



# Supporting the Transition to Independence for Young People Raised in Kinship Care

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**Grandparents Plus is the only national charity (England & Wales) dedicated solely to supporting all kinship families**



# Presentation overview

1. **Josh, Danielle, Matt and Ashley – Kinship Care Matters: Young Peoples’ Voices**
2. **About kinship care**
3. **Growing Up in Kinship Care: Experiences as Adolescents and Outcomes in Young Adulthood**
4. **Recommendations**



*‘There was a knock on the door. Social services said you’re going to live with your uncle for a bit.’ (Josh)*

*‘When they took me in they got full parental responsibility, but nothing to support them. They need some sort of financial support. They can’t just raise children on thin air.’ (Danielle)*



# Children raised by relatives in kinship care, England (2011 census)

153,000 children - 1 in 74; increasing faster than child population

More prevalent in non-white ethnic groups – 1 in 37 children in black ethnic group in kinship care

More prevalent in the poorest areas - 76% children in kinship care growing up in deprived household

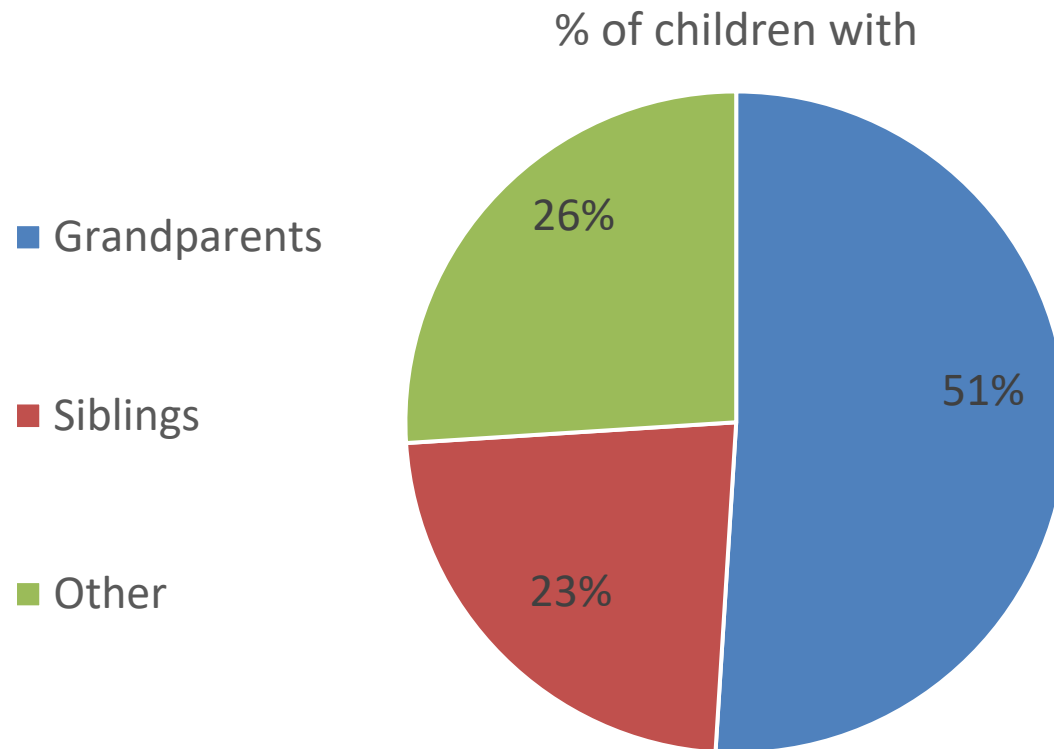
2 x more likely to have a long-term health problem/disability than children growing up with at least one parent



Source: Bristol Kinship Study (2017)

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# Children raised by relatives in kinship care, England (2011 census)



# Kinship care includes children living with relatives or family friends

- in informal arrangements (c. 90-95%?)
- with Child Arrangements Orders or Residence Orders
- with Special Guardianship Orders (more children left care on SGO than Adoption Order in 2019-20 - 90% to relatives)
- in family and friends foster care (16% of all fostering households; increasing faster than non-related)



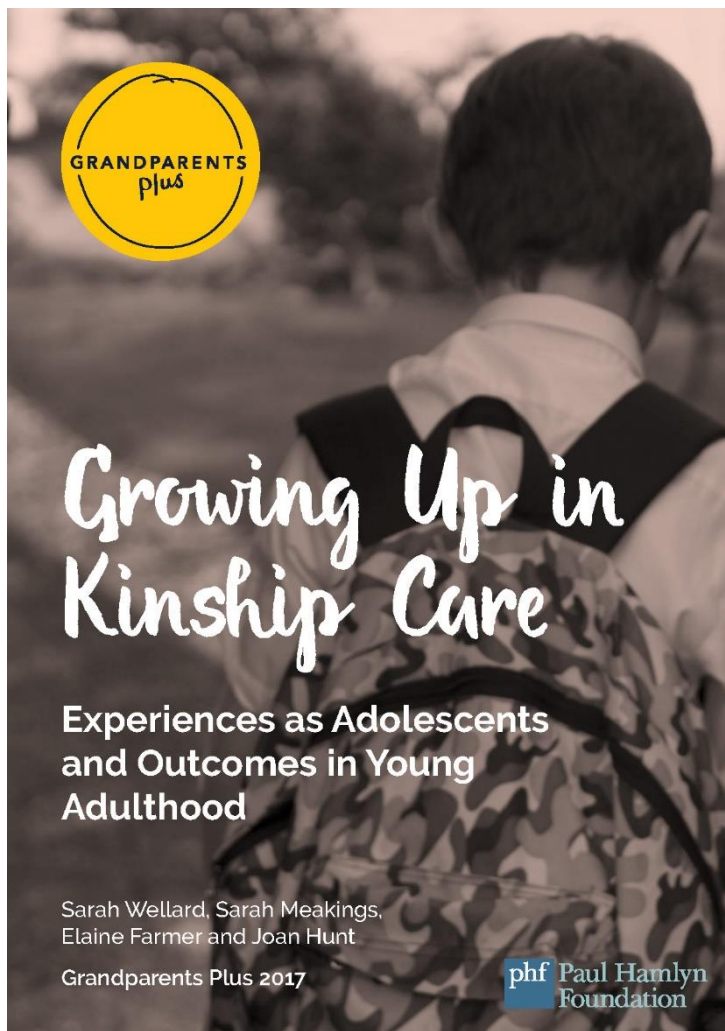
**Support for children and young people in kinship care (and carers) is determined by legal order**

