

Bereavement Matters in Kinship Care



NES Bereavement Conference 24th November 2021

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Bereavement Matters in Kinship Care

- Background and CHS Kinship Service
- Types of Kinship Care
- Issues
- Supports - What helps?
- The Charter
- Thanks



Health Matters for Children and Young People in Kinship Care

We provide training directly to Kinship Carers. We also design bespoke sessions to suit specific needs and interests. This training is delivered FREE OF CHARGE as Children's Health Scotland is funded by the Scottish Government and other trusts and foundations. Please contact us for more information.

Training topics

- Managing the healthcare needs and rights of children in care
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing for children in care
- Consent and Confidentiality
- Play techniques to help children cope with Dental, Medical and Hospital treatment and pain
- Getting it right for Looked After Disabled Children and those with complex healthcare needs
- Impact of Loss and Change
- Adolescence Matters

Services during COVID-19

1:1 Phone and Email Support
on any health-related matter. Sometimes a listening ear helps. We can provide phone and email support on any health-related matter. Contact details below.

Question and Answer Sessions
In these times of uncertainty and questions flying around, we would like to provide what reassurance we can. Please send in your questions to the email below and watch our website for details of forth-coming Q&A sessions.

Online Sessions
We can offer short bitesize sessions on some of the workshop topics: mental health and emotional wellbeing, ways to cope with stress and anxiety, loss and change. These will be advertised on our website.



Please ask us questions. For example we have been asked:

“Is it safe for my child to go to school when I am shielding?”

For more information and to arrange your training sessions, please contact:

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The aim of Children's Health Scotland is to make sure children and young people get the best quality healthcare. We are the only charity in Scotland dedicated to informing, promoting and campaigning on the healthcare needs and rights of all children and young people.

What's in a number?

Table 1.1: Number and percentage of children looked after at 31 July, in each type of accommodation^(1,2)

	Number			Percentage		
	2009	2018	2019	2009	2018	2019
In the community	13,707	13,219	12,602	90	90	90
At home with parents	5,924	3,818	3,536	39	26	25
With Kinship Carers: friends/relatives	2,993	4,103	4,064	20	28	29
With Foster Carers provided by LA	3,594	3,529	3,290	24	24	23
With Foster Carers purchased by LA	905	1,529	1,440	6	10	10
With prospective adopters	242	190	212	2	1	2
In other community ⁽³⁾	49	50	60	0	0	0
Residential Accommodation	1,580	1,519	1,413	10	10	10
In local authority home	611	585	558	4	4	4
In voluntary home	138	122	127	1	1	1
In residential school	598	395	341	4	3	2
In secure accommodation	102	52	63	1	0	0
Crisis care	18	0	0	0	0	0
In other residential ⁽⁴⁾	113	365	324	1	2	2
Total looked after children	15,287	14,738	14,015	100	100	100

