



Centre for excellence
for Children's Care and Protection



SCOTTISH CENTRE FOR
ADMINISTRATIVE
DATA RESEARCH



Growing Up in Kinship Care

4 December 2024

Agenda

- ❖ Findings from the Growing Up in Kinship Care research
 - ❖ Dr Joanna Soraghan & Dr Robert Porter, CELCIS
- ❖ What do we hear about what kinship families need?
 - ❖ Susan Hunter, KCASS
- ❖ Implications for practice and policy
 - ❖ Kirsty Doull, CELCIS
- ❖ intandem and supporting children in kinship care
 - ❖ Debbie Zima, intandem mentoring services

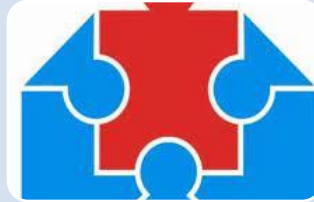
Growing Up in Kinship Care

- * What is kinship care?
- * Why have we conducted this research?
 - * Policy-led move towards kinship care
 - * Shortage of evidence regarding children's experiences



The Data

Data sought from 2008-2019 where possible*:



Looked After
Children
Statistics

Education
Data

SCRA Data
(Children's
Hearings)

Child
Protection
Data

Health
Visiting 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

Growing Up in Kinship Care

Aim 1

Increased understanding of kinship care usage and trends, the pathways into and out of kinship care, and insight into how children in kinship care are faring in terms of health, education and child protection outcomes.

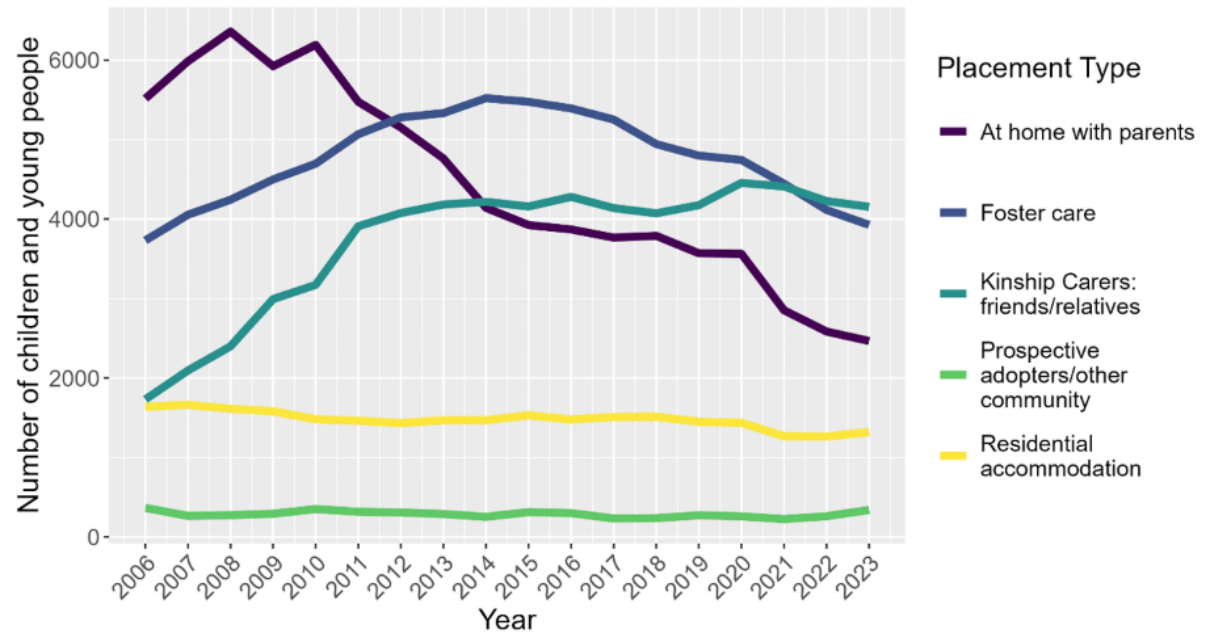
Aim 2

Test the feasibility of the data linkage approach and understand its potential for future research (e.g. on other cohorts)

