

Webinar Recording



Growing Up in Kinship Care

December 2024



CELCIS Webinar: Growing up in Kinship care

Looked After Children

Where possible, CELCIS tries to use non-stigmatising language and recognises that 'Looked After' and 'Looked After child' are not the preferred ways of referring to children who are care experienced. However, where these terms are used in current legislation, and therefore data, to refer to a child or young person with care and protection needs who is cared for under a formal arrangement with a local authority, we use these to be accurate about the source and context we are referring to.

Chair:

Hariet Baird, Engagement Lead, Scottish Centre for Administrative Data Research (SCADR)

Presenters:

Dr Joanna Soraghan, Data Analyst, CELCIS

Susan Hunter, Project Coordinator, Kinship care Advice Services for Scotland (KCASS)

Kirsty Doull, Care and Transitions Lead, CELCIS

Debbie Zima, Fund Manager, intandem Mentoring Services

Harriet Baird

Hello everyone. Thanks for joining us today. I'm sure there are a few more people coming through, but I thought I'd begin. Firstly, I'd like to introduce myself. I'm the chair of today's session, and I'm Harriet, and we're really pleased to have a range of speakers coming to speak to you about their expertise on this important topic today. So, without further ado, my background isn't specifically in Kinship care. So, I'm very lucky that I've got a room full of people who are but I facilitate engagement and events such as these. I work as part of ADR Scotland, which is a partnership between the Scottish Centre for Administrative Data Research (SCADR), and the Scottish Government, which is unlocking public sector data for public good research. We are funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). So, the webinar today is run by SCADR and CELCIS, who've done much of the preparation for today, and we hope it provides some really interesting insights into kinship care. I work closely with Joanna, who's the first speaker, and data has real power to give us new insights into Kinship care, looking at patterns and trends across time, and it can help us better understand the outcomes for children in Kinship care, which can inform policy and practice. And what's also really important is we can look at this over time, so not just snapshots, but we can look at care journeys over time. But of course, data is only part of the story, and there are people behind these numbers, and we're so looking forward to hearing the perspectives of the people on the front line, people working with kinship carers, people in kinship care and kinship families together, this evidence can help us build a picture of what's needed in kinship care and how we can ensure that children and young people can grow up loved, safe and respected in line with The Promise. So without further ado, I will introduce you to our first speaker, who is Joanna, and do put questions, as I said, in the Q&A function. Thanks all for joining.

Dr Joanna Soraghan

Great. Thank you. So, as I said, my name is Dr Joanna Soraghan. I'm a researcher at CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection and I'm with SCADR, the Scottish Centre for Administrative Data Research. So today I'm presenting to you about a research project that we recently published called Growing up in kinship care. And this was work carried out by myself and my colleague, Dr Robert Porter, he was hoping to be here presenting with us today, but he's unfortunately come down with the lurgie, which is a peril of organizing a December webinar. I'm also coughing a little bit,

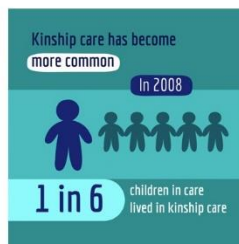
but hopefully we'll get through the next 20 minutes okay.

Growing Up in Kinship Care

* What is kinship care?

* Why have we conducted this research?

- * Policy-led move towards kinship care
- * Shortage of evidence regarding children's experiences



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So this study, as I say, is recently published, and we were wanting to get a better understanding of the experiences of children growing up in kinship care in Scotland. So by kinship care, I mean the circumstance where a child or young person is unable to live with their parents for any reason and then goes to be Looked After by a member of their extended family or a family friend. And the reason that we were interested in trying to understand a bit more about this with this research project is that in Scotland, in the last 15 to 20 years, there's been quite a clear policy position that where a child can't remain at home with their family, then that kind of move towards kinship care and living within the wider family should be explored as the first option where possible. And alongside that, what we've seen is a shift in practice, and as we can see in the animation here, that the number of children in care who are living in kinship care has risen quite substantially. So that's from around one in six children in care at the start of our study period, which was 2008 to around one in three, from the most recent data we had, which was 2019 so quite a significant change there in terms of where children in care are living. However, despite this kind of policy position and this move towards more children living in kinship care there, there's a not a huge deal of evidence or research in order to help us understand more about these children's experience and how well that's working for them, and that's what we wanted to try and do with this study, to provide some evidence around that.

The Data



- ❖ Anonymised 'administrative' data on approximately 19,000 children who had experienced kinship care
- ❖ Data source **only includes children who are formally 'looked after'**

*The most recent data available at the time of research

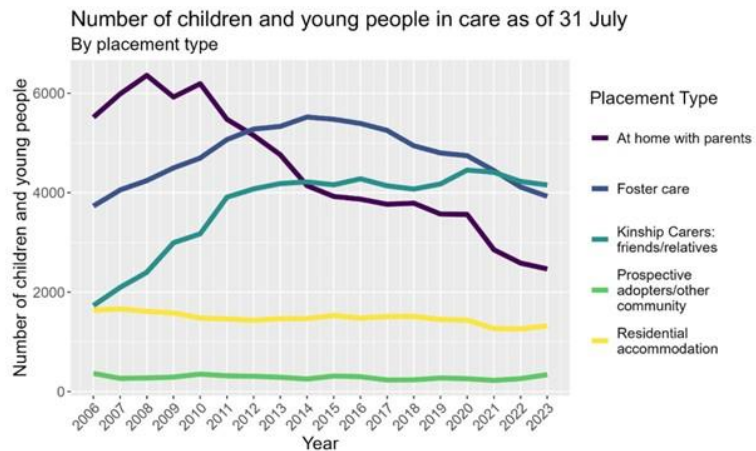
So the growing up in kinship care study is a quantitative research project, and we were using a source called administrative data. But what I mean by administrative data is just the information that's collected about us by public bodies and other organizations as we go about our daily lives and interact with them, and this data can be made available to researchers, where they can make a case for the societal benefit that can come from that. So that's the type of data that we were seeking to use for this study, with our key data set being what's known as the Looked After Children data set, so this data is held by Scottish Government, but it includes information collected by all 32 local authorities in Scotland on the children who are under their care, and that contains information such as the dates that a child spends in care, the types and numbers of different places that they live while in care, and where they move to the point of leaving care. This information is obviously all anonymized before it's made available to researchers. While we can see an individual child's different experiences of care over time, we can't make out any personal information or identify any children within that data. For this study, we thought, as well as trying to understand children's experiences of kinship care, it was really important to try and understand as well, how is that interacting with other aspects of their life, and can we get a broader view of how well this is working for children and families. And so, we were able to link that information from the children's social care records to information from a variety of other sources. So we had information from their education records on attendance, absences, exclusion, and more information on their interactions with the Children's Hearing System, where they had those and information from Child Protection processes

as well. And finally, we could bring in information on early childhood development from the Health Visiting data set as well. The children that are involved in the sample were the children who were identified within that Looked After Children data set as having spent some time in kinship care across the period of 2008 to 2019 which is currently the time period covered by the Looked After Children data and that identified 19,000 children in Scotland that that referred to and who are included in our study. It's really important just to stress that when I'm talking about kinship care for in this study, for the majority of the time, we're referring to children who are formally Looked After while in kinship care, so children who are in the care of their local authority. And we're aware that there are large numbers of children and young people across Scotland who do live with family members and family friends in a variety of other arrangements and aren't cared for by their local authority, whether that's an informal basis or a kinship care order, for example. So just important to acknowledge that those children would not be reflected in this data set, and therefore this research doesn't represent their experiences. It's purely those children who are Looked After while in kinship care.

So, through this study, we had two aims. The key aim was really to get an increased understanding of how kinship care is being used across Scotland, if that's changing over time, what children's pathways into and out of kinship care are there, and, as I say, how children are faring in terms of their broader outcomes around health, education and child protection. We didn't have a secondary aim, which was to look at the kind of landscape of what data was available about children and young people in Scotland, and what that can tell us about children's social care, and the value in looking at particular cohorts of children and their experiences. And so, we won't kind of go into depth in that secondary aim today, but for anyone interested in learning more about that that is contained within our research report.

Trends in kinship care

- ❖ Steady rise in the number of children who are in kinship care, alongside a decrease in those 'looked after at home' with parents



- ❖ Increased from **1 in 6** children in care to around **1 in 3** over our study period (2008-2019).

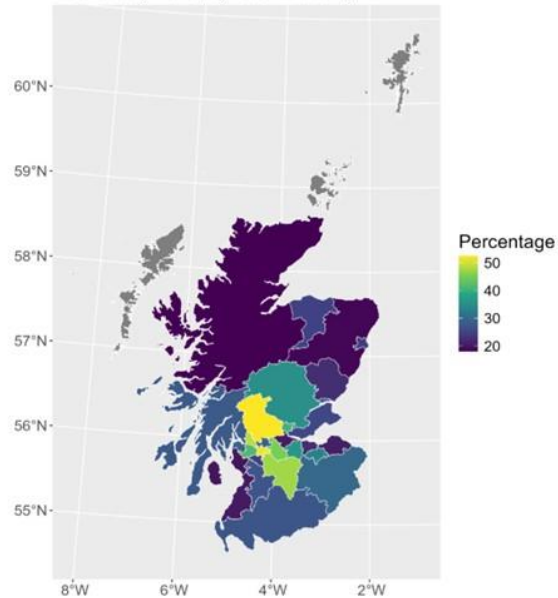
Just to begin, I'll give an overview of these kind of trends that we've seen in kinship care. The first two slides I'm presenting here are based on data that is publicly available. So this is information published by the Scottish Government annually from their Children's Social Work Statistics data. And so this is showing what we've already discussed, that come from 2006 onwards. There has been quite a steady increase in the number of children living in kinship care. And that can be seen through the teal line, which is shown on the graph, kind of starting third in the bottom on the left. And we can see that from 2006 onwards, that's increased from less than 2000 children to more than 4000 as of the most recent data. And we can actually see that in terms of the last two years of data, it's actually been the most common environment for children in care to live in Scotland. It's also notable to have a look at the purple line here, which represents those children who are Looked After at home with parents. So those are children that come into the care of local authority, but the decision is taken that they will remain at home with their parents, with support and supervision provided by the local authority, and that rise in kinship is really coincided with a very marked decrease in the number of children who are Looked After at home with parents over the time period. So as we've already said, our study focuses from 2008 to 2019 due to the data availability, when we saw an increase from one in six children in care to around one in three living in kinship. But even going back a couple of years prior to that to 2006 it was actually only one in eight children. So it really is a substantial difference that we're seeing over that

time in terms of practice around where children live in care.