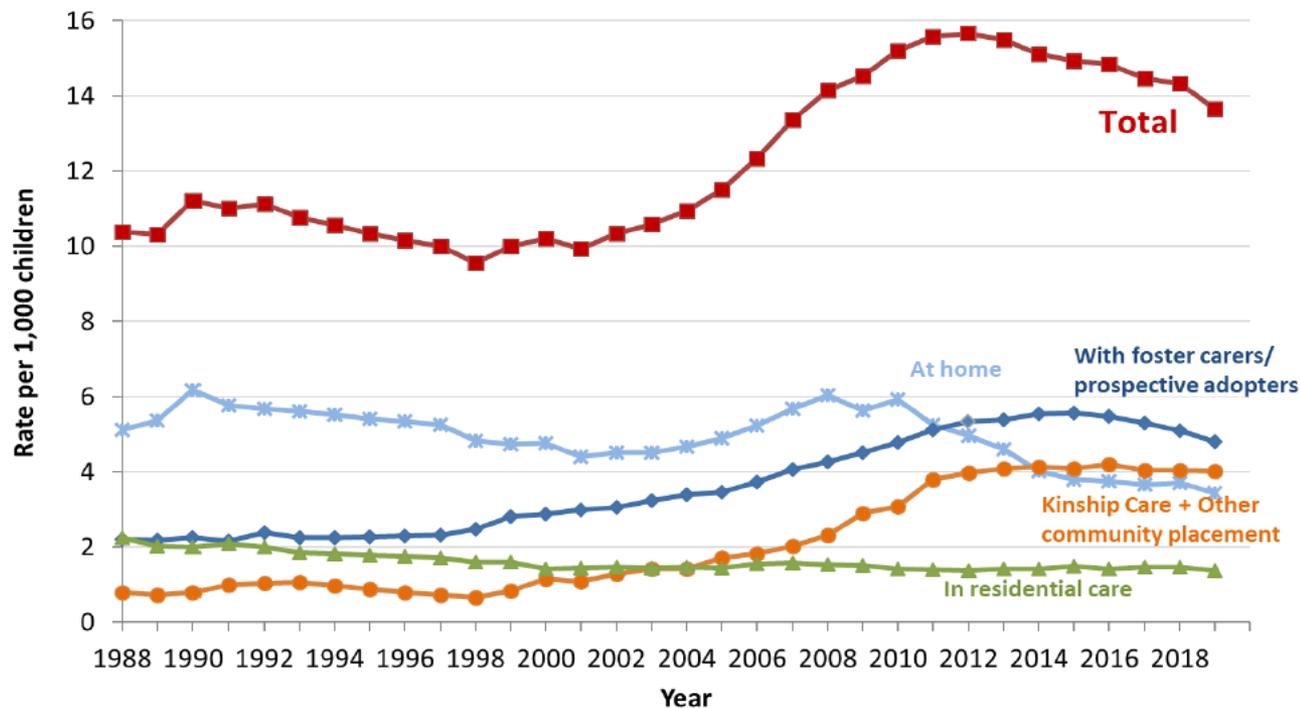
(1) Data for 2018 is estimated by using 2017 figures for Glasgow City and 2018 figures for all other local authorities. The figures for 2017-18 will be revised during 2020 following receipt of data from Glasgow City.

(2) Information on the number of children looked after by accommodation type is available back to 1988 in chart 1 data of the spreadsheet version of the associated downloadable publication tables

(3) 'In other community' is a category that captures those people in community placements outside those listed, such as supported accommodation.

(4) The bulk of the 'other residential' placements are private/independent residential placements for young people with complex needs.

Chart 1: Children looked after per 1,000 children under 18 by type of accommodation, 1988-2019⁽¹⁾



(1) Data for 2018 is estimated by using 2017 figures for Glasgow City and 2018 figures for all other local authorities. The figures for 2017-18 will be revised during 2020 following receipt of data from Glasgow City.

What is Kinship Care?

Kinship care is the care of children by their extended family or a close friend of the family. It includes 'formal' care for children who are 'looked after' by the local authority. It also includes 'informal' arrangements made privately between family members without local authority involvement.

The 2011 Census suggests that there are between 11,000 and 17,000 children living in kinship care. Of these, around 4,000 are 'looked after' by the local authority. ('Looked after' children are those placed by the local authority in foster, residential or kinship care. It also includes those living at home, but with an element of social work supervision). The number of 'looked after' children placed in kinship care has been increasing and they now make up 27% of all 'looked after' placements.



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What is Kinship Care?

- ❖ A kinship carer is a relative or friend who takes over the care of a child when their parents cannot look after them.
- ❖ For many children, there is no state involvement as the kinship care is a completely private arrangement between members of an extended family.
- ❖ In some cases the carers apply to the court for an order giving them some parental rights and responsibilities (Section 11 Order).
- ❖ Other children in kinship care may be 'looked after' by the local authority and placed with relatives or friends as an alternative to foster care.
- ❖ Kinship carers may offer to look after a child or they may be asked to do so by social workers. Where there is a **crisis situation**, they may have very little time to prepare for caring for children.