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

Number of children and young people in care as of 31 July
By placement type



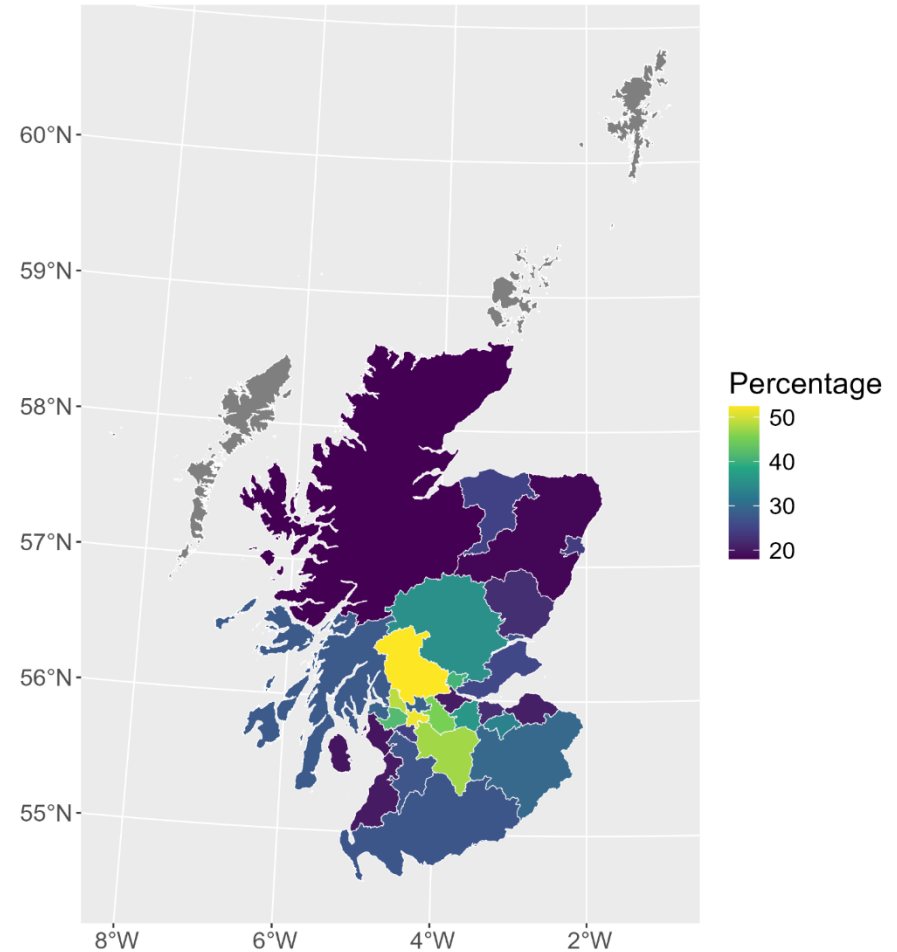
❖ Increased from **1 in 6** children in care to around **1 in 3** over our study period (2008-2019).

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



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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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

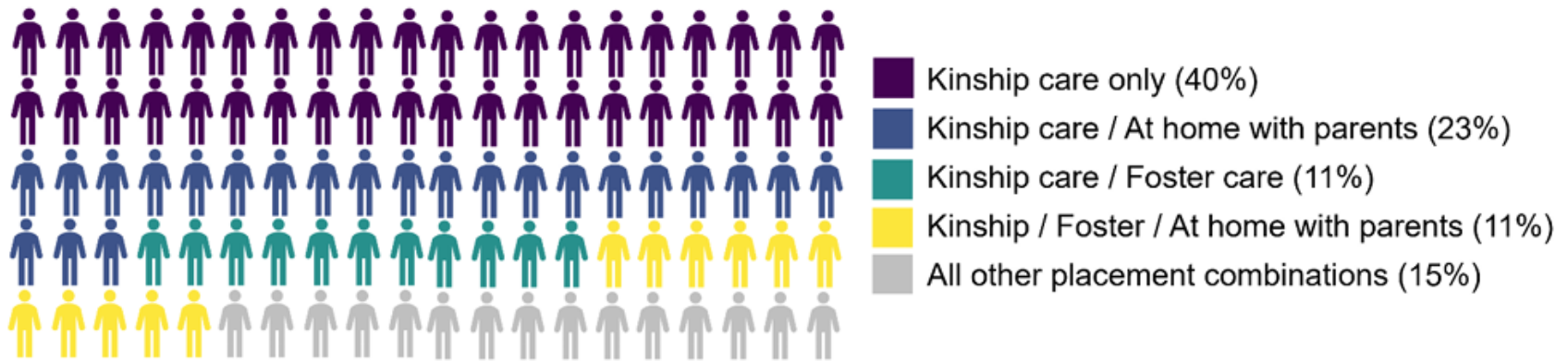
- ❖ In 2019, **children in kinship care** were **twice as likely** to be looked after under ‘**non-compulsory**’ (S.25) **measures** than the general population of children in care (36% vs 17%¹)



