks.
- Commitment to link up with other primary care services in Newcastle and North East England.

A really important trait of being a campaigner is being able to seize an opportunity and that is absolutely what this campaigner did to secure this campaign win.

After a bad experience with her GP surgery not understanding Kinship Care at all, Emily got in touch to ask them to be better and is now attending their GP surgery team meeting to speak about Kinship Care, share her story and discuss what GP 's and their surgeries can do to support Kinship Carers.

GP surgeries are hard to crack and getting a local GP surgery on board in supporting Kinship Care is going to open so many doors into the rest of primary care.

Emily has a fire within her and when its ignited there is no stopping her. She has a natural ability to create opportunities, network and lobby all so important when campaigning, I don't think she realises just how powerful she can be and just what an asset she is to the campaign team.

Other successes include, securing a meeting with Social Prescribing services, Newcastle GP Services to discuss how Link Workers could support Kinship Carers.

Commitment from Newcastle Social Prescribing to:

- Ensure their team of link workers are informed on Kinship Care and will signpost to Kinship support groups in the area and Kinship website pages.

Secured slot as part of Newcastle TITO (Time In Time Out) which are mandatory training days for all primary care staff.

-This was Jackie being the eloquent and compelling campaigner securing those wins.

Kinship Care added onto agenda of Ouseburn Learning Trust Schools and continuously mentioned at board meetings to continue to raise awareness.

That is a lot of accomplishments.

They have also all been achieved in the space of 3-4 months- all I can say is wow!

Every single one of these campaigners brings with them a unique strength. You are all so incredible, incredible in how you seize every opportunity, incredible in how you lobby and take action, incredible in how you have flourished as individuals and as a campaign team and most importantly incredible in how you continue to fight and want to see a better world for Kinship Carers. It has been an utter privilege to help you in your campaigner journey and I cannot wait to see what you accomplish next.

Jackie Cartwright: for her outstanding contribution to the Newcastle Kinship Campaign with specific recognition for her lobbying skills towards Newcastle City Council, dedication to championing Kinship Care and commitment in driving the campaign forwards on a local and national level.

Lilian White: for her exceptional contributions to the Newcastle Kinship Campaign with specific recognition for her poignant use of story telling and ability to use both professional and personal experiences to build a really powerful case for Kinship Care.

Lynne Davison: for her poignant contributions to the Newcastle Kinship Campaign with specific recognition for her ability to eloquently express her story leading to her inspiring and motivating professionals to take action.

Mandy Mckellow: for her exceptional contribution to the Newcastle Kinship Campaign with specific recognition for her intuitive contributions towards shaping campaign goals and her passionate and powerful storytelling ability.

Barbara Evans: for her invaluable contribution to the Newcastle Kinship Campaign with specific recognition for her passion and perseverance in lobbying for councillor and MP support for the Children's Social Care Review recommendations.

Emily Hutchison: for her incredible contribution to the Newcastle Kinship Campaign with specific recognition for her ambitious and inspirational lead in taking on primary care and creating waves for Kinship Carer recognition.

Catherine Carr: for her invaluable contribution to the Newcastle Kinship Campaign with specific recognition for bringing her creative flair into the campaign, thoughtful contributions and delivering an engaging and resonating story telling workshop. Shelia Weatherit: for her exceptional contribution to the Newcastle Kinship Campaign with specific recognition for her commitment to creating a meaningful and relevant local campaign and input into Kinship's national policy calls