

## Formal Kinship Care in England

### Who are What Works for Children's Social Care

WWCSC seeks to improve the lives of children and their families through setting standards in research and generating and collating the best evidence in children's social care.

### The importance of evidence based policy in children's social care

Children's services are complex, and our research helps policymakers, practice leaders, and practitioners understand how services work and what their outcomes are for children. By understanding which interventions work, and in what context, we can better support children and families, prioritise the most cost effective interventions, and affect meaningful change.

### What we did:

As part of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, WWCSC undertook research to:

- Examine the variation in the use of formal kinship care across England.
- Identify and describe the experiences of children living in formal kinship care. This includes child characteristics, their care journeys into kinship care and wider outcomes at age 16-18.

Our research focused on Kinship foster care and Kinship special guardianship.

### What we found:

- There is a high degree of variation in the use of kinship foster care placements and of kinship SGOs across England. The **rate of kinship care placements ranges from 4% to 39%** across Local Authorities.
- **Children of minority ethnic backgrounds are under-represented** in kinship foster care and in kinship special guardianship compared to their representation among all children in care. We think that this may be because they are over-represented in other forms of care, including informal kinship care.
- Children who leave care to a kinship special guardian experience **better placement stability**, with **27% of children who have ever experienced kinship care staying in a single kinship foster placement throughout their entire care journey**.

### The Independent Review of Children's Social Care:

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care made several recommendations relating to kinship care, including leave for new kinship carers, improved financial and legal support, training, and the introduction of a legal definition of kinship care.

### Our next steps:

We are undertaking further research to understand the reasons behind the variation in the use of kinship care across Local Authorities. We are carrying out an analysis of whether there is any correlation between rates of kinship care and other local authority characteristics, including Ofsted rating, income deprivation score, workforce statistics, and other factors. This analysis will allow us to identify possible explanations for the large variation in rates of kinship care use.

**Please participate in the survey that you will receive from WWCSC and Kinship in January. DCSs should have received an email with more information recently, please email [amar.alam@whatworks-csc.org.uk](mailto:amar.alam@whatworks-csc.org.uk) if you have not received that email.**