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

Care Journeys –Types of Care Arrangement

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

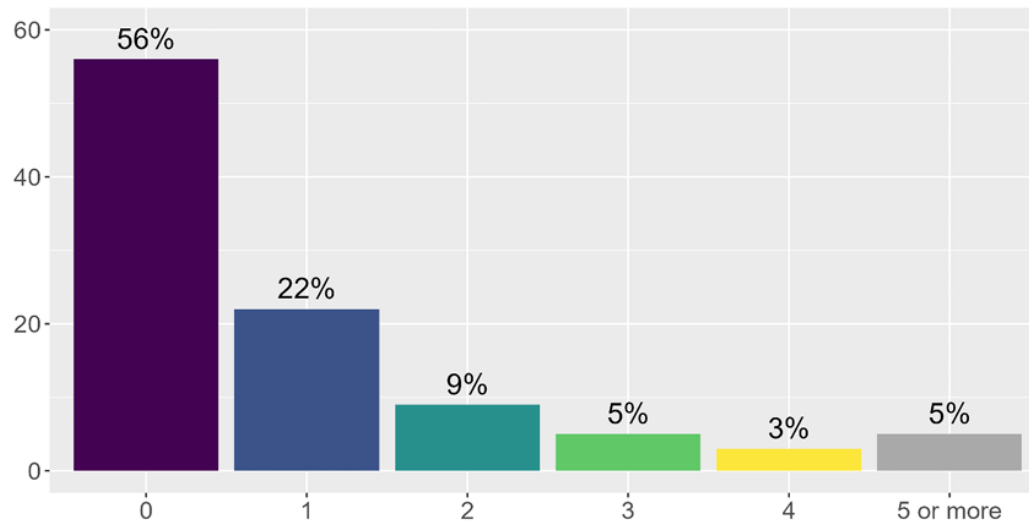


Around 2 in 3 children who experience kinship care do not live in any other type of care environment outwith their family home

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

Number of living arrangements experienced by children after first moving to live 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.



Average kinship = **16** Months arrangement



Note: These figures only include the time that a child is 'looked after' in kinship care.



