



CREATE Position Paper

Issue: Kinship Care¹ of Children and Young People in formal Out-of-Home Care

CREATE's Position

CREATE takes the view that, while research shows that children and young people prefer kinship care over other out-of-home care placement types due to feelings of comfort, familiarity and connection to family and community, the unique issues faced by kinship carers require that they receive special consideration in recruitment and training, and support from governments (McHugh, 2009). Children and young people should be involved in decisions that impact their lives, particularly where and with whom they live.

CREATE supports the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principal that prioritises placing Indigenous children in out-of-home care with kin or community members to allow continuity of children and young people's connections to family, culture and community.

National Standards for out-of-home care that can apply to placements in kinship care are Standards 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11 and 12 (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services, and Indigenous Affairs, 2011).

National Standards	Measures
1. Children and young people will be provided with stability and security during their time in care.	1.3 The proportion of children and young people in out-of-home care who report feeling safe in and secure in their current placement.
2. Children and young people participate in decisions that have an impact on their lives.	2.1 The proportion of children and young people who report that they have opportunities to have a say in relation to decisions that have an impact on their lives and that they feel listened to.
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities participate in decisions concerning the care and placement of their children and young people.	3.1 The proportion of Indigenous children and young people in out-of-home care placed with the child's extended family, with the child's Indigenous community, or with other Indigenous people, by care type.
9. Children and young people are supported to safely and appropriately maintain connection with family, be they birth parents, siblings or other family members.	9.1 The proportion of children and young people in out-of-home care who are placed with relatives and kin.
10. Children and young people in care are supported to develop their identity, safely and appropriately, through contact with their families, friends, culture, spiritual sources and communities and have their life history recorded as they grow up.	10.1 The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people who have a current cultural support plan. 10.2 The proportion of children (as age appropriate) and young people who demonstrate having a sense of connection with the community in which they live.
11. Children and young people in care are supported to safely and appropriately identify and stay in touch, with at least one other person who cares about their future, who they can turn to for support and advice.	11.1 The proportion of children and young people who are able to nominate at least one significant adult who cares about them and who they believe they will be able to depend upon throughout their childhood or young adulthood.
12. Carers are assessed and receive relevant ongoing training, development and support, in order to provide quality care.	12.3 The proportion of foster carers and kinship carers (who had a least one placement during the year) who report feeling supported in their role and who feel their developmental needs relevant to their role are catered for.

¹ Kinship care is where the carers of children and young people in out-of-home care are relatives or other people considered to be family, close friends or members of the child or young person's community (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014).

Evidence

- Children and young people consulted by CREATE expressed support for kinship care when deciding on a placement, with an important stipulation that jurisdictions continue to support and monitor those in kinship care placements to ensure children and young people are safe and thriving (CREATE Foundation, 2011).
- Most children and young people in out-of-home care in Australia live in kinship care (48% overall). In terms of jurisdictions, NSW has the highest proportion of children and young people in kinship care (56%) and Tasmania (28%) and Northern Territory (2.6%)² have the lowest (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014).
- Research indicates the continued growth of kinship care in Australia is due to: changes in legislation and policy that favour kin placements; a decrease in availability of foster carers; substance abuse by parents leading to kin stepping in to care for children; children and families preferring kinship care; and an increase in the numbers of children requiring out-of-home care (Child Safety Services, 2011).
- In 2012-2013, 31% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people were not placed with relatives/kin or other Indigenous carers/services, which means that the Child Placement Principle was not invoked for those Indigenous children and young people (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014).
- Kinship care has been found to provide, “placement stability, continuity of relationships and behavioural development”, although definitive conclusions on its effectiveness are not available (Child Safety Services, 2011).
- CREATE’s Report Card 2013 found children and young peoples’ responses confirm findings of other research on the experiences of living in kinship care, including feeling happy in their placement, having more free time and greater stability in placements with fewer placement changes and school changes. Children and young people also reported being more likely to be placed together with siblings and higher rates of contact with siblings, grandparents and other relatives (McDowall, 2013).
- Kinship care is different from foster care. Policy, programming and practice need to be tailored to the unique benefits, risks and requirements (Child Safety Services, 2011).

Actions

CREATE recognises the benefits and the difficulties that may be experienced by children and young people cared for in kinship arrangements. CREATE advocates for respectful engagement with children, young people, kinship carers and other family members that recognises the complexity of family relationships in kinship care, and for addressing the special challenges in assessment, recruitment, training and support confronted by these carers.

CREATE urges governments to ensure children and young people are involved in decision-making about the issues that impact their lives, including where and with whom they live.

CREATE will explore with state and territory child protection agencies opportunities for CREATE Young Consultants to be involved in highlighting the particular needs of kinship carers.

References:

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- Child Safety Services. (2011). *Kinship care: A literature review*. Brisbane: Queensland Department of Communities. Retrieved from <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/childsafety/foster-care/kinship-care-literature-review.pdf>
- CREATE Foundation. (2011). *Living with Nan: Feedback from children and young people about their experiences in kinship care*. Brisbane: CREATE Foundation. Brisbane: CREATE Foundation.
- Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). (2011). *An outline of national standards for out-of-home care*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- McDowall, J. J. (2013). *Experiencing Out-of-Home Care in Australia: The views of children and young people*. Sydney: CREATE Foundation.
- McHugh, M. (2009). *A framework of practice for implementing a kinship care program*. Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre.

² Northern Territory proportion may be higher due to difference in reporting care type and inclusion of kinship carers in foster care category (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014)