**Special Guardianship - support for children and young people with SGO limited to *previously looked after children* (eg Adoption Support Fund, Pupil Premium Plus)**

**Foster care – children and young people in family and friends foster care entitled to the same level of support as those in unrelated foster care**







First study - involving 53 YP and 43 kinship carers - exploring experiences and outcomes of YP who grew up in kinship care

Considered transition to independence

Comparisons drawn with care leavers and general population



# The YP and their carers

- Most had experienced similar multiple adversities to those in the care system and would have been in care if relative hadn't stepped in
- Reasons for kinship care included 66% parental abuse, 68% parental substance misuse, 37% domestic abuse, 26% parental mental illness, 26% death of a parent
- Care journeys varied: 58% moved directly from parents to kinship carers, 42% had experienced more instability (either living with another relative or in local authority care)
- Most had a formal legal arrangement. One-quarter had been in kinship foster care and were eligible for leaving care services



# YP experience continuity, stability and close relationships with carers

## Continuity

- Prior relationship with carer reduced disruption of move into kinship care and contributed to placement stability
- Two-thirds went into kinship care with at least one sibling
- Relationships with wider family ongoing

## Stability

- Three-quarters lived continuously with their carer until independence

## Closeness of relationships with carers

- YP felt close to carers and could confide in them



# YP experience of loss and conflict

## Separation from siblings

- Sibling relationships very important
- Most had contact with at least one separated sibling, especially when they lived with a parent/relative, but less so when they were in unrelated foster care/adopted
- One-fifth had lost contact with a sibling

## Relationships with parents

- During teenage years, more than half of carers had serious concerns about harmful effects on young people of parental contact. Study suggests continuing negative impact on YP into adulthood
- 38% had lost one or both parents



# The teenage years

**Almost all the kinship carers expressed concerns about YP's emotional and behavioural wellbeing, including:**

- Low self-esteem (66%)
- Anxiety (61%)
- Anger and aggression (53%)
- Drug use (32%)

**During their teenage years, YP reported**

- Truancing (53%)
- Exclusion from school (30%)
- Missing a lot of school (25%)
- Being bullied at school (38%)



# Staying put or moving out

## Extended transitions are possible

- Half of the YP were still living with kinship carers and confident they could remain as long as they wished

## Most YP who'd left to live independently had done so for positive reasons, and they'd felt ready

- In most cases, carers continued to provide emotional, financial and practical support
- Most YP still had a close relationship with their carer
- But 39% now saw the move as premature and some were struggling



# How YP who'd moved out were faring: reasons for concern

- 23% of YP in the sample left home *before 18*
- Two-thirds reported feelings of anxiety and depression
- One-quarter said their physical health was poor
- 54% had offended
- 42% were NEET

Findings broadly in line with research which shows YP with more complex needs tend to move on early from foster care (Munro et al 2011 and 2012), meaning '*those who are least able and prepared to leave successfully tend to be the ones to do so first*' (Wade 2014)



# Outcomes for YP in kinship care generally better than YP in care, but worse than general population

- YP in kinship care and care had similar levels of mental health disorders, learning difficulties, becoming teenage mothers
- YP in kinship care had better outcomes than care leavers related to physical health, educational achievement, whether they were NEET or offending
- Particular attention needs to be given to YP who have poor outcomes in multiple areas of their lives. They – and their carers – need more help





# Recommendations

- YP and kinship carers need access to more support at every stage – from a range of agencies
- YP in kinship care need access to support around transition to independence, as is provided for all looked after children
- LAs should identify and help vulnerable ‘early leavers’. They are not unknown - most in the study had been in care at some point
- LAs should review their interpretation of their duty to provide assistance to looked after YP in kinship care in their transition to independence – 40% of those entitled to it in the study didn’t get help and most ended up NEET



# Emerging issues

**SGO is a relatively new order**

- **As children grow older and reach independence, more support will be needed for them and their carers**
- **What happens when YP reach 18?**

**Can colleges and universities do more to recognise and support YP who grew up in kinship care?**

**Can we increase awareness of kinship care across services?**

**Need for data and research (including YP)**



Read our Growing Up in Kinship Care study

<https://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/report/growing-up-in-kinship-care-experiences-as-adolescents-and-outcomes-in-young-adulthood/>

Join our Kinship Care Professionals Network

<https://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/professional-support-network/>

Stay in touch

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