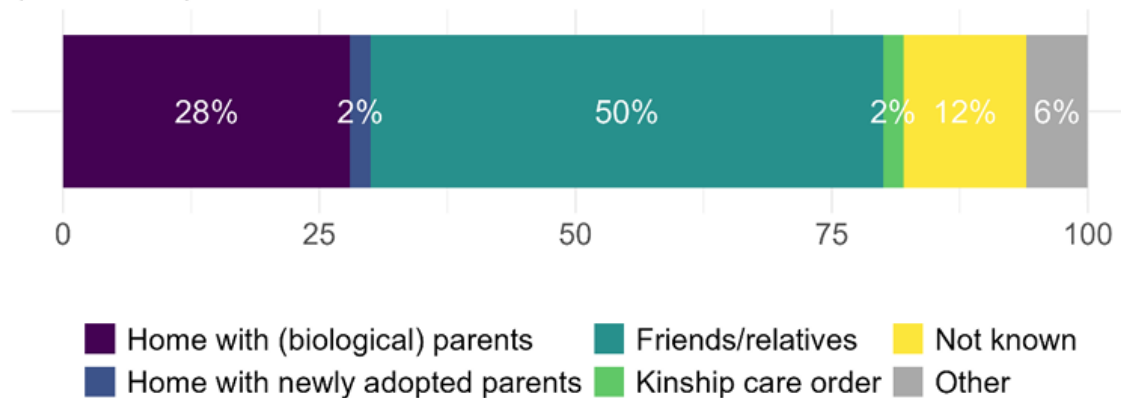
Care Journeys – Leaving Care

- ❖ 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

2008-2019

Destination after leaving care directly from kinship care
(n=10,324)

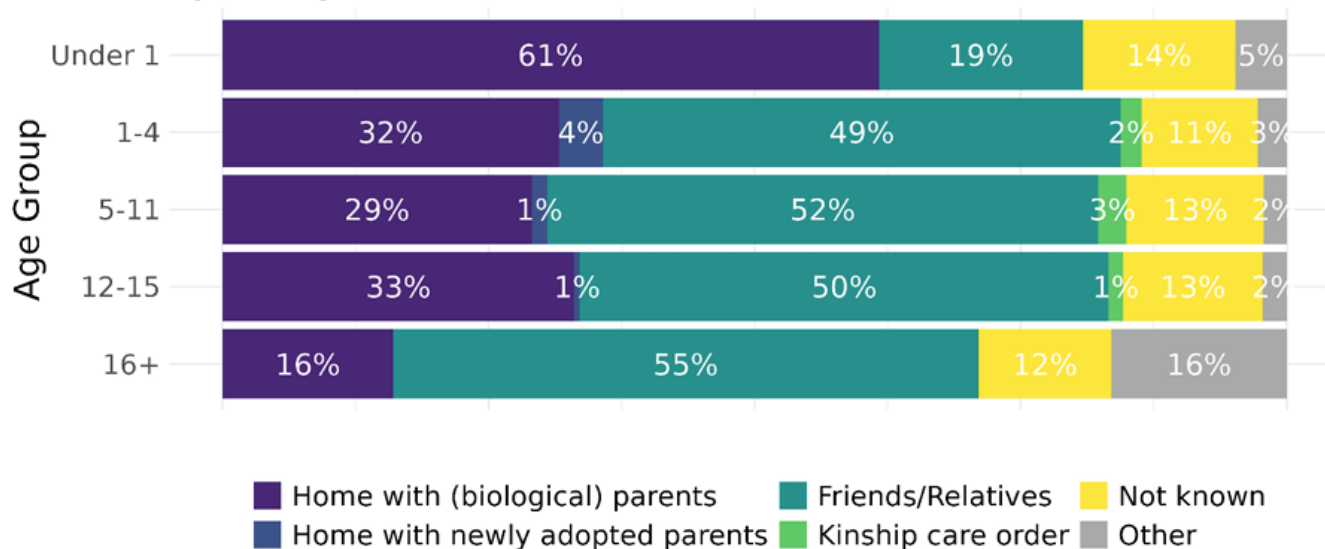


Care Journeys – Leaving Care

- ❖ This holds 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

2008-2019

Destination after leaving care directly from kinship care
By the age at which the child left care