Some Anomalies

Notwithstanding the considerable policy attention over the last ten years, a number of issues remain to be resolved concerning support for kinship carers. These include:

- The interaction of the benefits system with local authority allowances
- Variation in practice between local authorities
- Identifying with more certainty the level of unmet need amongst kinship carers of non-'looked after' children

Route into Kinship Care

- ❖ issues such as parental mental ill health, substance/alcohol use and/or domestic abuse
- ❖ as a result of parental death or prior to parental death
- ❖ complexities of emotions
- ❖ attempting to find therapeutic services to support the child's experience of loss
- ❖ altering their life (such as being able to continue working or not)
- ❖ financial pressures of caring for a child/children
- ❖ their own complex emotions related to the lack of parental capacity to care for the child/children
- ❖ in some cases the experience of grief and bereavement.



Bereavement Matters in Kinship Care



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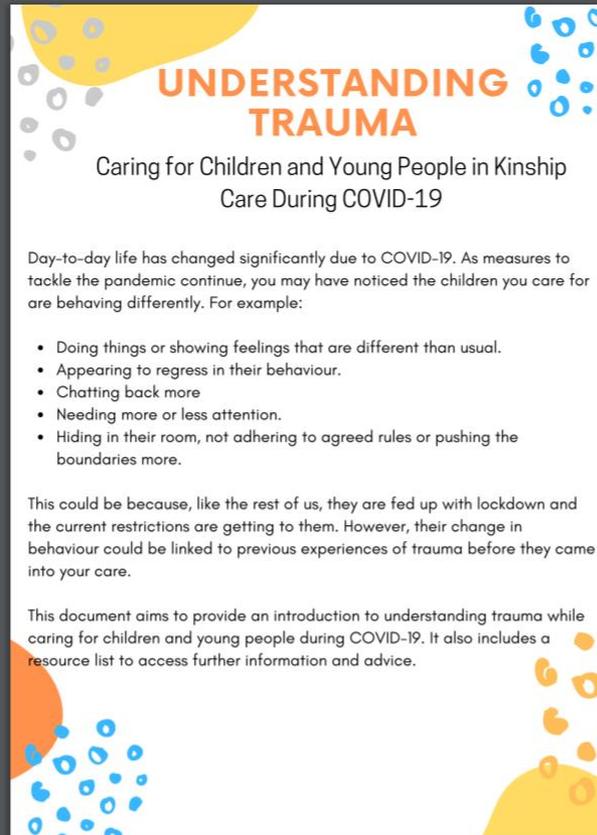
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The 'triple whammy' – children

- ❖ Trauma in childhood
- ❖ the retraumatising of the child when their parent dies
- ❖ the terrible fear of losing their grandparent who is old with a significant heart condition.



Understanding Trauma



UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA

Caring for Children and Young People in Kinship Care During COVID-19

Day-to-day life has changed significantly due to COVID-19. As measures to tackle the pandemic continue, you may have noticed the children you care for are behaving differently. For example:

- Doing things or showing feelings that are different than usual.
- Appearing to regress in their behaviour.
- Chatting back more
- Needing more or less attention.
- Hiding in their room, not adhering to agreed rules or pushing the boundaries more.

This could be because, like the rest of us, they are fed up with lockdown and the current restrictions are getting to them. However, their change in behaviour could be linked to previous experiences of trauma before they came into your care.

This document aims to provide an introduction to understanding trauma while caring for children and young people during COVID-19. It also includes a resource list to access further information and advice.



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<http://kinship.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Kinship-Care-Understanding-Trauma-ResourcesFinal.pdf>



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And what of the carer?

- ❖ Their own grief for loss of their adult child
- ❖ Shared grief of the grandchild/ren
- ❖ Loss of previous lifestyle and role as grandparent
- ❖ Financial implications



Complex emotions

I felt shock, disbelief, devastation, anger, relief and then guilt at feeling relieved!