Trends in kinship care

- ❖ Substantial regional variation in the usage of kinship care
- ❖ Over 50% in Glasgow and Stirling, around 20% in Edinburgh and Dundee
- ❖ Some evidence of higher kinship care usage in more deprived local authorities

Percentage of 'looked after' children living in kinship care
At 31st July 2023, by Local Authority



Scottish Government data also allows us to have a look at what's happening across different local authorities within Scotland. So the map here shows us across the different Scottish local authorities, what the percentage of children in care that are living with kinship carers? And so we can see there's quite a wide variety there. And so children for example, within Glasgow and Stirling, we have over half of the children in care are actually living with kinship carers in those regions. Whereas in Edinburgh or Dundee, that would be around 20% or one in five children. So even looking across kind of larger urban centres such as this, we are seeing quite a disparity there in terms of how kinship care is being used. And the groupings towards West and Central Scotland tending to be that the areas that have the highest levels of children in kinship care. We did run some analysis on this data available from the government in order to see what if there was any factors that we could detect that were associated with this variation that we were seeing and how kinship care is used. And we looked at things such as the demographics of the care population. For example, if certain local authority had high proportions of older children, young people in care, or younger children, the gender breakdown of the children in care. And we also looked at some local authority level factors such as the population density to get a sense of urban, rural and also the level of deprivation of a local authority. And only factor we found that had a relationship with this variation in the usage of kinship care was the deprivation of local authority area with a

tendency towards local authority areas with more deprived areas tending to have a higher levels of children living in kinship care.

Care Journeys – Entering Care

'Unless there are clear reasons why placement within the family would not be in the child's best interests, care within the wider family and community circle will be the first option for the child'

- Scottish Government, 2007



- ❖ **2 in 3** children moved **directly into kinship care** when they became 'looked after'
- ❖ Of those who didn't, **53%** were '**looked after at home**' prior to moving into kinship care, while **38%** lived with **foster carers**



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Those first two slides were based on data available from the Scottish Government. The results from here on in are our analysis on the data sets I mentioned earlier, the administrative data sets, and unlike the aggregate Scottish Government data, this allows us to look at the care journeys and the wider experiences of individual children over time, again, with the caveat that this is all anonymous, and we can't identify these children. And this means it's really helpful that we can get a better sense of children's care journeys - when they come into care, how long they spend there, and so on. So to begin with, we had a look at what happened at the point with which children enter care. As I said, there's a clear policy position within Scotland that where a child can't remain with their parents, that this should be the first option explored for them, as it would be a kinship setting with wider family. And what we found was that for the 19,000 children in our data set, that two thirds of those children had moved directly to live with kinship carers at the point at which they became Looked After by their local authority. Of the remaining third who didn't, more than half of them were Looked After at home directly prior to going to live with kinship carers. So again, for many of these children, the first type of care environment out with the family home would be kinship care. So quite a strong evidence there that that kind of policy position has been enacted, and generally where there is a viable kinship option for a child, that this does tend to be explored at an early stage, and we saw that around three in four children who do live in kinship care were living there within six months of becoming Looked After.

Legal reasons for care



❖ The proportion of children entering kinship care via 'non-compulsory' Section 25 measures rose from **19%** to **40%** between 2009 and 2019

❖ In 2019, children in kinship care were **twice as likely** to be looked after under 'non-compulsory' (S.25) measures than the general population of children in care (36% vs 17%¹)



¹Rising to ~23% when considering only those looked after away from home

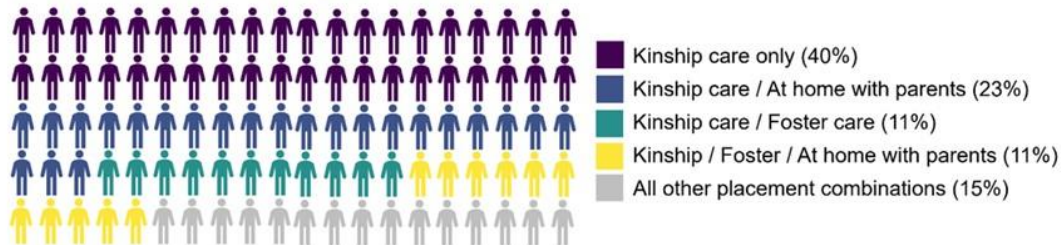


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So, the Looked After Children data also contains information on the legal reasons for a child being in care. And there can be a variety of reasons underpinning a child being in care, and the majority of these are compulsory measures, such as Compulsory Supervision Orders or child protection measures. Every children can also come into care under Section 25 Arrangements which can be quoted or referred to as Non-compulsory Measures or occasionally Voluntary Measures. This is quite a complex area of practice. And at CELCIS we have conducted some research on that this year to look at kind of practitioners and families experiences of these types of arrangements, and we won't go into that in detail today, but just in terms of what we can say about Section 25 Arrangements and kinship care, we saw that over the period of our study, that there was a quite significant increase in the number of children who were becoming Looked After in kinship care under Section 25 arrangements, and that rose from around 19% to 40% over that time period. And by the time of the most recent data, we saw that children who were living in kinship care were twice as likely to be Looked After under these section 25 Arrangements than children in the general population of care. And this was another area where we saw quite substantial variation across the different local authorities within Scotland. So looking at the legal reasons for being Looked After in kinship care in 2019 it ranged from around 80% of kinship placements, starting under Section 25 Arrangements in some local authority areas to fewer than 10% in other areas. So a really, really wide range in the approaches to Section 25 Arrangements and how they're used for kinship care across Scotland. We also found from the research that when children do begin to be Looked After in kinship care under a Section 25 Arrangement, that then tends to be the legal reason that they stay on throughout that period in care, with three quarters of children staying on that throughout the full time that they were living with kinship carers.

Care Journeys –Types of Care Arrangement

Combinations of care environments experienced by children who spent time in kinship care (n=19,109)

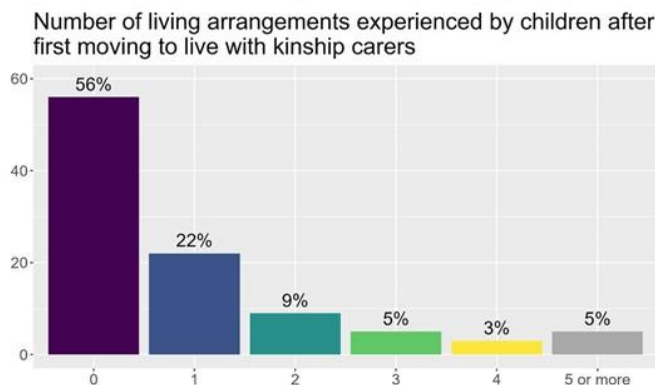


Around 2 in 3 children who experience kinship care do not live in any other type of care environment outwith their family home

So we were also able to explore in the data what the different types of environments that children lived in throughout their time in care. So for the 19,000, approximately, children who had lived in kinship care in Scotland, 40% of those children had only ever lived with kinship carers during the time they were Looked After by their local authority, and there was a further 23% that had only experienced a combination of living with kinship carers and being Looked After at home with their parents. So together, that gives us around two thirds of children who live in kinship care that don't actually experience any other type of care environment out with their family home. For those that did experience other types of care environments, and that was largely foster care, as we can see in the chart here, and there were smaller proportions of children who spent time in either residential care or secure care alongside kinship care placements.

Care Journeys – Stability of Care

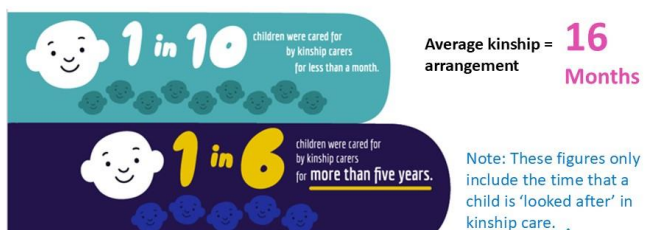
- ❖ More than half of the children remained in their initial kinship arrangement until they left care
- ❖ Around 1 in 4 children experienced multiple moves of care environment after first living with kinship carers



In terms of children's stability of care, we looked at what happened after the point at which children first moved into a kinship care arrangement, and we found that for more than half of those children, that was their living arrangement until the point at which they left care. However, there were other children who experienced higher levels of instability, with around 1 in 4 children who experienced two or more moves of care environment after they first lived with kinship carers.

Care Journeys – Time Spent in Kinship

- ❖ Evidence that kinship can be seen as both a **long-term** and **short-term** solution to the challenges faced by families.

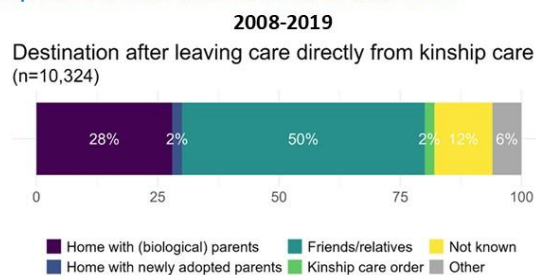


So the data allows us to have a look at how individual children spend in kinship care. And what we found was that kinship care can be seen as both a long term and a short term solution to the challenges that are faced by families. And for example, around 10% of children lived with their kinship carers for a period of less than one month, whereas around one in six that lived there for a period of more than five years. So a real wide range in terms of how long children are living in kinship care, with an average of around 16 months across Scotland, we did find that there were differences in this for different groups of children and young people. For example, children who entered kinship care arrangements under compulsory measures tended to live in those arrangements longer than children who entered under Section 25 arrangements. And again, we saw that evidence of local authority variation with average length of time a child spent in kinship care, varying from around five months in some local authorities to more than three years in others. So very wide range there as well.

