



Permanently Progressing? - Phase 2

Building secure futures for children in Scotland

A team led by the University of Stirling working with Lancaster University and the Adoption and Fostering Alliance (AFA) Scotland have won a £500,000 award from the Nuffield Foundation and a philanthropic donor, to carry out the next stage of ground-breaking work intended to improve the lives of children who become "looked-after" by the care systems.

In the largest UK study of its kind, between 2014 and 2018, the team followed the progress of every single child aged five and under who became looked-after in Scotland in the years 2012/2013 - a total of 1,836 children.

The highly acclaimed [study](#), published last year (2019) analysed the children's pre-care experiences, pathways and early outcomes. It used administrative data, surveys of caregivers and social workers, and interviews with children and caregivers.

Key findings of the Phase 1 of the study – titled [Permanently Progressing? Building Secure Futures for Children In Scotland](#) - were that a third of the children were still not in permanent placements after four years, and that adoption generally took more than two years. The study's finding that kinship carers, and the children in their care received less support than unrelated foster carers shaped the plans for development of Scotland's Kinship Care Advice Service which from the 1 Septembers 2020 has been hosted by a collaboration involving AFA Scotland and Adoption UK Scotland.

Now the team, led by University of Stirling social work expert Dr Helen Whincup has been awarded the prestigious half-million pounds of funding to revisit the 1, 836 children. AFA Scotland will continue to play an integral role in making links with practitioners and policy-makers throughout all stages of the research.

In Phase 2 - titled *Permanently Progressing? Middle Childhood* - the team, comprising researchers from the University of Stirling, Lancaster University, and Adoption and Fostering Alliance (AFA) Scotland, will use administrative data, questionnaires and interviews to see where the children are now and how they are faring.

Robin Duncan, Director of AFA Scotland, said: "It's fantastic news that this unique Scottish study is moving to a second phase. It will provide crucial evidence about what works best for children in the longer term. This kind of evidence is notoriously hard to gather but critical for shaping policy and practice to give children the best possible care experience."

Dr Whincup said: "Phase 2 of this longitudinal study which will run until 2024, will provide important information for children, families, social work practitioners and policy-makers in Scotland and internationally, which in turn will result in more effective services and better outcomes for children and families."

Reports and summaries for Phase 1 of *the Permanently Progressing?* study including an information sheet for children are available at the [Permanently Progressing? website](#).



The Nuffield Foundation is an independent charitable trust with a mission to advance social well-being. It funds research that informs social policy, primarily in Education, Welfare, and Justice. It also funds student programmes that provide opportunities for young people to develop skills in quantitative and scientific methods. The Nuffield Foundation is the founder and co-founder of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics and the Ada Lovelace Institute. The Foundation has funded this project, but the views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily the Foundation. Visit www.nuffieldfoundation.org

Research Team

Dr Helen Whincup: (Principal Investigator). Helen is a Senior Lecturer at University of Stirling, teaching primarily on the post-qualifying Masters in Applied Professional Studies (Child Welfare and Protection) and the Professional Supervision module. She is a qualified social worker with a practice background in children and families work, and practice and personal experience of adoption.

Dr Linda Cusworth: (Co-Investigator). Linda is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Child and Family Justice Research at Lancaster University. She is an experienced quantitative social researcher, and has worked as a researcher in child wellbeing, child protection and family justice for around 15 years. She has a passion for the use of administrative data and linked data in family justice research.

Dr Maggie Grant: (Co-Investigator). Maggie has worked in adoption and fostering research for 10 years. She is a Research Associate and Co-Founder at Adoption and Fostering Alliance Scotland.

Dr Alison Hennessy: (Lecturer). Alison is an educational researcher with a strong interest in the education of looked after children.

Jade Hooper: (Research Assistant). Jade is a Research Assistant and PhD Candidate based in the Faculty of Social Science at the University of Stirling.