You don't think you are due any help – I never got to speak about it.

you try to keep going so you don't grieve, look after everybody else

I'm grieving the child is grieving

parenting a child is different to being a grandparent



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Societal pressures

When you first get to know them you don't know if they are bereaved, they don't tell you much - don't open up till much later - FSW

Social attitudes around substance use assume there must have been a deficit in the carer's parenting of their own child – Prof Adviser

Social attitudes around type of death

When his mum died, he was only 12 but he insisted on making a speech at the funeral because he wanted everyone to know she wasn't a bad person.

Carer



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Legal and financial

If the child is not looked after, not previously looked after or not considered to be 'at risk of becoming looked after' no allowance will be paid.

Could they no just give you a wee grant? You've the Funeral, the wake, the children and the benefits stop!

We were phoned by the police and just told to come and get the children outside the school. Then SW say: That's fine the family have stepped in!



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Support – Local Kinship Groups

“We’ve all been to hell and back and so we can support each other we know what each other is going through.

Nobody gets it unless you have gone through it yourself. You just do not understand. You can sympathise but if you are living it, we can help and support each other.

On the day of her first meeting she said nothing at first but sat back and listened, tears streaming down her face. For the first time in 9 years she could tell her story.



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Support – Community

My GP referred me for severe depression to a CPN. She literally saved my life!

Fostering Compassion helped the group and told us: “You’ll eventually remember good memories” but I got so upset because I couldn’t remember any.

I felt I couldn’t show my grief in front of the kids – Child Bereavement UK/Scotland helped me understand I was helping the kids to express their emotions/giving them permission.



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Support – Local Authority

She found the local social work office were helpful and though they could not offer her concentrated support as her grandson was not classed as “looked after”, they informed her they would try and offer support as to “a child in need”
CAS Regional Officer

Bereavement support is determined at each Local Authority level when what we need is uniformity and parity.
Minister

She was encouraged to write down her story and with this the LA granted her an order to put the care on a legal footing which then opened doors to support and support groups etc.
FSW



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Last Words

- ❖ I've dealt with all that and now this!
 - ❖ Be aware – nature of the loss, bereavement and grief
 - ❖ Don't judge – treat everyone with the same respect and dignity as you'd treat everyone else
 - ❖ Advice on how to deal with the CYP's grief and loss
 - ❖ Keeping the memories alive
 - ❖ Relationships and trust
 - ❖ I couldn't carry on if I didn't have her, she's my world
-
- Scotland should be a place where: accessing support (including emotional, practical, financial, social, and spiritual) is seen as a right
 - People who have been bereaved should: be treated with compassion, empathy and kindness





Frameworks

UNCRC – Key Articles



The voice of children,
young people and families



illustration : alex leonard

U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 42



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INFORM CHILD

RCPCH

Royal College of
Paediatrics and Child Health

Leading the way in Children's Health

UNCRC 39



Illustration : alex leonard

You should be helped to get better if you have been hurt or neglected

U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 39

**CHILDREN &
YOUNG PEOPLE'S**
Commissioner
Scotland



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The Right to Recovery

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of:

- any form of neglect, exploitation or abuse
- torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- armed conflicts.

Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child UNCRC 39



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Supporting schools

Attachment/trauma aware schools

- Safe base teams – team Noah – attachment figures
- Separate playgrounds

Nurture groups

Mindfulness

Calm the body first – before engaging

Emotional Literacy - Feeling weather maps

Case conferences

Child Centred Planning

Life story work – via other agencies

Seasons for Growth Programme

Place to be

Thanks and Acknowledgements

- ❖ Cumbernauld Group
- ❖ Alloa Group
- ❖ Nurture Scotland
- ❖ Citizens Advice Scotland – National Kinship Care Advice Service
- ❖ Scottish Government
- ❖ Kinship Care Forum
- ❖ East Ayrshire



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Thank you

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