Care Journeys – Leaving Care



- ❖ More than 50% of children in kinship who 'cease to be looked after' remain living with friends or family
 - ❖ On what basis, and what are the impacts of this?
- ❖ 4-10% recorded as moving from 'looked after' in kinship care to a Kinship Care Order between 2017 and 2019



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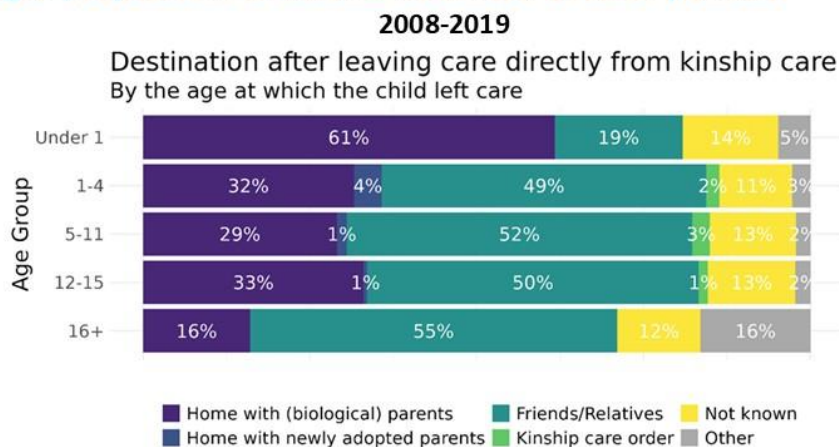
So within the Looked After Children data, there's information recorded on where a child moves to at the point at which they leave care or cease to be Looked After, as it's commonly referred to. And so we can see in the graph at the bottom here that shows where children recorded as moving to directly after they left care and from a kinship care placement over the full time period of 2008 to 2019. So hopefully, you can make that out. We can see that just under 3 in 10 or 28% of children returned home to their parents at the point of leaving kinship care. What's perhaps even more notable is the scale of the population of children who are actually leaving kinship care but are recorded as continuing to live with friends and relatives, and that would be captured by the two categories here, which are friends and relatives in teal and kinship care order in green. So it's important to note that kinship care orders were actually only recorded in the data from 2017 onwards, and the annual percentage of children recorded as

moving into kinship care orders were between four and 10% in the three years following that. So what we don't know is for the 50% who recorded as moving to friends and relatives or living with friends and relatives after being Looked After by their local authority. We don't know what proportion of children within that would be moving on to legal order, such as a kinship care order or section of living order, and what proportion of children are living with friends and relatives on an entirely kind of informal basis. And it's really important that we can get a better understanding of that, because the legal basis under which a child is living with a kinship carer, whether that is being Looked After by their local authority. Being on a section 11 order, a kinship care order, or living there on a less formal basis, can have really extreme impacts on children and families in terms of the supports that are available to them, and that's from ranging from financial supports to social work services and more. So it's really important that we understand what's happening for that large proportion of children that are no longer Looked After in kinship care, but are continuing to live with members of their family.



Care Journeys – Leaving Care

- ❖ This hold true across all age groups beyond infancy, where far fewer children remain with friends/relatives after leaving care
- ❖ A larger proportion of infants returned to their parents



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We did drill into this a bit more to see whether the place that children moved to after kinship care and was impacted by the age they were when they left care. And we can see that that kind of observation of children largely staying with friends and family after being Looked After in kinship care held true across almost all age groups. So, from one year olds upwards right through to 16 plus, there were more than half of the children that would continue to live with friends

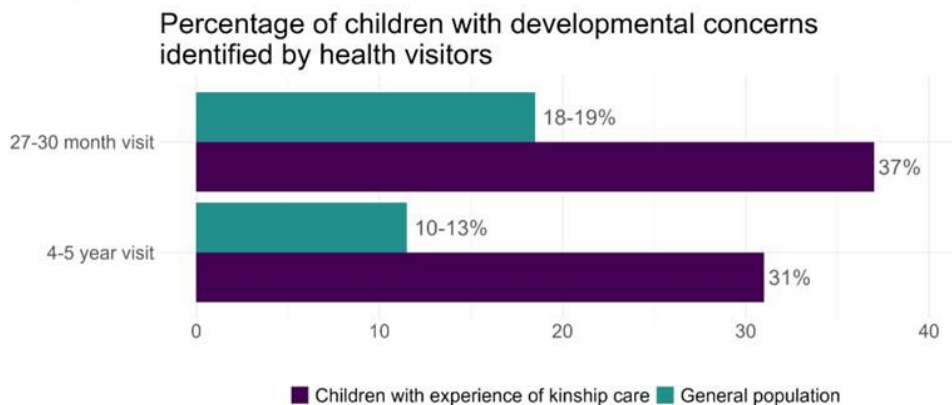
and family, either on a kinship care order or recorded as friends and relatives. The only age group for which we saw a different pattern was for the under ones, with a far larger proportion of infants returning home to live with their parents, at around 60%.



So, the findings in the last few slides have all been from that Looked After Children data set, which is a really rich resource to get a better understanding of care experiences. As I said, we were able to link that information to a variety of other data sources in order to get a better sense of what was happening at a broader level for children and young people. And one of these data sets was data from the Children's Hearing System, held by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration. So, at any point throughout childhood, if there's a concern about a child's safety or well-being, they can be referred to a Children's Hearing and they can also be referred if there's concerns about them being involved in an alleged offence. Looking across the children for whom we had data from the Children's Hearing System, we found that 92% of the children in our sample were only ever referred on care and protection grounds, so due to concerns for their safety and well-being. There was a far smaller percentage, at 8% who had been referred on offense grounds. But it's important to note that all of those children, all of that 8% had also been referred at some point on safety and well-being or care and protection grounds as well. The most common specific grounds that children were referred on within our sample were a lack of parental care, which was around three quarters of the children who had been referred on those grounds, and exposure to domestic abuse at around 28%. A referral to the Children's Reporter can go into a Children's Hearing. That for children who had experienced hearings, we found that the average number of hearings that they'd experienced across that time period was 11, and that 10% of children had experienced more than 20 hearings. So, in many instances, this is likely to be due to the fact that the child has come into care, and there are then hearings to have regular reviews as to whether their living arrangements should continue and if that's the best course of action for the child. But it's important to remember that each one of these hearings can potentially be quite a disruptive

experience for the child, and it's important to kind of acknowledge the scale of those and how many of them children are experiencing. The average length of time that children had involvement with the Children's Hearing System was around four and a half years based on the time between their first hearing and their last hearing that was recorded in the data.

Health Visiting - Early Childhood Development



- ❖ The most common concerns identified were emotional and behavioural difficulties and challenges with speech, language and communication.



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We were also able to link to information from the Health Visiting Program to get an idea of early childhood development. So that data gave us a sense of the number or the proportion of children at various visits that had developmental concerns identified by their health visitors. And we looked at both the 27 to 30 month visit and the four to five year visit. So what the graph here is showing is in purple, the proportion of children who had experience of kinship care that were identified as having developmental concerns with those in the general population being marked in green. And we can see that those who had prior experience of kinship care were around two to three times more likely to be identified as having developmental concerns across those two age groups, and the most common concerns that were identified for the children were emotional and behavioural difficulties, followed by challenges with speech, language and communication.

Education



- ❖ Evidence of consistent improvements in education outcomes for children with experience of kinship care between 2008 and 2019 – across attendance, attainment, exclusion rates and destinations after leaving school
- ❖ More children with experience of kinship care were staying at school until S5 or S6 (65% in 2019 vs 46% in 2010)
- ❖ However, despite these improvements, attendance rates and attainment remained lower for children who had been in kinship care than the general population

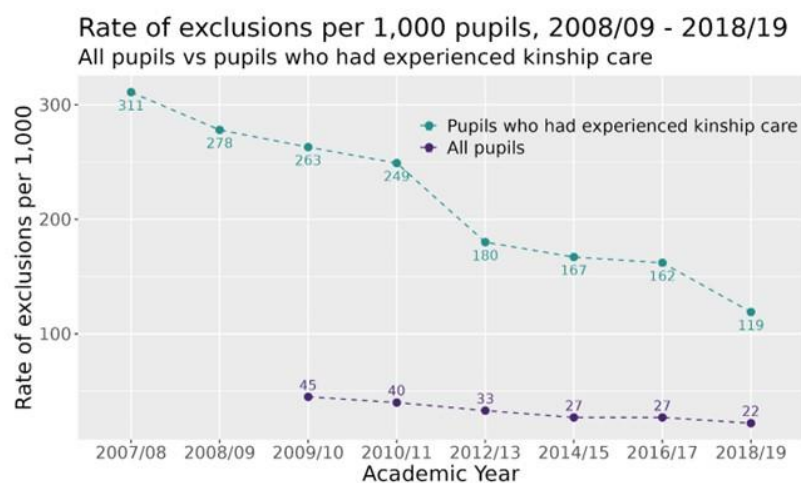


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The final data source I'll talk about today was the Education data. So we had data across quite a wide range of education outcomes, and that was things such as attendance, attainment, exclusion rates and what children went on to doing after school as well. And it was quite a mixed picture that we got from our education data in terms of the experience of children in kinship care. So on the positive side, across that that study period, from 2008 to 2019 we saw quite consistent evidence of improvements in education outcomes for children and young people across, obviously, this kind of wide range of education outcomes we were looking at. And we saw that children were also staying on at school longer. Children who had been in kinship care with increasing numbers, staying on until S5 or S6. However, despite these improvements, we did see that there was still an attainment gap there between children who had been in kinship care and the general population, and that was consistent across the other education outcomes as well, with things such as attendance and exclusions, still having a gap there between children who'd been in kinship care and the general population.

