

Permanently Progressing?

Building secure futures for children: Phase 2 Middle Childhood



Summary for Children

In Scotland, children in care can be looked after at home with their parents. They can also be looked after away from home living with family (kinship carers), foster carers or in residential care. Some children might be adopted. The aim is that all children should have stable, loving homes through their childhoods, and achieving this for them shouldn't take too long.

Researchers at *Permanently Progressing?* have looked at the lives of almost 2,000 children who were five or younger when they became looked after in Scotland in 2012-13. We wanted to see who they were living with, and how they were doing ten years later. We also wanted to understand the relationships they have with people who are important to them but who they don't live with, such as birth parents or siblings.

What we found out

Where children were living

By the end of July 2022, most of these 2,000 children were either living with their parents, other family members, in adoptive families or long-term foster families. For most of them, this took over two years.

Children who were looked after away from home when they were babies were more likely to be adopted.

One in ten children were in placements where they might have to move again.

For children who were looked after away from home, changes in where and with who they lived was common, and some had five or more moves! One child described being '*like a piece on the chessboard. Just leave him there for now or take him back? No, move him here*'.

Information was missing for some children, so we didn't know where they were living by 2022, which disappointed us as all Scotland's children are important!



How children were getting on

Children had difficult experiences before they became looked after away from home. Some also had physical and/or learning disabilities. One of the ways children show their feelings is through their behaviour and some had difficulties in managing their emotions, including anger. This means that they and their families might need extra support.

Children's wellbeing and feelings of belonging were helped by the everyday acts of care, affection and commitment shown by the adults caring for them

School was important, and school staff could have a huge positive impact on children's lives. Unfortunately, school could also be a place that made children stressed and sad, and some children were excluded from school.

Support

Children we spoke to said they would go to their carers/adoptive parents if they needed help. Children, caregivers and birth parents valued professionals (social workers, health staff, teachers) who listened and were responsive and kind. They didn't like it when support was hard to arrange, inconsistent, or when they were just given instructions.

Relationships with people children live apart from

Not all children saw their birth parents, and children who lived with family members and foster carers were more likely to see their parents or have other types of contact (phone, text, online). Some adopted children had 'letterbox' contact with their birth parents. This is when birth parents and adoptive parents send letters to each other (usually through a social worker).

Some children were living with their brothers and sisters, but many of them were not. When they weren't living together, not all children saw or spoke to their brothers or sisters.



Thank you from the research team

We hope that people who read our research (including you) will understand a bit more about Scotland's care experienced children.

We are grateful to the children and young people, kinship carers, foster carers, adoptive parents, birth parents and social workers who took part. The full report and an accessible video are at: <https://permanentlyprogressing.stir.ac.uk/>

Or scan the QR code below:



Thank you to Eva for all her help with this summary.

This part of the study was a collaboration between University of Stirling, Lancaster University and AFKA Scotland. It was funded by the same donor who funded the earlier work and the Nuffield Foundation.

The project has been funded by the Nuffield Foundation, but the views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily the Foundation. Visit www.nuffieldfoundation.org

UNIVERSITY of
STIRLING



Lancaster
University



afka

Association for
Fostering, Kinship
& Adoption Scotland