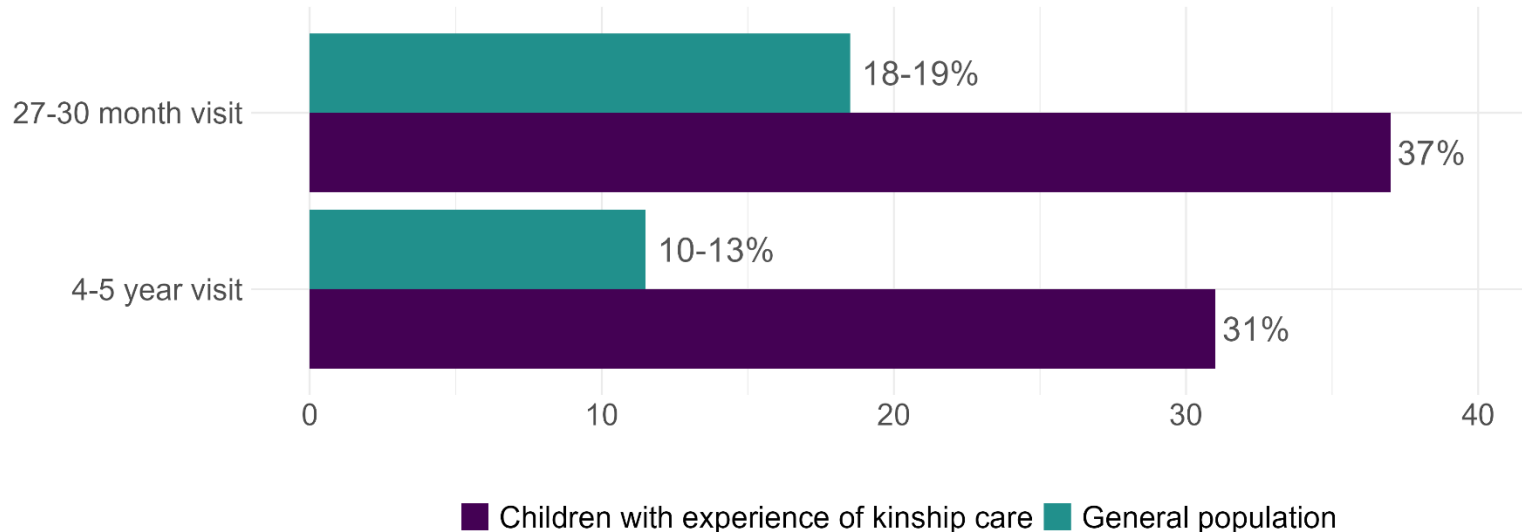
Children's Hearings System



- ❖ The most common grounds for referral were a lack of parental care (76% of children) and exposure to domestic abuse (28%)
- ❖ The average number of hearings experienced was 11, with 1 in 10 children experiencing more than 20 hearings.

Health Visiting - Early Childhood Development

Percentage of children with developmental concerns identified by health visitors



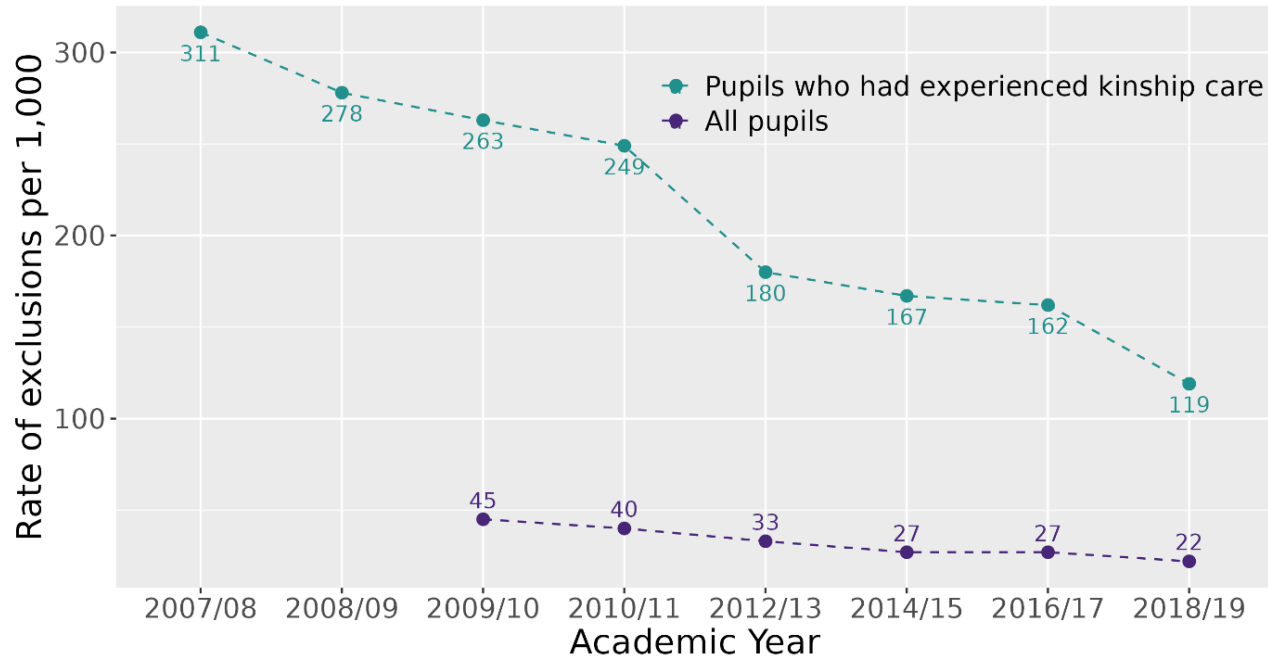
- ❖ The most common concerns identified were emotional and behavioural difficulties and challenges with speech, language and communication.