Education – Exclusions



- ❖ Drastic reduction in exclusion rate for children who had experienced kinship care, although remaining more than 5 times higher than for the general school population

Just illustrate that with a couple of examples. Having a look at exclusions here, we can see that the children who had been in kinship care, who are represented by green here at the start of our study period, had a very high exclusion rate of around 311, exclusions per 1000 pupils, and we can see quite a stark decrease there across the time period in terms of how many children were being excluded, which is very positive. However, if we then compare that to the general population of school children in purple, we see that by the end of the study period, there's still a significant disparity there, with children who'd been in kinship care around five times more likely to be excluded than the general school population. And looking at attainment, as I say, we did see that progress over time, but this graph here shows the most recent year of data that we had and the disparity between the two groups. So, we can see across all SCQF levels at school that children with experience of kinship care were achieving fewer qualifications.

Education – Additional Support Needs



72% of children and young people in kinship care in 2019 had at least one previously recorded **Additional Support Need**

31% of all school pupils in Scotland in 2018/19 were recorded as having at least one **Additional Support Need**



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The final element of the education data that we looked at was additional support needs. And again, here we're seeing quite a difference. We saw that children and young people with experience of kinship care had at least one previously regarded additional support need. There was 72% of children in comparison to 31% in the general population. For those of you who are more familiar with education data, one of the categories that can classify as having an additional support need is being Looked After child being in care, and it's just to say that these figures presented are with that category being removed, as we wanted to look at additional support needs beyond the children's experience of care.

Key messages 1



- * While many children thrive in kinship care, kinship families are often supporting children with **complex needs** and it is important that **tailored supports** are in place to ensure that all kinship children and families can flourish.
- * It is important that we **better understand** the reasons behind the **regional variation** in children's experiences of kinship care across Scotland, in order to ensure that all kinship families have access to the support they require and deserve no matter where they live.



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So that was a very whistle stop tour of some of our findings. There's obviously a lot more detail and a lot more detail and a lot more information within our research report. And I'll just finish by giving a sense of the sort of key messages that came out of the research. From our point of view, I think there are a lot of children who are thriving in kinship care, and we've also looked at some of the positive progress that we've seen in terms of education outcomes and so on. But I think it's important to acknowledge that the kinship families are also supporting children who have very complex needs, and this can be in terms of

additional support needs, early childhood development and things such as prior trauma as well. So, it was really important that these needs are assessed and that tailored supports are in place for kinship families to make sure that all children can flourish. The research also highlighted a variety of different instances in which there was a substantial regional variation across Scotland in terms of children's terms of children's experiences of kinship care, and we think it's important that this is better understood, so that we can we know that children are receiving the support they need no matter what part of Scotland that they live in, and that services are consistent for children and young people.

Key messages 2



- * Our findings **do not imply** that the **poorer outcomes** seen for some children in kinship care are **a result of their time in kinship care**. Many of these children will have experienced trauma and adverse experiences prior to becoming 'looked after'.
- * Our data **does not cover** the period during and after the **COVID-19 pandemic** – a time of great change for children, young people and families. It is important that **more timely data** is made available for research purposes.



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I think it's really crucial to imply that where we have highlighted that there may be some poorer outcomes for children and young people in kinship care. My research is not by any means, implying that this is as a result of the time that children have spent in kinship care. We need to be aware that many of these children have experienced trauma and adverse experiences prior to the person coming into kinship care or other forms of care, and that these things are well known to have kind of severe long-term impacts upon children's well-being. A glaring omission that probably won't have missed the eagle eyed of you out there is that our data, unfortunately, didn't cover the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and ended in 2019 so this feels like a real limitation of this piece of work. We know that many of the different things we're looking at, from children's experiences of care through to different outcomes across a variety of domains, were all really impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we can't say anything about what happened over that time from the data that we have. So it's really important that more timely data is made available for research, just so that we can ensure that kind of what we're putting out there is the most up to date picture for people.

Key messages 3



- * There is a need to **better understand** the circumstances and experiences of the many children **living 'informally' in kinship care** in Scotland – and those who move between 'formal' and 'informal' arrangements – in order to ensure that all children are appropriately supported, regardless of the legal status of the kinship arrangement.



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And finally, I think a key takeaway for me is that, as I say this, this research focused on the experiences of children who are Looked After by their local authority while living with kinship carers. And we know that there are higher numbers of children who are actually living with kinship carers on an informal basis across Scotland. It's really hard to get an accurate picture of the scale of that, but the most recent estimate that we have is that there are around 9000 children as of 2011 when the last census was done. And we also know that it's not just children who either live formally, as it's sometimes referred to with under the care of their local authority in kinship care and those who have no involvement from the local authority. There are also these children who are maybe moving between different scenarios, as we saw in our leaving care data. Children might move from being Looked After by their local authority to living with family members on a kinship care order or living with them on a less formal basis with no legal order in place, and all of these moves and these changes will have implications for that family and the support that's available to them, and that has quite a substantial proportion of the children, as we saw from our leaving care data. So, it's really important that we get a better sense of the experience of the children who are living in different legal arrangements across Scotland, in kinship care, and that we can make sure that those supports are available for those families, regardless of what the legal status is. And so just to finish up, hopefully that's been interesting, we do have a research report available with a lot more information.

Want to know more?

Now available:



* Research report

* Info-comic summary



We're also lucky to have some funding available to make an additional resource through which we [created an info comics summary](#). That's a six-page summary of our research - a couple of the pages you can see here. And hopefully that's a more accessible resource, and hopefully a bit more of an engaging resource that can also be shared with children and young people as well. So do read and share these widely as you see fit. I am happy to take any questions or reach out anytime to discuss the research. Thank you.

Harriet Baird

Thanks so much, Joanna for a comprehensive overview of the research, and we'll be taking questions at the end. So do put questions in the Q&A function. We will now move on to some perspectives from those working with kinship families and children, and also perspectives on practice and policy. So a really nice mix of speakers to really understand this context more broadly. So firstly up, we'll go to Susan, and if you could introduce yourself first, Susan, that would be great.

Susan Hunter

Hi there, everybody. My name is Susan Hunter, and I am the Kinship care Advice Service for Scotland Project Co-ordinator. Yeah, I've worked with kinship care for the past six years, and I am learning every day, shall we say? So I'll get a move on, if that's okay, because I've got a lot to cover.

So, who are we? We're that. So, we're the National Kinship care Service, and we're funded by the Scottish Government. The service is operated by Adoption UK, Scotland, and the Association for Fostering, Kinship and Adoption, and who also manage the service. And we also subcontract CPAG (Child Poverty Action Group) to do a bit of work for the service. Our service is really fortunate to have an active advisory group with members who helped to steer our service. As a service we're very good at thinking we know what kinship carers need. However,

they are exceptionally good at setting us straight as to the actual needs of kinship carers, and we will listen to them and act accordingly. Our advice lines are accessible for both kinship carers and professionals for advice and information. And on the last slide, there's contact details for the service. During the presentation, I'll focus on the needs of kinship families. There's a lot of information on the slides. So I'll probably just talk over a lot of it to make sure I move within the time frames.

What Kinship carers tell us they need:

- Immediate needs on arrival of child includes resources and financial support.
- Support to navigate extremely complex legal & welfare benefits systems, when family's need is immediate
- Support with navigating rights and entitlements depending on how the child has come to live with them
- Support to Navigate levels of assistance, support, including administration of Kinship Care Allowances, depending on local authority area
- Emotional support for the whole family – including mental health and family wellbeing
- Adequate housing – often overcrowding
- Education – Lack of support and understanding of impact of trauma on children. Additional needs of children in Kinship Care not being recognized.



So what do kinship carers need? What do they tell us that we that they need? So we hear that kinship carers can be unprepared in every aspect and taking on the care of a child. And what we hear via our helpline is that these needs should be met as soon as possible, and the sooner they're met, then the benefits for the whole family will start. Taking care of a kinship child means the kinship carer becomes financially responsible for them, and everything that that entails and goes with it. We've already heard about the dynamic and of kinship families and where they are situated, where they occur. Many families may experience poverty if they cannot access financial assistance or benefits, especially the start. We know that a high percent of kinship carers live in areas of deprivation where there are already high instances of child poverty, and something leading on from that is the ability to work for a kinship carer is often restricted - either having to give up work or to reduce hours, and this again impacts on family finances. Moving on to housing, it's an ever-increasing challenge for families due to a lack of suitable housing, mainly, and even when alternative housing is identified, this can mean to a change of location, schools, etc, which can impact the child or young person negatively, taking them away from everything that is familiar. Education was highlighted in the research, and we're fortunate enough to have an education service within KCASS, which is quite new, and that you can find information about that on our website. What we hear is that we know when

kinship carers are worried about providing the basics for the children, then that stress impacts negatively on already traumatized children, and our role as a service is to support families in the best way we can. What we would like to see as a service is kinship carers being asked, what do you need? How can we help? Especially at the outset of them taking on the care of a child, and I've already said, when their needs are met, then the family can then start to recover together. I'm speaking a lot about all the negativities and the challenges. However, there's so many positives around kinship carers and what we hear, and they often tell us is that kinship carers wouldn't change their experience of raising their kinship child. Their love is unconditional. Yes, they are resilient, and they have to be resilient, and they have to fight for help and support at every step for their family, but they also feel rewarded despite all of the challenges.

And further enhanced needs:

- Changes in role within the family and family dynamics and relationship – support to navigate this.
- Helping the child make sense of what is happening.
- Managing and maintaining employment and other caring responsibilities
- Emotional exhaustion and potential to feel isolated
- Stigma – Kinship Carers too afraid to say that they are struggling
- Shame – Kinship Carers seen as part of the problem
- Suddenly caring for a child family situations. Lack of preparation and training

Further needs and what may lead to those needs - so trauma experienced as a direct result of the kinship child having to reside away from their parent or parents negatively impacts the whole family. The family dynamics changed with all involved changing and adapting to new roles. However, what is concerning is that there is a distinct lack of support associated with the experience of trauma and the support available for those kinship carers and children and young people when their class is non-looked after. Our service can provide information on life story and that can help the child understand better what has happened to them and why they no longer live with their parents. We have information on our website.

I wanted to speak about kinship carers feeling stigmatized. There's a lot of fear associated with kinship care, if kinship carers need to ask for support, they feel they may be judged as failing and not coping. They fear that the child might be removed, so they just keep quiet and get on the things as best they can. There's also a lot of shame associated with kinship care. Kinship carers often blame

themselves for the family situation. Not only do they blame themselves, but they also feel blamed by professionals and other family members and that again, impacts on the family dynamics.

