

CREATE Position Paper No. 3: Kinship Care of Children and Young People in Formal Out-of-Home Care

CREATE's Position

¹ 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.

Evidence

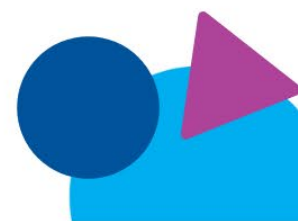
- *National Standards for out-of-home care* that can apply to placements in kinship care are Standards 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11 and 12 (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services, and Indigenous Affairs, 2011).
- Children and young people consulted by CREATE expressed support for kinship care when 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 Territory² (2.6%) have the lowest (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014).

CREATE takes the view that, while research shows that children and young people prefer kinship care

- 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).

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).

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).



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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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