

New study finds significant increase in children being brought up by relatives in England

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A University of Bristol study reveals the most comprehensive evidence to date on the extent of kinship care in England. Kinship care is when children are brought up by relatives in the absence of parent/s.

The briefing paper, published today [13 October], analysed microdata

from the latest 2011 Census to map the number of [children](#) growing up in [kinship care](#) households.

The study, led by researchers from Bristol's Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies, found that the seven per cent growth in the kinship child population between 2001 and 2011 was more than three times that of the population growth rate of all children in England, which was 2 per cent over the same time period. An estimated 152,910 (1.4 per cent) of the 11.3 million children in England in 2011 were living in kinship care.

The highest prevalence of kinship care was seen within the black ethnic group with one in every 37 black children growing up in the care of relatives compared to only one in every 83 white children.

The findings also show that grandparents were the main carer for 51 per cent of the kinship children, while 23 per cent of the carers were siblings. The remaining group of children were being brought up by a by another relative such as an aunt, an uncle or a cousin.

The study shows that the majority of children in kinship care are affected by poverty and deprivation. Of all children living in kinship care in England, 40 per cent were living in households located in the 20 per cent of the poorest areas in England and more than three quarters (76 per cent) of the kinship children were living in a deprived household. The high prevalence (4 per cent) of kinship children in the most deprived households in England compared with the low prevalence (0.7 per cent) of kinship children in households with no deprivation indicate a pressing need for support and services to be provided to these children and their kinship families.

Compared with children growing up with at least one parent, children in kinship care were also found to be nearly twice as likely to have long-

term health problems or disabilities.

Dinithi Wijedasa, the study's lead author from the Hadley Centre for Foster and Adoption Studies based in University of Bristol's School for Policy Studies, said: "As well as showing a significant increase in the number of kinship care households, the findings highlight that children growing up in the care of relatives face significant poverty and deprivation compared with children growing up with at least one parent. Children in kinship care are also more likely to have a disability or higher levels of long-term health problems. Given that a large majority of these children and their families will be not known to the local authorities, it is imperative that measures are taken to enable them to receive adequate support."

Cathy Ashley, Chief Executive of Family Rights Group, commented: "This new research provides important, authoritative statistics about kinship care. The number of children living in kinship care are increasing, and they are overwhelmingly affected by poverty. This research is reinforced by findings from a new report by Family Rights Group we have found that almost half (49 per cent) of kinship carers have had to give up work permanently to care for the kinchild, and a further 18 per cent have had to give up work temporarily. We call on the government to take action to introduce a period of paid leave for kinship carers, similar to adoption leave, to enable the children to settle in without the carers being forced to give up work."

Lucy Peake, Chief Executive of Grandparents Plus, added: "It is shocking that such a high proportion of children growing up in the care of a grandparent or other family member experience poverty and deprivation. Many of these children are doubly disadvantaged by the abuse and neglect or other serious problems they experienced before moving in with their carers. The government's proposals to cut child tax credits and reform welfare benefits threaten to make their situation even

worse. We are calling upon the government to ensure children in kinship care get the help and support they need, and to protect them from the impact of welfare reform."

The briefing paper, entitled 'The prevalence and characteristics of children growing up with relatives in the UK: Characteristics of children living with relatives in England: Part 1' is the first in a series from an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded research study, 'Kinship Care Re-visited: Using Census 2011 Microdata to Examine the Extent and Nature of Kinship Care in the UK' (grant ES/K008587/1).

More information: The briefing paper is online:
fluff.bris.ac.uk/fluff/u1/ficm...X7_nYRh8MQTVlyQwTpd/

Provided by University of Bristol

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