Meet the Minister meeting

Five members of the KCASS Advisory Group recently met with Ms Don - Minister for Children, Young people and The Promise

Impact of Kinship Care Orders (KCO) highlighted by KCASS Advisory group.

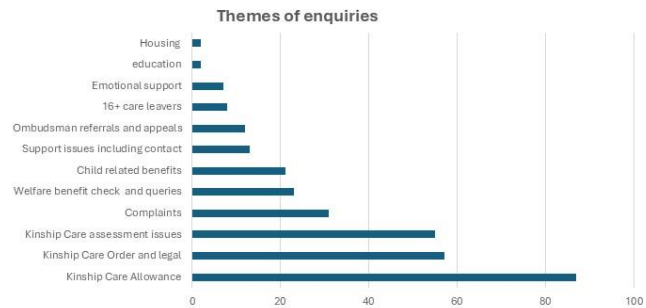
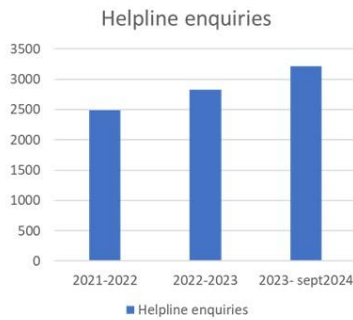
- Families feel forced into taking out Kinship Care Orders.
- No proper explanation of the implications for the family.
- No further support from social work for the families when KCO in place.
- Lack of support within the education system.
- Being forced back to court by parents who wish to have the order changed and the impact of this on the family.
- Kinship Carers are now required to fulfil the work requirements.
- KCA ceases between 16 years of age and 18 years of age with no entitlement to continuing care
- Lack of permanence orders being made by Local Authorities.



So I've spoken about our advisory group. So they recently met with the Minister for children and young people, Natalie Don-Innes, and they raised with her the pitfalls and challenges for kinship carers where there is a kinship care order in place, and that means that the child or young person is classed as non-Looked After. And this slide, it reflects the experiences of those who contact our service. Kinship care orders are often referred to as a Residence Order or a Section 11 Order, reflecting that these were not actually developed for kinship carers, these orders. Often the kinship carers are not aware of the implications when being advised to take on this order in terms of accessing all kinds of support. There are financial implications that I mentioned there, some local authorities differentiate between financial support provided for Looked After Children and young people and non-Looked After Children and young people, and that can affect payments, also entitlement to free school meals and school clothing grants. Our advisory group feel that there needs to be significant change associated with this order to properly meet the needs of kinship families.



Enquiries to the service



So we also have a lobbying role to ensure that the voices of kinship carers are heard, and we mainly gather our information via our advice lines, listening to the voices of kinship carers when we're out and about within our communities, and also listening to our advisory group. We're an extremely busy service, and there have been year on year increases in demand for advice and information. The main and initial themes of inquiries are predominantly financial and legal inquiries. However, our skilled advisors will explore all areas of family life with the kinship carer to ensure as much support as possible is applied for and received.

Useful Resources

- Our website <https://kinship.scot/> Leaflets and [support groups](#) on
- Email address advice@kinshiptscot.org
- Helpline number **0808 800 0006** (Mon to Fri, 10am – 2.30pm)
- What now? booklet – ask for copies
- Facebook page [@kinshipcarecas/](#) and Twitter [@KinshipScotland](#)
- Our [YouTube](#) channel for recordings of Kinship Care Week events
- [The Promise](#) Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) [factsheets for kinship carers](#)



So what we hear is that where the child is Looked After, there are significantly more supports in place than a child who's classed as non-Looked After. What we also hear is that we as professionals are familiar with the terms Looked After non-Looked After. Ask a new kinship carer if the child in their care is Looked After, and what will their response be? Of course, they Looked After I look after them. The implications of getting the legal status wrong can be catastrophic in terms of entitlements. That's for another day. Also, we also need to remember that kinship carers are not familiar with the term kinship care, and they'll need support and help and support to access the relevant support services available for them. If they don't know that they're a kinship carer, they would know to look for advice for kinship carers. When they're aware of their situation, kinship carers can access our website, and we've got lots of information on there for kinship carers. We also have information on there for professionals and support within local areas. We also have a Facebook page with a strong community of kinship carers, and a Twitter account that posts news and updates to kinship carers. And this Twitter format is favoured by professionals that our contact details are also on there. You can contact us by phone or by email. We also take contacts via Facebook as well and Twitter, and that's me coming to the end of my presentation. It says any questions, but you can put those into the Q&As, yeah, and I'm going to stop sharing now.

Harriet Baird

Thanks very much, Susan. And don't worry, we could still hear you and understand you. And sorry, sorry, sorry that you had a bit of a coughing fit. There. No problem at all. And so our next speaker is Kirsty, who's going to talk about implications for practice and policy. And so Kirsty, over to you.

Kirsty Doull

Hello everybody. I am Kirsty Doull, and I am the Care and Transitions Lead at CELCIS. So, my role covers kinship care and also foster care and young people moving into adulthood. So my role today is to think a wee bit about how the findings of the research may help us in the next steps around practice and policy. So, what is the research highlighting for us that we can't lose hold of? How can the research help us take the next right step. So, what I'm going to do is I'll talk through, in turn, some of the key headline findings from the research, and then offer what I think may be helpful considerations.

The proportion of 'looked after' children who are living in kinship care has increased substantially over the study period, from around 1 in 6 (16%) in 2008 to 1 in 3 (29%) in 2019

- Need systems and processes that support the unique value of kinship care
- Should allow for tailored consideration of individual children's needs, and the corresponding supports that are required for their kinship carers



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So the research found that the proportion of Looked After Children living with kinship carers has increased substantially in recent years, with the most recent Children's Social Work Statistics also telling us that children living in kinship care account for 34% of the Looked After child population in Scotland. So this raises some quick questions for me, do our systems and processes adequately support this growing population of children and young people and their carers? Are we making robust decisions quickly enough to support children's care in childhood and beyond? And do these processes allow for that tailored consideration of individual children's needs and the corresponding supports that are required for their kinship carers. And we know from some of CELGIS's other work and from practice that many local authority processes and procedures were rightly originally designed to support Looked After Children in foster care or residential care, or who perhaps had a plan for adoption. And so consequently, while our practice has rightly evolved over recent years to reflect the particular positives around a child being cared for by their kinship carers, often, though not always, the structural processes around the decision making for this has not always caught up. So consequently, we need to make sure that our assessment and decision-making processes take account of this unique type of care for children, so that these decisions are made within a child's timeframe, and so that kinship families receive the tailored support that they need.

There are many children in Scotland living with kinship families who are not 'looked after' by their local authority

- A need for more research?
- Children in kinship families need support, regardless of legal basis
- Highly complex system, offering differing supports and entitlements depending on whether child is 'looked after' or not – needs simplified



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The research also found that there are many children in Scotland living with kinship families who are not Looked After by their local authority, and there is therefore perhaps a need for more research into this area, especially as we know that all kinship families will need some degree of support, and that this support will be beneficial regardless of whether there is a legal order in place or not, or a legal status in place. And currently the landscape on accessing emotional, practical and financial supports, including sometimes access to benefits, is extremely complex, and this needs to be simplified to ensure that all kinship families receive suitable support.

Kinship carers are often supporting children with complex needs, and it is important that tailored support is in place for the children and their carers

- Importance of robust and helpful assessment and decision-making processes
- Need to reduce the complexity in benefits/ allowances to ensure that all kinship families are supported financially



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Another key finding was that kinship carers are often supporting children with complex needs, and so it is important that tailored support, as we've heard quite a bit today, is in place for the children and their carers. And this brings me to, again, a need for assessment and decision-making structures that suitably reflect this growing population of children and their unique needs, and not just for assessments sake, but in order that they and their carers receive the support they need to thrive. And we also know that supporting children with more complex needs often takes more and so likewise, access and supports should be

as simple as possible, and currently, we know that the linking between allowances and other supports from a local authority and the benefit system can be tricky, so it would just be helpful if this was made much easier. We know from the research that there is variation across Scotland as to how likely children are to live in kinship care, for how long they may be in kinship care, and on what the legal basis is to support the family arrangement. And it's important that the reasons behind the regional variation in children's experiences of kinship care across Scotland are better understood to ensure that all kinship families have access to the support they require and deserve, no matter where they live or what their arrangement is. The Scottish Government's recently published assessment framework, and there's an associated practice note as well, may be helpful here in offering a standard approach to assessing the needs of children and their kinship carers.

Educational outcomes remains an area where many children and families would benefit from additional support

- What does this mean for children who are living with kinship carers but who are not 'looked after', and so perhaps not as visible in terms of needing extra support?
- Can we work even more closely with Virtual School Head Teachers?

Another area the research explored was educational outcomes, and it found that this was an area where many children and families would benefit from additional support. And further to this, we must consider what this might mean for children who are in kinship care, but who are not Looked After, and so who may not be as visible on the face of it, in terms of needing extra support. So is there an opportunity here where we can link even more closely with colleagues, such as our Virtual School Head Teachers, who offer additional support to children and young people who have experience of care?

Other helpful things...

Evidence base that can help the **Promise Bill**, and any future Scottish Government **consultation** on kinship care

Evidence base that can help the future work of the Kinship Care Collaborative – building on:

- Updated **guidance** on kinship care assistance
- A new **Assessment Framework**



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Research may also be helpful in providing a contextual evidence base for the upcoming Promise Bill, and also in the event of any Scottish Government consultation around kinship care. It will also be useful for the next steps in the work of the Kinship care Collaborative, which is a collective of kinship carers and organizations who work in and around supporting kinship families with the overarching aim of delivering and supporting improvements for kinship families across Scotland. And this will build upon the recent assessment framework that I mentioned earlier, and also on updated guidance that was published earlier in the year. So in summary, the research can further support our arguments around many things, including the need for clearer structures and scaffolding to support assessment and decision making processes that reflect the uniqueness and value of kinship care. We also perhaps want to explore further the needs of children in kinship care who are not Looked After, so that we can better support these families and also gain a fuller picture of kinship care across Scotland.