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

Education – Exclusions

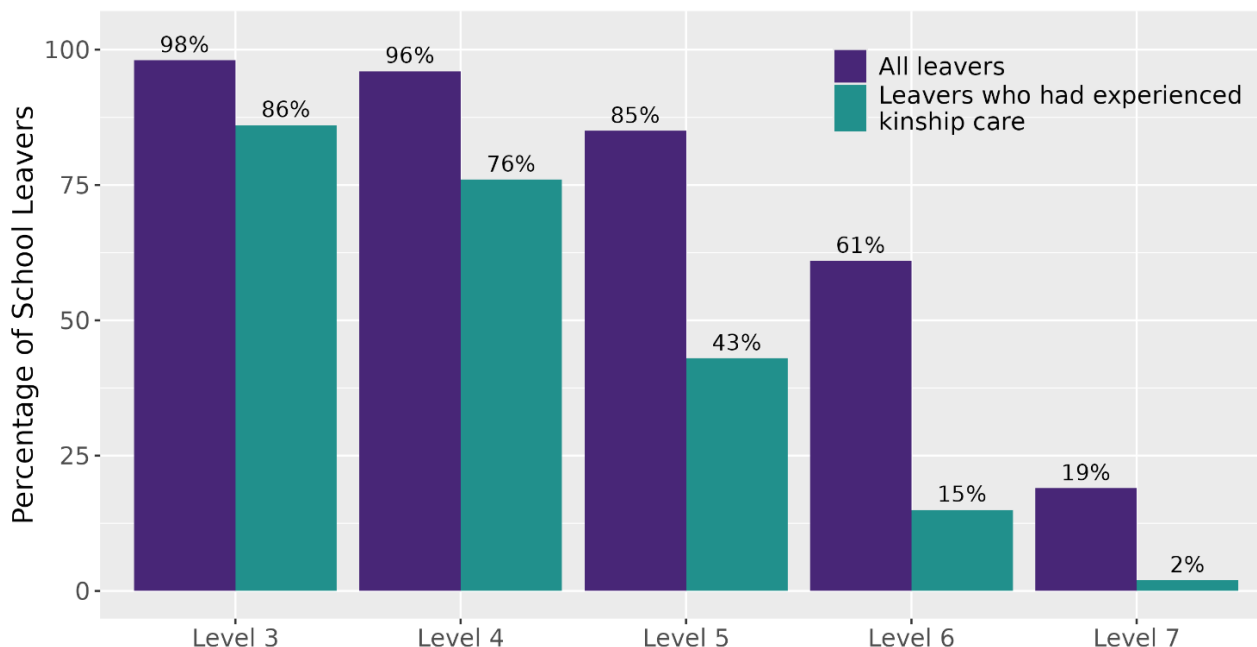
Rate of exclusions per 1,000 pupils, 2008/09 - 2018/19
All pupils vs pupils who had experienced kinship care



- ❖ 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

Education – Attainment

School leavers with at least one qualification at the stated level in 2018/19



- ❖ While more children with experience of kinship care were achieving qualifications at all levels, there remained an attainment gap

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**

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.

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.

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.

Want to know more?

Now available:

✦ Research report

✦ Info-comic summary





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Growing Up in Kinship Care
Research

Thank you

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