Research also highlights the need for easier access to all supports, whether that be emotional, practical, financial or support in education, and that we move towards a more consistent approach across Scotland, and we also need these supports to be tailored to reflect the specific needs of individual kinship families. So thank you very much for your attention, and I'm happy to have a chat about anything that has been discussed today at any time, if that would be helpful.

Harriet Baird

Thank you very much, Kirsty, that was really helpful, kind of drawing out key features of research and implications. I can see there are more questions going in the chat, so only one more presentation, and then we'll get to some of those questions. So the final presentation is from Debbie. And thanks so much to Debbie, because she's standing in for someone who was unwell. So much appreciated. And yeah, do introduce yourself.

Debbie Zima



intandem and supporting children in kinship care

Susie White
Nov 2024

INSPIRING SCOTLAND



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Thank you, Harriet, and thank you for inviting Inspiring Scotland to part of this. What is a really, really important session, and I do have a mini graveyard shift here, so I wonder if I could have my slides put up, which would be really helpful. But in the meantime, what I'll do is introduce myself. So my name is Debbie Zima, and I'm a fund manager at Inspiring Scotland. I am honoured and grateful that I work on intandem, which is Scotland's national mentoring programme for young people, predominantly Looked After in their local authority, those living at home or in kinship arrangements. We work in 20 local authority areas with 12 of our partner charities.



“

There's an assumption kinship carers will just cope

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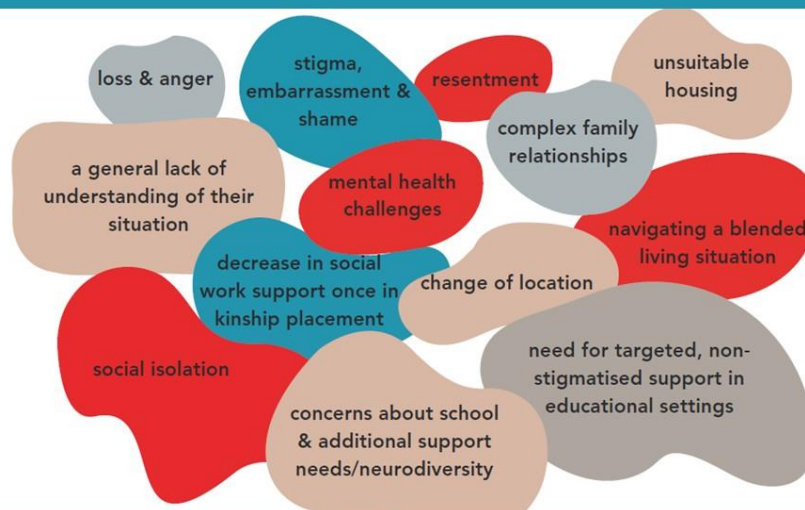
So last year, one of our intandem coordinators at one of our partner charities, who has experience of kinship care, challenged our thinking by saying this, and it's quite profound, actually:

"There's an assumption that kinship carers will just cope."

We wondered if kinship carers should be expected to just cope, which I'll come back to in a little while. All families, as we know, have their ups and downs,

highs and lows, and kinship families do too. So today, what I'd like to share in the 10 minutes that I've got is some of the specific barriers and challenges faced by these children and young people mentored by intandem specifically. We don't want to reinforce stigma. There are incredible people who've benefited hugely from being part of a kinship family. But equally, we don't want to underplay some of the challenges that some of our kinship families face, as we've already heard, particularly, I would say, from Susan, who runs the support service at KCASS. I'd then like to talk about some of the themes around supporting kinship families, what we have heard at intandem from across the sector. And lastly, share some suggestions from young people and families on what they would like to see happen. And again, that would feed into the work that Susan's doing with her advisory group. So what kind of barriers are children and people in kinship care facing?

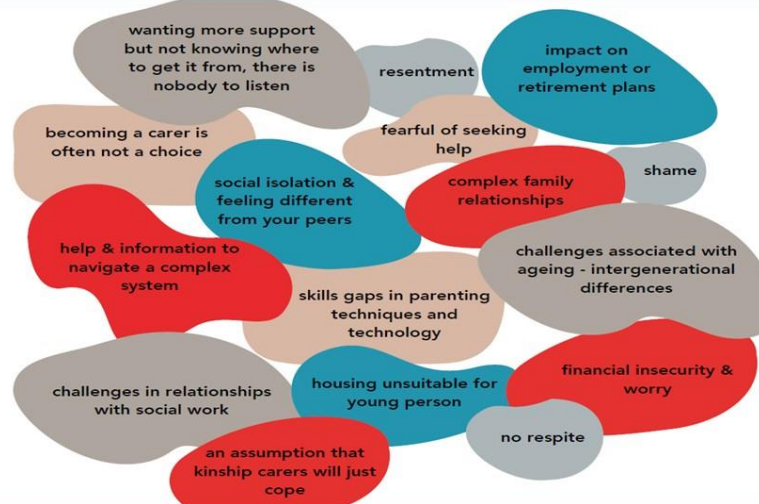
Challenges facing children and young people



Our intandem co-ordinators, who we've mentioned, build a trusted relationship with our children, young people and their families. What they've told us, and it's rising more and more, is they're spending more and more time supporting children and families in kinship care. Our amazing coordinators, as I said, 12 partner charities across 20 local authority areas, but we as a central team at Inspiring Scotland, couldn't understand why they were being asked to provide wider family support. What was driving this extra ask from these families? After all, the coordinators were meant to be visiting the family to introduce mentoring. So in a typical intandem style, we got together with all our partner charities to try and understand what was going on. And what you see on this slide is the results of that, our children and young people told us that they were trying to work through complex family relationships. They were coping with feelings of loss and bereavement. Again, a lot of what Susan has already said that they are

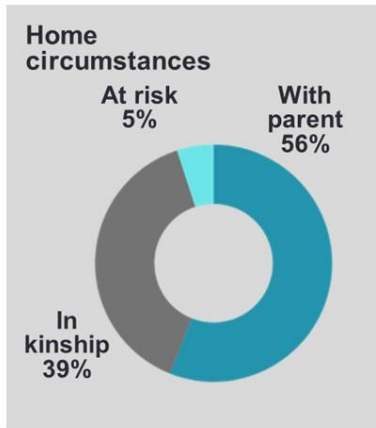
hearing from their families and what's come through, in all the research and evidence that we've heard from Joanna as well and Kirsty too.

Challenges for Kinship Carers



For carers, kinship care is complex. It's isolating, and the word that was used was it's relentless. There were several major life changes for carers, which we were told, with placements often starting suddenly, again backing up what Susan's already said, without any time to prepare mentally or practically, potentially giving up work or retirement, and a really, real fear of appearing not to cope in front of statutory services like social work or education and let alone asking for help themselves. So when the intandem coordinators go round to a house seeking to introduce our mentoring service and understand the family situation, listening openly and without judgment, what we are finding is the flood gates are opening and immediate needs are coming out. Kinship carers shared specific worries and challenges, going to a Children's Hearing, being faced with the upsetting details, trying to talk to school and holding a common fear of what would happen to their child if something actually happened to them, particularly those that are grandparents in poor health. So kinship children and carers are facing multiple challenges, often past trauma is part of this experience, as I've said, intandem offers one to one mentoring, which involves a trusted relationship. So I suppose it's not actually surprising that the kinship families asked their trusted coordinators and our partner charities, the people that they already know through the mentoring of support for our young people. But what we were surprised about was the patterns and the number of requests, and also, we wanted to find out where to get more support for these families.

Extending support to the wider family



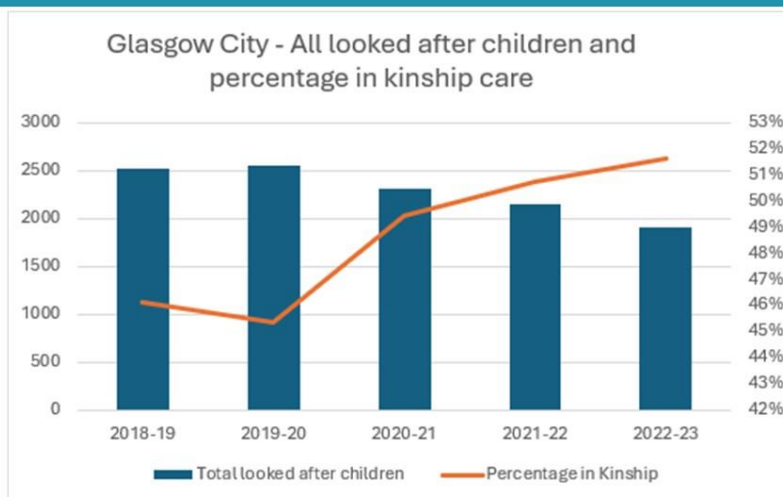
“We often find ourselves providing support to an entire family – by default, rather than by design”

intandem partner

intandem co-ordinators, and I'll keep repeating it, build this trusted, consistent relationship with families. And what this is, is The Promise in action, listening to understand, getting alongside families, to offer the right support at the right time. It's these relationships that allow mentoring coordinators to listen and work with families to identify what will help. intandem is a mentoring program for children and young people, but increasingly, we are providing whole family support alongside the mentoring. That means emotional and practical for both the children and the family. And I think, as Susan said, we are learning as we go as well. As you can see from this slide, almost 40% of children mentored now by intandem live in kinship care, and what does this family support look like? We've recently started to track the number of families asking for support and the type of support provided. So last quarter, so it's right up to date data, intandem provided 31 adults with one-to-one support. 24 families received support to identify more income (again, backing up what Susan is saying), things like hardship grants, food banks, school uniform banks, and 22 families received help with education, speaking to guidance teachers about attendance or helping to ask for additional needs assessments. Why is intandem, a mentoring program, providing family support - by default, but not by design and are kinship families just coping? Some of this family support is due to the growing strain on statutory services. We're probably all aware of vacancies and social work teams and the higher rates of sickness absence. There's the impact of the cost-of-living squeeze, the prevalence of mental ill health amongst our young people, in the day-to-day reality of child poverty amongst the families we support and let's not forget the ripple effect of the COVID pandemic. 79% of our children mentored by intandem do live in the post codes classed as the most deprived, which, again, backs up what we've heard in the previous presentation by Joanna. Families often say intandem is the only service available to them. There is something that we need to understand here about capacity, availability, accessibility and

openness, as well as the important point about trust when we think about working with families. intandem, co-ordinators have told us, and they say they feel they're the only one in a family's home because they sit in the living room. They listen, and they're offering help.

Rising use of Kinship Care



We try to see if this was all reflected in the published data on Looked After Children. And I think given the slides that we've already seen, I think we'll all agree that is absolutely the case. But are we getting it right with early intervention and support? Perhaps these children are now in formal kinship care or Voluntary Arrangements. Questions we keep asking, are these children from families getting the support they need? Or, again, I'm going to come back to the fact, are they just coping, but maybe at breaking point? Are we tracking what children and families are really experiencing? So as a portfolio, we wanted to learn what others were doing and understand the wider picture. So earlier this year, we brought together from across the sector and people on this call today, many of you might have been there, over 25 organizations at two events, inviting as many people as we could. We cast the net wide, also even wider to include kinship who work across England and Wales too. We discovered, as I think we're hearing also today, everyone is finding kinship care complex, inconsistent and also very challenging, but encouragingly, there is real energy and a desire to work together to make things better, and I think we need to keep that in our mind's eye.

intandem kinship learning & collaboration events



“Such a disparate picture throughout Scotland in terms of service provision”

intandem Kinship Learning & Collaboration Event attendee

The findings from our two events was the need to collaborate, not just within the third sector, but share our learning (and I think it's the learning that we need to take forward), understand across and between everyone who is working to support children in kinship care, local authorities, voice - are we really listening to and involving children and their families? And we need to tackle stigma. Carers will not ask for help if they fear it would lead to them being judged as again, I'll say not coping. It has to be okay to ask for help, but that takes trusted relationships first, and we'd be remiss if I didn't mention funding, as this should be planned, consistent investment in prevention, rather than a crisis response.

What kinship carers and young people say they want

- Someone consistent and relatable
- Non-judgmental
- Specialist support for Kinship carers
- Concern around asking for help, perception and stigma
- Peer support – someone who understands
- Counselling for the child in their care
- More availability of support, not just 9-5 on weekdays
- No time frame to support, available as long as they need it
- Advice and training, examples given of social media, trauma, behaviour, drugs and alcohol etc
- "Safe House" - somewhere they could go/book with staff to care for children, to provide a break and get peer support from other carers

Kinship care, as we've already seen now and as I've spoken about, is challenging, but young people and their families are not short on ideas of what they would like. They want it to be less confusing and less complicated. And Kirsty's summary actually says that too. So what we're hearing from our young people backs this up. Some suggestions for practical support - access the right

information at the right time, more availability of support. Carers talked about the difficulty in asking for help because of stigma, advice and training. So again, back to that assumption. In closing, many kinship carers are coping. We know that. But many are asking for support so they can continue to provide the invaluable love and care to their children and young people. We owe it to them to listen. We owe it to them to work together. We owe it to them to coordinate our efforts and make things better. We can't keep assuming children and families will continue to cope without the right support.

Harriet Baird

Thank you very much, Debbie. And actually, a quick question for you immediately there's come in the chat is, just to clarify, is intandem national, and a few people have responded in the chat. But I just thought I'd give you a chance to respond

Debbie Zima

Well our aspiration is to be national in all 32 local authorities, but we are in 20 local authorities, working with 12 partner charities across those 20 local authority areas. We've got a website, or if anybody wants to get in touch with me, I'm happy to provide any more information.

Harriet Baird

And thanks very much, Debbie, and that that's confirmed what was in the chat. And I'm now going to move to wider questions, so I'm going to look in the Q&A so I will work through these with the panel. But obviously, if people have further questions, please keep adding them to the Q&A. So lots of lovely comments and questions. But a first question is around resources for grandparents, so I wondered whether Susan could perhaps talk to that, especially around the educational changes over the past, you know, over the years and so forth. Are those kind of resources available?

Susan Hunter

Yes, I think I mentioned earlier on that we have an education pathway within our service, and they can provide one to one support, particularly, and that can cover the whole family, but it's around education. So anything to do with education, our team will be able to respond to, so we have a load of leaflets on our on our website as well that grandparents particularly might find useful about preparing for a school meeting, transitions from into primary school into high

school. However, our education pathway (there is information on the website, and I'll put something in the chat), you can self-refer into the service, and what will happen is then that the education advisor will get in touch with you directly, and you'll have a consultation with the education advisor, and just talk through anything that's concerning with, you know, with the wee one going to school, or whatever the concerns may be. So, I'll pop that in the chat. There was something else in terms of the education. I haven't got the question up, sorry. I thought there was something in addition to that as well.

Harriet Baird

And thanks, Susan, no, I think it was just, you know, education systems might have changed since a grandparent was a parent, for example. So just kind of updated guidance. But I think you covered that.

Susan Hunter

I'll find it and I'll put it in the chat.

Harriet Baird

Thank you so much. I'm trying to look at different questions for different panel members. So the next one will be a research one for Joanna. Is there a plan for further research surrounding the areas where more data is needed?

Dr Joanna Soraghan

So, no concrete plans at the moment, but there's definitely, as we've highlighted, a few areas will be keen to look at more and potentially plans to kind of try and seek funding to do some of that work. I think will be really useful is, as I said, is to get a more up to date idea of how many children in Scotland are living in these kind of informal kinship care arrangements where there's not legal order in place, and they're just living with a family member. Because the most recent estimate for that is based on the 2011 census, when we estimate around 9000 children who were living in those informal as we as they're called arrangements. And that's obviously quite a long time ago, and we see how much change has happened with those children who were Looked After and in care over that time. So just to get a more accurate sense of that, I think would be really crucial, and that more up to date census data should be becoming available, and there's obviously a lag in between that data becoming available and researchers getting funding and access to that data and things. So, it's not something we'd be able to provide immediately, but I think that to get a sense of

that and how that's distributed across the country and things, then I think that would be a really helpful thing to understand. That's one area begin to focus on, certainly. But yes, concrete plans but no funding in place and work starting not yet unfortunately.

Harriet Baird

Thank you, Joanna. And related to that, do you have any data on labour and market outcomes for children in kinship care? Or is that possible?

Dr Joanna Soraghan

So certainly, with what we had, the closest thing to that would be the information from education about children's destinations after school, and that's just looking at what is called initial destinations, so three months after they leave school and follow up destinations, which I believe are nine months after leaving school. It's a very short window there into steps towards adulthood, not a longer-term picture. So we didn't have anything. I know that the DWP does have whole data on employment. It's not... It has been linked before for research, but it's not one of the ones that's kind of very regularly done and very easy to get access to. And I'm also unsure as to what the kind of time frame that covers would be, and how many of the children that we would have kinship data for would be captured within that because obviously there's a lag between them being in care and them being in the labour market. So, it potentially would be possible, but I'm not too sure on the details of how it would work and how many children would be covered by that data.

Harriet Baird

Thank you very much Joanna. The next question is around kinship carers and young people and saying what they want is provided to foster carers by their agency and their supervising social worker. Has this model been explored for kinship carers? So don't know whether Kirsty or Debbie might want to comment on that. If you can see that question in the in the Q&A.

Kirsty Doull

Yes, I can come in. And I'm wondering if there's also a lot of expertise on this call who'll be able to speak to more local practice than I will be able to. I think if I take a bit of a bit of a balcony view around it, one of the things that we think about quite a lot is trying to strip away the bureaucracy and really focus on what

does this child need, and what do the adults in their family need, rather than, is it a foster carer? Is that kinship carer? Is it a section 11? Is that a Compulsory Supervision Order? And I feel this is going to take even more of a seismic shift towards that, and if we get that move right where it's based on needs, rather than status of an adult or legal status of a child, we'd be moving more into what does this child and adults around them need, rather than is this kinship? Is this foster etc? So I know that's quite a broad statement, but I'm not fully aware of any local practice around the question, I do suspect for the others on the call that do.

Harriet Baird

Thank you, Kirsty, I don't know whether anyone else wants to come in on that. If not, there's lots of questions coming through. Debbie, did you want to say something?

Debbie Zima

No, I was just going to say from the local standpoint, I would probably default to my local partner charities to reply to that, but whoever asked that question, I'd be happy to find out and come back to answer that question. But I completely agree with Kirsty. It's about what the family, the young person needs, wants, taking safeguarding elements into all of this as well. So, you know, it's not a straight line. I would say it is quite complicated and complex. But if anybody wanted to follow up with me, I'd be happy to have a conversation about that.

Harriet Baird

Thank you so much Debbie. Lots of questions coming through, so just trying to answer as many as we can, this one's for Susan from KCASS, is there a notable digital divide issue for kinship carers at the moment, obviously an issue that came to the fore in the lockdown and access to technology and connections and support? So I don't know whether you could, could speak a bit to that question. Susan,

Susan Hunter

Yes, we do. There was actually some research presented recently by Mark Hardy from AFKA (Association for Fostering, Kinship and Adoption Scotland) looking at that very question. And what we hear is that, obviously, you know, when we're out and about within peer support groups, is that members of the support groups. There's, a lot of kinship carers who don't have access who don't access

the internet, who don't use their phones, can't join zoom. So, our peer support groups are fantastic at printing out information and sending on onto them, and I know local authorities will do that as well because they don't have access to the internet. I think that's slightly changing as we become more tech savvy and with schools supporting families, you know, to access the internet. But it certainly is still a very big issue, and it's unseen and it's unheard, because we have people who will go ahead and will share the information. And what worries me is that that's the kinship carers that know that they're kinship carers and go along to a support group. What about those who are floundering within their own communities, they're unseen and unheard. So yes, there is still an issue around connectivity and internet access and the tools to go along with that.

Harriet Baird

Thank you very much. Susan, another question is around in alignment with the promise about the terminology, of using the term Looked After and instead using terms like care experienced. And it would be interesting to know across the panel what people's approaches are on this. So maybe I'll start with Kirsty and anyone else can kind of chip in on that one.

Kirsty Doull

Yes, I think it's important to remember. And I know I'm almost contradicting myself, because my previous comment was about stripping back the bureaucracy, but I think there is something important about remembering that the term 'Looked After' has legal implications, requiring statutory duties, and by and large, though not always, compulsory intervention in a family's life to protect and care for the child. I'm not precious about the words Looked After, but at present, it reflects legal implications. And so I think no matter where our national conversation goes around, using terms such as Looked After, we cannot lose sight of that. It has specific ramifications that are important. So I think that is my overall thought on it. I do agree that, and I think Susan was really helpful in that that some kinship carers say, of course, the child's Looked After. I give them every day, but we mean it in a different context. So that's unhelpful, that that context, but at present, we do have to remember that it has specific legal implications.

Harriet Baird

Thank you, Kirsty. I'm not sure whether anyone else wanted to come in on that? Joanna?

Dr Joanna Soraghan

I agree this kind of language really matters. We want to be careful how we're expressing things in terms of the piece of research, particularly it was using kind of local authority and government data. And as Kirsty says, this is the official or the legal term that is used within them and so to accurately reflect the data, and what's captured within the data, that's the term we've used. But we do use it mindfully and where it's more appropriate to who we're speaking to use other terms, such as care experienced. And I see that someone in the chat has said, so obviously one term is not going to suit everybody. There are people who would actually prefer Looked After to care experienced. But yeah, I think I agree there's a need to be mindful and move the conversation forward, but we can't do that while there are terms that are the legal terms that we still need to be aware of that and use them where appropriate and necessary.

Debbie Zima

Can I come in, Harriet, if that's alright.

I do know that we are putting into the Scottish Government, which has a consultation on the definition of care experience, which we are absolutely feeding into. So, we're getting the views of our young people, we're getting the views of our families, we're getting the views of our mentors, we're getting the views of our partner charities. So I think that that's maybe a beginning to what this looks like. Yes, absolutely, I hear what Kirsty is saying about everything has this legal definition. But I, and I'll just speak this is for myself. Personally, I flip things on its head sometimes, and think, you know, if I was that person, what would I feel like if I heard that was what I was somebody said about me? Um, you know, it's very easy, you know, I'm a mother and I'm a daughter and I'm whatever. But then if somebody chucked in that I was Looked After, or would I know what that meant? So, I think that this, the consultations that we're having, the ramifications of what that looks like, I absolutely get it. But if we are going to be absolutely true to The Promise we need to really consider this. It's not going to happen overnight, but we need to be respectful of people. So that would be my comment on that.

Susan Hunter

Can I just say as well about that? And the same thing that Debbie was talking about, the care experience definition. I was on one of the sessions, and I was really quite concerned that all the people who were discussing who should be included in the definition of care experience, and absolutely those who are Looked After Children should be included. However, not everybody thought that those who are non-Looked After should have been included in that definition. Now, these are professionals. I was really concerned about that, because with

being care experienced, you are entitled to certain supports. And if that's going to be the case that non-Looked After Children are not going to be included in that, then I have huge concerns. So the whole way that we define terminology is really, really important, because it impacts on our children and young people and what supports they have available.

Harriet Baird

That's thank you all for your responses on that. And it sounds like the consultation is obviously directly looking into that very matter. So many more questions and comments, I'm doing my best to get through them. A kind of comment question here is around the themes being very clear and consistent throughout the presentations, and from the experience on the front line that people need resources and so forth, and so, I guess this is to Joanna, what is next with this research, and what is the hopeful outcome?

Dr Joanna Soraghan

It wouldn't just be due to this research, but it is consistent with things that we hear. And I have been along to attend the Kinship care Advisory Group one day, and just hear a lot of the same messages. And I think a really key thing is this disparity in support that's available for different families based on the different legal order. And I think for me, that would be a really key thing that I'd like to see addressed. And people have ended up in these circumstances, and yeah, there might be a slightly different legal thing underpinning that, but these people are facing the same challenges or could be facing the same challenges. I think that there's a lot that could be done around that to recognize kinship families which are not, don't have a legal status, or are not Looked After, and to provide the same support to them that's applicable for other kinship families.

Harriet Baird

Thank you, Joanna and I guess Kirsty's presentation touched on how some of some of these key findings could affect policy and practice. So many interesting observations. So, someone said, thank you very much for the brilliant presentations, and they're particularly interested in the relationships between the adults in families where there are kinship arrangements. Do any of the presenters have a sense of whether families are able to access helpful support around managing complex family dynamics? I don't know who would perhaps like to respond to that.

Susan Hunter

well, I'll come in just at the moment, because we, I've just had an advisory group meeting this morning, and we were talking about how the families or the kinship carers have to arrange contact with their family members, and how challenging that can be, and how they feel that they have to, because sometimes it's within an order, or they've been told by social work that they have to facilitate this, this contact. And it can often lead to deterioration in the relationships with the parents of the child as well, and that person that, what's put on to them, to organise that and to arrange that, and it's something that they're not prepared for. You know, how do you? For one kinship carer, he was told he had to supervise contact, but the daughter turned up at three in the morning, knocking on the door, and I want to see the wee one, and you have to let me see them. And he was told to phone the police and get his daughter arrested. And it's that kind of story that we hear over and over and over again, and the impact that that has on family relationships.

Debbie Zima

I'll come in as well, Harriet, if that's okay. I will absolutely concur there with Susan. I think, as part of my presentation, which I know hit on, the just coping. But the other element, which I did touch on was the complexity of our families and the young people that are coming to us for mentoring in the first instance. And so what this is doing, because of the trust and the relationship that we have, we are finding that family members are contacting us, our co-ordinators, rather than somebody else, because of that trust that they have built up. So I think that that's something that we also need to consider. We're not particularly, we go above and beyond. We're in the third sector. We do know that we do what we do. But I would agree with Susan completely. We are seeing family situations that - I've been working with intandem now for just over five years - that I knew that young people that we work with had complex lives. This is, I would say, a different scale to anything that I heard on a consistent basis. Now I think we need to consider that as well.

Harriet Baird

Thank you very much, Debbie and to Susan as well. Another question I'm not sure who in the panel could answer, but does the promise include informal kinship care as well, and equally, formal kinship and children on legal orders up to care leaving status. And does it kind of capture all of those groups? And is anyone able to clarify that?

Kirsty Doull

I can come in a wee bit my senses, and I'm happy for others to come in, is that it references it in quite broad terms, kinship care, kinship families, and around some of the things we've talked about today, about the need to support all kinship families, the need to not feel a kinship carer has professionalized their role in order to access supports, but in terms of that specific around those distinctions that I think have been named in the chat, it doesn't go that specific, is my sense of it, but it does speak broadly about children in kinship care and kinship families.

Harriet Baird

Thank you, Kirsty. There's also a question around therapeutic support. Why is access to in-person therapeutic support for children living in kinship care not made available through government funding. There's a difference between support work and specialist therapeutic services. I'm not sure whether that's more just a potential comment from anyone on the panel?

Susan Hunter

Can I come in as well to see that we have a kinship pathway as well, within our service, and it's quite new and part of that is therapeutic support for the family. Again, I'll put the details in the chat, and there's an opportunity to have a support session with a clinician. And then there's further supports on the on the back of that. So that's proving very popular at the moment. It was just within four local authority areas, but I think we've seen the benefit of it, so we've been able to expand that. So I'll put the details of that service within the chat. I mean, it's not all encompassing, obviously. There should, as you say, there should be government funding for it, but we have this small bit of our service which can be beneficial for families who can use it.

Debbie Zima

And I'll just come in from the intandem perspective with our 12 partner charities, again, pockets of funding when I talk about family support workers, some of our partner charities have fundraised and got funding. One I'm thinking particularly through The Promise for a family support worker, and through that actual work, they also do therapeutic work with their families. That they access through intandem as well, which again, is really important. So whoever asked that question, we'd love to be able to offer and roll out again. It's, it's funding. It's different in every local authority area. I mean, we just come back to even, you know, CAMH's waiting lists as a for instance, which I know is completely

different. But even we just started there, the backlog is just so, so enormous, but, but yes, with intandem, our partner charities offer signpost wherever we can.

Harriet Baird

Thank you very much, and we'll try and get that link in the chat to the kinship pathway, the therapeutic support as that seemed very relevant to that. I think there's a lot more questions and comments. Thank you everyone so much. I think we've only got time for one more question, and that is for rural highland areas, where is there the best support for families in kinship care situations as it seems lacking. So I don't know whether anyone has some feedback on the rural highland areas support.

Debbie Zima

We have an intandem partner in Inverness who covers the highlands. Now, I know that's a huge geographic area, so we really could do with more than just one coordinator. So if we had lovely funding, we would offer more. But yes, we have, we have an in tandem service in the highlands as well through Action for Children. So, if, if that individual would like more information on that, I'd be more than happy to put you in touch with the team in Inverness.

Harriet Baird

Thanks so much Debbie. Susan, would you quickly like to come in?

Susan Hunter

Yeah, there is a distinct lack of support within highland specifically. And on our website, we have the details of the local authority supports for each local authority area, the third sector agencies that work within each area, within each local authority, but also any peer support group within each local authority area that we're aware of. If anyone knows of any that we're not covered in, please let us know, and we'll add it, because it's really important to get the word out for what support there is out there.

Harriet Baird

Thank you very much. Susan, um, I'm aware that we're coming to time. Our presenters all did very well at keeping to time on their presentation. So I should do the same for the Q&A. Firstly, I'd like to thank everyone who's commented or

submitted a question. I think we've responded to a lot of them, but if anyone has any outstanding questions, please just contact the CELCIS team, and we can direct any outstanding queries. We'll also be sending resources afterwards, so the slides and information. So you will hear from us afterwards, and so I'd mostly just like to end by thanking the speakers. Thank you so much for your perspectives on kinship care and from your different perspectives, whether that's data and research, policy and practice or supporting children and young people and kinship carers themselves, I think there have been some strong threads of common challenges, but obviously lots of hopeful contributions into how we can improve the situation going forward. So thank you, everyone. So much for your time.

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